

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31)?

In what way will Satan be cast out? And why does Jesus say out, not down?

Answer:

Let’s begin by reading the passage in context:

John 12:31-32 (ESV):

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

This statement by Jesus occurs just days before His crucifixion. He speaks of a coming decisive moment—a cosmic turning point. When Jesus says “the ruler of this world will be cast out,” He is referring to Satan, the one who, since the fall of man, has held dominion over the fallen world.

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1. “Will be cast out” - A Future Victory

Note that Jesus uses the future tense: “will be cast out.” This shows that the casting out of Satan had not yet happened at that time. It was something Christ would accomplish through His death on the cross.

This victory was not just symbolic. It marked the beginning of Satan’s defeat, not his complete destruction — yet. Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection struck the fatal blow to Satan’s kingdom and started the countdown to his final judgment.

Hebrews 2:14 (ESV):

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

2. Why “Cast Out” and Not “Cast Down”?

There’s a big difference between being cast down and being cast out. Satan was already cast down from heaven when he rebelled:

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Revelation 12:9 (ESV):

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

This happened long before the cross. From then on, Satan was on earth, wandering in spiritual darkness (cf. Job 1:7). He had no authority—until man gave it to him.

3. How Satan Gained Earthly Authority

God originally gave dominion over the earth to Adam (Genesis 1:28). But when Adam sinned, he handed over that authority to Satan.

This is why Satan could tempt Jesus with “all the kingdoms of the world” during His 40 days in the wilderness:

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Luke 4:6 (ESV):

To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.

Satan wasn't lying—he had received that authority through Adam's failure. From that point, Satan became the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), operating within the dominion that rightfully belonged to mankind.

4. Christ's Mission: To Reclaim the Kingdom

Jesus, the “Second Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), came to reclaim humanity's lost dominion and defeat the devil. But His method wasn't through military conquest or force—it was through sacrifice. On the cross, Jesus took back authority by paying the price for sin and disarming the devil.

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Colossians 2:15 (ESV):

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

When Jesus died and rose again, He defeated Satan legally and spiritually. He reclaimed the authority Adam lost and made a way for mankind to be restored into right standing with God.

5. What Happened at the Cross?

At Calvary, Jesus didn’t just defeat death—He took back the keys of death and Hades:

Revelation 1:18 (ESV):

I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

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This “casting out” refers to Satan being expelled from his illegitimate position of authority in the lives of the redeemed. He no longer has dominion over those who are in Christ.

6. What Does This Mean for Believers?

Since the cross, Satan has no rightful power over anyone who belongs to Jesus. He can no longer accuse, condemn, or control those who are covered by the blood of Christ.

Romans 8:1 (ESV):

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

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Luke 10:19 (ESV):

Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

The believer now walks in victory and authority. Satan is still active in the world (1 Peter 5:8), but he cannot touch the soul of one who is truly born again unless God allows it for a purpose.

7. What About Unbelievers?

If you are outside of Christ, this freedom does not apply to you. Without Christ, your life is still under the dominion of Satan, who works actively to destroy you:

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John 10:10 (ESV):

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Your fears of witchcraft, curses, or spiritual oppression are not imaginary—they are real. But they are also unnecessary, because Christ has already made a way out.

It’s only by God’s grace that you are still alive today. He is giving you time to repent. Don’t waste the opportunity.

Conclusion:

Jesus’ statement “Now the ruler of this world will be cast out” marks a turning point in history. Through the cross, Satan was cast out from his place of false authority over God’s people. For the believer, this means freedom, authority, and victory. For the unbeliever, it is a call to turn to Christ before it’s too late.

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2 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV):

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Have you surrendered your life to Christ? If not, do it today — and step into the victory He has already won for you.

Be blessed.

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