

Forum: the occult and demon possession

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Equal and opposite errors

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They [the demonic forces] themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

-- C.S. Lewis in the Preface to his *Screwtape Letters*

"Gods" and Demons

- ▶ Pagan "gods" in scripture are not necessarily demonic forces
 - "Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless." – 1 Samuel 12:21
 - "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs" – Jonah 2:8
 - Reliance on other spiritual forces -- real or imagined -- is prohibited by Ten Commandments

Occult / demonic in OT

- ▶ Sorcerers of Pharaoh (Exodus 7)
- ▶ Saul's visit to "medium" (1 Samuel 28)
- ▶ How do we interpret phenomenon today in the light of these two episodes?

Demon possession in Matthew, Mark and Luke

1. The demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mark 1:23-26; cf. Luke 4:33-37)
2. The Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20; cf. Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)
3. The daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; cf. Matthew 15:21-28)
4. The demoniac boy (Mark 9:14-29; cf. Matthew 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43)
5. The dumb man (Matthew 9:32; cf. Luke 11:14-15)
6. The blind and dumb man (Matthew 12:22-28)
7. The crippled woman (Luke 13:11-16)

Demon possession in Acts

1. The slave girl at Philippi (Acts 16:16-18)
2. The strong man at Ephesus (Acts 19:13-17).

Rest of the New Testament

- ▶ No other cases of demon possession described.
- ▶ Reference is, however, made to demons and demonic powers
 - Romans 8:38, 1 Timothy 4:1, Ephesians 6:12, James 2:19, and Revelation 9:20 and 16:14.

Biblical demon possession

1. Exchange of personality
2. Clairvoyance
3. Unusual strength
4. Moral impurity
5. Seizures and convulsions
6. Physical illness
7. Socioeconomic factor
8. Voluntary versus involuntary
 - ▶ Possession never affects believers
9. Deliverance and transference

My Haitian friends' testimony

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Romans 8:37-39

"The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn."

—Martin Luther, quoted by C. S. Lewis in
Screwtape Letters

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