

## DEMONS

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### INTRODUCTION

For most of us, this will be a VERY academic study. Most of us will never need this for practical use. Most of us will never encounter the condition described in the "New Testament", by a Greek word which would probably be best rendered as "Demonised". (But usually referred to in our colloquial, by the non-biblical term "Demon Possessed".)

In our Western culture, and especially amongst Christians, this condition is extremely rare.

Demons are not hiding under the nearest rose bush, waiting to grab innocent passers-by! (As some Pentecostals seem to want us to believe!) That particular lie breeds fear ..... and there is no place for such fear in the love which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

It is much more common amongst those cultures where paganism, idolatry, animism, spiritism, voodoo, and witchcraft are predominant. However, we must not make the mistake of assuming that everyone who lives in such environments, becomes "demonised".

I have personally seen a very small number of cases, which exhibited real Biblical symptoms. These all had their origin in counterfeit Pentecostal experiences, which were associated with a "false Gospel" and "another Christ", and "manipulative techniques" which are not found in the Bible. Beware the counterfeit of Pentecostalism!

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### 1. EVIL SPIRITS AND DEMONS EQUIVALENT

Both Old and New Testaments describe the unique form of mental affliction or torment, sometimes accompanied by physical disability, which is attributed to, variously, a "demon", an "evil spirit", or an "unclean spirit". In several parallel references these terms appear to be interchangeable.

The Bible uses the word "spirit" in many ways. Not all of these refer to a personal being.

For instance, when joined with the word, "Holy", it refers to the divine energy by which God performs His work or maintains His personal presence within the minds and hearts of His servants.

Sometimes it refers to a person's own inner "essence", which decides the nature of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

In other places it refers to the teaching and influence of a human person who shapes the thoughts and actions of others.

In many places the word means nothing more than "breath" or "wind".

The Bible also describes the possible influence on false prophets and false Christians, of "lying spirits" or "another spirit", or "the spirit of Antichrist", or "the spirit of error".

These cases describe influences on the human mind which, in some way, attempt to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes they appear to have personality. Most often they do not.

## **2. THE PERSONALITY OF DEMONS**

In those cases where "spirits" or "demons" are used as alternative names for the same thing, the Bible does appear to attribute personality to them.

In some cases, demons are described as acting and speaking in personal ways. They are able to take over the mind and body of those they afflict, causing them to speak and act as though they are under the control of some other being.

Behaviour is abnormal, attention seeking, and often bizarre. It is clearly quite out of character, when compared with the person's normal behaviour, in their own right mind.

This is not "ordinary" mental illness, in which behaviour, though abnormal, is clearly the product of the person's own distorted mental perceptions.

Nor is the loss of sight, speech, or hearing, which sometimes occurs, the same thing as that which results from "ordinary" physical or psycho-somatic causes.

This mental affliction is characterised by the clearly recognisable presence of an additional alien personality which is quite separate and distinct from the person themselves. Someone else, or something else, is visibly in control. (That is what we see ..... and must deal with, in the same way that Jesus did.)

This invading personality is the "demon". If this "other" controlling force cannot be observed, there is no demon present.

When the demon has gone, the person is immediately healed and in their right mind.

The condition does not require any special spiritual gift of "discernment" to diagnose it. Even the ordinary layman of Jesus' day could recognise the condition for what it was and bring the afflicted to Jesus for help.

## **3. REAL OR NONEXISTENT?**

Is the apparent personality of "Evil Spirits" real? Or is it a mere figment of the "imaginings" of a disordered mind?

Whatever it was that sought permission from Jesus, then left the Gadarene demoniac, entered a herd of some two thousand swine, and then destroyed them in suicidal frenzy, ..... whatever THAT was, ..... it was certainly NOT the product of mere superstition, nor was it a figment of anyone's imagination!

Whatever THAT was, THAT WAS WHAT THE BIBLE CALLS A DEMON!

I confess that I don't know EXACTLY what it was ..... but I do know what it did!

## **WHAT ARE DEMONS?**

The Bible does not clearly reveal exactly what demons are, or where they come from.

The popular theology that demons are fallen angels, or immortal beings with almost unlimited power, has no basis in Scripture. That theory comes from pushing several Scriptural references far beyond what is actually said in actual words. In my view, such speculative conclusions are not only based on faulty logic but are also a very poor basis

for a doctrine which many seem to regard as near essential. ADDING to the Word of God in that way is a dangerous business.

One common view of the day, found in the writings of the historian Josephus ([Wars 7,6,3](#)) was that demons are actually the earthbound spirits of dead evil men, who wander the earth seeking, and sometimes finding, another human body to replace the one lost in death.

That is very much the same as one of the possible meanings given to us by one of the commonly used LEXICONS! (If you know how to read a Lexicon, see "Liddell & Scott")

Of course, this theory CANNOT BE TRUE. Contrary to popular theology, the Bible makes it quite plain that the dead are really dead, with no conscious existence at all.

However, this information from Josephus does perhaps throw some light on the subject, allowing for a much more intellectually satisfying speculation than the "fallen angel theory".

In a few places, the Bible does take note of the MISTAKEN pagan belief that the dead go on living in another plane.

According to Moses, God unequivocally forbids any attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead through mediums who have "familiar spirits". The Old Testament says repeatedly that this is a sin, greatly offensive to God. The penalty is death.

Although it is clearly impossible to communicate with someone who no longer has any conscious existence, and although most mediums are eventually exposed as frauds, the Bible does recognise the existence of "something" to which some of those Old Testament mediums could gain access through their "familiar spirit". This "something" whatever it is, impersonates the dead, deceiving those who commit this sin, and separating them from God. It is communication with these impersonating "spirits", whatever they are, which is so strongly forbidden by God.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul refers to the idol gods as "demons". (That is another of the several meanings given by the lexicons - see Bauer, Liddell & Scott, Bagster, and Young's Concordance). It also reflects the language of the popular Jewish belief mentioned by Josephus.

The idols are of course, the product of mythology surrounding the deeds of long dead men and women, who over a period of time, eventually came to be deified and worshipped. In using this language, Paul is not endorsing the immortality of the soul! But he is recognising the HUMAN ORIGIN of the dumb idol gods.

Christians, Paul tells us, may not share in any partnership at all, with the demons who lie hidden behind these dumb idols of the pagan religions. Although the idols themselves are unquestionably nothing at all, (because REAL "deified human spirits" do not exist) it IS TRUE that the occult practices of some of their devotees can tap the same demonic spiritual forces which are found at work in mediums.

For example, in some of these pagan religions, (such as modern voodoo) the ultimate experience of worship occurs when the devotee becomes "possessed" by the god. There are references to similar things in some ancient writings.

This may explain Paul's oblique reference to spiritual forces experienced by some members of the Corinthian Church, which he relates to the time when they were "[led astray after dumb idols](#)". ([1 Corinthians 12:1-3](#)) Whatever it was that moved them then, it was certainly not the Holy Spirit, and he did want not them to remain ignorant about the difference between the real thing and the demonic counterfeit.

A further similar use of language is found in the prophecy in the [Revelation 16:13-14](#), which speaks of the influence of "*spirits of demons*", which deceive the world to gather the nations to the final great battle of Armageddon.

It might not be an unreasonable speculation to regard this as a reference to such long dead men as Mohammed, Karl Marx, Voltaire, and many mainstream "Church Fathers", whose words (spirits) still influence the actions of the living in our generation, breeding hatred in the hearts of men who live without Jesus.

A very significant proportion of the politics and religion of the world is controlled by the spiritual descendants of these men. Although the men themselves are long dead, they have become "deified". They are "Demons" in a very similar sense to Paul's use of the word in [1 Corinthians 10:20-21](#). It may well be their LASTING INFLUENCE, about which the Apostle John speaks, which, in the prelude to Armageddon, will be accompanied by miraculous signs, manifested in ways yet to be revealed.

All of that still leaves me ignorant of what a demon really is. Like the rest of us, I can speculate, but I must emphasise that since the scriptures are silent about this, it can be NO MORE THAN SPECULATION.

We MUST NOT let our own personal speculations become a new foundation doctrine of the faith!

My personal SPECULATION is that the demons of the Gospels are "spirit beings", which behave as though they have a REAL personality. That is clearly indicated by the language which the Bible uses when it discusses their behaviour. It seems to me that it requires a great deal of INTELLECTUAL DISHONESTY to decide otherwise.

But what is a "Spirit Being"? Alas ..... I DO NOT KNOW!

Since the Bible does not clearly tell me exactly what such a "spirit being" is, I am unable to go much beyond that fairly meaningless speculation. Nor, in the face of the lack of clear Biblical evidence, do I think it is either necessary, or Biblically sound, to attempt to do so.

This much I do know (and only this much):

Whatever it is that impersonates the dead in a seance; whatever it is that can believe God and tremble; whatever gives rise to the bizarre behaviour of the "possessed"; or occasionally produces unexplained supernatural occult manifestations; whatever it is that drove those Gadarene swine to "suicide"; THAT is what the Bible calls a demon!

That is what Jesus spoke to and cast out with a word! ([Matthew 8:16](#))

## **THE IMPORTANT ISSUE**

It is not what the Bible leaves unresolved, and open to speculation, which matters. There are other things which the Bible does reveal about demons, which are much more important.

The Bible does tell me what these "spirits" can do, and how to identify them as the source of the problems they cause.

It also tells me how to deal with the problem. Most important of all, it tells me how to find the AUTHORITY necessary to deal with the problem in the same way that Jesus did.

THAT IS REALLY USEFUL INFORMATION! (Assuming of course that we do find a REAL case of someone with the problem and that there are Biblical grounds for dealing with it IN THAT WAY.)

## THE DANGER OF THE COUNTERFEIT

The Bible gives a clear description of the behaviour of a number of cases of those afflicted with the condition. These recorded symptoms define the Biblical limits for diagnosing the condition.

This contains a warning for the cautious, who value the truth of the Bible. It has become common, especially amongst Pentecostals, to attribute a multitude of other problems, not mentioned by the Bible in this context, to demon influence. I have heard famous preachers of this persuasion claim that almost anything is the result of demon influence, including disease, physical injuries, bad habits (such as smoking or nail biting), and worst of all, even unconquered sin.

**THIS IS DANGEROUS GROUND.** Many have been deceived and damaged by such ministries. In countless cases, people ignorant of what the Bible really says, have been led astray. Even though the problem is not demonic at all, they are persuaded to open themselves as mediums or hosts for an evil spirit. They are persuaded to submit themselves to "deliverance ministry", in which prolonged noise, hyper-ventilation and other mind-bending techniques, are used to induce the appearance of a demon.

Some of the techniques encountered are very easily recognised as forms of hypnotism, and audience manipulation. In the more extreme cases however, the techniques used are disturbingly similar to those used by mediums and Voodoo priestesses. Sometimes it takes hours, or even days, to produce results. Sometimes the demon appears almost immediately. Either way, it seems that in such cases, the consent of the victim can actually open the door for the entry of a demon, which was never there in the first place.

Many of the books you buy on this subject, recommend holding conversations with demons, in order to determine their name, and their origin. Some "deliverance ministers" even **BOAST** about how they took the opportunity to seek answers to other "interesting" questions ..... **IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS IS SOMETIMES DONE IN A SEANCE!**

This is **NOT** Biblical "deliverance".

Engaging in conversations with demons to seek information of any sort, is a modern form of the sin of "TRAFFICKING WITH SPIRITS", described in the Old Testament.

God says that those who practise it are an abomination to Him. It can lead to some spectacular manifestations, **GREATLY SATISFYING TO THE EGO** of those involved, but it does nothing of any real worth for either the minister or the victim.

[And to forestall those of you who are about to quote the case of the Gadarene Demoniac as an example of Jesus holding such a conversation ..... Please read that story again, a little more carefully! The record says that Jesus asked the **MAN** his name (not the Demons). When the **DEMONS** spoke, to beg not to be sent out of the country, Jesus did **NOT** enter into conversation with them. He simply gave permission for them to leave the man and enter the pigs. That is neither "trafficking with spirits", nor is it a "Seance"! However, anything much beyond that, is certainly in the realm of what God forbids!]

The worst feature of this particular deception, is that those who are persuaded to blame their sins on the influence of a demon, are closing the door to true repentance.

Forgiveness for sin, and victory in temptation, require that we accept personal responsibility to deal with the inner desires that, unchecked, lead to sin. Love for God, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is called "self-control", is the cure for sin.

Casting out a demon is not ever mentioned anywhere in the Bible, in this context.

## **HOW DO DEMONS GAIN CONTROL?**

Apart from those cases where mediums make themselves willing hosts for demons, the Bible mentions ONLY TWO other cases which explain how demons gain control of their victims.

THESE TWO CASES REPRESENT THE LIMIT OF OUR BIBLICAL EVIDENCE.

In one, an "evil spirit" is SENT BY GOD, to torment the back-slidden King Saul.

In the other, a "lying spirit" RECEIVES PERMISSION FROM GOD to deceive false prophets and those willing to receive their lies.

In these cases, "spirits", clearly, are subject to God's control. (The Devil is NOT mentioned!)

Interesting, isn't it, that the DEVIL is not mentioned in either of these cases!

## **THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS**

This information about the source of the problem explains the authority and ease with which Jesus dealt with these cases. A simple command spoken with the authority vested in Him by His Father, reversed God's permission for the demon to inhabit the mind of the afflicted person, producing the same immediate result as if God Himself had spoken.

Certainly, there were sometimes loud cries, foaming at the mouth, and violent bodily reactions, but the demon, whatever it was, left. The person was instantly in their right mind, fully restored and healed.

There is no warrant anywhere in scripture for the long, loud, and exhausting verbal battles described in some of the highly questionable, but popular books of our time.

## **DELEGATED AUTHORITY FOR DISCIPLES**

Jesus has delegated authority to true disciples to recognise and deal with this problem, in a Biblical fashion, where it is appropriate.

This AUTHORITY which Jesus delegates, is awesome. JESUS casts out demons with A WORD! That is the same power at work, by which GOD created the world, by simple spoken words. *"God said ..... and it was so!"* (Genesis 1 & Psalm 33:6-9)

However, let us establish the priorities. Authority is not lightly given. We must not attempt to usurp authority which is not ours! It comes only to TRUE DISCIPLES. Many who are not really disciples, have done great harm to their victims.

Our part in this is to ensure that we are disciples, for whom the confession of Jesus as LORD, speaks the TRUTH!

Discipleship means commitment to TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO ALL HIS WORDS.

"Cheap Grace" is excluded!

## **THE WARNING FROM JESUS**

With delegated authority, there also comes a strong warning from Jesus.

Lest we come under the same rebuke as the seventy, let us remember that it is much, much more important that our names are written in Heaven, (Luke 10:20) than that we are able to cast out demons. If we fail to observe that priority, ability to cast out demons is worthless.

For many "deliverance ministers", casting out demons is little more than a VERY financially rewarding EGO TRIP, on the part of men who Jesus rejects as evildoers, who He does not recognise at all. (Matthew 21:21-23)

They are, Jesus says, amongst the FALSE PROPHETS!

It is also not unlikely that there will be others, whose PRESUMPTION will lead them into the same instant retribution as those Jews who used the names of Jesus and Paul, without really knowing what that meant. (Acts 19:13)

### **CAN A CHRISTIAN HAVE A DEMON?**

Some of the Pentecostal "Deliverance Ministers" would have us believe that most Christians are perpetually inhabited by demons! The truly amazing thing about that, is that they find receptive audiences for that LIE. (And some of them make handsome livings from it.)

That particular teaching accompanies a FALSE GOSPEL. There is not one case in the Bible where a Christian, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and walking in the Spirit, was ever subject to this affliction.

It is far beyond the warrant of Scripture to teach that the Holy Spirit can, or will, dwell side by side with an evil spirit, in the mind and body of a real child of God.

However, there might sometimes be RARE conditions where this particular form of mental affliction is not unique to pagans or unbelievers.

The case of King Saul indicates that it also seems to be an affliction visited on sinners who have removed themselves from the protection of God. Saul's rebellion against God caused the Holy Spirit to depart from him, leaving place for the evil spirit which was SENT BY GOD.

However, let us be clear about this case. It did not happen easily or casually, for minor sin. This was no ordinary sinner. This was a man gone far, far, away from God.

The example of King Saul shows us that it would certainly be possible for a Christian to BACKSLIDE in the same way, with the same consequences.

The lesson? Don't be like Saul ..... DON'T BACKSLIDE!

### **THE DANGER OF TOO MUCH**

There are those who claim much more than the Bible says, in their theology about demons.

That is very dangerous, since it often leads to disastrous consequences for victims of wrong actions, based on wrong foundations.

"Deliverance Ministry" can in fact be a SIN involving occult practises, which separates those who do such things from the Kingdom of God.

### **THE DANGER OF TOO LITTLE**

There are others who deny the reality of the Bible's words about demons, explaining it all away as the superstition of the ignorant and a figment of the imagination of the sick mind.

Jesus, they say, was simply accommodating Himself to the superstitions of time, using language which He did not believe Himself, to trick the unfortunate victims of the demon into believing that they had been cured of a problem which did not really exist!



That, however, is totally unacceptable, for it would make Jesus a deceiver.

Further, it requires a great deal of intellectual dishonesty to manipulate the Scriptures to reach this conclusion.

More important still, that conclusion offers no answers at all for those who suffer this torment.

Whatever it was that sought permission from Jesus, then left the Gadarene demoniac, entered a herd of some two thousand swine, and then destroyed them in suicidal frenzy, ..... whatever THAT was, ..... it was certainly NOT the product of mere superstition, nor was it a figment of anyone's imagination!

## **CONCLUSION**

It is unfortunate that somehow, almost inevitably, discussion usually tends to zero in one or two un-resolvable THEOLOGICAL questions, to the exclusion of the much more important practical GOSPEL and PASTORAL issues.

In the Gospels, this subject is about PEOPLE.

It is about people WHO ARE HURTING under bondage to SPIRITUAL forces which can cripple mind and body.

It is about PEOPLE for whom there is NO OTHER ANSWER than the authority which Jesus has, to issue a simple command in a few words, which can set them free from that affliction.

For Jesus, that authority was a part of His GOOD news. It was one of the many ways in which he "proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord" and "set the captives free".

## **THE GOSPEL IMPLICATIONS**

Jesus did have an answer for this affliction of the human mind. That answer is described clearly in the Gospels.

When Jesus spoke to Demons, He clearly did believe that He was speaking to something which could both hear Him and OBEY His Command!

The healing of demoniacs was, Jesus said, a work of the Holy Spirit and clear proof that the Kingdom of God had come upon the Pharisees. In the face of that proof, their rejection of Him as the Messiah, amounted to the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. ([Matthew 12:22-32](#))

That is a lot to claim, if what Jesus did was based on something He did not believe Himself!

The problem of demons is FAR less common in our western culture than it was in Israel in the first century. It is also far less common than some Pentecostals would have us believe.

However, Jesus did say that it would be one of the signs by which He would confirm the preaching of the Gospel by those who are truly sent by Him. ([Mark 16:17](#))

It is a sign given by Jesus, to follow those who believe the Gospel in truth, live the Gospel in truth, and preach it in truth.

The Gospel preached by Jesus has not changed.



It must still be true today that the Good News about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, contains the same hope of release for the victims of this affliction, as it did then in the first century.

If we don't believe Demons exist at all, then (if we ever do encounter someone with this affliction of the mind) equally we won't be able to believe that there is something there to hear the command. Neither will we be able to believe that whatever it is, it **MUST OBEY** those who are authorised to **SPEAK THE HEALING WORD OF COMMAND**, on behalf of Jesus.

### **THIS CONCLUDES THIS STUDY.**

It certainly **HASN'T** been "The Fallen Angel Theory", and it definitely **HASN'T** been "They Don't Exist at All".

I have tried to concentrate on issues which affect the Gospel, on those rare occasions, when this problem is encountered in our Western Culture.

I do not have any more time to spend on what I consider to be an insoluble question about what Demons are, or where they come from. I have been there, done that, in past times. It didn't help me, or anyone else!

I **DO KNOW** I that if I should ever encounter such a person, I don't need that resolved, to spread the **GOOD NEWS** that Jesus does have an answer for those so afflicted.