

A Study of Angels and Demons
Lesson 6 – Demons and Demon Possession
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Introduction: Jesus and the apostles want us to see the evil in the unseen world.

- A. We are told about the spiritual opponents we face. **(Eph 6:11-12)**
 - 1. The evil of Satan cannot be underestimated.
 - 2. Jesus spoke of His personal battle with the evil one. **(Jn 14:30)**
- B. There was during the lives of the apostles a time where men could witness and hear the work of demons in their possession of men.
 - 1. Many did witness of the horrible occasions where demons possessed others.
 - 2. Many also witnessed Christ and then His followers cast out demons.

I. Demon possession in the New Testament

- A. What is demon possession?
 - 1. Demons did actually possess the minds and bodies of human beings against their will. There are at least twenty-six instances in the New Testament.
 - 2. Demon possession is not just an illness or mental condition. There is a difference in the two! **(Mark 1:34, Matthew 4:24; Luke 8:2)**
- B. The varying effects of demon possession on the victim.
 - 1. One was unable to speak. **(Mt 9:32-33)**
 - 2. Some were blind and unable to speak. **(Mt 12:22; Mk 9:25)**
 - 3. Some were wild and had superhuman strength. **(Mt 8:28; Mk 5:3-4)**
 - 4. Some also had convulsions and were physically endangered. **(Mk 9:17-22; Lk 9:38-42)**
 - 5. One woman could convince others she told the future. **(Acts 16:16-18)**
- C. The speech of demons through those they possessed.
 - 1. They recognized their future punishment. **(Mt 8:29; Lk 8:31)**
 - 2. They recognized Jesus' deity and power. **(Mt 8:29; Mk 1:23-24)**
 - 3. They also recognized the apostles. **(Acts 16:16-17; 19:15)**

II. The Nature and Character of Demons

- A. They are spirit beings.
 - 1. The terms “demon” and “spirit” are used interchangeably. **(Mt 8:16)**
 - 2. A spirit does not have flesh and bones. **(Lk 24:39)**
- B. They can make decisions and move to different locations. **(Mt 12:44-45)**
 - 1. They could leave and return to possess one. **(Mt 12:43-45)**
 - 2. They possess a will.
- C. They can think and draw conclusions.
 - 1. They came to recognize who Christ is. **(Lk. 4:34; cf. Mk. 1:24)**
 - 2. They are said to “believe” and see future consequences. **(James 2:19)**
- D. They have emotions. **(James 2:19)**
- E. There are degrees of evil among demons. **(Mt 12:45)**

III. The casting out of demons

- A. Consider the occasions where Jesus cast out demons.
 - 1. There are general references to His merciful action. (**Mt 4:24; Mt 8:16**)
 - 2. The demoniac in the synagogue. (**Mk. 1:23; Lk. 4:33-36**)
 - 3. The Gerasene demoniac. (**Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39**)
 - 4. The Syrophenician girl. (**Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30**)
 - 5. The epileptic boy. (**Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43**)
 - 6. The mute demoniac. (**Mt. 9:32-34**)
 - 7. The blind and mute demoniac. (**Mt. 12:22ff; Lk. 11:15**)
- B. Consider the occasions where the apostles cast out demons.
 - 1. During the commission of the 70. (**Lk 10:1, 17-18**)
 - 2. They failed once and needed Jesus' help. (**Mk 9:18-19, 28-29**)
 - 3. Given this power as apostles. (**Mk 16:17-18**)
 - 4. Cast out a spirit of divination. (**Acts 16:16-18**)

IV. How God used demon possession

- A. It drew many to Christ as the only hope to cast out demons.
 - 1. The fakes would quickly be exposed.
 - 2. It would humble men and help them see pure evil.
 - 2. Those of faith would be relentless. (**Mk. 7:24-30**)
- B. It demonstrated the power of Christ over Satan.
 - 1. They absolutely obeyed His voice and could not act without His permission. (**Mt 8:16; Mk 1:34; 5:13-14**)
 - 2. This same power was given in the commission of the 70. (**Lk 10:17-18**)
 - 3. Jesus used this occasion to teach what others should have concluded about His power and might over Satan. (**Mt. 12:28-29; Lk. 11:20-22**)
 - 4. The overthrow of Satan is certain! (**Lk 10:17-20**)
- C. It opened hearts to hear the apostles.
 - 1. The power to cast out demons would "confirm the word" spoken by the apostles. (**Mk 16:17-20; Heb 2:2-4**)
 - 2. The contrast between the fake and the real brought a great opportunity to teach. (**Acts 19:15-20**)

V. When did demon possession cease?

- A. Since the apostles were given power to cast out demons as they delivered the message, then the confirming signs ceased when their work was completed.
 - 1. The ability to cast out demons was usually connected with the ability to speak in tongues, heal people, and to prophesy (**Mk 16:17,18; Mt 10:1; Mt 7:22**)
 - 2. We see this occurring with spiritual gifts. (**1 Cor 13:8-10**)
 - 3. We see the connection with the allowance of evil spirits to act. (**Zech 13:1-2**)
- B. When the power to cast out ceased, then the power to possess others ceased.
 - 1. We now have all these things recorded for our instruction.
 - 2. As with modern day miracles or demon possession, compare these with the genuine Bible examples.

Do Demons Possess People Today?

By Edward O. Bragwell, Jr.

Occasionally, I run into those who want to know whether or not demons possess people today. Sometimes we see accounts of supposed demon possessions in newspapers, in magazines, or on television shows. Demon possession has also been a favorite subject in Hollywood, with such moves as "The Exorcist" and "The Omen." With so much fanciful material bombarding our lives, it is no wonder that we run into people who have questions concerning this. Let's then, look at what the Bible says about it.

First of all, one who examines the Bible will have to immediately admit that demons or unclean spirits did possess people in the days of Christ. There are numerous examples. There was the man in the synagogue (**Mark 1:23-28**). There were two men of the Gergesenes (**Matt. 8:28-34**). There was Mary Magdalene (**Mark 16:9**). There were others as well. Jesus demonstrated His power by casting out these demons, and was even wrongly accused of using Satan's power to cast them out (**Matt. 12:24**). The power to cast out these demons was also given to His disciples (**Matt. 10:1; Luke 10:17**). So no one can deny the fact that demon possession did occur at one time.

The question that we want to address, however, is whether or not demons still possess people today. Let me say from the outset that I believe that the Bible strongly indicates that people ceased to be possessed by demons after the days of the New Testament. There are several things that causes one to come to this conclusion. First, the ability to cast out demons was usually connected with the ability to speak in tongues, heal people of diseases, and to prophesy (**Mark 16:17, 18; Matt. 10:1; cf. Matt. 7:22**). We know from I Corinthians 13 that the ability to prophesy and the ability to speak in tongues ceased with the coming of the complete revelation of God. We realize that, in general, the miraculous spiritual gifts that the early disciples possessed were given to them in order to confirm the word that was being revealed at the time (**Mark 16:20**). When the complete revelation had come, there was no more need for them. These spiritual gifts then ceased from the earth upon the completion of God's revelation, and one would assume that the ability to cast out demons ceased with the ability to speak in tongues and prophesy and heal the sick and so on. If the ability to cast out demons has ceased, then it would follow that the possibility to be possessed by demons no longer exists. It would be ridiculous to think that God would allow us to be possessed by demons with no way out of it.

I'm sure, however, that there may be some reading this who will say, "All right, I realize that the ability to prophesy and speak in tongues have ceased, because they are specifically mentioned as things that would pass away. But demon possession is not so mentioned, so how can you be so sure that it ceased at the same time?" I think that we can turn to Old Testament prophesy for that answer. Several Messianic prophecies tell us about what will take place during the time that the Messiah's kingdom is established. One such prophesy is found in **Zechariah 13:1-4**. Here Zechariah talks of a day when "a fountain shall be opened" to his people "for sin and uncleanness." This is clearly a reference to the time when the blood of Christ would be made available to take away

sins. The prophecy goes on to say that three other things would happen "in that day." He says that the name of idols would be cut off from the land - a reference to the fact that those in God's kingdom do not worship idols but the true God. He goes on to say that the prophet and the unclean spirit would be caused to depart from the land. As we have already seen, eventually prophecy ceased in the kingdom; it was done away with. Now if one claims to be a prophet we know that he is a liar, as Zechariah says, "if anyone still prophesies," he will be told, "You have spoken lies." It is impossible for one to speak prophesies when prophesies have ceased; and if one does, you know he is a false prophet. But notice that at the same time the prophets were to depart from the land, the unclean spirit was to depart from the land. So just as surely as prophesies have ceased, people have ceased to be possessed by unclean spirits or demons. Homer Hailey makes the following comment concerning this prophesy: "In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles" (A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, p. 392).

While demons do not possess men today, we need to realize that it is possible for us to allow Satan himself to control our lives. It is him that we need to be concerned with today and not some demons that might possess us. While the demons of Christ's day came in and took control of someone against their will, Satan can only control our lives if we allow him to do so. So we need to be diligent in our efforts to keep him from controlling our lives (**1 Pet. 5:8, 9**). We need to turn to Jesus and let him control our lives.