

# Casting out Demons by Faith

Matthew 17	Mark 9	Luke 9
• • •	14 Coming to the disciples, he saw a great multitude around them, and scribes questioning them.	• • •
14 <sub>(a)</sub> When they came to the multitude, [...]	15 Immediately all the multitude, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and running to him, greeted him.	37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met him.
• • •	16 He asked the scribes, <b>“What are you asking them?”</b>	• • •
14 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] a man came to him, kneeling down to him, and saying, <sup>1</sup>	17 <sub>(a)</sub> One of the multitude answered, [...]	38 <sub>(a)</sub> Behold, a man from the crowd called out, saying, [...]
15 <sub>(a)</sub> “Lord,” [...]	17 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] “Teacher,” [...]	38 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] “Teacher,” [...]
15 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] “have mercy on my son,” [...]	17 <sub>(c)</sub> [...] “I brought to you my son,” [...]	38 <sub>(c)</sub> [...] “I beg you to look at my son,” [...]
• • •	• • •	38 <sub>(d)</sub> [...] “for he is my only child.”
15 <sub>(c)</sub> [...] “for he is epileptic,” <sup>2</sup> [...]	17 <sub>(d)</sub> [...] “who has a mute spirit;”	39 <sub>(a)</sub> “Behold, a spirit” [...]
15 <sub>(d)</sub> [...] “and suffers grievously;” [...]	• • •	• • •
• • •	18 <sub>(a)</sub> “and wherever it seizes him,” [...]	39 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] “takes him,” [...]
• • •	18 <sub>(b)</sub> [...] “it throws him down,” [...]	• • •
15 <sub>(e)</sub> [...] “for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water.” <sup>3</sup>	• • •	• • •
• • •	• • •	39 <sub>(c)</sub> [...] “he suddenly cries out, and it convulses him” [...]
• • •	18 <sub>(c)</sub> [...] “and he foams at the mouth,” [...]	39 <sub>(d)</sub> [...] “so that he foams,” [...]
• • •	18 <sub>(d)</sub> [...] “and grinds his teeth, and wastes away.” [...]	• • •
• • •	• • •	39 <sub>(e)</sub> [...] “and it hardly departs from him, bruising him severely.”
16 “So I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him.”	18 <sub>(e)</sub> [...] “I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they weren’t able.”	40 “I begged your disciples to cast it out, and they couldn’t.”
17 Jesus answered, <b>“Faithless and perverse generation! How long will I be with you? How long will I bear with you? Bring him here to me.”</b>	19 He answered him, <b>“Unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me.”</b>	41 Jesus answered, <b>“Faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.”</b>
• • •	20 <sub>(a)</sub> They brought him to him, [...]	• • •

<sup>1</sup> Mt, Mk, and Lk each record the man’s plea to Jesus differently. However, we have to remember that ancient writers were far more focused on conveying the *point* of someone’s words than recalling the exact wording. Their accounts are complementary rather than contradictory: their accounts of the man’s statement agree that (1) the man’s son was tormented by a spirit that caused him to behave in bizarre and dangerous ways; (2) the man reached out to the disciples, who were unable to help; and (3) the man brought his son to Jesus, hoping Jesus would show mercy and heal him.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word *σεληνιαζεται* translated as “epileptic” in Mt 17:15<sub>(c)</sub> describes someone affected by the phases of the moon; *lunatic* would be a fitting translation of this word. This does not contradict Mk 9:17<sub>(d)</sub> and Lk 9:39<sub>(a)</sub> when they attribute the son’s problems to a spirit. Mk and Lk address the *cause* of the problem while Mt describes an affect of it.

<sup>3</sup> This statement is echoed in Mk 9:22.

Matthew 17	Mark 9	Luke 9
•••	20 <sup>(b)</sup> [...] and when he saw him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground, wallowing and foaming at the mouth.	42 <sup>(a)</sup> While he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him violently. [...]
•••	21 He asked his father, “How long has it been since this has come to him?” He said, “From childhood.”	•••
•••	22 Often it has cast him both into the fire and into the water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.”	•••
•••	23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”	•••
•••	24 Immediately the father of the child cried out with tears, “I believe. Help my unbelief!”	•••
•••	25 <sup>(a)</sup> When Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, [...]	•••
18 <sup>(a)</sup> Jesus rebuked him, [...]	25 <sup>(b)</sup> [...] he rebuked the unclean spirit, [...]	42 <sup>(b)</sup> [...] But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, [...]
•••	25 <sup>(c)</sup> [...] saying to him, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!”	•••
•••	26 <sup>(a)</sup> After crying out and convulsing him greatly, [...]	•••
18 <sup>(b)</sup> [...] the demon went out of him, [...]	26 <sup>(b)</sup> [...] it came out of him. [...]	42 <sup>(c)</sup> [...] and healed the boy,
•••	26 <sup>(c)</sup> [...] The boy became like one dead; so much that most of them said, “He is dead.”	•••
•••	27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose.	•••
•••	•••	42 <sup>(d)</sup> [...] and gave him back to his father.
18 <sup>(c)</sup> [...] and the boy was cured from that hour.	•••	•••
19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately, and said, “Why weren’t we able to cast it out?”	28 When he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we cast it out?”	•••
20 He said to them, “Because of your unbelief. For most certainly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”	•••	•••
21 “But this kind doesn’t go out except by prayer and fasting.” <sup>4</sup>	29 He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing, except by prayer and fasting.” <sup>5</sup>	•••

<sup>4</sup> Mt 17:21 is absent from several early Greek manuscripts, including *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase “and fasting” is absent from several early Greek manuscripts.