

DEMONS

By Mark E. Moore, PhD

I. Biblical Data

A. Demons Cast Out by Jesus

1. In the Capernaum Synagogue (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35; Sec. 42)¹
2. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2; Sec. 60)
3. Blind & Mute (Matt 12:22-23; Sec. 61)
4. Gadarene (Matt 8:28-33; Mark 5:2-8; Luke 8:27-30; Sec. 66)
5. Deaf & Dumb Demoniac (Matt 9:32-33; Luke 11:14-15; Sec. 68)
6. Syro-Phoenecian Woman's daughter (Matt 15:22; Mark 7:25-26; Sec. 78)
7. "Epileptic" Boy (Matt 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 9:42; Sec. 87)

B. Demons Cast Out by Others:

1. Apostles (Matt 10:1,8; Mark 3:15; 6:13; Luke 9:1)
2. The 72 (Luke 10:17)
3. Disciples in general (Mark 16:17)
4. Jews (Matt 12:27; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:42; 11:19; Acts 19:13-16)

C. Characteristics of Demon Possessed Persons

1. Evidence of Sickness
 - a. Listed among Jesus' other healings (Matt 4:24; 8:16; 10:8; Mark 1:32-34, 39; Luke 4:41; 13:32; see also Luke 13:11 for a non-possessed demon induced ailment). In fact, 1/3 of the healings in the gospels involve casting out demons (Warner, p. 43).
 - b. Exorcism is often called Healing (Matt 15:28; 17:16, 18; Mark 9:18; Luke 9:42)
 - c. Specific Ailments

(1) Blind (Sec. 61)

(2) Deaf/Mute (Sec. 61 & 68)

(3) Bent Double--curvature of the spine (Sec. 110)

(4) Epileptic symptoms (Sec. 87)

(5) General sickness (possibly Luke 13:16; 2 Cor 12:7)

2. Mental illness (Matt 11:18; Luke 7:33; John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20, 21).

3. Suicidal (Matt 17:15; Mark 5:5)

4. Homicidal (Matt 8:28)

5. Incredible strength (Mark 5:3-4)

D. Characteristics of Demons

1. They have knowledge, especially of Jesus' identity (Mark 1:24, 34; Luke 4:34, 41) and can teach falsehoods (1 Tim 4:1) even though they believe in God (James 2:19).
2. They seek a place to dwell (Matt 12:43) and are attracted to certain locations (Rev 18:2).

¹Section Numbers are keyed to Thomas & Gundry's, *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*.

3. They can perform miracles (Rev 16:14), but their power is limited (Rom 8:38; Rev 9:20).
 4. They are loud (Mark 1:23,26; Luke 4:33, 41) and evil (Matt 12:43; Luke 11:24) and organized into a world-wide force (Rev 16:14).
 5. They are the power behind idol worship (1 Cor 10:20; Rev 9:20), and Christians cannot become involved with them (1 Cor 10:21).
 6. They are underlings of Satan, the ruler of the world (Eph 6:12; [and controls the earthly rulers: 1 Cor 2:8; 2 Cor 4:4]), is bound (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 10:18; Acts 10:38) and yet yields considerable influence (Mark 8:33; Luke 22:3; Matt 12:44; Acts 13:10), but will ultimately be destroyed (Col 2:15; 1 John 3:8; Rev 20:1-10).
- E. Overcoming Demons
1. The blood of Jesus (Rev 12:11)
 2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4)
 3. The armor of God (Eph 6:10-18). The only offensive weapons are the sword and prayer.
- II. Is Demon Possession still a reality?
- A. No--Alfred Edersheim & P.T. Butler
1. There is no clear Scriptural evidence of demon possession before or after the Gospels. Therefore, it was a phenomenon unique to Jesus' incarnational ministry.
 - a. The only O.T. mention of spiritism is with Saul, at the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28:6-24).
 - b. Josephus (Ant. 8.2.5.) speaks of Solomon's magical, exorcistic, incantations.
 - c. The apocryphal book of Tobit mentions demons.
 - d. Eusebius (c. 250 A.D.) says exorcism is the third of four minor orders of the church.
 2. Here in America we have seen little evidence of demon possession and those can be explained as psychological, mental or emotional disorders.
 3. Exorcism is not listed among the spiritual gifts. However, it may be subsumed under healings.
- B. Yes--
1. The O.T. demythologizes or minimizes the demonic names and activities prevalent all around them. We see the same phenomenon from Romans through Jude. Why?
 - a. God alone is sovereign -- radical monotheism need not worry much about demons.
 - b. Man alone is sufficient to account for all present evil on earth.
 - c. What gets your attention gets you. Therefore, the Bible focus on God, not the Devil.
 - d. Perhaps God is only willing for us to see the "dark world" in the presence of the incarnate Christ (in the Gospels and Revelation).

2. The dominant tools of Satan in America have been materialism, scientism and naturalism. As we become disillusioned with these and turn to spiritism, we can expect to see a rise in demonic activity, including possession.
3. There are many accounts of demonic activity (See Montgomery, pp. 210-213).

III. Demons in Culture

- A. Levels of demon control (some would say "Impression, repression, obsession depression, oppression, possession"):
 1. Possession--where one's body is controlled.
 2. Influence--where external factors wage war against an individual. Alfred Lechler suggests some of the characteristics of demon subjection (Montgomery, p. 340):
 - a. Non-receptivity to divine things, religious doubt, inability to understand sin, lack of concentration on Bible reading and prayer.
 - b. Lack of peace, unrest, temper, blasphemy, depression, suicidal thoughts.
 3. Oppression--Direct attack of a demon on an individual.
 - a. Sickness; physical danger
 - b. Mental Illness; depression; fear
- B. Types of demon control (non-violent): Cultic possession (prophets, seers, kings, priests), rainmakers, medicine men, witches, sorcerers, mediums, magicians.
- C. Parapsychology practices in which demons may perhaps be involved:
 1. Spiritism: apparitions, telekinesis, trance-speaking, automatic writing.

2. Hyperesthesia: sooth dream, telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience.
 3. Mantic: cortomancy, palmistry, astrology, rod-and-pendulum divination
- D. Characteristics of demon possession (Montgomery, p. 224)
1. New Personality
 - a. claims to be a demon
 - b. uses different voice
 - c. alternate morality, especially an aversion to God and/or Christ
 - d. changed behavior
 - e. demon claims to be a demon and uses certain titles or names
 2. Supernatural knowledge and/or strength
- E. Demonology and Sociology
1. The rise of demonic activity often correlates with major social changes in a community.
 2. Exorcism, in many instances, provides opportunity for community cohesion.
 3. Donald Jacobs lists at least 11 functions of exorcism in the life of a community (Montgomery, pp 186-187).
 4. Some demon possession is communal--oracles to benefit the community. Others are individual, often malevolent, involving sickness or violence.
 5. Presuppositions of non-Western world view societies:
 - a. Holistic--They do not "departmentalize" religion, politics, family, etc.
 - b. Non-Absolutes--No single religion or god contains all truth.
 - c. Spiritual powers are capricious--Not static but dynamic.
 6. Psychologists tend to label "demon Possession" as neurosis or schizophrenia.
 7. "Modern man, despite appearances, is less aware of his own nature and motives, and is lonelier as he faces them. We pity the savage amid his mysterious, menacing spirits, but at least he shares his fears with all his tribe, and does not have to bear the awful spiritual solitude which is so striking among civilized people. And the primitive tribe does at least lay down a certain magical interpretation, which, however mistaken, is satisfying because it is unquestioned. In the same way, the modern fanatic, who unhesitatingly accepts all the dialectic and the slogans of his party, is happier than the skeptic. And this explains the strange resurgence of the primitive mentality which we are witnessing today. Uncertainty is harder to bear than error. Now, science, by claiming to do away with the problems to which it has no answer, has left men alone in their grip. It leaves man in complete uncertainty as to the meaning of things, and the question still haunts him" (Keen "Transpersonal Psychology: The Cosmic versus the Rational," Psychology Today, 8(July, 1974), 56-59).
 8. "There is a famous aphorism of C. S. Lewis to the effect that the devil is equally pleased when he is feared and when he is ignored. . . the devil is a little bit like the hognose snake, a harmless but evil-looking reptile which responds to the threat of danger by two ruses. First, it impersonates a pit-viper, coiling, striking, and hissing viciously. If this fails to intimidate the attacker, the snake turns belly-up, opens its mouth and lolls its tongue out, and plays dead. If it is picked up and placed right side up, it simply turns over again and resumes the death ruse

again, because it seems to realize that if it cannot bluff, it has to mimic death" (Montgomery, p. 83).

Resources:

- Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000.
- Keir, Howard. "New Testament Exorcism and its significance today" *Expository Times*, 96(4):105-109.
- Montgomery, John (ed.) *Demon Possession*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976.
- Olson, Dr. Ken. *Exorcism: Fact or Fiction?* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.
- Warner, Timothy. *Spiritual Warfare*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991.