

NOTES ON DEMON POSSESSION

One of the four following conclusions must be true concerning the reality of demons as mentioned in the Gospel accounts. No other is possible, and only one of these can be true.

- Either, 1, Jesus did cast out real demons as represented;
- or, 2, Jesus did no such things but the accounts are entirely false;
- or, 3, Jesus did go through the motions and the pretense of casting them out, while He knew there were no real demons;
- or, 4, Jesus was as ignorant and superstitious on this subject as the people and honestly thought He cast out spirits in healing sickness.

Which of these views fits the facts and the testimony? The true meaning of a word or an expression may be put into its place in any account; and the definition will fit as well as the word it defines. Just read the accounts of Jesus' intelligent conversations with demons, supplying the word "disease" as the explanation for the word "demon."

I. MEANINGS OF THE WORD "DEMON."

1. Not the same as "devil." There is only one devil but many demons.
2. Oldest meaning: divine power, deity. Homer (c. 850 B.C.) used it interchangeably with (God). Cf. Josephus, *wars*, 1, 2, 8. Acts 17:18. See A. Campbell in *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 379-397, for older uses.
3. A being between man and God. Plato attempted to fix this definition. Used in both good and bad sense. Plato held that they included departed spirits of good men. Socrates spoke constantly of his "demon." Ignatius (*Epistle to Smyrna* 3, 2) says that Jesus told His disciples after the resurrection, "I am not a disembodied demon." This shows his way of expressing what Luke 24:37-39 says. Cf. also Luke 4:33, "spirit of an unclean demon."
4. Elsewhere in the N. T. demons are always evil spirits, messengers and ministers of Satan.
 - a. Heathen deities, Acts 17:18; I Cor. 10:20; Rev. 9:20.
 - b. Ones who believe and tremble (or bristle) but are lost, James 2:19.
 - c. They recognize Jesus as Son of God, Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:23, 24, 34; 3:11; Luke 4:41.
 - d. Agents of Satan, Matt. 12:24-26; Luke 10:17, 18; 11:15-22.

II. EVIDENCES THAT THEY ARE IMMATERIAL, INTELLIGENT BEINGS, NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH DISEASES OR FIGURES OF SPEECH.

1. The O. T. legislation proceeded upon the assumption that there is such a thing as a "familiar spirit." Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-14.
2. In the N. T. they are regarded as personalities. e.g. James 2:19, believing Rev. 16:14, working signs. Jesus founded a parable on their conduct, Luke 11:24-26.
3. Jesus distinguished between them and diseases. So did His disciples. Matt. 10:8; Luke 10:17-20.
4. Jesus addressed them as persons and they answered as such, Mark 5:8; 9:25.
5. They manifested desires and passions, Mark 5:12, 13.
6. They showed superhuman knowledge of Jesus, Mark 1:24, 34; Matt. 8:29, and of His apostles, Acts 16:16; 19:14.

III. VIEWS OF THEIR IDENTITY AND ORIGIN.

1. *Plato*; Departed men, some good. (*Symposium*, p. 202).
Josephus: Spirits of evil men who have died. (Wars, 7:6:3).
A. Campbell (Lect. on Demonology in *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 384-389) holds firmly to the view that they are (or were) the ghosts of dead men. He says all pagan writers, the Jewish historians, and the Christian fathers express this opinion. He thinks it is implied in Scripture (I Tim. 4:1).
2. *The book of Enoch* says demons are fallen angels. Consider II Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6 on "angels who sinned." Matt. 25:41—"the devil and his angels." Eph. 6:11, 12—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Cf. Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:16; Rom. 8:38; Col. 2:15.
 Their immediate recognition of Jesus might indicate former acquaintance with Him or supernatural knowledge. In the Bible they do not seem to be confused with ghosts; but in the one case of a dead man reappearing (I Sam. 28:11-19) he does not act as a demon.
3. Other spirits, neither human, nor of the rank of angels. Cf. Judges 9:23; I Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9; I Kings 22:19-23.

Note: the word might be used of a combination or all of these. See *Vocabulary of The Bible*, ed. by J. J. Von Allmen, pp. 83-85.

IV. RATIONAL SUPPOSITIONS OF PROBABILITY. (See Balmforth's Com. on Luke, ref. to in R. C. Foster's *Studies In Life Christ*, vol. I, pp. 211, 212).

1. Any non-materialistic (idealistic or spiritual) view of the universe makes it likely that man is not the only product of the cosmic process.

SPECIAL STUDIES

2. Experiences of missionaries may be best explained by assumption of demon possession.
3. Lack of experience with demons in Christian countries may be explained.
4. The mysterious hinterland beyond surface consciousness is hardly known at all, so we cannot rule out the possibility of spiritual intelligences being able to affect it by entry from without.
5. It is common experience (as well as teaching of Scripture) that the powers of darkness and evil do influence our moral freedom. Then it is just possible that they may act through man's physical nature upon his rational, or vice versa.
6. It is well-ascertained fact physiologically that the conditions of a man's mental and spiritual nature exert influence upon the body and are influenced by the body: e.g. fever produces delirium; dyspepsia, despondency; etc.
7. If effects between man and man can be produced by animal magnetism or by hypnotism, so might demons influence and disturb both the physical and rational natures.

V. EFFECTS OF POSSESSION, OR ACCOMPANYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. Physical ills or diseases:
 - a. Matt. 9:32,33, "dumb man" spoke when the demon was cast out.
 - b. Matt. 12:22, "blind and dumb"
 - c. Matt. 17:15, "epilepsy"; but Mark 9:25, "deaf and dumb spirit".
 - d. Mark 5:15, wildness.
 - e. Mark 7:25; Matt. 15:22ff, "greivously vexed" literally, "badly demonized" with no specific disability indicated.
 - f. The woman "whom Satan had bound" (Luke 13:16) "had a spirit of infirmity" but is not said to have been possessed. Deformity of the back.
2. There are cases in which no physical ill is attributed to the demon (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31ff. Jesus was charged with demon possession when no malady was apparent, but simply because of His speech and mental attitude. John the Baptist was similarly charged because of his manner of life. See John 7:21; 8:48,52; 10:20; Matt. 11:18.

Note that all these same physical ills, except the being "bowed together", are represented in the Gospels as separate from demon pos-

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session in other cases. Deaf and having impediment, Mark 7:32; Dumb, Matt. 15:30,31; Blind, Luke 18:35ff; John 9; Epilepsy (KJV-lunatics), Matt. 4:24 literally "moonstruck", meaning epileptic, not insane.

3. Effects other than disease.

- a. Superhuman knowledge, Mark 1:24; 5:7; 3:11,12; Luke 4:41; Acts 16:16-18
- b. Fear of torment, Luke 4:33,34; 8:28-31; Matt. 8:29
- c. Conversation as of third person, Mark 1:24,25; Luke 4:34,35
- d. Manner of departing (convulsions), Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 4:35
- e. Extraordinary strength, Mark 5:3,4; Acts 19:13-16
- f. Fierce wildness, Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:4,5; Luke 8:29. Cf. John 10:20.
- g. Desire to enter into some body, Mark 5:12,13; Matt. 8:31; Luke 11:24,25
- h. Multiplicity, Mark 5:9; 16:9; Luke 11:26; 8:30

VI. NATURE OF PERSONS POSSESSED

1. Mostly grown men, but two were children, Matt. 17:15; Mark 7:25-30; 9:21; Matt. 15:22. Some were women, Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2,3.
2. Some made very faithful helpers of Christ after they were released, Mark 5:20; Luke 8:2,3.
3. They always appear to be pitied rather than blamed, treated as unfortunate rather than immoral. Jesus was interested in the persons, not the demons. At least their demons are something else than unbreakable bad habits.

VII. OTHER REFERENCES TO THE WORKING OF DEMONS.

1. I Tim. 4:1, doctrines of demons and seducing spirits.
2. James 3:15, factious wisdom is demoniacal ("devilish"),
3. Rev. 16:14, "working signs" and going "forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them unto the war of the great day of God."
4. I Cor. 10:14-22, involved in idolatry and heathen worship.

FOR FURTHER READINGS ON DEMONS, see the following:

1. Articles in *I. S. B. E.* on "Demons" and "Exorcism"
2. Articles in *Unger's Bible Dict.* on "Demons" and "Demonic"
3. *Biblical Demonology*, by M. F. Unger, book pub. 1953.
4. Lecture on "Demonology" by Alexander Campbell, in *POP. LECT. & ADD.* pp. 379-397.
5. *The Vocabulary of the Bible* (also called *Companion to the Bible*), ed. by J. J. von Allmen, see article on "Demons" pp. 83-85.

SPECIAL STUDIES

6. Discussion in Cremer's *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of N. T. Greek*, pp. 168-171.
7. *Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, by A. Edersheim, vol. I, pp. 479-485; 607-613; and on Jewish notions and traditions, vol. II, pp. 755-763; 770-776.
8. Halley's *Bible Handbook*, pp. 428.239.
9. Vin's *Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words*, p. 291.
10. Baker's *Dictionary of Theology*, p. 163 on "Demons"; p. 206 on "Exorcism"
11. *Dictionary of Christ and The Gospels, Hastings*, pp. 438-443.