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Demon and Demon Possession

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Many people are misinformed about the subject of demons. Their views range from outright denial of their existence to affirming that they continue to possess men today. This brief study will consider this subject from a biblical perspective, without the fanciful twists of Hollywood, the imaginations of men, or the perversions of false teachers. The Bible is our only reliable source on the matter (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Let it be noted first of all, that demons are real. They do indeed exist. Any effort to deny the eyewitness testimony of Jesus, his apostles, and the multitudes which witnessed demonic activity is sheer foolishness. Yet there are those who reason that “those people were poorly educated, and that was their way of explaining things like epilepsy.” Others have said that Jesus was “simply going along with the superstitions of the day.” We should realize that all such reasonings cast a bad reflection upon the credibility of our Savior and his word (cf. 1 Jn. 4:6). Consider these verses on the reality of demons and demonic activity: Matthew 12:22-29; Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-15; Acts 19:13-17. Apparently, demons were allowed great freedom of activity so that God might manifest himself through his power over them (Matt. 12:28; Mk. 16:17-20).

Since there is no explicit statement regarding the origin of demons, we must realize that it is simply a matter of conjecture. Among some of the ideas that have been suggested are:

(1) They are the offspring of the intermarriage of angels and women of the pre-flood era (cf. Gen. 6:1-2). This view is highly unlikely in that angels evidently do not marry (cf. Matt. 22:30).

(2) They are the spirits of wicked dead people. This, too, is unlikely because the spirits of all the dead are held in the hades realm until the judgment day. Those spirits are not free to leave hades (Eccl. 12:7; Lk. 16:19-31).

The most plausible explanation (if indeed there can be a biblical explanation - Deut. 29:29) is that demons are “fallen angels.” Perhaps a better term would be “angels that sinned.” Consider these facts:

(1) Satan is “the prince” (“ruler” - NASB) of the demon kingdom (Matt. 12:24-25).

(2) Demons, as well as angels, are spirit-beings (Mk. 5:12-13; Heb. 1:13-14).

(3) There were “angels that sinned” (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

(4) “He that committeth sin is of the Devil” (1 Jn. 3:8).

(5) Satan has angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-10).

Hence, it is logical to infer that these “angels that sinned” are the demons. While this may not be conclusive, this view doesn’t appear to contradict other Scriptures, and is worthy of consideration.

The most important part of this study is to stress that demons are no longer able to possess people as in the days of Christ and the apostles. We can reach this conclusion from several lines of reasoning.

First of all, the miraculous abilities have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-12). This includes the ability to “cast out devils” (Mk. 16:17-20). Hence, if demons could still possess us, we would have no means of ridding ourselves of them (cf. Acts 19:13-17).

Therefore, we would be hopelessly at the mercy of Satan. But the Bible does not picture us as helpless victims, but rather as overcomers through Jesus (1 Cor. 10: 13; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4).

Secondly, the Bible teaches that Jesus has bound the "strong man" - Satan. Jesus said that he "cast out devils by the Spirit of God." Then, he compared that to someone binding the strong man so he could "spoil his house" (Matt. 12:22-29). Consider also in this light 1 John 3:8, Luke 10:17-18, and Revelation 12:7-10.

Finally, the demons themselves knew that there was a time coming when they would be rendered powerless and sent to "the abyss" (Lk. 8:31, NASB). They asked Jesus, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:28-29) This "time" of Matthew 8:29 coincides with "that day" of Zechariah 13:1-2. In this prophecy, we see several events that were to occur "in that day."

"In that day there shall be a foundation opened... for sin." Surely anyone can see the reference to the (then) future sacrifice of Christ and its benefits. This part of the prophecy is fulfilled (1 Cor. 15:14; Acts 2:38-41; Rom. 6:3-4).

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land." Who worships those idols of old? Who serves Baal, Molech, Dagon, or even Jupiter and Diana (cf. Acts 19:26-27)? This part of the prophecy is fulfilled, also.

"And also I will cause the prophets... to pass out of the land." This was fulfilled in the completed Scriptures (Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 13:8-12; Jude 3). Interestingly enough, coinciding with these events, God caused "the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech. 13:1-2).

All of these events took place in the same time period (i.e., "in that day"). Hence, if we can see that salvation is now available, the idols of old have ceased to be worshiped, and that the prophets have ceased to arise, then we can see that demons are no longer active. Another interesting verse which bears some connection with this idea is found in Revelation 12:7-10. Notice especially the time reference in verse 10, and compare with Luke 10:17-18.

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). Notice the past tense of these verses, indicating an action already taken, again establishing the complete fulfillment of Zechariah 13-12.

Yes, demons are real beings. They are quite likely "fallen angels." However, they cannot possess men today. But let us never forget that Satan is still very active through persuasion (Job 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jas. 1:13-15). He is constantly tempting us to turn our hearts away from God. This work of Satan is far worse than any demonic possession, for it can lead one into eternal ruin in the flames of Hell (Matt. 25:41-46). But the good news is that you can "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). You can turn to Christ in obedient faith and be saved from your sins. Then you can look forward to that home in Heaven that awaits the faithful (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). Won't you accept the invitation of Christ and be saved?

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