

## **The Nature of Demons**

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The Bible relates to us the existence of persons who are not part of the creation. God (the Godhead) is pre-imminent above all. Beneath Him are angels, and a little lower than the angels, man (Heb. 1). We also know of Satan our adversary, whose origin is mysterious, but whose fate is known to us (Rev. 20). Finally there are demons. We know little of demons, of their origin or much about their persons. They are Undefined in the Old Testament, while the New Testament gives them personality. Some wonder if they are the same as Satan's angels (mentioned only once in Revelation 12:7). Most likely, that reference is the same as those called Satan's ministers (2 Corinthians 11:14, 12:7), people who (unwittingly) serve Satan's schemes.

#### **DEMONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

There are only 4 references to demons in the Old Testament, and all of them pertain to false gods. These references are to foreign gods in general (Psalm 106:37, Deuteronomy 32:17) and specific Assyrian gods (Leviticus 17:7, 2 Chronicles 11:15). Then there are the evil spirits that afflicted or deceived men such as Abimelech, Saul, and Ahab's prophets. If these are demons, then they pose an interesting thought: these spirits served God, not Satan. Demonic appearances in the Old Testament pertained to false gods, emotional instability and false revelations. There were no demonic possessions of people.

#### **DEMONS IN THE TIME OF CHRIST**

In the time of Christ demonic activity changed dramatically. There are 63 references to demons and Jesus and His apostles. We see them possessing people of many nations. We see them speaking through people they possessed and doing miraculous things, such as foretelling/soothsaying and possessing inhuman strength. Oddly, they constantly are rebuked for proclaiming Jesus (Acts 16:17, James 2:19).

Why the change? There are two reasons to consider. First, we note that often when Jesus performed miracles He was accused of doing so by the power of Satan (Matthew 9:34, Matthew 11:18, John 10:20). The Jews had been warned that there might be false prophets who performed signs (Deut. 13:1-3). But in Luke 11:14-126 Jesus makes the point that the particular work of casting out demons was a direct proof that His works were NOT of Satan.

Second, Jesus needs to demonstrate that His power is greater than that of Satan. In the same passages (Luke 11) Jesus goes on to say that His power over Satan was necessary in order to "rob" Satan of his possessions. We who were in sin were his possessions taken by Christ (John 8:34). Jesus, by casting out Satan, demonstrated He had the power to overcome Satan, who had the power of our death (Heb. 2:14). When Jesus cast out the first demons in Mark 1:27, the people understood this and declared "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." They could see that He did this with authority from God.

#### **DEMONS TODAY**

The New Testament writers do not mention demonic possession as part of the New Testament church. Instead, they reference demons in the same manner as the Old Testament. They call demons today false gods and idols in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 and Revelation 9:20. More importantly, they refer to worldly wisdom and deceiving messages as being demonic in 1 Timothy 4:1 and James 3:15. This is very important to understand. While we no longer see the demonic possession of the first century, demons are active in ways far more dangerous. They are still deceiving spirits who vex us. How does one "hear" deceiving spirits and false gods? Through the flesh, as seen in Philippians 3:19 and Romans 16:18.

We see many examples of demonic influence and doctrines now. Consider the statement “sounds good” in regards to instrumental music, “feels good” to defend drinking, “looks good” to defend promiscuity, or “seems good” to promote the many false works of denominationalism. Paul warned in 1 Timothy 4 that these demonic doctrines might have a form of godliness, but that they denied the power. The power of demons today, as it was in the Old Testament, is the power of “almost religion”.

#### CONCLUSION

Dangers of demons are not as Christ’s day. The power to possess was for a purpose: to reveal the kingdom which had come. “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). Today, demonic dangers come from worldliness. Demons are real. They influence us by the fleshly reasoning and desires that plague us all.