

**The Attackers: Black Sheep: The 7 Sons of Sceva: Paul's 3-year Ministry in Ephesus; Exorcism (*Exorkízō*) Is Not Mentioned in the New Testament; Jesus & the Apostles Cast Out (*Ekbállō*) Demons; Pharisees Accuse Jesus of Exorcism by Satan; Jesus Refutes the Charge, Matt 12:24, 26; Sons of Sceva Try to Exorcize in the Name of Jesus & Paul; the Demon Refuses to Obey; the Possessed Man Subdued Them All, Acts 19:13–15; Magicians Burn Their Books, vv. 18–19**

**B. The Seven Sons of Sceva: Acts 19:13–17:**

1. This passage takes place in Ephesus where Paul began a three-year ministry, two of which he taught doctrine both in the local synagogue and at the school of Tyrannus \ Tī-răn'-us\ (Τύραννος).

**Acts 19:8** - Paul entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

**v. 9** - But when some were becoming hardened [ they rejected the gospel ] and disobedient [ they did not believe ], speaking evil of the Way [ a metonymy<sup>1</sup> for Jesus ] before the people, he withdrew [ separated ] from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school [ σχολή (*scholē*): instruction at a medical school ] of Tyrannus.

**v. 10** - This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

2. Some of the Jews were negative to the doctrine of salvation and rejected Jesus as the “Way” of salvation. This division among his flock caused him to move to a neutral site: the school of Tyrannus.
3. Doctrine must be distinguished from religion which is either ascetic legalism or lascivious antinomianism. When a church is infected by either or both and truth does not correct the problem, then the pastor is obligated to move to another location as the Lord provides direction.
4. During this three-year ministry Paul had at Ephesus he had the opportunity to perform a number of miracles.
5. The working of miracles by the apostles was done by a temporary spiritual gift designed to establish their apostolic identity and authority.
6. The Dark Side was motivated to combat this. Some demon-possessed Jews who had presented themselves as exorcists sought to gain credibility by pronouncing the names of Jesus and Paul over the afflicted.
7. Exorcism — ἐξορκίζω (*exorkízō*) — is demonic to start with and the word does not appear in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> When it works, it is designed to convince the afflicted and any observers of the power of the exorcist and having won their confidence to then teach the lie.
8. The only legitimate act of demon removal from a person is properly referred to by the verb ἐκβάλλω (*ekbállō*): to cast out.

<sup>1</sup> “Metonymy, a figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something else closely associated with it” (Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 135).

<sup>2</sup> The plural adjective predicate adjective of ἐξορκιστής (*exorkistés*) is a hapax legomenon found in Acts 19:13 and refers to the seven sons of Sceva among others, translated “exorcists.”

9. This verb is only associated with Jesus (Matthew 17:18 and Mark 5:8) and His disciples (Matthew 10:1) and was only operative during the first century A.D.
10. The only legitimate and effective system for demon removal in the post-apostolic period of the Church Age is faith alone in Christ alone; a demon cannot possess the body of a believer.
11. In Acts 19, we are introduced to the demonic exorcisms performed by the seven sons of Sceva \sē'-va\, a Jewish chief priest. Here is the mantra they recited over an afflicted person:

**Acts 19:13c** - "I adjure [ ὁρκίζω (*horkízō*): to charge, bind, or command on oath, or under the penalty of a curse<sup>3</sup> ] you by Jesus whom Paul preaches!"

12. When Jesus cast out a demon from the blind and mute man in Matthew 12:22, some Pharisees responded with the accusation:

**Matthew 12:24b** - "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

13. The accusation of the Pharisees is that Jesus is functioning as an agent of Satan's and therefore credit Lucifer with the miracles being performed by the Lord.
14. The Lord responds to this by using a debater's technique by assuming their supposition is true and then demonstrates that it is false by the following logical progression:

**Matthew 12:26a** - "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself.

**v. 27** - "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons [ **prophets who have performed such miracles** ] cast them out? They shall be your judges."

15. The Pharisees and scribes taught that the miracles performed by the prophets were by the power of God. Logically, Lucifer is not going to cast out one of His demons. So the argument is overcome by the Lord.
16. This takes us back to the Acts 19:13 where the sons of Sceva incorporate the power of Jesus and Paul in their mantra in hopes of exorcizing demons from several people.
17. To this contradiction, an ἐγγαστριμύθος (*engastrimúthos*) demon responds to them in:

**Acts 19:15b** - "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

**v. 16** - And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

18. Demons will not exit a person's body in response to the use of Jesus' name or even that of Paul's. Satan will not cast out Satan in the name of Jesus or Paul. Instead, Satan will discipline his disciples if they try to give credit to Jesus for an exorcism.

<sup>3</sup> Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged, 2d ed., s.v.: "adjure."

19. Following these events there was an immediate revival among Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus toward Jesus as many began to confess their involvement in the magical arts:

**Acts 19:18** - Many of those who had believed kept coming confessing and disclosing their practices.

**v. 19** - And many of those who practiced magic [ περίεργος (*períergos*): **black arts; sorcery** ] brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver<sup>4</sup>.

20. This dramatic demonstration of the power of God and the Word of God illustrates the Ephesians' wide acceptance of Jesus as Savior and the Word of God as priority one in their lives.

**Acts 19:20** - So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

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<sup>4</sup>“Acts 19:19, referring to the 50,000 pieces of silver, does not make it clear whether they are Jewish, Greek, or Roman silver pieces. However, it could range in equivalent American dollars from \$7,000 to \$28,000. This would place a high price on books and these were priced so highly because they were books prepared by magicians, and they did not represent the ordinary value of books” (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1993), 250.