

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

DEMONIC POSSESSION

Through the Ages



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Larry Wilson

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P.O. Box 273
Bellbrook, OH 45305

Demonic Oppression Through the Ages

Demons have been around for thousands of years. They were present when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, during the flood in Noah's day, and when Jesus walked the earth. They have been involved in every war. For them, cruelty is a sport. They are highly educated, wise, relentless, deadly, and toil to deceive and seduce. Demons know sin can have immediate or immediate or lifelong consequences. When sins cause both, it delights them even more! For example, sexual immorality can have both short and long-term effects: A child is abused, a woman is raped, or sexual promiscuity produces a child no one wants. Drinking and driving under the influence can have both types of consequences. The demons have a tailor-made collection for each of us, and should the Holy Spirit retreat from us, they will pounce. Their goal is bondage, misery, and death. They are hateful and motivated to loathe us because they hate Jesus who created us and later redeemed us; therefore, if these satanic agents can keep a soul from inheriting eternal life, they are elated. They know they are going to their destruction and are determined to take as many individuals with them as possible.

Jesus Encountered Demons

Jesus encountered demons during His ministry on earth. On one occasion, Jesus approached two men, and the demons within them trembled, saying, “**‘What do you want with us, Son of God?’ they shouted. ‘Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?’ Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, ‘If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.’ He said to them, ‘Go!’ So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.**”¹

These texts reveal several facts about demons. First, they recognized Jesus as the “Son of God” even though the Jews would not; they also spoke knowledgeably about their fate. They knew the appointed time for their destruction had not yet come! Second, demons can and do take control of people. Third, the demons drowned the pigs because they did not want to remain within them. Demons Are Fallen Angels

The Bible does not provide much information about angels before sin occurred in heaven, but it does give details from which we can draw some conclusions. For example, by aligning specific Bible texts and God’s changeless patterns, we can reasonably con-

¹ Matthew 8:29–32

clude that if the Father loved mankind (a lower order of creation) enough to redeem us,¹ He must have also loved the angels (a higher order of creation) enough to redeem them if possible. Therefore, the Father could not redeem the fallen angels because they became rebellious and defiant, committing the unpardonable sin. There is no grace for those who commit the unpardonable sin.² If mankind can commit the unpardonable sin presently, and if committing the unpardonable sin will be possible “in the age to come,”³ it is reasonable to say that God kicked rebellious angels out of heaven *only after* they passed the point of no return.

If God gave humanity free will, and, because He is changeless it is reasonable to conclude He gave the angels free will. The rise of sin in heaven proves that the angels had free will. The Bible indicates that some angels put their faith in God and others did not, suggesting they had the power of choice. Because the Bible offers specific details about God and the angels, a little conjecture will be helpful as I present my understanding of the events before sin began.

Fall of Lucifer

After Jesus created the universe, He created several billion angels. Jesus gave them free will, amazing tal-

1 John 3:16

2 Matthew 12:31–32; Hebrews 10:26

3 Matthew 12:32

ents and intelligence, residence in God's house, and a powerful predisposition for righteousness. Angels were the first and highest order of created beings. They served God as ambassadors and managers of His universe. After being trained and prepared, they were to oversee all the new worlds (in the same way seven angels were made overseers of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3), which Jesus would create.

The angels lived in perfect harmony for a time with no rebellion within them. There was no bullying, politics, arguing, coveting, cheating, lying, or stealing. If you can imagine this, no one thought or spoke evil about his neighbor! The angels loved the Father and Michael, and appreciated the Holy Spirit's ministry during worship. Unfortunately, one day, a tiny change occurred within a single angel. The other angels did not notice this change initially, and for some time it was carefully hidden.

The Bible does not indicate the length of time the angels lived in heaven before sin began. But given that Adam (and many others) lived before Noah's flood and over nine centuries, and that God has given us 6,000 years of probationary time, it is reasonable to understand that God was patient with the angels before He expelled them from heaven. Consider these thoughts:

1. It must have taken some time after the angels were created before Lucifer, who had a strong propensity for righteousness, to become self-centered, jealous, and evil-minded.
2. When Lucifer's disaffection began, God must have given him and the other angels plenty of time to consider the arguments and charges against God. After the angels understood Lucifer's motives, the Father also gave the angels time to repent of their rebellion.
3. It must have taken a significant amount of time for one-third of the holy angels to become angry enough at God to blaspheme the Holy Spirit (commit the unpardonable sin). Because the Holy Spirit is gentle and patient, reaching a state of defiance takes time (even within human beings).

When Jesus created Lucifer, Jesus gave him every gift that God could provide a created being:

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as

a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.”¹

This is how I understand Lucifer’s fall. After Lucifer enjoyed a wonderful, purpose-filled life for many years, heaven’s most elevated and beautiful angel became discontented. Lucifer was one of the two guardian cherubs, and he wanted *to be respected and worshiped* in the same way that Michael, the other guardian cherub, was. When He discussed the matter with the Father, the Father told him his desire could not be granted. Because Lucifer coveted the worship and honor given to the other guardian cherub, he felt diminished, disrespected, and angry.

Meanwhile, the angels had no idea that Lucifer was unhappy. They loved and adored him. They were awed at his talents. His majesty was greater than any other angel. His ability to sing, lead the choir, and create and arrange the most amazing music produced endless praise from the angels; but this was not enough. Although Lucifer wanted to be treated like the other guardian cherub, he did not know who the other guardian cherub was. The Father had designed this mystery for a reason.

¹ Ezekiel 28:12–15

Several similarities can be identified between Adam and the angels before sin appeared. Angels did not see Jesus create the universe, and Adam did not see Jesus create the world. The angels did not see Jesus create anything, and Adam did not see Jesus create anything, including Eve. The angels and Adam and Eve were told that Jesus was the Creator of everything. They had to accept this declaration by faith because they did not see Jesus create anything.

The situation in heaven was even more puzzling because Jesus lived in the form of a humble-looking angel (Michael). He was not beautiful. The Creator made all the angels *nicer looking* than Himself. Jesus did not wear the dazzling ornamentation He gave Lucifer. Jesus wore nothing that elevated Himself above the lowest angel. Nothing about Jesus' physical appearance caused the angels to worship Him; in the same way, nothing about His appearance as a man caused human beings to worship Him. Notice Isaiah's words concerning Jesus:

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”¹

1 Isaiah 53:2-3

Even though Jesus *looked* like an angel, He was a member of deity living as an angel. The Father had determined that Jesus must live among created beings as one of them in the same way that He would later live among men. Because Jesus is deity and Creator of the universe,¹ the Father *decreed*, before anything was even created, that Jesus would be given the same respect, honor, and worship due the Father forever.² The decree to worship the Creator is eternal. **“Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”**³

Jesus gave Lucifer everything that a created being could have. Jesus (Michael), the other guardian cherub, looked like an ordinary angel, yet the angels were required to worship Jesus, not Lucifer. The Father deliberately created this strange situation. Before the Father filled the universe with people, He wanted to test the faith of the angels in the same way Adam and Eve later would be tested.

Because the angels had not seen Jesus create anything, and there was nothing in His appearance that would suggest majesty or deity, the Father was testing the submission and faith of the angels. For many years, the angels were delighted to do the Father’s will be-

1 Colossians 1:15-17

2 John 5:22-23

3 Revelation 14:6-7

cause there was no sin or rebellion within them. However, one fateful day, Lucifer compared himself to Jesus. Lucifer noticed a striking difference and he struggled with his vanity. He wanted to do the Father's will, but he also wanted to be worshiped as Jesus was worshiped.

When Lucifer was denied equality with Jesus, he stopped loving God. He lost faith in God because he did not believe God was fair. Then, rather than submit to God's will, Lucifer set out to get what he wanted and thought he deserved. Because he did not have foreknowledge, he did not anticipate the dreadful consequences that would follow. Lucifer was extremely intelligent, so he began with a *sneaky smoke screen* among his closest friends, who suspected nothing was out of the ordinary. They would not be suspicious of a *guardian cherub* who stood next to the Father. Of course, the devil could not reveal his motive because his friends had a powerful propensity for righteousness, and they would have quickly detected his disaffection with God.

Lucifer voiced many sophisticated questions about the Father, which were unanswerable, to gain the attention of his friends. Lucifer thought this approach would sow seeds of doubt. The Father had not yet explained many things to the angels, so Lucifer's

questions and innuendos gained traction. The devil's sneaky campaign was effective. Many angels began to think as Lucifer thought, creating new questions without answers.

Lucifer then moved into phase two. He produced clever lies about the Father.¹ The angels had never heard a lie and had no reason to question Lucifer's integrity, so they believed him. Lucifer calculated that once enough angels sided with him, as *their leader*, he could legitimately pressure the Father to allow Lucifer to receive the same worship and respect given to the other guardian cherub and the conflict would end. After all, the two guardian cherubs were equals, weren't they?

The Godhead observed Lucifer's thoughts, motives, ambitions, and actions daily because nothing is hidden from God's sight. Jesus and the Father did everything possible to resolve Lucifer's jealousy and disaffection. They met with him many times. The Holy Spirit did everything possible—short of violating the will of Lucifer and his followers. Finally, a day came when the angels were summoned together and the Father told the angels that, even though Jesus looked like an angel and served as a guardian cherub like Lucifer, there was a distinct difference between them. Jesus was not

¹ John 8:44

a created being; instead, He was a coeternal member of the Godhead. In fact, Jesus had created Lucifer. Because Jesus was Creator, all angels were required to worship Him even though they had not seen Jesus create anything. Human beings will receive this same test during the Great Tribulation.

This revelation forced the angels to make a decision. As a guardian cherub, Lucifer was not about to be embarrassed and lose face, so he rallied his followers against the truth. They demanded change. Because the Father had declared that Jesus was a member of deity, Lucifer focused his attacks on Jesus. He hated Jesus; he wanted to kill him. Lucifer became anti-Christ because he wanted what Jesus had. The Father patiently waited and deliberately allowed Lucifer's arguments, lies, and campaign to roil heaven so that the love and faith of each angel was tested. Once the Holy Spirit reported that every angel had made a decision, the Father called the angels together and commanded them, on the spot, to immediately bow down and worship Jesus as Creator. Lucifer and his followers defied the Father. There was a great commotion like an earthquake, and a third of the angels suddenly disappeared.

“Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you,

O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth.”¹

Even though it became much more peaceful after the Father cast Lucifer and his followers out of heaven, the remaining holy angels had many unanswered questions. Faith in God means living with unanswered questions. However, faith in God always makes sense when viewed in reverse. So, faithful angels had to wait. They did not know it then, but God would answer their questions during a drama that would unfold after they witnessed Jesus create a planet called *Earth*.

Why Are Demons Allowed to Live?

Demons are angels who once lived in heaven until the Father expelled Lucifer and one-third of the angels for committing the unpardonable sin. Even though the Father has an eternal law that demands a sinner must be executed on the day he sins,² the Father temporarily stayed this law to benefit the universe. He permitted the fallen angels, Adam and Eve, and their offspring to live for two reasons. First, He planned for the universe to observe the curse of sin. It takes time to observe the nature and far-reaching consequences of sin. Second,

1 Ezekiel 28:16–17

2 Genesis 2:17

He allows the knowledge of good and evil to mature so that throughout eternity, His expanding universe will better understand His character, ways, and government. Understanding how an infinite God of love deals with finite beings having free will is difficult to comprehend.

The Father has given the curse of sin plenty of time to develop because He will not permit *sin's curse* to appear a third time. Sin first began in heaven when certain angels became convinced that God was unfair. Next, sin appeared on earth when Lucifer, an intelligent predator, presented himself to Eve in the form of a lovely serpent and deceived her. Before Eve sinned, snakes were among the most beautiful creatures in Eden. Then Adam, knowing the penalty for eating fruit from the forbidden tree, loved Eve so much that he ate the fruit anyway, planning to die with her. So the Father has set up a process where the effect of sin's curse will not occur again.

The Father wants everyone—existing and new worlds to come—to understand an amazing truth: He is not righteous because He has the authority and power to define righteousness or even because He claims to be righteous; He is righteous because He *always* obeys His two laws of love.¹ When sin's drama is finished,

1 Matthew 22:33–39

the Father wants the universe to know what Lucifer and a third of the angels could not understand when they rebelled. If Lucifer and his followers had been patient and maintained their faith and love for God, trusting in God's infinite wisdom and unfailing love, they would not have sinned. Unfortunately, Lucifer became impatient and would not wait for God's perfect timing. Lucifer wanted what he wanted now—instant gratification is hard to resist! When the Father denied Lucifer's desire, he became angry, hated God, and lost faith in Him.

The Father foreknew Lucifer's actions, Eve's deception, and Adam's fall. So, the Father wisely stayed immediate execution for sin until the drama with sin comes to an end. After the 1,000 millennial years are over, God will incinerate the wicked angels and wicked people, and Jesus will create a new heaven and new earth. After this period of sin has ended, God will implement immediate death for sin, and no one will blame God for executing willful and defiant sinners. The only way to stop the curse of sin from spreading is to annihilate the sinner.

A Big “Oh, No!”

After the Father expelled Lucifer and the defiant angels, Jesus created Earth and other worlds filled with inhabit-

ants. The angels who maintained faith in the Father and worshiped Jesus had their faith in Jesus, as the Creator, affirmed when they saw Him create the worlds with their own eyes!¹ Faith in God, when seen in reverse, always makes sense! From the beginning, the Father had required the angels to have faith. For example, He told them to worship Jesus as the Creator even though they had not seen Him create anything. Similarly, the Father required Adam and Eve to have faith when Jesus told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Unlike Lucifer and his followers who committed the unpardonable sin, Adam and Eve did not sin defiantly, so the Father implemented a plan of salvation to save them and their offspring. Not surprisingly, the Plan of Salvation is based on faith! Only those who live by faith in God will *continue* to receive the benefits of eternal life. The only way finite beings can happily live with an infinite Godhead, whose actions today may take ten thousand years to understand correctly, is through faith in and love for God.

God established the eternal gospel before the angels existed, requiring all created beings to worship Jesus as the Creator.² The Father required the angels to have faith in the eternal gospel, so I believe Jesus created

¹ The Bible hints that other planets were created to be inhabited but does not indicate when they were created or inhabited. See Job 2:1–2; Isaiah 40:26; 45:18; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 11:3 NIV and Hebrews 1:2 KJV.

² Revelation 14:6–7

many inhabited worlds *after* the faith of the angels had been tested. The Father tested the angels to see who would *choose* to live by faith because faith in God is always required. The fact that sin and rebellion have existed in heaven and on earth proves that all of God's children have free will and do not have to love, trust, and obey God. Therefore, I understand that after God tested the angels' faith and separated them like the sheep and goats, Jesus proceeded to create inhabited worlds, including Earth.

When Adam and Eve sinned, I believe Jesus suspended His creative work to focus on saving sinners. During the last days of earth, every living person will have a test of faith.¹ The Father wants to identify who will worship Jesus as the Creator even though no human has seen Jesus create anything. When people of earth are separated (the sheep and the goats), all who choose to put their faith in Christ will be saved. After the 1,000 years of the millennium² and when Jesus purifies the earth by fire, He will resume His work of creating new worlds filled with inhabitants. The people who Jesus has saved will see Him create a new heaven and earth! In case sin occurs on the new earth, the Father has designed a test of faith for humans similar to the earlier test the angels experienced.

1 Revelation 3:10

2 Revelation 20

Furious Fallen Angels

The fallen angels were outraged when they saw Jesus create many inhabited planets. The evidence forced them to recognize the stupidity and foolishness of their rebellion against God. They were just like the antediluvians in Noah's day who realized their folly and foolishness only when the rain began to fall. The fallen angels were not sorry for doing wrong and remained defiant. Of course, the demons want to escape the death penalty that awaits them, but they cannot bring about any heartfelt sorrow for their sin. *No being can produce a desire to repent or feel sorrow or remorse for sins once the Holy Spirit leaves.*

When a person grieves away the Holy Spirit, he enters a godless state that will exist until he dies. In this state, it is impossible for a being to repent and be sorrowful for doing wrong. I have seen this condition in hardened criminals. Esau had the same experience: **“When he [Esau] wanted to inherit this blessing [the blessing that rightfully belonged to him as the firstborn, which he had sold for a meal], he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.”**¹

God has set a date to destroy the demons with fire and they know it. Meanwhile, they have no happiness,

¹ Hebrews 12:17, insertions mine

peace of mind, or joy as they once did because the Holy Spirit, which produces the fruits of the Spirit,¹ is not within them. For over six thousand years, the fallen angels have been filled with bitterness and hatred for the Godhead! They now know they will suffer intensely in hell for predatory behavior.² God will punish each demon for his contribution to the delinquency of each sinner. This is similar to adults being punished for leading minors into corruption or crime.

Given their expulsion from God's glorious and brilliant presence, their dismal surroundings when compared to the beauty of heaven they once enjoyed, their endless jealousy and hostility that occurs each day, their internal agitation (there is no peace or rest for wicked beings³), and their hate for the Father and Jesus, their lives are exceedingly miserable and narrowly focused. They can only do one thing that brings any hint of satisfaction. They are determined to take as many people into hell as possible, but they have to follow the rules which the Father has imposed.

Demons Can Control a Freewill Being

God gives each person gifts and talents at birth, and the demons want to use these assets for evil purposes. Some of God's gifts include a measure of faith, the

1 Galatians 5:22-23

2 Matthew 8:29; Luke 12:5

3 Isaiah 57:20

ability to hear the Holy Spirit, intelligence, the ability to reason, reanalyze and remember, the capacity to love and be loved, and *most of all*, **free will**.¹ When a person reaches maturity, God provides gifts and talents that enable that person to be a self-directed adult, responsible to God and neighbors.

The curse of sin mars God's gifts and talents in various ways. Each person is born with a propensity for selfishness, rebellion, and wrongdoing, and if this propensity is allowed to dominate God's gifts and talents, the results will be harmful. The demons know this, so they prey on our natural inclination to do wrong. The shameful and vulgar ways of talented and gifted people today, a bulging prison population, and thousands of years of sordid human history reveal their many successes.

Demons understand the gift of free will. After all, each demon knows that he deliberately and willfully *chose* to rebel against God. Therefore, their greatest delight occurs when they can lead young people to make foolish choices. The demons carefully study each of us from birth to determine how the inescapable consequences of sin can be used to ruin us. Demons are masters at gradualism; if it takes 20 years or even 50 years to ruin a person, this is not a problem. They have nothing else to do.

¹ Romans 12:3, John 16:13, Joshua 24:14–15, John 3:16, Revelation 22:17

If a well-known person's credibility and respect are destroyed in later life by some defect in character, the demons are delighted! They watch to see which temptations are most effective, which natural traits of character are dominant, and opportunities for entrapment. They especially watch to see whom each person will choose for friends. One of their best tools for getting young people to make rash decisions is through friendship with immoral people. The demons know, **“Bad company corrupts good character.”**¹ They have seen this phrase fulfilled billions of times!

Demons Use the Power of Suggestion Like the Holy Spirit

The Bible indicates that demons are intelligent and can speak their minds.² God permits demons to talk to human beings by inserting thoughts into our minds through the same spiritual channel the Holy Spirit uses! Our problem is that we cannot always identify the source of the voice. Each sinner has an imagination and can create evil thoughts because all sinners have a natural propensity for doing wrong.

The demons are experts at doing wrong and they can introduce evil to our minds. They are masters at using the power of suggestion. This power is not trivial; do

1 1 Corinthians 15:33

2 Matthew 8:29, 31; Luke 4:33–34; Acts 19:15

not confuse it with our own ability to generate evil thoughts. The Holy Spirit uses the power of suggestion as well; He puts ideas in our minds and prompts us to do right. He also inserts thoughts beyond man's natural ability to think of good things to do—consider the marvelous ministries of George Müller (1805-1898) and Mother Teresa (1910-1997).

Demons Are Masters at Influencing People to Sin

When a person repeatedly chooses of his own free will to knowingly and willfully violate his conscience and integrity, knowing that he is doing evil (for profit, thrill, or because of peer pressure), that person is fair game for demons because there is no hedge of protection when he continues to sin willfully.¹ Such a person is on a dangerous road. The demons know this. So, they watch for our response to temptation and when we *willfully choose* to do wrong, a door is opened for them.

A person will often commit a greater sin than intended when demons insert their suggestions into his mind. How often have you heard someone say after his actions are presented, “That is not me! I’m not that way!” Each time a new low in conduct is reached, the demons rejoice. They keep careful records and they have good memories. If a sinner does not notice any

¹ Hebrews 10:26-27

immediate consequences for wrongdoing, demons know the sinner will minimize the event and soon forget it. This is precisely what the demons want; they will insert another evil suggestion when the time and circumstances are right. If the sinner reaches another new low in conduct without immediate consequences, he becomes more comfortable with his increased downward spiral. This is how gradualism works. One sin opens a door for another. Soon, the thoughts suggested by the demons will drown out the efforts of the Holy Spirit, and this is what “the gentle giants” want. They know that everyone who sins becomes a slave to sin,¹ so they make sin exciting, sensual, daring, and thrilling. The pleasures of sin may be many and irresistible, but the consequences are inescapable.²

Sin is like the drug Novocain. It numbs the conscience and causes the sinner to minimize the seriousness of his deeds. If a person does not stop violating his conscience and personal integrity and repent of his sins, the Holy Spirit will accept his choice and leave the sinner alone. When a sinner complies with evil thoughts, he will become increasingly degenerate and decadent. This is Lucifer’s purpose and goal.

1 John 8:34

2 Galatians 6:7–8

Demonic Skills

Demons are not stupid. On the contrary, they are highly intelligent angels who once lived in God's presence. Because the demons study us closely, they know how to seduce us. They use all kinds of dirty tricks to accomplish their wicked goals. They use nudity and music to arouse passion; and riches and material things to arouse covetousness. They constantly appeal to our sinful nature by making wrongdoing appear "new, edgy, and exciting." The world is saturated with their tricks. I have noticed that demons do their best work if they can put our sinful nature into a state of discontent because they know the law, "What we sow, we will reap." Their next level of control is increasing demonic torment, and we see evidence of this each day.

Demons are Masters of Tormenting People

Demons know our fears, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. They are masters at tempting and tormenting. Even though demons live among us and are determined to destroy us, the Father has placed *a hedge of protection* around each sinner. Demons cannot penetrate this hedge of protection unless we willfully and knowingly do wrong. When we choose to do so, this hedge is momentarily removed, and the demons respond. If we continue to willfully and knowingly do

wrong, the hedge becomes weaker and the demon's attacks stronger.

Demons are Thrilled with Our Pain and Suffering

Demons have been extremely successful in triggering sexual abuse, murder, lying, and corruption throughout society. When demons lead pastors and priests to sexually abuse children, they are thrilled! Consider the suffering that will radiate through the church and the lives of their victims. Demons are delighted when they cause a murderer to commit a crime, who is then caught and sent to death row. Consider the pain and suffering that radiates from years of solitary confinement and through the family of the deceased. When demons see politicians abusing their position, demons are thrilled. Consider the decline that comes to a nation when politicians are corrupt. Demons are thrilled to see ordinary people stealing, lying, and cheating. Consider the distrust that follows; no one trusts anyone anymore. If you watch the news, you must conclude that demons are rejoicing. The world is roiling with the successes demons have had, capitalizing on our sinful nature.

Demons and Mob Mentality

I am convinced that a phenomenon called *mob mentality* occurs when demons insert the same evil thought

into a mob at the same time. When a mob is caught up in a moment of passion, demons know the power of suggestion can become actionable, and when this occurs, the result is a true phenomenon. It is as though the mob suddenly behaves as if it has *one mind*. The fruit of demonic behavior is anger, hatred, violence, and destruction; and when adrenalin-induced anger goes beyond reason, you can be sure demons are present. Because demons are angry beings focused on our *total* destruction, we should not be surprised if their victims mirror them. Remember, the pigs in Matthew 8:32 displayed *mob mentality* when Jesus sent the demons into them and they all drowned.

Demons Possess Children

Demons love to hurt children because children can grow up and hurt their offspring. Demon-oppressed parents can make a child feel self-loathing and shameful, which results in the child having no self-esteem, self-worth, or self-value. Evil parents can physically, sexually, and emotionally abuse a child causing significant psychological damage. This can cause a child to inordinately thirst for love and friendship, whether good or bad. These are just a few avenues that demons use to prey on children because they know that damaged children are vulnerable.

In ancient times, certain physical defects or illnesses were believed to be the result of demonic possession,¹ and this is still true in certain parts of the world today. Because this was a prevailing practice in Bible times, I believe Bible writers sometimes lumped physical defects and illnesses into a general category called *demonic possession*. This issue needs discussion because I believe that God does not permit minors to become fully demon-possessed. I do believe that demons can insert thoughts in the minds of older children starting with early adolescence and oppress them, but only after the child has *knowingly and willfully chosen* to disobey the good that he knew to do—exercising his free will to do wrong. If demons can possess children, what would keep demons from possessing all children? I know, sometimes it looks like the kids in the checkout line have a demon in them, but that is a matter of poor parenting.

Disciples Unable to Cast Out Demons

The Bible tells a story about a little boy who has a demon. Three gospels relate to the story; you must study all three versions to understand the situation properly.² The little boy suffered from a condition that caused him to foam at the mouth and to fall involuntarily into the water or fire. The father thought his son had a de-

¹ Matthew 9:32; 12:22

² Matthew 17:13–20; Mark 9:17–29; Luke 9:38–42

mon, so he took him to Jesus' disciples because Jesus was unavailable. The disciples were publicly humiliated because they could not cast out the demon or heal the little boy. Fortunately, Jesus showed up, rebuked the demon, and healed the little boy.

Whether the little boy had a physical defect like epilepsy (an unknown mental condition) or even a demon, Jesus healed him. This story is important because it reveals a profound point that many people misunderstand. A few weeks before this event occurred, Jesus gave His disciples a commission to go throughout Israel, telling everyone that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus gave His disciples the power to heal sicknesses and cast out all kinds of demons to ensure their testimony gained traction.¹ Naturally, this power created quite a sensation in the towns and villages where the disciples went. So, when the father showed up with his afflicted son, he rightfully expected his son to be healed, and the disciples were confident they could do the job, but after failing they were humiliated and embarrassed.

There is a simple reason for their failure. The public failure of the disciples stemmed from a hidden defect in character. While Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration and the remaining

1 | Luke 9:1-2

disciples were at the mountain's base waiting for Jesus to return, they had nothing to do. I believe they began discussing their miracles and the coming kingdom of God. This led to arguments about who would be greatest when Jesus set up His kingdom. Based on parallel descriptions from Mark and Luke, it is difficult to identify the location and timing of events that transpired that day.¹ However, we know that Jesus and His disciples headed for Capernaum shortly after Jesus healed the boy.² As they walked along, I believe some of the disciples privately continued discussing who would be the greatest in the coming kingdom of God because they were very excited about the coming kingdom and their position! However, when they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus asked, **“What were you arguing about on the road? But they kept quiet. . . . Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.’”**³

At that time, the disciples believed that Jesus would establish God’s kingdom on earth imminently!⁴ Therefore, when Jesus gave them the power to heal the sick and cast out all kinds of demons, this amazing power caused them to think more highly of themselves than

1 Mark 9:33–34; Luke 9:43–48

2 Mark 9:30

3 Mark 9:33–35

4 Mark 1:15; 9:1; 9:34

they should have. Jesus sent them out with this tremendous power to *validate a prophetic message*, but the disciples thought this power was a *personal validation* of their importance to God! Because of their arrogance, selfishness, and self-seeking (the original sins of Lucifer), they had broken their connection with God. This left them powerless, and they did not realize it.

The Holy Spirit embarrassed the disciples by refusing to heal the boy when they called upon the name of Jesus! I imagine they took turns trying to heal the little boy, and all of them failed. Later, when the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out the demon, Jesus did not mention their sin. Instead, He jumped to the point that the power to cast out demons is from God, which is only given when God has a purpose for extending the power. Men will not use God; God uses men. The moral of the story is that if any person is called to cast out a demon, let him seek God's will through fasting and prayer. If God informs the seeker that He will give him the power to cast out the demon, the seeker can humbly go and cast out the demon. Otherwise, the seeker must report that God has not given him the power to cast out the demon. He should excuse himself from the matter, or the demons may beat him up!¹

1 Mark 9:29, KJV; Acts 19:13-17

The Road to Demon Oppression

Remember, the door to demonic oppression opens when we knowingly and willingly choose to do wrong and violate our conscience. The demons use an insidious scheme. At first, their approach is gentle and benign because they want to entice us without our knowing it. They want us to think that their thoughts are our thoughts. Over time, the demons gain deeper access if we act on their suggestions. For some people, the road to demonic oppression can have an innocent and naive start. Bad friends may introduce vices such as tobacco, drugs, alcohol, pornography, or violent movies and games. Given juvenile curiosity and peer pressures, young people have often succumbed to lifelong addictions through these vices. For some, the road to demonic oppression may have started with exploring the occult, sexual lust that led to sexual immorality, or through abusive or unloving parents (or foster parents). Demons will not stop oppressing a victim unless the sinner comes to his senses and takes a firm stand to stop doing the wrong that he has been doing. If a person resists the demons and hardens his heart against their suggestions, God requires the demons to back away. They have to accept our free will. Freedom from demonic oppression will come with a struggle and will take time, but it does happen by standing firm for what is right!

Demons are delighted when they see families trapped in cycles of pain and suffering caused by addiction. There are all kinds of addictions because the devil knows that addictions ruin relationships and lives. When it comes to substance abuse, demons understand that about half of the population are candidates for addiction at their first experiment. They know that drugs are a gateway to many hellish experiences. Demons prey on young people who are blind to the fact that drugs and alcohol are very dangerous, not only for the users but also for anyone within their sphere. Demons use glossy ads and celebrities in the media every day to disconnect young people from this solemn fact: “What we sow, we will reap.”

For example, demons have convinced many young people that substance abuse is no big deal. Illicit drugs may offer an “ecstatic experience” for the moment, but the consequences of that first incident can (and often do) turn into addiction. Thus, substance abuse can be an entry point for demonic possession. Demons have also led millions of people to believe there is nothing wrong with sexual immorality. This too, can be a door to addiction and ultimately, demonic possession.

Other Routes to Demon Possession

But what about those who shun drugs and sexual im-

morality? Very few people understand the addiction that comes from materialism. When we are not able to say “no” to gratification, we open the door to addiction. This is a growing problem which leads many people into bankruptcy. Many people make their jobs more important than God, family, and health to avoid bankruptcy. Sadly, some people drive themselves beyond exhaustion to get more money to buy more material possessions. In this materialistic era, the love of money is an open door for demonic possession. Anything that has power over us can be used to pry open the door of our hearts to Satan’s demons.

We live in an age of overstimulation. We are always busy, and our brains constantly process some form of data. Consequently, our brains are imploding because of overstimulation. Billions of dollars are spent each year on psychotropic drugs because people are unable to deal with the demands of living. Harmful behaviors are causing us to lose control of ourselves. We cannot focus, we cannot tolerate silence, and we cannot rest. If the devil is a formidable adversary when we are at our best, what does he become when we are at our weakest?

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and

humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”¹

Demonic Influence and Oppression Is a Slippery Slope

If you have been born again, you know that we live in a world that groans under the heavy influence of demons. Many people do not realize that billions of demons are hovering over us, ready to destroy. People go about their merry lives unaware of lurking demons because demons are invisible, and we cannot see their predatory efforts and intimate involvement. The decadent state of human conduct also desensitizes people. A pig farmer once told me, while I was gasping for breath, that if I lived near the pigs for a short time, I would not smell them. I have also had former pig farmers tell me that after being away from the pigs for a while, they cannot believe how badly they smell! This proves that whatever is usual soon becomes normal. Each day, we learn through the media that more murderers are killing innocent people. Robberies, drug use, and corporate crimes are rampant; political hatred and infighting are disgusting, and sexual immorality is everywhere. This is the new normal now, and people brush it off with, “The world is a crazy place.” The devil is energizing this degenerate crazi-

1 Matthew 11:28–30

ness. **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”**¹

Demonic Torment

People are increasingly concerned about demonic torment and possession. Demonic power is a growing concern because when people sink into the godless darkness of spiritual apostasy, they enter the domain of Satan’s demons. It begins this way: **“A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”**² **“Those who live according to the [desires of the] flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”**³ **The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm [living] of the flesh cannot please God [because they are separated from the uplifting, ennobling, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit!].”**⁴

1 1 Peter 5:8

2 Galatians 6:7–8

3 Romans 8:5, insertion mine

4 Romans 8:7–8, insertions mine

Demonic Control & Slavery

Few people appreciate the extent of evil that Satan can bring to a person. **“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion [predator] looking for someone to devour [take control of].”**¹ Most Christians understand that Satan is a predator, and they need to use God’s power to escape the attractions of the sinful nature and the devil’s temptations. However, when the devil gains control of an individual, that person becomes his slave. Unfortunately, their lives will end badly unless they make a dramatic change. It is imperative to invite and surrender our will to the Holy Spirit each day to prevent Satan’s demons from exercising control over us.²

“In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ‘Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!’

“ ‘Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.”³

1 1 Peter 5:8, insertions mine

2 Isaiah 55:6–7

3 Luke 4:33–35

From time to time, I have received questions about demonic possession, and even though I do not fully understand this subject, I will share what I have learned. Hopefully, it will be helpful. I believe this topic warrants attention because I am convinced that demons are increasingly taking possession of people!

Human beings need a Savior because we are no match for our supernatural adversary, the devil. His tremendous powers and energies are devoted to the ruin and destruction of every human being, and he is determined to lead the whole world into open rebellion against the laws of God. Because the Prince of Darkness is steadily strengthening his grip on this planet, we must understand how he works.

Demon Possession Not Found in the Old Testament

I find it very interesting that the term “demonic possession” is not directly mentioned in the Old Testament, but it is mentioned numerous times in the New Testament. I believe the absence of any mention of demonic possession in the Old Testament could be for two reasons. First, when the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, they were a very healthy group of people. They had been eating angel food called manna¹ for forty years, and illness in Israel was rare. Second, before Israel’s exile in Babylon (605 BC – 538 BC),

1 Psalm 78:25

the Jews measured prosperity and misfortune with a straightforward formula. If a person pleased God, God blessed that person with health and wealth.

If a person sinned against God, that person received a curse from God.¹ This simple formula was presented to Jesus one day. **“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’**

“‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”²

Before the Babylonian exile, Jews regarded misfortune as a curse from God. They erroneously believed God sent Satan to hurt or harm those who displeased Him. Ironically, this faulty concept is discussed at great length in the story of Job, which many scholars believe was the first book of the Bible to be written. Scholars generally accept that Moses wrote Job during his forty years of tending sheep. The irony is that Job’s three physician friends slandered God by insisting that Job deserved what he got.

At the end of the book, God spoke to Job and told him that He was angry with Job’s friends.³ Given the fact

1 Deuteronomy 28

2 John 9:1–3

3 Job 42:8–9

that Job was an early book in the Old Testament, it is baffling why the Jews ultimately adopted a *prosperity theology* anyway.

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish nation became corrupt and broke their part of the covenant with God. So, they did not receive the prosperity God had conditionally promised through Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Israel became physically and spiritually weak.

Medical Problem or Demon Possession

The necessity and importance of physicians and medicine became more important and respected within Israel. In fact, the healing ministry of Jesus brought more attention to His presence, mission, and message than anything else! I believe that illness and birth defects had become so prevalent during the time of Jesus that some of the medical problems described in the New Testament are labeled “demonic possession” because the underlying medical problem was not understood. In other words, it is possible that some disorders, such as epileptic seizures, were probably mislabeled as “demonic possession” because there was no understanding of the illness.¹

Since the Jews considered illness and physical defects to be a curse, they reasoned that demons must

1 Matthew 17:15–18

be responsible. We see their reasoning in this passage: **“While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.’**

“But the Pharisees said, ‘It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.’”¹

Even though *demonic possession* may be a misnomer for certain illnesses, I do not want to diminish the fact that there were several genuine instances of demonic possession in the New Testament. Consider these two instances and notice in both cases that the demon spoke: **“Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.**

“One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them

1 Matthew 9:32–34

such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”¹

In this passage, the demon challenged the seven sons of Sceva, and then the demon empowered its host to attack these seven men and rip off their clothes. Interestingly, demons are always after our clothing. Keep this thought in mind as you read the following text.

“When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time, this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!’ For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times, it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

“Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’

‘Legion,’ he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.”²

1 Acts 19:13–16

2 Luke 8:27–31

These two passages (and other instances of demon possession in the New Testament) indicate that demons can and will take up residence within people.

How Demons Possess People

The all-important question is how do they do it? I believe demon possession can occur in several ways.

1. If a person repeatedly and willfully violates his conscience, his sense of right and wrong will fade. In a morally confused and darkened condition, the door for demonic possession opens. Over time, the victim will be manipulated and ultimately controlled by demonic impulses. The obvious indication of a possessed person occurs when there is no longer any concern for right and wrong, and the person inflicts crimes of passion that are unimaginable.
2. If a person is sexually and/or emotionally abused during childhood, studies indicate a strong possibility that the victim will grow up with thoughts and behaviors that are harmful and self-destructive. These behaviors can range from self-loathing to bursts of hostility and hatred toward those who may innocently upset their hurting heart. Whether the rage is directed inwardly or outwardly, anger and frustration left unchecked can open a door for demonic possession. The battlefield is often in the mind, and the devil can wield a strong influence over our minds using fantasies and hateful desires

that demand a horrible and depraved fulfillment.

3. There is a subtle form of demonic possession that is not easily discernable. We tend to think that demonic possession means that someone is out of control, irrational, out of their mind, or convulsing from a seizure. The devil is clever and highly sophisticated, with many brilliant demons working with him. They know that we have been given the power of choice, and to possess us, they need to gain control of that power. Demons have a wide range of tools to break down our power of choice, and they prey upon our inherent rebellion against God's laws.

Mental Illness and Demon Possession

There is a difference between mental illness and demonic oppression; however, distinguishing between the two can be difficult because demon possession can mimic mental illness. Some people are sure they are demon-oppressed when, in fact, they have mental problems. Some people think they are not demon-oppressed when, in fact, they do have demonic problems. Of course, God knows the difference, and He can heal any form of mental illness. He can terminate demonic oppression or cast out any number of demons from a possessed person. If a person thinks he has a demonic problem, he should seek a thorough physical and mental exam to make sure that a physical defect is not causing the problem.

To make matters even more complicated, there are different degrees of demonic oppression, and many different routes lead to demonic oppression or possession, but the doorway is always the same: Free will. God ensures that no one can be involuntarily demon-possessed; otherwise, everyone on earth would be demon-possessed. In this article, I define demonic possession as a condition where the victim can no longer exercise free will. The victim has no self-control because demons have complete control.¹

Demonic oppression is different than demonic possession in that demonic oppression does not necessarily end with demonic possession. Demonic oppression occurs when demons begin to torment willful and deliberate sinners. Demons can agitate, incite, and upset their victims in various ways. For example, demons can rob a person of sleep, and this can create a train of physical problems. Demons will often magnify the innate tendencies of their victims. For example, a demon can make a person who has a propensity for paranoia extremely paranoid. A demon can make a person who has anger problems very explosive and violent. Demons can make people behave in rash and unpredictable ways. When demons switch these personality states off and on, mental health experts are

1 Matthew 8:28; Mark 1:23–26

baffled. Medication makes little difference. What can a victim do?

We Desperately Need God's Protection

Our only safety is to nurture the gift of the Holy Spirit. I call His presence a gift because, to be blunt, we do not deserve Him. All of us are sinners. We need Him far more than He needs us; however, He loves us and is willing to enter any heart that will open the door with repentance and reformation.

If you experience demonic torment, seek help. Find a Godly counselor near you to pinpoint the root cause of the problem. Do not expect immediate results. Freedom from demons demands your serious struggle for victory through the power of the Holy Spirit. The devil knows that God sends the Holy Spirit to each person at birth. As long as we obey the Spirit's prompting to do what is right in God's sight, He keeps the demons at arm's length by providing a strong hedge of protection around us.¹ We desperately need God's protection!

Free-will Choice and Allowing Demons In

When we yield to temptation and *willfully* do wrong, the Holy Spirit retreats because He accepts our power of choice. He will not overrule our choices. If we insist on continuing to do wrong, the Holy Spirit will with-

¹ Job 1:10; Psalm 34:7

draw even further. When the protection is removed, demons approach us like hyenas circling a carcass. They want to control our minds and bodies. God permits demons to put their thoughts in our minds. They can influence us in powerful ways to do greater evil, like the Holy Spirit can put thoughts in our minds and influence us to do what is right. The power of choice is strong, but so is the sinful nature! If we go along with our sinful nature and the influence that demons wield, the influence of the Holy Spirit within us will weaken as demonic control becomes stronger. Both the Holy Spirit and demons are on an intense mission. The Holy Spirit wants to prepare us for heaven through sanctification. Demons are determined to separate us from the Holy Spirit so that they can destroy us. Demons are ferocious like mosquitoes; they rush in to bite ruthlessly if given the slightest opportunity.

Jesus said, **“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”**¹ Many people are beginning to realize they have a severe problem. Demons are tormenting them, but they are powerless to escape the torment. Many want to be set free without knowing what gave demons entry into their lives. If we do not learn from our mistakes, we will repeat them! Freedom from demonic possession

1 John 8:34, 36

comes with a serious warning! Jesus said, **“When an impure spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”**¹ The detection of demonic oppression requires a gift from God.

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”²

“To one there is given *through the Spirit* the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, *to another distinguishing between spirits*, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, *and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*”³

1 Matthew 12:43–45

2 1 Timothy 4:1

3 1 Corinthians 12:8–11, italics mine

Repenting of Demon Possession

If a victim of demonic oppression reaches a point where he realizes his actual condition before God and is willing to sorrowfully repent of his sins and live by faith, God will receive Him. In turn, the Holy Spirit will give him additional strength to fight the good fight of faith! God is willing to restore and protect the free will of every sinner, whether the sinner becomes a believer or not. However, God's hedge of protection only occurs for as long as the sinner will not willingly and knowingly do wrong. God generously provides this protection because He loves every sinner and wants each sinner to have the freedom to choose whom he will serve. God knows what is best for us, but we must choose to serve Him. He wants us to put our faith in Him and obey His Word. Living by faith means doing what is right in God's sight regardless of the consequences. This is using free will for its highest purpose.

Necessary Changes After Demon Possession

One final point: Being set free of demonic oppression or demonic possession is not the end of the story. When a person is set free of demonic possession, he must understand that he cannot live as he previously lived. He must abandon his previous life, friends, and

family if necessary. He must separate himself from his past and make every effort to do what is right and holy in God's sight. He must read God's Word, hold on to God's truth, and claim God's promises, asking for strength to do what is right, *or* the demons will surely ambush him in a weak moment, and his final condition will be worse than before.

If God did not overrule, demons would control the whole world. They have gained control of so many people that we now have the same situation that existed in Noah's day. If you want to be free of demonic oppression, then ask God for help. Make every effort to do what is right and honorable in God's sight. The Bible says, **“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”**¹ If you know someone who wants to be set free from demonic oppression or possession, find someone who has spiritual discernment. He or she can meet with the victim and assess their condition. Then, they should fast and pray, seeking God's will and power. This is not a trivial topic. We can be sure that with the Lord's help in removing the demons, they will come out fighting and shrieking as they lose control over that person.

¹ James 4:7-8

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