

A Study of Demons

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels:”

(Matthew 25:41)

Introduction:

Many in the world are enamored with the thought of demons. Television has wild and fanciful depictions that leave the imagination running wild. The late 70’s movie “The Exorcist” both horrified and left wild thoughts in the public’s mind about demons and the act of exorcism by modern day priests. Web sites abound in “demonology.” Statues of gargoyles are found in France with the intent of warding off demonic spirits. The early church experienced a wave of demonic influences (I Cor. 10:20-21; I Tim. 4:1; James 2:19). We would like to examine the subject of demons this evening; however, let us stick to the facts. Let us not go beyond the word of God (Numb. 22:18) and neither let us add our fanciful ideas to the word of God (Deut. 29:29).

I. What are Demons?

- A. The word “*demon*” (*daimonion*) as used in James 2:19 = “a malignant demon, evil angel, Matt. 8:31; Mark 5:12; Lk. 8:29; Rev. 16:14; 18:2...to be possessed, afflicted, vexed, by a demon, or evil spirit, Matt. 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33... a heathen god, deity, Acts 17:18; I Cor. 10:20-21; Rev. 9:20; a demon, evil spirit, Matt. 7:22; 9:33, 34; 10:8, 12, 24... pertaining to or proceeding from demons; demoniacal, devilish, Jam. 3:15” (Moulton 84). “An inferior divine being, a demon... evil spirit” (LS 171). “Demon, evil spirit, of independent beings who occupy a position somewhere between the human and the divine” (AG 169). “Usually referring to the ministers of the devil (Lk. 4:35; 9:1, 42; Jn. 10:21 etc.); inferior spirit beings, Satan’s angels who ‘did not keep their own domain’ (Jude 6; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7,9). Satan is said to be the ruler of demons (Matt. 9:34; 12:34; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15)” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary pp. 297).
- B. Traditional views of demons: “According to a late mishnaic tradition god created the evil spirits on Friday of the creation week” (ISBE; vol. 1, pp. 920).
- C. Traditional views of demons: Some believe that demons are angels who lust mated with the “daughters of men” and had demonic offspring; i.e., the Nephilim (cf. Gen. 6:1-4).
- D. Other Jewish traditions state that the fallen angels themselves are the demons (I En. 69:1-15).
- E. Still others believe that demons were the souls of dead men (the idea taken from Mk. 6:14-16).

II. Demons in the OT:

- A. The Hebrew word *sed* is translated “demon” at Deut. 32:17 and Ps. 106:37).
- B. Three specific demonic figures are named in the OT (i.e., Azazel / Lev. 16:8, 10, 26, night monster / Isa. 34:14, and the horseleach or vampire / Prov. 30:15).
- C. Consider the Babylonian demon Pazuzu (ISBE; vol. 1, pp. 920).



Inscribed bronze statue of the Babylonian demon Pazuzu. The figure has the feet and wings of an eagle, a human body with claws for hands, and a misshapen head. (Archives Photographiques)

III. Demons in the NT:

- A. Demons in the NT are often regarded as “evil spirits, unclean spirits, and deceitful spirits.” Three occasions in the NT reveal demon worship (Acts 17:18; I Cor. 10:20ff; Rev. 9:20).
- B. Demon possession occurred quite often in the pre-church (i.e., Jesus’ day) and apostolic days. Symptoms of demonic possession included:
 - 1. Insane raving (Mk. 1:24; 5:5; Lk. 9:39)
 - 2. Self destructive behavior (Mk. 5:5; 9:18).
 - 3. Antisocial behavior of nudity (Lk. 8:35).
 - 4. Seizures (Mk. 1:26; 9:18, 20, 26; Matt. 17:15).
 - 5. Dumbness (Mk. 9:25, 32; 12:22).
 - 6. Deafness (Mk. 9:25).
 - 7. Blindness (Matt. 12:22).
 - 8. Performance of involuntary functions (Acts 16:16-18; Mk. 1:24; 5:7; Lk. 8:28).
- C. Jesus exorcized demons by simply commanding them to come out of people (Mk. 1:25; 5:8; 9:25). Six times Jesus performed this work:
 - 1. The demoniac in the synagogue (Mk. 1:23).
 - 2. The Gerasene demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20).
 - 3. The daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Mk. 7:24-30).
 - 4. The epileptic boy (Mk. 9:14-29).
 - 5. The dumb demoniac (Matt. 9:32-34).
 - 6. The blind and dumb demoniac (Matt. 12:22ff).
- D. Paul too called the “spirit of divination” out of the slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16-18).

IV. The Work of Demons:

- A. Demon doctrine is opposed to truth (I Tim. 4:1).
- B. Demons spread their error by false prophets or teachers (Mk. 13:22; Matt. 24:11, 24).

V. Satan's Relationship to demons:

- A. The devil is the prince of demons and is known by the name "*Beelzebub*" (cf. Matt. 12:22-28). The word "Beelzebub" = "master of the flies" (ISBE; v. 1, pp. 447). "Lord of filth or dung" (Thayer 100). No wonder that those who sin are considered "*defiled*" by the Lord (cf. Jude 7-8).
- B. The devil walks through the earth seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8); however, his work is limited by God (Job. 1:7). The devil tempts the minds of man through "*devices*" (II Cor. 2:11):
 - 1. Lust (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 2. Vanity (I Jn. 2:16)
 - 3. Pride (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 4. Covetousness (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 5. Persecution (I Thess. 3:1-5).
 - 6. False doctrines (II Thess. 2:9-10; I Cor. 4:6-13).
- C. Demons are servants of the devil (he is their prince). Demons thereby serve Satan's quest for the souls of men. Christian's are in a battle against the devil and his demonic spirit beings (cf. Eph. 6:10-12).

Let us draw some conclusions:

- Some have concluded that demons are evil or sinful "*angels*" (cf. II Pet. 2:4). Matthew 25:41 states that the devil has "*angels*" that will suffer eternal punishment with him. The conclusion is that if the devil is the prince of demons and he has angels under him then demons must be fallen angels (cf. Jude 6).
- Whether demons are simply "evil spirits" or fallen "angels" matters little as far as the Christian's true concern with them.
- Do demons possess men today and cause them to have seizures, insane raving, self destructive behavior, deaf, dumb, blind, or even cause one to perform an act involuntarily? No. Note that the statement in Lk. 11:20 (Matt. 12:28) makes it clear that Jesus regarded His exorcizing demons as a sign that the kingdom of God was near. By the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus performed signs for the purpose of confirming truth (as did the apostles) (Mk. 16:20; Jn. 20:30-31). The church has now been established and the word of God is complete thereby there is no more need for miraculous works of the Holy Spirit (like exorcism) to occur.
- The important lesson for Christians to learn today about demons is that Satan is their prince and they share the same work of ruining men's eternal existence. We are in a battle not against Satan alone but against a "*host of wickedness in heavenly places*" (Eph. 6:12).