

## Matthew: 12:22–28

### From Catena Aurea:

22. Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

23. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?

24. But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

GLOSS. (non occ.) The Lord had refuted the Pharisees above, when they brought false charges against the miracles of Christ, as if He had broken the sabbath in doing them. But inasmuch as with a yet greater wickedness they perversely attributed the miracles of Christ done by divine power to an unclean spirit, therefore the Evangelist places first the miracle from which they had taken occasion to blaspheme, saying, Then was brought to him one that had a dæmon, blind and dumb.

CHRYSOSTOM. We may wonder at the wickedness of the dæmon; he had obstructed both inlets by which he could believe, namely, hearing and sight. But Christ opened both, whence it follows, And he healed him., insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

JEROME. Three miracles were wrought in one and the same person at the same time; the blind sees, the dumb speaks, the possessed is delivered from the dæmon. This was at that time done in the flesh, but is now daily being fulfilled in the conversion of them that believe; the dæmon is cast out when they first behold the light of the faith, and then their mouths which had before been stopped are opened to utter the praises of God.

HILARY. Not without reason, after having mentioned that all the multitude was healed together, does he bring in the cure of this man separately who was dæmoniac, blind and dumb. For after the man of the withered hand had been brought before Him, and been healed in the Synagogue, it behoved that the salvation of the Gentiles should be represented in the person of some other afflicted man; he who had been the habitation of a dæmon, and blind and dumb, should be made meet to receive God, should contain God in Christ, and by confession of God should give praise to the works of Christ.

AUGUSTINE. (Quæst. Ev. i. 4.) For he that believes not, is truly dæmoniac, blind, and dumb; and he that has not understanding of the faith, nor confesses, nor gives praise to God, is subject to the devil.

AUGUSTINE. (De Cons. Ev. ii. 37) This narrative is given by Luke, not in this place, but after many other things intervening, and speaks of him as dumb only, and not blind. But he is not to be thought to be speaking of another man, because he is silent respecting this one particular; for in what follows he agrees exactly with Matthew.

HILARY. All the multitude were astonished at this which was done, but the jealousy of the Pharisees grew thereupon, And all the multitude were astonished and said, Is not this the Son of David?

12:25–26

25. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand;

26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

JEROME. The Pharisees ascribed the works of God to the Prince of the dæmons; and the Lord makes answer not to what they said, but to what they thought, that even thus they might be compelled to believe His power, Who saw the secrets of the heart; Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said unto them.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xli.) Above they had accused Christ of having cast out dæmons by Beelzebub; but then He did not reprove them, suffering them, if they would, to acknowledge Him from further miracles, and to learn His greatness from His doctrine. But because they continued to maintain the same things, He now rebukes them, although their accusation had been very unreasonable. But jealousy reckes not what it says, so that only it say somewhat. Yet does not Christ contemn them, but answers with a gracious mildness, teaching us to be gentle to our enemies, and not to be troubled, even though they should speak such things against us, as we neither acknowledge in us, nor have any reasonableness in themselves. Therein also He proves that the things which they had said against Him were false, for it is not of one having a dæmon to shew such mercy, and to know the thoughts. Moreover, because this their accusation was very unreasonable, and they feared the multitude, they did not dare to proclaim it openly, but kept it in their thoughts; wherefore he says, Knowing their thoughts. He does not repeat their thoughts in His answer, not to divulge their wickedness; but He brings forward an answer; it was His object to do good to the sinners, not to proclaim their sin. He does not answer them out of the Scriptures, because they would not hearken to Him as they explained them differently, but He refutes them from common opinions. For

assaults from without are not so destructive as quarrels within; and this is so in bodies and in all other things. But in the mean while He draws instances from matters more known, saying, Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation; for there is nothing on earth more powerful than a kingdom, and yet that is destroyed by contention. What then must we say concerning a city or a family, that whether it be great or small, it is destroyed when it is at discord within itself.

HILARY. For a city or family is analogous to a kingdom, as it follows, And every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

JEROME. For as small things grow by concord, so the greatest fall to pieces through dissensions.

HILARY. But the word of God is rich, and whether taken simply, or examined inwardly, it is needful for our advancement. Leaving therefore what belongs to the plain understanding thereof, let us dwell on some of the more secret reasons. The Lord is about to make answer to that which they had said concerning Beelzebub, and He casts upon those to whom He made answer a condition of their answering. Thus; The Law was from God and the promise of the kingdom to Israel was by the Law, but if the kingdom of the Law be divided in itself, it must needs be destroyed; and thus Israel lost the Law, when the nation whose was the Law, rejected the fulfilment of the Law in Christ. The city here spoken of is Jerusalem, which when it raged with the madness of its people against the Lord, and drove out His Apostles with the multitude of them that believed, after this division shall not stand; and thus (which soon happened in consequence of this division) the destruction of that city is declared. Again He puts another case, And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?

JEROME. As much as to say, If Satan fight against himself, and dæmon be an enemy to dæmon, then must the end of the world be at hand, that these hostile powers should have no place there, whose mutual war is peace for men.

GLOSS. (ord.) He holds them therefore in this dilemma. For Christ casts out dæmons either by the power of God, or by the Prince of the dæmons. If by the power of God, their accusations are malicious; if by the Prince of the dæmons, his kingdom is divided, and will not stand, and therefore let them depart out of his kingdom. And this alternative He intimates that they had chosen for themselves, when they refused to believe in Him.

CHRYSOSTOM. Or thus; If he is divided, he is made weak, and perishes; but if he perishes, how can he cast out another?

HILARY. Otherwise; If the dæmon was driven to this division to the end that he should thus afflict the dæmons, even thus must we attribute higher power to Him who made the division than to those who are thus divided; thus the kingdom of the Devil, after this division made, is destroyed by Christ.

JEROME. But if ye think, ye Scribes and Pharisees, that the dæmons depart out of the possessed in obedience to their Prince, that men may be imposed upon by a concerted fraud, what can ye say to the healing of diseases which the Lord also wrought? It is something more if ye assign to the dæmons even bodily infirmities, and the signs of spiritual virtues.

12:27–28

27. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

CHRYSOSTOM. After the first answer, He comes to a second more plain than the first, saying, And if I by Beelzebub cast out dæmons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges.

JEROME. He alludes, as is His manner, under the name children of the Jews, either to the exorcists of that race, or to the Apostles who are by race of that nation. If He means the exorcists who by the invocation of God cast out dæmons, He thus constrains the Pharisees by a wise enquiry to confess that their work was of the Holy Spirit. If, He would say, the casting out of the dæmons by your children is imputed to God, and not to dæmons, why should the same work wrought by Me not have the same cause? Therefore shall they be your judges, not by authority but by comparison, they ascribe the casting out of the dæmons to God, you to the Prince of the dæmons. But if it is of the Apostles also that this is said, (and so we should rather take it,) then they shall be their judges, for they shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

HILARY. And they are worthily appointed judges over them, to whom Christ is found to have given that power over the dæmons, which it was denied that He had.

CHRYSOSTOM. Yet He said not, My disciples, or Apostles, but your children; that if they chose to return again to their own privileges, they might take occasion hence; but if they should be ungrateful, they might not have even an impudent excuse. And the Apostles cast out dæmons by virtue of power which they had from Him, and yet the Pharisees made no such charge against them; for it was not the actions themselves,

but the person of Christ to which they were opposed. Desiring then to shew that the things which were said against Him were only jealous suspicions, He brings forward the Apostles. And also He leads them to a knowledge of Himself, shewing how they stood in the way of their own good, and resisted their own salvation; whereas they ought to be joyful because He had come to bestow great goods upon them; If I by the Spirit of God cast out dæmons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. This also shews that it is a matter of great power to cast out dæmons, and not an ordinary grace. And thus it is He reasons, Therefore is the kingdom of God come upon you, as much as to say, If this indeed be so, then is the Son of God come upon you. But this He hints darkly, that it may not seem hard to them. Also to draw their attention, He said not merely, The kingdom hath come, but, upon you; that is to say, These good things are coming for you; why do you oppose your own salvation; for this is the very sign given by the Prophets of the presence of the Son of God, that such works as these should be wrought by Divine power.

JEROME. For the kingdom of God denotes Himself, of whom it is written in another place, The kingdom of God is among you; (Luke 17:21) and, There standeth one in the midst of you whom ye know not. (John 1:26) Or surely that kingdom which both John and the Lord Himself had preached above, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mat. 3:2 4:17.) There is also a third kingdom of the Holy Scripture which shall be taken from the Jews, and be given to a nation that brings forth the fruit thereof.

HILARY. If then the disciples work by Christ, and Christ by the Spirit of God, already is the kingdom of God transferred to the Apostles through the office of the Mediator.

AUGUSTINE. (Quæst. Ev. i. 5.) Whence the sense might be this, If I by Beelzebub vast out dæmons, then, according to your own opinion, the kingdom of God is come upon you, for the kingdom of the Devil, being thus divided against itself, cannot stand. Thus calling that the kingdom of God, in which the wicked are condemned, and are separated from the faithful, who are now doing penitence for their sins.

## **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

### **12:22 A Blind, Mute Demoniac Healed**

#### **Reprise.**

Hilary: The healing of the blind, mute, demon-possessed man follows. It was not without reason that, although he had said that all the multitudes were healed together, now a blind, mute man possessed by a demon was offered to him so that the same order of understanding might follow without any ambiguity. The Pharisees accused the apostles of plucking ears of corn, that is, of prematurely gathering the people of their age. But in his presence mercy was praised over sacrifice. A man with a withered hand was offered up in a synagogue and was cured. Yet not only were these deeds not useful in converting Israel, but the Pharisees even entered into a plan of murder. So it was necessary that the salvation of the Gentiles happen after these events in the dramatic definitive form of a single person. A blind, mute man who was the dwelling place of a demon was being prepared as one fit for God, that he might behold God in Christ and might praise the works of Christ by his acknowledgment of God. The crowd was stunned at the accomplishment of this deed. But the Pharisees' envy grew worse. These great deeds of his surpassed their human weakness. Shamefully they escaped any acknowledgment of this deed of God, covering it over with the greater crime of their own treachery. They did this so that they could say that all this power of his against demons came from Beelzebub, prince of demons. They could not suppose that these were the achievements of a man. On Matthew 12.11.

### **12:23–24 By Whose Power Was the Man Healed?**

### **12:25 A Kingdom Divided**

#### **The Destructive Division Is Within Jerusalem.**

Hilary: The law comes from God. The promise of the kingdom of Israel comes from the law, and the announcement of Christ's birth and arrival come from the law. If the kingdom of the law is divided against itself, it will of necessity be abandoned. Every power is pulled down by division, and the strength of a kingdom separated from itself is destroyed. Thus the kingdom of Israel has fallen from the law when the people of the law oppose the fulfillment of the law in Christ. "But both a city and a house divided against themselves will not stand." The dwelling of a city is the same principle as that of a kingdom. But this city

of Jerusalem is always viewed in contrast to the boastful tyranny of the nations. Now after Jerusalem had been inflamed against the Lord by the madness of its people and after the crowd of the faithful had put his apostles to flight, then it will not stand because of the division of those who are leaving. And so, what directly follows this division is the order for that city's destruction. On Matthew 12.13–14.

### **The House Divided.**

Chromatius: The Lord declared that a kingdom or city or house divided against itself could not stand. This was said in reference to the kingdom that the Jews themselves occupied under the rule of Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, which was judged as abandoned before being divided. The Jews would lose entirely the city of Jerusalem, to which Samaria had been hostile. They would lose the dwelling place of God's temple against which golden calves and the house of idols had been erected. He showed them that they ought rather to follow that kingdom that cannot be divided—that is, the heavenly and eternal one. The spiritual city of Jerusalem always remains fixed and immovable. No hostile power ever has been or will be able to overcome the true house of God. That house which is protected by the Son of God is quite safe. Tractate on Matthew 49.5.

### **12:26 How Will Satan Stand?**

#### **The Devil's Kingdom Cannot Stand Divided.**

Augustine: In saying this, he wanted it to be understood from their confession that they had chosen to live in him by not believing in the kingdom of the devil and that the devil could not stand divided against himself. So let the Pharisees choose what they want. If Satan could not cast out Satan, they could find nothing to say against the Lord. But if Satan can cast out Satan, let them look out for themselves all the more and let them abandon his kingdom because it cannot stand divided against itself. Sermon 71.1.

#### **The Inconsistency Implied.**

Chrysostom: The wars abroad are not so ruinous as the civil wars. As with civil wars, so wars happen inside the body. In all things it is the same, but in this case Jesus takes his illustration from the public sphere, for what is more powerful on earth than a kingdom? Nothing. But nevertheless it perishes if divided against itself. And what would you say of a city, similarly, if it were to break down by its own weight? What great blame would fall on those who carry the burden of its affairs! And what of a house? Whether it is a small

matter or a great one, it perishes when it revolts against itself. Furthermore, if I am possessed by a demon and through it cast out demons, there is dissent and strife between demons, and they rise up against one another. And if they rise up against one another, their strength is destroyed. “For if Satan casts out Satan”—note that he did not say “demons,” implying that there was a great deal of harmony in them toward each other. Rather, he said hierarchically, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is then divided against himself.” But if he is divided, he is becoming weaker and being ruined. And if he is ruined, how can he cast out another? Do you see how great is the joke of the accusation, how great the folly, the inconsistency? It is not plausible that one would be said to stand by that which was likely to cause one to fall. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 41.1.

### **12:27 They Shall Judge You**

#### **A Matter of Attribution.**

Jerome: If they were exorcists casting out devils by invoking God’s name, he intimates by clever questioning that they should declare the work to be of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to say, “If the casting out of devils by your [the Pharisees’] children is attributed to God and not to devils, how come the same work does not have the same cause?” Therefore “they shall be your judges,” not by authority but by comparison. While they attribute to God the casting out of devils, you attribute it to Beelzebub the prince of devils. But it was said about the apostles (and this we should bear in mind), they will be the judges of those children, for they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Commentary on Matthew 2.12.27.

### **12:28 The Kingdom of God Has Come on You**

#### **Personally to You.**

Chrysostom: To cast out demons is a work of the highest power and not of any ordinary power. For Matthew said, “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons,” just as Luke said, “If I by the finger of God cast out the demons.” The inference then might seem to be that if this is so, then quite obviously the Son of God has appeared. This, however, he did not quite say directly but in a reserved way so as not to provoke them. He dimly intimates it by saying “then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Do you grasp this wisdom? His presence was quietly shining forth precisely through the very things to which they were assigning blame. Then, to conciliate them, Jesus said not simply “the kingdom is come” but in a



personal sense “to you.” It is as though he had said, “Good things have come specifically to you, so why then do you feel so displeased that you are being wonderfully blessed? Why do you make war against your own salvation? This is that very time which the prophets long ago foretold. This is the sign of that advent which was expected by them. Even these things now are being accomplished by divine power. You yourselves know that they are happening. That is a fact. But that they are being accomplished by divine power, you do not realize, so the deeds themselves cry out. It is impossible that Satan should be the stronger power now, for he must of necessity be weaker. For it cannot be that one who is weak can, as though strong, cast out the strong man, the devil.” In speaking thus Jesus at the same time pointed to the power of charity and the vulnerability of contentious divisiveness. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 41.2.