

DEMONS ARE POWERFUL INTELLIGENT SPIRIT PERSONS

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the Scriptures do not teach that the term *demon* refers to any inanimate object, or to any **physical or mental illness**, or to any person afflicted with such illness or disability; but rather to show that ‘demons’ are evil spirits having personalities and supernatural power, and who were particularly evident during the time of Jesus’ ministry.

PART 1 – ‘DEMONS’ IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

‘DEMON’ PERSONALITIES ARE INVOLVED IN IDOLATRY

‘SHEDHIM’ AS DEMONS—NOT JUST IDOLS

The word *shedhim* is probably related to a root meaning “to destroy.” This word occurs only 6 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Nevertheless the *shedhim* were real personal demons, and not mere idols. The lifeless idol was simply representative of the very real demon as shown in the following parallels:

- ❖ “They sacrificed to **demons**...to gods they did not know” (*Deut. 32:17*).
- ❖ “They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to **demons**” (*Ps. 106:36-37*).

That the Israelites viewed idols that were sacrificed to as representative of real personal demons—evil beings, is proved by the translation of the Hebrew word *shedhim* by the Greek word *daimonia* in the Septuagint:

- ❖ “For all the gods of the peoples are **idols** (Heb. *shedhim*)” (*Ps. 96:5*).
- ❖ “For all the gods of the heathen are devils (Gk. *daimonia*)” (*Ps. 95:5 LXX*).

‘SEIRIM’ AS DEMONS – NOT JUST IDOLS

- ❖ “They must no longer offer their sacrifices **to the goat-demons** (Heb. *seirim*) that they have prostituted themselves with. This will be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations” (*Lev. 17:7*).

This term is rendered in RSV and NJB as ‘satyrs.’ It does not refer simply to a goat or a goat-shaped idol but to the supernatural personality behind it, as is also the case in 2 Chronicles 11:15. However, the passages in Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 may refer to literal animals.

IDOLS USED IN THE WORSHIP OF REAL ENTITIES

Although in the OT the subject of casting out demons never occurs as well as the fact that Paul says: “...we know that an **idol is nothing** in the world, and that there is no other God but one” (*1 Cor. 8:4*), yet he makes it clear in the same letter that the idol is the visible image used in the worship of a demon with which humans can have fellowship:

- ❖ “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to an idol is anything? Rather that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they **sacrifice to demons** and not to God, and I do not want you to have **fellowship with the demons**” (*1 Cor. 10:19, 20*).

THE SORCERERS OF EGYPT USED DEMONIC POWER

- ❖ “...Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and **it became a serpent**. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the **sorcerers**, and they, the magicians of Egypt, **also did the same by their secret arts**. For each man cast down his staff, and **they became serpents**. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs” (*Ex. 7:10-12*).

The account says that Pharaoh's sorcerers threw down their rods "and they became serpents." It does not say that they only appeared to be snakes or that some trick was played. Otherwise one would have to ask if Moses was being honest with his readers. The miracles continued with the ten plagues upon Egypt:

- ❖ "Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile **turned into blood**. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. *But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts*" (Ex. 7:20-22).
- ❖ "So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the **frogs came up** and covered the land of Egypt. But *the magicians did the same by their secret arts* and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt" (Ex. 8:6-7).

A plain reading of these passages demonstrates that these sorcerers of Egypt had real supernatural power. However, if one denies that these sorcerers used supernatural power as if it were only some kind of trickery, then one would have also to deny the miraculous nature of the signs that God did through the hands of Moses and Aaron (Ex. 4:21, 7:8, 9). Furthermore, Exodus 7:3 makes it plain that God's "signs" were the miracles of the 10 plagues. So, when one takes into account what the rest of the Scriptures say on this issue it is evident that it was by demonic power that the sorcerers were able to duplicate God's miracles even though less potently. Clearly the "secret arts" of these sorcerers were the work of demons.

GOD WARNED ISRAEL NOT TO PRACTICE THESE MAGICAL ARTS

- ❖ "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you *any*one who makes his son or his daughter **pass through the fire**, or *one* who practices **witchcraft**, or a **soothsayer**, or one who **interprets omens**, or a **sorcerer**, or one who **conjures spells**, or a **medium**, or a **spiritist**, or one who **calls up the dead**. For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall *be blameless before the LORD* your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you" (Deut. 18:9-14).

Why would God forbid the Israelites to practice any of these 'magical arts' and call them an 'abomination'? Professor Merrill Unger explains:

To the Hebrews, deities worshipped by other peoples were evil spirits or demons, with which magicians and diviners trafficked. To practice magic or divination, or to support them, was to them, at least to the God-fearing and orthodox among them, tantamount to an acknowledgement of idols. This is the reason that the Hebrew names for heathen gods (shedhim, seirim, 'elilim, gad), which really denoted the demons behind the visible idolatrous representations, have been so translated in the Septuagint.

Biblical Demonology, p.111.

Furthermore, because God always counsels us for our benefit, He gives us warnings against any practices that would be a danger to us. If, however, one were to view the above practices of sorcery or conjuring spells etc. as not being from a supernatural evil source then one could practice them with impunity, even though this would be an ignoring of God's warning against them.

WHO WAS "THE PRINCE OF PERSIA"?

- ❖ "...and I have come because of your words. ¹³ But the **prince of the kingdom of Persia** withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, **Michael**, one of the chief princes, **came to help me**, for I had

been left alone there with the kings of Persia ...²⁰ Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.²¹ But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince)” (*Dan 10:12-13, 20-21*).

It is argued by some that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” **was simply a human ruler** of a nation and that this is true also of “the prince of Greece.” However, the New American Commentary on Daniel shows why these persons must be understood to be supernatural beings:

...the concept of the angel’s being “detained with” earthly kings seems untenable ... Who was this “prince of the kingdom of Persia” who resisted Gabriel for three weeks? (1) He must have been an angel since no human prince could have withstood Gabriel. Moreover, Israel’s “prince” was the angel Michael (10:21), and it is reasonable to suppose that in the same context the “prince of Persia was also an angel. (2) Since this prince opposed God’s angel, he may safely be assumed to have been an evil angel, that is, a demon.
p. 284-5.

So if one believes that Gabriel is a powerful angel of God, and likely an archangel; and yet this “Prince of Persia” is only a human prince, then why would Gabriel have needed the help of Michael? The context is of four supernatural beings (inclusive of the prince of Greece) and showing that the “Prince of Persia” is certainly one of them, albeit working against God and His angels.

EVIL SPIRITS ARE PERSONS

- ❖ “And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he [*Micaiah*] would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?” Then *Micaiah* said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and **all the host of heaven** standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.”²¹ Then **a spirit came forward** and **stood** before the LORD, and said, ‘**I** will persuade him.’ The LORD **said to him**, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘**I** will go out and **be a lying spirit** in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘**You** shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you” (*1 Kings 22:18-23*).

Evidently the language here is that of a real person volunteering to be “**a lying spirit** in the mouth of all [Ahab’s] prophets.” There is nothing in this account implying that this is metaphorical or allegorical language in any way. So if one views the holy angels (Mark 8:38) as incapable of any such wicked actions then this ‘spirit’ must be what the rest of the Scriptures call an unclean spirit or demon following “the father of lies”- Satan. Also there is nothing in the text to indicate that this spirit was among “**all the host of heaven**” as if this spirit had direct access to God.

However, does this passage show that God is a promoter of lying? No! Professor Walter Kaiser in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* explains that:

Such a charge is possible only if one forgets that the biblical writers dismiss secondary causes and attribute all that happens directly to God, since he is over things. Therefore, statements expressed in the imperative form of the verb often represent only what was permitted to happen...God can be described as deceiving Ahab only because the biblical writer does not discriminate between what someone does and what someone permits...Because Ahab had abandoned the Lord his God and hardened his own heart, God allowed his ruin by the very instrument Ahab had sought to prostitute for his own purposes, namely, prophecy...Even though the lying spirit had the Lord’s permission, this did not excuse the prophets who misused their gifts. They fed the king exactly what he wanted to hear, p. 230.

GOD REVEALED THE TRUTH TO AHAB

By His sending Micaiah to Ahab God was giving Ahab the opportunity to know the final outcome if he went ahead with his military actions. “If God were truly trying to entrap Ahab into a life-threatening situation, he would not have revealed the plan to him!” *ibid.* p. 231.

EVIL SPIRITS IN THE CASES OF SAUL AND ABIMELECH

Similar to the account in 1Kings 22:18-23 God is portrayed as sending an evil spirit upon Saul (1 Samuel 16:14) and later one between Abimelech and the inhabitants of Shechem (Judges 9:23). Although neither of these accounts make it totally clear that these ‘evil spirits’ are persons, it is clear that this must be the case because of the description in 1Kings 22:18-23 of the very personal description of that ‘spirit’ as well as those “unclean spirits” in the Christian Scriptures. Furthermore, it is evident that such “spirits” are often involved in the work of false prophets (Zechariah 13:2-6).

PART 2 – ‘DEMONS’ IN THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

The Anchor Bible Dictionary states that: “In the NT, demons are portrayed as real and powerful enemies of humankind, who are effectively removed by the power of God at work in Jesus.”

Additionally all Greek-English lexicons of the New Testament describe *demon* as “a spirit person,” “a hostile transcendent being” or similar. As well as the very often used term “demon” and its related terms in the NT, there are the terms “spirit,” “unclean spirit,” “deceitful spirits,” and “evil spirits” which all apply to the same personal spirit beings – the demons - as proved by comparing Mark 5:2, 8, 13, where the term “*unclean spirit*” is used, with its parallel account in Luke 8:30 which uses the phrase “*many demons*” and so showing that demons are unclean spirits. Similarly, when the preaching tour of the 70/72 disciples was completed they said: “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us*” but Jesus rephrases it as: “*the spirits are subject to you*” (Luke 10:17, 20).

Nevertheless, the Sadducees rejected the concept of such spirits, but Paul in Acts 23:8 viewed such rejection negatively just as he similarly viewed their failure to believe in the resurrection or angels.

A SINGLE DEFINITION OF THE WORD ‘DEMON’

According to several lexicons the word *daimonion* has the basic meaning of ‘*a hostile divinity*’ – a semi-divine being, a (higher) power. *According to the NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*: “it expresses that which lies outside human capacity” and therefore denotes a superhuman power.

WRONGLY REDEFINING ‘DEMON’ AS AN ACCOMODATION TO A SUPERSTITION OF THE TIMES

Although, the Sadducees of Jesus’ time and a few Jewish rabbis of the 2nd century taught that Satan and the demons were not real beings, it was only with the liberal theologians from the 18th century, at the advent of *the age of enlightenment* that doubt was cast in Christian circles, on the notion of demons as real beings. A little later, in the 19th century, the Christadelphians adopted this belief and this is all somewhat understandable in view of the ridiculous caricatures of Satan and demons which the Roman Catholic Church had presented for centuries.

So for Christadelphians and a few others, the word *demon* as a person in the NT record came to be viewed as Jesus’ accommodation of the superstition held by the people of the times; but supposedly had quite different and varied meanings.

MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS OF THE WORD ‘DEMON’

Those who reject the teaching that demons are real spirit persons offer a number of different definitions for ‘demon’ such as:

- an inanimate **idol**,
- **Physical illness**,

- **The neurological disorder – epilepsy,**
- **Mental illness (especially insanity), or**
- **Any person afflicted with any such illnesses or disabilities.**

If any of these definitions were valid then one would be able to fairly consistently substitute any one of them for the word *demon* in the text and have it make sense. However, as we shall see, this is not the case. So these are purely arbitrary definitions which, in view of the biblical statements, pose a challenge to the honesty of Jesus and the NT writers.

JESUS WOULD NOT HAVE CONNIVED AT MAINTAINING A SUPERSTITION

Leading Bible-believing theologian Henry Alford, in his defence against liberal theologians and critics of the reliability of the New Testament, stated that:

The Gospel narratives are distinctly pledged to the historic truth of these occurrences [the accounts of demon possession and expulsion]. Either they are true or the Gospels are false...They form part of the general groundwork upon which all agree. Nor can it be said that they **represent the opinion of the time**, and use words in accordance with it. They relate to us words used by the Lord Jesus in which **the personality and presence of the demons is distinctly implied**. Now either our Lord spoke these words or he did not. If he did not then we must at once set aside the concurrent testimony of the evangelists to a plain matter of fact; in other words establish a principle which will overthrow equally every fact related to the Gospels. If he did, it is wholly at variance with any Christian idea of holiness in him to have used such plain and solemn words repeatedly, before his disciples and the Jews, **in encouragement of, and connivance at, a lying superstition**. It will be unnecessary to refute the view of demoniacal possession which makes it identical with mere bodily disease...We may observe that it is everywhere in the Gospels **distinguished from disease**... *Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p.79, (Italics his, emphasis ours).

DEMONS ARE DISTINCT FROM THE PERSONS THEY AFFLICT

UNSPECIFIED EFFECTS OF DEMONS

- ❖ “There was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and *he* cried out with a loud voice, ‘Let **us** alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? *Have you come to destroy us?* **I** know who you are...’ But Jesus rebuked **him**, saying, ‘**(You)** Be quiet and come out of *him!*’ And when **the Demon** had thrown *him* down...**he** came out of *him* without harming him”
(*Luke 4:33-35 NASB*).

Here it is evident that it was the demon that cried out and not the demoniac, and that Jesus was speaking to the demon.

THE GRAMMAR

So after Jesus healed those with various diseases the passage speaks of further expulsions of demons:

- ❖ “And **demons** (*neuter*) also came out of many (*masculine*) **crying out** (*neuter plural agreeing with demons*) and saying (*neuter plural agreeing with demons*), You are the Son of God!”...And he rebuking **them** (*neuter, the demons*), would not allow **them** (*neuter, the demons*) **to speak**, for **they** knew that he was the Christ” (*Luke 4:41*).

In the Greek text the word *demon* is grammatically neuter. This is not clear in our English translations. So when the pronouns related to demons are also neuter then we know that it is the demon that is being spoken about and not the demoniac.

Furthermore, because the word *demon* is defined as ‘*a hostile divinity*’ – ‘a semi-divine being’ and ‘a higher power, it can hardly refer to the ordinary afflicted human.

DEMONS DEMONSTRATE INTELLIGENCE - INDICATING THAT THEY ARE PERSONS

RECOGNITION ABILITY AND SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE

From the above texts it is also clear that the demon possessing the individual human was a personality by the fact of its intelligence in speaking. Furthermore, it recognized Jesus and had superhuman knowledge concerning the final destiny of demons as well as the fact that Jesus is “the Christ” - “the Son of God.” In fact, the crowd that was present (vs. 40), including the demoniac, didn’t know these facts about Jesus, and so showing that the demons must have had supernatural knowledge. Other instances of demons speaking are:

- ❖ “Have you [*Jesus*] come to torment **us** before the time?” (*Matt. 8:29*).
- ❖ “...the *evil spirit* answered...: ‘Jesus **I** know and Paul **I** know but who are you?’” (*Acts 19:15*).
- ❖ “And the *unclean spirits*, whenever **they** saw him [*Jesus*], fell down before him and **cried out** saying, ‘You are the Son of God’” (*Mark 3:11*).

In the above cases it is the demons who actually speak, ask questions, cry out or shout, and acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, albeit perhaps using the vocal chords of the victim. This indicates that demons are persons and not abstract things such as mental illnesses. The NT writers were not fanciful or superstitious in their understanding. So if they state that it was demons who spoke then that must have been the case.

DEMONS HAVE THE ABILITY TO HOLD BELIEFS

Furthermore, only personal beings with a degree of intelligence can believe something:

- ❖ “Even the **demons believe**—and **tremble**” (*Jas. 2:19*).

Here the term demons cannot mean various illnesses, epilepsy or mental disease because such things are not personalities that could believe or be afraid. Neither could they form doctrines:

- ❖ “..giving heed to deceiving spirits and **doctrines of demons** (Gk *daimonion*)” (*1Tim. 4:1*).

By common sense and grammatically this means the teachings belonging to or originating with demons and not teachings about demons. This is because the English preposition “of” translates the genitive case (possessive) of Greek nouns which, in the case of *daimonion*, is subjective as Bauer’s lexicon shows, and therefore refers to teachings originating with demons. So, obviously illnesses, which are abstractions, cannot have or originate doctrines, but only intelligent beings have the ability to deceive.

DEMONS HAVE AUTHORITY AS RULERS

- ❖ “For we do **not wrestle against flesh and blood** (*mortal humans*), but against **principalities, against powers**, against rulers (Gk. *kosmokrates*) of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual hosts of wickedness* in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 6:12*).

Kosmokrates = world powers *or* world rulers. In Paul’s time ‘cosmocrates’ referred to external powers who were not human. The fact that Paul says that “we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood**” i.e. humans shows that the “rulers (Gk. *kosmokrates*) of the darkness of this age” are something other than human - as “*spiritual hosts of wickedness*” which is why Paul gave the following warning:

ONE CAN ONLY FELLOWSHIP WITH PERSONS – THEREFORE DEMONS ARE PERSONS

- ❖ “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons...I do not want you to have **fellowship with demons**” (*1 Cor. 10:19, 20*).

Humans do not “fellowship” with inanimate idols, or sicknesses, or mental illnesses. Furthermore, why would Paul counsel against fellowshiping with an ill person or a mentally ill person as if they could spiritually harm us. Yet, Paul is here saying that, although an idol is nothing, it is the demon that lies

behind it, which is sacrificed to and fellowshiped with, which is dangerous. So in all the above cases demons are shown to be persons distinct from the demoniacs they possess, and to have the ability to think and express their thoughts and so demonstrating that they are real and powerful persons with evil intentions.

DEMONS ARE DISTINCT FROM THE ILLNESSES WHICH THEY
SUPERNATURALLY CAUSE

From his own lips Jesus makes a clear distinction between his expelling of demons and his curing of illnesses when he told the Pharisees:

- ❖ “Go and tell that fox [*Herod*], “Behold, I **cast out demons** and **perform cures** today and tomorrow...” (*Luke 13:32*).

Also, as Henry Alford and others point out, all the accounts of Jesus’ expelling of demons distinguish between illnesses and demon-possession. Examples are:

- ❖ “At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him **all who were sick** and **those** who were **demon-possessed** ...” (*Mark 1:32*). (The same distinction is seen in the parallels in Matthew 8:16 and Luke 4:40, 41)).
- ❖ “...a great multitude of **people** ... who came to hear Him and be healed of their **diseases**, as well as **those** who were tormented with **unclean spirits**. And they were healed” (*Luke 6:17, 18*).
- ❖ “He gave them [*the disciples*] power over unclean **spirits**, to cast them out, and to heal *all kinds of sickness*” (*Matt. 10:1*). (The same distinction is seen in the parallel in Luke 9:1)

The final case is not detailed in the NT but concerned “*some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary, called Magdalene (seven demons had come out of her);*” (*Luke 8:2*).

Clearly, in all these cases, the sicknesses were different from the demon-possession and so the demon cannot be simply a metaphor for an illness of any kind, although the demons were the personalities causing such illnesses and disabilities. The inference seems to be that by the expelling of the demons *their power* operating directly on individuals was broken; whereas the healings overcame the damage done by such demon activity.

In the case of the woman who was disabled for 18 years Satan was evidently the spirit which caused the disability or was behind the spirit which caused the disability and so Jesus attributed this evil work to Satan:

- ❖ “a woman was there [*in the synagogue*] who had been **disabled by a spirit** for over 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called out to her, ‘Woman, you are free of your disability.’ Then He laid His hands on her, and instantly she was restored and began to glorify God. ... ¹⁶**Satan has bound this woman**, a daughter of Abraham, for 18 years...” (*Luke 13:11-13, 16 HCSB*).

Yet Jesus was hardly saying that her sin (satan - a supposed metaphor for sin) had caused this disability. In fact there is both demon-possession unconnected with illness and illness unconnected with demon-possession.

NOT ALL SICKNESSES ARE CONNECTED WITH DEMONS

- Leprosy—Matt. 8:2, 3 and parallels
- Paralysis—Matt. 8:6, 7 and parallel
- Fever—Matt. 8:14, 15 and parallels
- Paralysis— Matt. 9:2-7 and parallels

Haemorrhage—Matt. 9:20-22 and parallels

Blindness—Matt. 9:27-30

The lame, blind, dumb, and crippled—Matt. 15:30, 31

Because there is no mention of demon-possession in these accounts it seems unlikely that demons were involved in causing these diseases and so indicating that there is not always a connection between demons and illnesses.

DEMONS ARE DISTINCT FROM ANY EPILEPSY THEY MAY CAUSE

In one case an illness such as epilepsy may be naturally caused, but in another case it may be demon caused:

NATURALLY-CAUSED EPILEPSY

- ❖ “and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with *various diseases and torments*, and those who were **demon-possessed**, *epileptics*, and *paralytics*; and He healed them”

(Matt. 4:24).

Here the demon-possessed persons are distinct from the epileptics and paralytics.

DEMON-CAUSED EPILEPSY

- ❖ “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is *an epileptic* and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water...” ... ¹⁸ And Jesus **rebuked the demon**, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour” (Matt. 17:15, 16, 18).

The parallel accounts in Mark’s and Luke’s gospels show just how this demon mistreated the boy:

- ❖ “And someone from the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a **spirit which makes him mute**. And whenever it seizes him, **it throws him down**, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.’ ... ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. And **when the spirit saw him**, immediately it **convulsed** the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth ... ²²‘And it has often **cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him**. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ ... ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, **saying to it, ‘You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again’**” (Mark 9:17, 18, 20, 22, 25).

With this epileptic boy “*who is possessed by a spirit which makes him mute (Lit. a mute spirit)*” (Mark 9:17) it does not mean that the spirit itself was mute but, as recognized by all translators since the KJV, it means that the spirit was the cause of the muteness.

Now this incident does not mean that epilepsy is always caused by demons as Matthew 4:24 shows. Yet when taken with the many earlier texts it can be seen that demons are beings which can be noticeably violent.

DEMONS ARE DISTINCT FROM THE MENTAL ILLNESSES WHICH THEY SUPERNATURALLY CAUSE

MARK 5:1-20 records the case, in the region of the Gerasenes, of the insane (*probably manic depressive psychosis*) man who had supernatural power. He was a man “with an unclean spirit” which turned out to be “many” (vs. 9) and “they” (vs. 12), as referring to other “unclean spirits” i.e. demons. It was not the man speaking of his own volition because Jesus “had said to him (i.e. the unclean spirit). ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’” So:

- ❖ “He [*the unclean spirit*] cried out... ‘what have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me’” (*Mark 5:7*).

The Expositors Bible Commentary on verse 10 states:

Both the singular and the plural occur here: “He begged...not to send them.” This is probably Mark’s way of indicating that the demons are speaking through the lips of the demoniac. Volume 8, p. 658.

One could hardly imagine that a mental illness is capable of calling out these words; but rather it is *the unclean spirit* who has caused such illness and responds to Jesus’ command with “I implore you by God that you do not torment me.”

Furthermore, it is certainly not a mental illness that requests being transferred from the man to the herd of 2,000 pigs. When Jesus complies with this request the result is devastating for the herd. The fact that the herd is 2,000 in number indicates that there must have been a very large number of demons which drove the pigs insane so that they responded in such a destructive way:

- ❖ “And he [*the demon*] answered, saying, “My name is Legion; *for we are many*.” Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send **them** out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So *all the demons* begged Him, saying, “Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.” And at once Jesus gave **them** permission. Then the *unclean spirits* went out and entered the swine (there were about **two thousand**); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea” (*Mark 5:9-13*).

It clearly is not the man’s thoughts that are being expressed because the unclean spirit says “for we are many” and throughout the passage the word “them” is used to describe the ‘unclean spirit’ speaker along with all the other *unclean spirits* who are later expelled. There is nothing in this passage that would make one naturally think that this multitude of “unclean spirits” was a multitude of mental illnesses, but rather that these were the cause of this man’s illness. So the case of the Gerasene demoniac shows that spirit beings are being referred to rather than illnesses in similar passages of the gospels. Furthermore, the question as to why Jesus sent the demons into the pigs is dealt with in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* on verse 11-13 where it says:

A tentative answer is that Jesus wanted to give tangible evidence to the man and the people that the demons had actually left him and that their purpose had been to destroy him even as they had destroyed the pigs.

If the above is true, but the demons were merely illnesses, then Jesus would not have needed to cast them into the pigs because the man would easily have known that he was now cured of an illness. Furthermore, if *demons* simply meant *mental illnesses* and Jesus went along with a supposed contemporary superstition, then why, when the 70/72 returned and reported their success in expelling demons, did he not honestly say to his own disciples that it was a superstition. Instead he says: “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Luke 10:18) and so confirming belief in real spirits.

Additionally, because mental illness is part of general illnesses, all the other Scriptures we analysed also show that mental illness is distinct from ‘demons.’

THE GREEK WORDS FOR ‘MADNESS’ IN THE NT

There is no need to imagine that the word demon means ‘a mental illness’ because the NT uses other words to describe ‘madness’ or ‘being mad,’ such as the verbs *mainomai* and *emmainomai*, and the nouns *mania* and *paraphronia*.

After Jesus had given the parable of the good shepherd we read of the crowd’s response to him:

- ❖ “Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, ‘He has a **demon** (*Gk demonion*) and is **mad** (*Gk mainomai*) Why do you listen to Him?’ Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” (*John 10:19-21*).

It was Jesus’ motivation to correct every false teaching presented to him by the religious leaders or others. So if the statement by the Jewish leaders against Jesus represents a superstition then he would have corrected it. Yet in this account Jesus clearly accepts the concept of ‘demons’ as separate from the insanity of which the Jews also accuse him. So if one believed that the word ‘madness’ can substitute for the word ‘demon’ in this account because ‘demon’ means ‘madness,’ then one or the other word becomes redundant. In normal reading of the passage and taking into account the many other passages about these events concerning demons it is evident that Jesus here was being accused of being demonized and that such a personal demon had caused him to become mad.

The “others” in the passage who deny that Jesus is demonized clearly recognize personal demons as ‘causers’ of damage to people but not ‘causers’ of the considerably more difficult work of healing.

ILLNESSES CANNOT REASONABLY BE TORMENTED

Indeed it might be possible to say that when a person is tormented by a demon this means he is tormented by an illness, either physical or mental. However, it is not possible or reasonable to speak of demons being tormented as meaning that such demons are really illnesses, because one cannot torment an illness. Yet, these demons were clearly in fear of being tormented by Jesus:

- ❖ “And suddenly they cried out, saying...Have you [*Jesus*] come here to torment **us** before the time? ...so **the demons** begged him, saying, ‘If you cast **us** out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’” (*Matt. 8:29, 31*). Also Mark 5:7-9.

In the parallel account recorded in Luke 8:28-32 these demons also beg that “*he would not command them to go out into the abyss.*” This makes no sense if demons meant illnesses.

SUPERNATURAL EMPOWERMENT BY DEMONS

PAUL’S EXPELLING OF DEMONS & THE SEVEN SONS OF SCEVA—Acts 19:11-17

- ❖ “Now God worked unusual **miracles by the hands of Paul**, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the **diseases** left them *and* the **evil spirits** went out of them. Then some of the *itinerant Jewish exorcists* took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Also there were **seven sons of Sceva**, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And **the evil spirit answered** and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then **the man in whom the evil spirit was** leaped on them, **overpowered them**, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. **This became known** both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”

First of all, to repeat the earlier points, it is evident that the diseases were separate from the evil spirits even though these may well have caused the diseases and what is discussed here is an intelligent personality because “the evil spirit **answered** and said, “Jesus I know....”

Secondly the demon had supernatural power so that he enabled the man to overpower, beat up and rip off the clothes of 7 relatively young men. It is unlikely that a person suffering natural insanity could overpower more than two or three other men.

Thirdly, this was such a noteworthy event that it was reported and caused fear in Ephesus.

THE SUPERNATURAL ACTIONS OF DEMONS WHICH ARE
NOT RELATED TO ILLNESS

A DEMON THAT FORETELLS THE FUTURE

- ❖ “Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a **spirit of prediction** and made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. As she followed Paul and us she cried out, ‘These men are the slaves of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.’ And she did this for many days. But Paul was greatly aggravated, and **turning to the spirit**, said, ‘I command **you** in the name of Jesus Christ to **come out of her!**’ **And it came out right away**”
(Acts 16:16-18).

Other translations render this as: “*had a spirit that enabled her to predict (foretell) the future.*” Clearly this was an external personality which supernaturally empowered her and which Paul saw fit to expel from her because it worked against God’s purpose. So evidently this spirit was not an illness, mental or otherwise.

DEMONS THAT PERFORM MIRACLES BEFORE ARMAGEDDON

- ❖ “for they are **spirits of demons performing signs**, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to *gather them* to the battle of **that great day of God** almighty ... and they [the *spirits of demons*] *gathered them* [the kings of the whole world] together to the place that is called in Hebrew Harmageddon” (Rev. 16:14, 16).

In John’s earlier writing namely, his Gospel he uses the word “signs” with reference to each of Jesus’ miracles. So it is consistent to understand the “signs” performed by these demons in Revelation 16 as also being a reference to miracles which they perform. It could hardly be a reference to ill or disabled people, or to any illness as epilepsy or any mental illness that could be responsible for gathering the kings of the whole world to a particular location. Again this is something that only deceitful intelligent beings could do. Furthermore, the many who were demon-possessed earlier mentioned in **Luke 4:41** may or may not have been ill or mentally ill.

ONLY DEMONS AS PERSONS CAN BE WORSHIPPED
AND COMMUNED WITH

- ❖ “But the rest of mankind...should **not worship demons**, and *idols* of gold ... which can neither see nor hear nor walk” (Rev. 9:20).

Demons, here, are contrasted with inanimate idols. So demons are the living beings which are worshipped when offerings are made to the inanimate idol. This text shows that demons are not illnesses etc. because worship of illnesses is inconceivable. Furthermore, worship of demoniacs i.e. people because they are ill or mentally ill makes no sense.

- ❖ “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of **the table of demons**” (1 Cor. 10:21).

Just as “the Lord’s table” refers to communion with God and Jesus as intelligent beings with supernatural power so “the table of demons” also refers to communion, but with demons, who must therefore also be intelligent beings with supernatural power.

EXPLAINING AWAY THE BIBLICAL FACTS CONCERNING
DEMONS AS SUPERNATURAL PERSONS

2 Peter 2:4 NAB:

“If God did not spare the angels **when they sinned**, but condemned them to the chains of **Tartarus** and handed them over to be kept for judgement...”

and **Jude 6, 7:**

“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has **kept in eternal bonds under darkness** for the judgement of the great day.”

EXPLAINED AWAY AS: *The angels (messengers) were the 250 princes led into rebellion by Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16). They left their proper abode by seeking the priesthood. They were committed to pits of darkness when the ground swallowed them.*

COMMENT: These 250 were not messengers (Gk *aggelos*) but leaders of the people. Also the term “angels” in these verses is not a reference to humans because Tartarus seems not to be a location for the punishment of humans, but rather for the detention of very long-living beings who are awaiting their judgement on the great day.

James 2:19: “You believe that God is one. You do well; the **demons** also believe and shudder.”

EXPLAINED AWAY AS: *It was, the individual possessed by illnesses that believed and shuddered.* Duncan Heaster proposes that:

““Demons” is put here by metonymy for the [supposedly] demon possessed people, and their observed trembling at the time of their cure.”

COMMENT: Metonymy is a figure of speech whereby one noun is changed to another. However, Heaster’s application of it to James’ words is completely arbitrary. The major and only work on figures of speech – *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (E.W. Bullinger) never associates metonymy with James 2:19. The only figure of speech used in James 2:19 is called *synchoresis* (concession). So this passage is not speaking of “[supposedly] demon possessed people” but actual demons. Really, why would the fact of “demon possessed people” believing and shuddering impress James’ readers? Furthermore, regarding the ‘shuddering’ of the demons – this passage is not connected with the healing of anyone and it is purely imaginative to say that such supposed ill people trembled as they were cured. Such a picture of trembling is not given anywhere in the NT when someone was cured by Jesus or an apostle.

However, Heaster goes on to say: “The usual position taken is that demons are fallen angels who cannot believe and cannot repent nor be healed. This passage even taken at face value would contradict that system of belief.” Yet this is a monstrous out of context distortion of what is said in James 2:19. This verse concerns belief in the fact that God is one. It does not concern one’s putting faith in God – it does not concern the demons as putting faith in God and repenting and being healed (healing not being part of this passage at all); but their belief in the fact that God is one.

So as shown earlier substituting demon possessed people for demons is not what the Scriptures say or teaches.

DOES THE FACT THAT ACCOUNTS OF DEMON POSSESSION OCCURRED MAINLY OUTSIDE OF JUDEA MEAN THAT IT WAS A LOCAL SUPERSTITION?

Here appeal is made to the fact that the Sadducees, who were based in Judea, did not believe in demons. However, one can hardly judge the truth of this matter based on the beliefs of the very misguided:

❖ “Sadducees [who] say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (*Acts 23:8*).

So the denial of the resurrection and of the existence of angels shows how far away from biblical truth the Sadducees had strayed and therefore could not be a measure of public belief in demons.

Secondly the dearth of the recording of cases of expulsion of demons in Judea is accounted for by the two facts that:

1. There is relatively little coverage of Jesus' ministry in Judea as compared with that in Galilee and other places.
2. John, who does cover Jesus' Judean ministry, deals largely with the sayings of Jesus, rather than so much with the events. Yet he does not contradict the accounts of demon expulsion in the much earlier accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke i.e. he makes no attempt to say that what Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded regarding the expulsion of demons was based on superstition which was simply accommodated by Jesus who supposedly knew better.

DOES THE USE OF DRUGS TODAY TO DEAL WITH ILLNESSES SHOW THAT THE WORD DEMONS JUST MEANT ILLNESS?

This proposal ignores the following two facts:

1. The medicinal drugs themselves do not directly cure anyone but simply facilitate the ill person's body to heal and repair itself. Yet when Jesus expelled a demon he then immediately and fully cured the person of the demon induced illness and so restoring the person to normal health.
2. Many illnesses are never helped by medicinal drugs. So if someone is actually demonized then drugs would have only a minimal beneficial effect upon them, and not help them to be restored to normal health.

BOTH GOOD AND EVIL SPIRITUAL POWERS

In his letter to the Colossians Paul writes of spiritual "powers" both good and evil:

- ❖ "For by him [*Jesus*] all things were created (*new creation*) that are *in heaven* and that are on earth, visible and *invisible*, whether thrones or dominions or **principalities or powers**" (*Col. 1:16*).

Here Paul is evidently describing the holy angels as the invisible part of the new creation in contrast to evil "principalities and powers" described later in his letter when he writes of Jesus as: "*having disarmed **principalities and powers**, he made a spectacle of them, triumphing over them...*" (*Col. 2:15*). So it is evident that some of the angelic principalities or powers noted in Colossians 1:16 became enemies of God's people at an earlier stage of history and so requiring that they be disarmed through Jesus' sacrifice. So Christians are admonished to protect themselves from these evil powers. On this passage leading theologian James Dunn says:

In the Colossians list some have suggested that the "thrones" and "authorities" parallel "visible," referring, that is, to earthly powers. But that is unlikely. What is probably envisaged is a hierarchy of heavenly powers, with "thrones" as the topmost rank. This is most likely how anyone familiar with the Jewish-Christian apocalyptic tradition would read them...Likewise the parallel with Eph. 1.21 strongly suggests that *kyriotetes* ("dominions") refers to heavenly powers. *Kosmokratores* ("cosmic powers") and *pneumatica*, "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" in Eph. 6.12, need no further comment.

The Theology of Paul the Apostle, p. 107.

BECAUSE ANGELS CAN SIN THEY ARE CONDEMNED

- ❖ "Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error" (*Job 4:18*).
- ❖ "If God did not spare the angels when they sinned,...chains of **Tartarus**" (*2 Peter 2:4 NAB*).

ONLY THE ELECT ANGELS CANNOT DIE

- ❖ "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and **the elect angels**" (*1 Tim 5:21*).
- ❖ "**nor can they die anymore**, for they are **equal to the angels**" (*Luke 20:36*).

DEMONS ARE FALLEN ANGELS

- ❖ "...into the **everlasting fire** prepared for **the devil and his angels**" (*Matt. 25:41*).
- ❖ *Satan...and his angels* were hurled down with him" (*Rev. 12:7, 9*).

PROTECTION FROM DEMONS

- ❖ “Put on the whole **armor of God**, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we do not wrestle against *flesh and blood (mortal humans)*, but against **principalities, against powers**, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual hosts of wickedness* in the heavenly places [*high positions*]” (Eph. 6:11, 12).

However, such spiritual armour does not protect against diseases because Christians generally suffer from the same diseases as the rest of the general population. The real enemies from which we seek protection are the wicked angels, principalities and powers which try to separate us from God and Jesus (Rom. 8:38, 39). Why would Paul imagine that these entities would try to separate us from the love of God unless they were wickedly motivated? So it would seem from the above scenario that there are **two classes of fallen angels**: those who are free and who Jesus expelled from people (Matt. 12:22-28) and yet to be cast down to the earth (Rev 12:7-12; and those bound in Tartarus as in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEMONS

- ❖ “...Depart from me, you accursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for **the devil and his angels**” (Matt. 25:41).

Can one seriously interpret this as an ‘**everlasting fire** prepared for sinful human nature (the devil) and his mental illnesses (his angels)’ when it is goat-like wicked human personalities who are threatened with the same fate? This passage parallels Revelation 20:10 which states: “*And the devil was hurled into **the lake of fire and sulphur.***” Normal reading of this certainly gives the strong impression that a personal entity is being spoken of here.

WHY WOULD SATAN AND THE DEMONS CHALLENGE ALMIGHTY GOD?

Because Satan and the demons are clearly intelligent it does seem strange that they would have challenged the Almighty knowing that He had power over their continued existence. Yet because of **their free will** they did make this monumental mistake so that: “...He charges his angels with error...” (Job 4:18, 19). In fact, the Pharaoh of Egypt is a significant example of someone whose arrogance against God led him to destruction. Prior to the plagues Pharaoh did not believe that he could be defeated by Israel’s God. At least by the 4th plague, which did not affect the Israelites but was on Egypt only, Pharaoh should have realized that God could destroy him and his nation; but he **dug his heels in** and retained his arrogant attitude toward God, even after the death of his first-born son. This seems to have been the case with Satan and the demons who, at least by Jesus’ time, became fully aware of their eventual destruction by God yet continued to oppose him. Perhaps Satan originally thought he could win the moral argument concerning God’s exercise of His sovereignty over His creation. So because Satan and the demons had free-will they let wrong desire get the better of them and succumbed to sin (1 John 3:8; 2 Pet. 2:4). This is the same as for the enticement of humans:

- ❖ “But **each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires**. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15 NET).

WHAT THE FAILURE TO BELIEVE IN REAL DEMONS MEANS

Failure to believe that demons are real supernatural personalities amounts to: (1) Rejection of the plain words of the Scriptures (2) An accusation that Jesus allowed for the teaching of error. In *Biblical Demonology* Professor Merrill Unger notes that:

Such instances, it is maintained, were not what they are plainly described to be, supernatural occurrences, but merely attacks of unusual diseases of body and mind, and that our Lord, in ascribing them to demon inhabitation, accommodated himself to the superstitious ignorance of his auditors and the popular beliefs of the time...This position not only **violates every principal of sound exegesis of the plain words** of the text, but **accuses the Lord Jesus**, who exposed and denounced superstition in matters of far less moment, **of sanctioning particular error** which has ever been the bastion of superstition....It is mere naturalistic rejection of the supernatural, the outcropping of the ever-recurring problem of unbelief...Skepticism may not be able to accept the scriptural accounts, but it's flimsy arguments cannot dispose of them, p.24.

KEY EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF REAL DEMONS

1. **DEFINITION OF THE WORD 'DEMON' - 'a hostile divinity'** – and therefore with supernatural powers.
2. **DEMONS ARE DISTINCT FROM DEMONIACS**
 - ❖ “And **demons** (*neuter*) also came out of many (*masculine*) **crying out** (*neuter plural agreeing with demons*) and saying (*neuter plural agreeing with demons*),...And he rebuking **them** (*neuter plural, the demons*), would not allow **them** (*neuter plural, the demons*) **to speak**, for **they knew that he was the Christ**” (Luke 4: 41).
3. **ALL ILLNESSES ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM DEMON POSSESSION**

The following cures of “all who were sick” could have included epilepsy and mental illness:

 - ❖ “Behold, I **cast out demons and perform cures** today and tomorrow...” (Luke 13:32).
 - ❖ “... **all who were sick and those** who were **demon-possessed**” (Mark 1:32).
4. **EPILEPSY IS DISTINGUISHED FROM DEMON-POSSESSION**
 - ❖ “...those who were **demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics**; and He healed them.” (Matt. 4:24b).
5. **MENTAL ILLNESS IS DISTINGUISHED FROM DEMON-POSSESSION**

There is nothing in **MARK 5:1-20** that would make one naturally think that this “legion” of “unclean spirits” was a multitude of mental illnesses.
6. **ILLNESSES CANNOT REASONABLY BE TORMENTED**
 - ❖ “And suddenly they cried out, saying...Have you [*Jesus*] come here to torment **us** before the time? ...so **the demons** begged him, saying, ‘If you cast **us** out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’” (Matt. 8:29, 31).
7. **ONLY INTELLIGENT BEINGS HAD THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE JESUS AS MESSIAH**
 - ❖ “And the *unclean spirits*, whenever **they** saw him, fell down before him and **cried out** saying, ‘You are the Son of God’” (Mark 3:11).
8. **ONLY INTELLIGENT BEINGS CAN HAVE DOCTRINES OR BELIEVE SOMETHING**
 - ❖ “...giving heed to deceiving spirits and **doctrines of demons**” (1Tim. 4:1).
 - ❖ “...the demons **believe and shudder**” (Jas. 2:19).
9. **ONE CAN FELLOWSHIP/COMMUNE ONLY WITH INTELLIGENT BEINGS**
 - ❖ “I do not want you to have **fellowship** (*be participants*) **with the demons**. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the **table of demons**” (1 Cor. 10:20, 21).

10. DEMONS ARE SUPERNATURAL BECAUSE THEY PERFORM MIRACLES

- ❖ "...a slave girl met us who had **a spirit that enabled her to predict (foretell) the future...**"
(Acts 16:16-18).
- ❖ "...for they are **spirits of demons performing signs**, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to *gather them* to the battle of **that great day of God** almighty ... and they [the *spirits of demons*] *gathered them* [the kings of the whole world] together to the place that is called in Hebrew **Harmageddon**" (Rev. 16:14, 16).

11. JESUS WOULD NOT HAVE LEFT UNCORRECTED A SUPERSTITION ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT ISSUE.

If Jesus himself had let this superstition slip by in his lifetime on earth then surely he would have corrected it within the writings of his representatives and at the very latest in the writings of the apostle John! However, would Jesus ever have been a party to a lie?

12. "SPIRITUAL HOSTS OF WICKEDNESS" ARE NOT HUMAN GOVERNMENTS

- ❖ "For we do not wrestle against *flesh and blood (mortal humans)*, but against **principalities, against powers**, against rulers (Gk. *kosmokrates*) of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual hosts of wickedness* in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Because the Christian fight is not against "flesh and blood" the "*spiritual hosts (armies) of wickedness* in the heavenly places" must be the demons described in the rest of Scripture.

13. ANGELS CAN SIN

- ❖ "Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error" (Job 4:18).
- ❖ "If God did not spare the angels **when they sinned**,...chains of **Tartarus**" (2 Peter 2:4 NAB).

14. ONLY THE ELECT ANGELS CANNOT DIE

- ❖ "I charge *you* before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and **the elect angels**" (1 Tim 5:21).
- ❖ "**nor can they die anymore**, for they are **equal to the angels**" (Luke 20:36).

15. DEMONS ARE FALLEN ANGELS

- ❖ "...into the **everlasting fire** prepared for **the devil and his angels**" (Matt. 25:41).
- ❖ *Satan...and his angels* were hurled down with him" (Rev. 12:7, 9).

CONCLUSION REGARDING SATAN AND DEMONS

There is no biblical definition of demon except that of a spirit personality with supernatural abilities that, at least in Jesus' and Paul's time, supernaturally caused severe disabilities in humans and enabled individual humans to perform feats such as supernaturally foretelling the future, certain occult practices, and supernatural violent actions. Any other definition is contrary to the very words and grammar of the texts and requires the human invention of new and various definitions, which is intellectually dishonest. This means that one has fallen into the trap of the classic fault of *petitio principii*; that is, of begging the question and reading into the data what one wants to read out from it.

Additionally, there was never an issue over the personal/non-personal Devil or demons in all of the church controversies until more recent centuries. So in summary:

- From Study 18 it is clear that the term the Satan is not a parable or a metaphor for sin. Whenever the Scriptures give a parable they make it evident what the parable refers to. Whenever something is metaphorical it is evidently so from the context. No such connections are made in the case of the Satan.
- It is also clear that the term the Satan is not a term for various human adversaries because of the various supernatural actions of the adversary described.

- The term demon does not refer to an idol, or to a demoniac (ill or insane person), or to the sickness, or epilepsy, or insanity that the demoniac suffers, or to anything other than an evil spirit person with supernatural power. So in the Scriptures one must distinguish between the cause of insanity and the one who is described as causing it.
- Jesus clearly recognized the existence of both Satan and the demons as spirit persons with supernatural abilities. For his modern-day followers not to recognize this would be a form of unbelief with an explaining away of supernatural evil which then challenges the authenticity of the scriptural record and forces the creation of a theory that implies that Jesus was either an ignorant victim of an “unscientific age” or a person who let a significant lie – a superstition - stand unchallenged.
- If however, Jesus was not ignorant of the facts but was making an accommodation to the superstition of the time which stated that evil spirits caused all mental illness when in reality some mental illness occurred naturally, then this imputes to Jesus an outrageous misguiding of his listeners, past and present.
- This line of reasoning is little different from that which rejects the teachings of the virgin birth, the resurrection or the miracles that are detailed in the Scriptures. It thus amounts to an altering of the meaning of Scripture and therefore a suppression of the Truth. It also demonstrates a lack of faith in accepting what the biblical text actually teaches on this subject or that one has simply been misled by those who promote this teaching. Yet Jesus evidently brought only Truth. In summary Merrill Unger shows the falsity of the idea that Jesus would accommodate any superstition when he makes the following comment:

This ingenious, but false, theory is completely incompatible with the simple and direct **attribution of personality to the demons** (as much as to men, angels, or God), and, if carried out in principle, must **subvert the truth and integrity of the Holy Scripture** itself. It is completely overthrown by the single fact of the violent effect caused by the entrance of the demons into the Gadarene swine, which excludes any idea that our Lord or the Evangelists did not assert or imply any objective reality in possession ... But the essential idea of the accommodation theory is in itself unsound. For our Lord did not speak of demons only to the ignorant and superstitious and uninitiated multitudes, but also in His private instruction to His own disciples (Matt.17:19-21).

APPENDIX 1

Why did demon activity seem particularly prevalent in the 1st century? *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* proposes that:

The Beelzebul passages clearly depict the power of Jesus over demons as the evidence that God's kingdom had broken into the present world order....They were direct confrontations with the kingdom of the enemy.

So it appears that it was because the greatest enemy of the demons, namely the Messiah, was able, by his expelling of them, to reveal their existence and the harm they do. Nevertheless, contrary to popular opinion, there is plenty of evidence that demons continue their activities up to today (Eph. 6:11, 12) even though, as intelligent beings, they have changed their tactics and methods to fool the modern unbelieving mind-set.

APPENDIX 2

Does the fact that in **Luke 4:39** Jesus “**rebuked the fever** (i.e. an abstraction), and it left [Peter's mother-in-law]” mean that the demons must be abstractions? *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes

that:

The fact that Jesus 'rebukes' an impersonal fever, as he had earlier rebuked a demon, has led some to assume that a personal evil force had caused the fever ... Otherwise either the fever is being personified in effect, through the use of a vivid verb, or Luke is emphasizing the active force of Jesus' word, Volume 8, p. 873.

Mark 4:39 gives another account where Jesus rebukes an impersonal force: "*Then he arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea...*" So there is no real reason to imagine that Jesus' rebuking of a demon means that he is merely rebuking an illness as in the case of the fever in Luke 4:39 where a vivid verb is being used for effect and/or emphasis.

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SUGGESTED READING

Biblical Demonology – A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today by Merrill Unger.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, pp. 919-923.

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