

Matthew 9:32-34

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Jesus heals a mute demon-possessed man. The crowds who witness this miracle are duly impressed. The Pharisees try to dampen their enthusiasm and accuse Jesus of using demonic powers to cast out demons.

The parallel accounts for this miracle and/or the Pharisees' slander are found in Mark 3:22 and Luke 11:14-15.

Matthew continues his narrative, *as they* (Jesus and His disciples) *were going out*. He does not specify the place *they were going out* from. He could either mean *they were going out* from the house where Jesus just opened the eyes of two blind men, or he could mean that *they were going out* from the town of Capernaum where Jesus had been having these recent encounters and conducting miraculous healings. As they were on the move, *a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him*.

Perhaps because he has already detailed several examples of this kind of miracle, Matthew does not emphasize many particulars of this exorcism here (Matthew 8:16, 28-34) save that *the man* was also *mute*. What he chooses to bring to the reader's attention are the contrasting responses from those who witnessed (or immediately heard about it) *after the demon was cast out and the mute man spoke*.

The crowds were amazed while the Pharisees were angered over what Jesus had done for this man. This is underscored by the opposing things each were saying after it took place.

The crowds were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." They were celebrating the marvel at what Jesus did and trying to come to terms with what it meant for them as a nation. Behind their remark were questions like: "What wonderful things is God up to?" "What does God have in store for Israel?" "Is He about to fulfill His promises to us? "Is this a sign that the Messiah is coming?"

The crowd's attitude towards this miracle is the exact opposite posture *the Pharisees* assumed when they saw it. Instead of being amazed and contemplating what God was doing, they were inwardly enraged, in utter denial of God's involvement. *The crowds were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."*

Up to this point, *the Pharisees* and scribes had clashed with Jesus. They accused *Him* within their hearts of blasphemy (Matthew 9:3). They sought to undermine Jesus's character to His disciples (Matthew 9:11). But with this statement, *the Pharisees* reject Jesus outright. They reject His ministry. They publicly attack Him in the strongest terms possible. *The Pharisees were saying that Jesus is Satan, the ruler of the demons.*

Because this miracle occurred publicly and there were witnesses, the Pharisees were unable to dispute that *the mute, demon-possessed man* was healed. And depending on if *the* (formerly) *mute man* had any recollection *after Jesus cast out the demon*, he almost certainly would have shared a fascinating testimony about the miracle with his own mouth. If *the Pharisees* were to delegitimize Jesus in the eyes of *the crowds*, they could not deny His remarkable power. But they could brand Him as a demon. And that is precisely what they sought to do.

Biblical Text

9:32-34 As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” But the Pharisees were saying, “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”