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What Does God's Word Say About...

Demons - Part 1

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Demons, devils, Satan and other aspects of the “supernatural” have in the last few years become a fascination of many Christians and non-believers. Several books have been written and sermons preached regarding the amount of access or contact those in the spiritual realm have with mortal man. Opinions differ as to the amount of influence or control Satan can have over a Christian or non-believer. Some claim the Devil has little influence over a believer, while others insist Satan can actually “possess” people.

Anyone that has read the Bible knows it speaks of people being possessed by “demons,” “unclean spirits,” or “evil spirits.” These three terms are used interchangeably in the Bible to refer to the same thing. Christ and His disciples dealt with possessed people regularly and always cast out the invading spirits. These “exorcisms” occurred instantly and not over a period of days, months, or years (Matt. 4:24; Mark 6:7). We do know that these evil spirits were under the control of Satan (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). Demons were often attributed to causing physical infirmities and mental illnesses (Matt. 9:33; Mark 7:26-30; Acts 5:16). These demons immediately recognized who Jesus was, and were often commanded by Jesus to keep quiet about this fact (Mark 3:11-12; Luke 4:41). Notice that the demons recognized Jesus as the “Son of God” and made appeal to Him because they knew they deserved torment and dread (Mark 5:6-7).

Some characteristics of demons during the life of Jesus were that they had names and more than one demon could possess the same body. They desired to stay in the same geographical region or “country.” They would rather indwell an animal body than none at all, and would cause animals to kill themselves. However, there is no Biblical evidence that they caused, or succeeded in causing a human to kill themselves. The demons desired to be in a body when it dies, and they had a desire for water (Mark 5:9-13). Mark 9:17-29 gives us more details about demons. They can cause dumbness and deafness (vs. 17,25), rabid animal-like behavior (vs. 18), they can indwell from childhood (vs. 21), and cause suicidal behavior (vs. 22). They resist leaving a body, causing terrible “convulsions” while leaving it (vs. 26). Some demons have more power than others, and some could only be removed by prayer and fasting of a believer (vs. 29).

So what is “demon possession” and what does it really mean? If you look up the term “possessed” in the N.T. Greek Lexicon, it does not refer to ownership, but it means to be under the power [influence] of a demon. There is a big difference between ownership and influence. Can a person be influenced by a demon? Absolutely. But the Bible provides no scripture to the idea that a person can be owned by a demon. Roughly half of the healings Jesus performed in the gospel of Matthew were actually those being delivered from a demon. Today, people can be under the power [influence] of demons, just as they can be under the power, or influenced, by alcohol. The more a person drinks, the more it influences them. The more a person gets into the power or influence of Satan, the more it influences them. The more you give yourself to sinful practices the more sin will control your life.

There has been much publicity of the frequency of “exorcisms” today. According to scripture, does demon possession still happen today? The Bible mentions two types of demonic influence or control over men: 1. Where demons contact and influence people externally; from the outside in [temptations, lusts, evil desires, etc.]. 2. Where the demons actually dwell inside the person, influencing and manipulating him internally. The first is still occurring today (James 1:13-15) while the second ended in the first century (Zech. 12:3-11, 13:1-4, 14:1-21). Notice in the OT book of Zechariah, it uses the phrase, “in that day.” “That day” refers to the days of Christ because Jesus quoted these scriptures referring to Himself (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27). What does Zechariah say is going to happen? On that day prophets will cease and unclean spirits will be removed from the land. On that day God will take away the supernatural powers of good and evil. Since the time of Christ and the apostles Satan is no longer allowed to possess a body as there are no longer forces of good [prophets] that can deal with the forces of evil.

In next week's article we will continue to examine how Satan and his demons can influence people externally and how Satan

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:

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