

Question: According to Matthew 12:29, was Satan bound at the time of Jesus' birth?

Answer: Let's examine this carefully.

Matthew 12:29 (ESV)

"Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."

This verse comes from Jesus' teaching during a confrontation with the Pharisees, who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul (Satan's power). Jesus uses a vivid analogy: before someone can "plunder" or take over a strong man's house, they must first "bind" the strong man.

Was Satan Bound at Jesus' Birth?

The short answer is No. Satan was not bound at the time of Jesus' birth, and in fact, Scripture shows that Satan is still active today. If Satan had been bound at Jesus' birth, Herod would not have felt threatened or sought to kill the infant Jesus:

Matthew 2:13 (NIV)

“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’”

This shows Satan’s influence remained intact; Herod’s murderous intent was likely inspired by demonic forces opposed to God’s redemptive plan.

Satan’s Activity During Jesus’ Ministry

Later, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, an event that could not happen if Satan were bound:

Matthew 4:1-3 (NIV)

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’”

This highlights that Satan was free to tempt and oppose Jesus personally.

The Present Spiritual Reality

Satan's freedom explains why sin and evil persist today, and why Scripture warns believers not to give the devil a foothold:

Ephesians 4:27-28 (NIV)

"Do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need."

The "foothold" (Greek: *topos*) metaphorically means a position of influence or opportunity.

The Future Binding of Satan

The Bible prophesies that Satan will be bound during Christ's millennial reign a literal thousand year period of peace on earth after the tribulation:

Revelation 20:1-3 (KJV)

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

This binding prevents Satan from deceiving the nations during the millennial kingdom, fulfilling God's justice and peace on earth.

What Does Matthew 12:29 Mean Then?

When Jesus spoke of "binding the strong man," He was referring to His authority over the spiritual kingdom of darkness during His ministry. He wasn't saying Satan was entirely powerless or absent

but that Jesus had come to overpower Satan's works and deliver people from his bondage.

The context of Matthew 12 shows Jesus casting out demons, which the Pharisees wrongly attributed to demonic power. Jesus corrects them, showing that only God's power could overcome Satan's kingdom:

- Satan cannot cast out Satan (which would be self destructive).
- Jesus, with greater authority, "binds" the strong man (Satan) to "plunder" his house (rescue those held captive).

This spiritual binding involves restraining Satan's influence over individuals and communities, setting captives free, and establishing God's kingdom.

Believers' Authority Over Satan

Jesus gave believers authority to "bind and loose" spiritual forces:

Matthew 18:18 (ESV)

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven.”

This authority is exercised through faith, prayer, and obedience, resisting the devil’s schemes (James 4:7), and walking in the Spirit.

Present Reality of Spiritual Warfare

Though Satan is not bound in the ultimate sense until the millennium, Jesus’ victory on the cross has already disarmed Satan’s power over believers:

Colossians 2:15 (NIV)

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

The spiritual warfare continues, but the victory is assured for those who are in Christ.

The Urgency of Salvation Today

The Bible warns that Satan's time is short:

Revelation 12:12 (NIV)

*"Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone
down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his
time is short."*

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV) calls believers not to love the world, which is passing away, but to live for God's eternal purposes.

- Satan was not bound at Jesus' birth and is still active today.
- Jesus' ministry involved binding Satan's power to free people from his control.
- Satan will be literally bound for a thousand years during Christ's millennial reign after the tribulation.
- Believers share in Jesus' authority to "bind and loose" demonic powers in their lives.
- The final judgment and eternal defeat of Satan are yet to come.

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