



Sticks and stones.....

June 4, 2018

MATTHEW 12:22-24 NKJV – (22) Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. (23) And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (24) Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

In **Matthew 12:22** Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. As a result, "all the people were astonished and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' But when the Pharisees heard this, they denied that this could be a work of God, but instead declared: "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (**Matthew 12:23-24**). It is remarkable that the Pharisees reacted to this incredible miracle by Jesus in the very opposite way of that of the multitude, who realized that Jesus was from God.

Beelzebub is the Greek form of the name *Baal-zebul*, a pagan Philistine god worshiped in the ancient Philistine city of Ekron during the Old Testament times. It is a term signifying "the lord of flies" (**2 Kings 1:2**). Archaeological excavations at ancient Philistine sites have uncovered golden images of flies. After the time of the Philistines, the Jews changed the name to "*Beelzeboul*," as used in the Greek New Testament, meaning "lord of dung." This name referenced the god of the fly that was worshiped to obtain deliverance from the injuries of that insect. Some biblical scholars believe Beelzebub was also known as the "god of filth," which later became a name of bitter scorn in the mouth of the Pharisees. As a result, Beelzebub was a particularly contemptible deity, and his name was used by the Jews as an epithet for Satan.

The point Jesus is making to us today is that, if people are calling Him Satan, as did the Pharisees of His time, they would surely call His disciples the same. In **John chapter 15** Jesus declares, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me" (**John 15:18-21**).

SCRIPTURE READING

EPHESIANS 4:31

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Life and death are in the power of the tongue. Therefore, use it carefully and not carelessly.