



Psalm 119.105

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DISARMED DECEIVERS

A Primer On Demonology

By Roderick Graciano



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What Are Demons?

Demons are *evil* or *unclean spirits*. The New Testament (henceforth, NT) uses these terms interchangeably, as in Mar 5.1-20 and Luk 4.33.¹

The wickedness of demons raises the question of their origin, because in the beginning God pronounced *all* creation good (Gen 1.31). Clearly, demons must have been originally sinless, as Adam was at first, but like Adam they fell.

The Bible says nothing directly about the demons' fall into evil, but it does imply that they are fallen angels. Paul names demons as the unholy counterpart to good angels in Rom 8.32, and other passages tell us clearly that Satan has his own evil angels (Mat 25.41; Rev 12.7,9). If demons are indeed Satan's angels, then we can assume that they followed Satan in his rebellion immediately after their creation. (Remember that Satan fell *before* Adam and Eve did, Gen 3.) Satan's own rebellion and fall, an event alluded to in a prophecy about the King of Babylon, involved unmitigated pride and the desire for deification (Isa 14.12-14). This most predominant of Satan's sins accords well with what we know of the arrogant character of demons; in history they have unceasingly endeavored to pass themselves off as gods, even seducing pagans to sacrifice to them (Deu 32.17; Psa 106.37; 1Co 10.20).

Where Are Demons Now?

Some evil angels are already chained in darkness awaiting their final judgment (2Pe 2.4; Jud 1.6). God apparently bound these angels long ago because of their consummate evil, perhaps in association with the antediluvian corruption of the human race (Gen 6.5-7; 2Pe 2.5).² It appears that some of them will be temporarily released as a judgment upon mankind in the End Time (Rev 9).³

“Demons... inhabit moral rather than physical space.”

Spirits Inhabit Moral Space

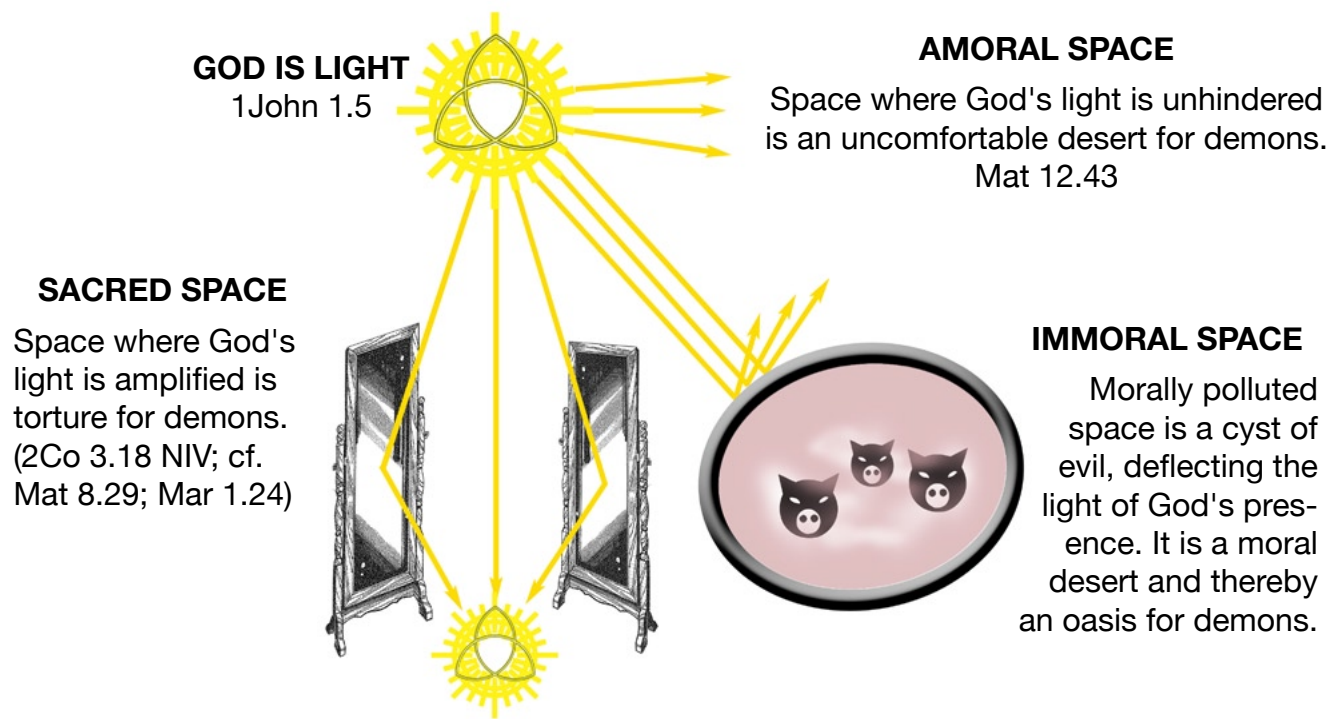
Our greater concern, though, is with the demons who currently roam the earth and plague mankind like Satan does (Job 1.7). Demons inhabit our world, but it is helpful to understand that as spirits they inhabit *moral* rather than *physical* space. Recognizing that spirits inhabit moral space helps explain:

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- 1 I use the 3-letter abbreviations for Bible reference book names used by the *BibleWorks* program, but with a period rather than colon separating chapter and verse references.
 - 2 There are differing degrees of wickedness among the evil spirits (Mat 12.45; Luk 11.26).
 - 3 Theologian Wayne Grudem, an author I recommend, believes that 2Pe 2.4 and Jud 1.6 refer to *all* the rebellious angels and therefore all demons. Grudem interprets the “chains” (see Greek or KJV) in these verses as barring the fallen angels from heaven, but not from our human world. However, Jewish beliefs about a particular group of sinning angels, based (erroneously?) on Gen 6 (1Enoch 6; 1QapGen) provide a possible rationale for positing a subset of evil angels that are now firmly bound. Furthermore, as Edwin A. Blum writes in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, “Peter uses the verb *tartaroo* (‘to hold captive in Tartarus’) to tell where the sinning angels were sent. Tartarus, thought of by the Greeks as a subterranean place lower than Hades where divine punishment was meted out, was so regarded in Jewish apocalyptic as well.... The usual translation of *tartaroo* as sent or “cast into hell” (so KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, et al.) only approximates the idea of a special place of confinement until the final judgment. Though “gloomy dungeons” (*seirais zophou*) may be correct, “chains of darkness” (KJV) is an equally possible translation (cf. Jude 6). *Seira* (“a chain”), *seiros* (“a pit”), and *siros* (“a pit,” “a cave”) all occur in the MSS.”

- Why angels and demons are able to enter our dreams (Mat 1.20).
- Why demons eschew wandering away from a human host (Mat 12.43,44).
- Why the demons begged to be sent into swine (Mat 8.30,31).
- Why evil spirits haunt certain buildings (cf. Rev 18.2).
- Why evil spirits attach themselves to idol images (1Co 10.19,20).
- Why God would have us confess the sins of our ancestors (Lev 26.40).

Let's explain this further. Sacred space results from the manifestation of the divine presence, whether on a plot of ground (Exodus 3.5; Joshua 5.15), or within a person (Rom 15.16). In contrast, human beings often produce defiled or immoral space (Greek *topos*, in Eph 4.27) by their thoughts and actions, particularly by murder, adultery and the overt dedication of space or objects to pagan deities (Lev 18.25-28; Num 35.33,34; Deu 24.4; Psa 106.38; Ezr 9.11; Isa 24.5; Jer 2.7; 3.2,9; 16.18). As one would expect, **evil spirits prefer immoral or amoral space to sacred space.**

Remember how the demons begged to be sent into swine (Mat 8.30,31)? Considering the Gadarene region where this occurred, those swine had probably been dedicated for pagan sacrifice, and seemed like suitable habitations to the demons. Have you ever wondered why supernatural occurrences emanated from some of the false idol images of antiquity? It's because evil spirits delight to associate with things that man sets up to oppose the true God, and they happily manifest what power they have in the name of the false deity. Have you wondered why some houses are haunted? It's because demons love murder, immorality and lies (John 8.44), and feel comfortable where violent crimes and other gross sins have taken place. All this helps us understand that *a part of spiritual warfare is to make demons uncomfortable enough to leave.*





Based on the teaching of Jesus in Mat 12.43-45, about the evil spirit wandering in “the desert, seeking rest but finding none” (NLT), many people have gotten the impression that demons prefer deserts, and like to haunt arid places. However, the demon of which Jesus spoke *did not like the desert* he wandered in, and sought to return to the man from whom he had been evicted.⁴ To understand the story, we must recognize that Jesus described spiritual/moral phenomena, not a physical landscape. A dry, uncomfortable desert for a demon is anywhere that God’s holy presence is manifest. Our worship services are a burning wasteland for demons, but a spiritual oasis for us and the holy angels (remember David driving away Saul’s demon with musical worship, 1Sa 16.23). Demons seek polluted moral space for their habitation, or at least a space that has not been dedicated to God. No wonder Jesus warns against leaving the house of our souls “unoccupied” (Mat 12.44). Once evil is ejected, holiness must replace it or evil will return. **The spiritual realm abhors a vacuum!**

Our goal, then, is to sanctify ourselves by receiving Jesus Christ and dedicating our lives to Him. Then we can become sanctifying influences by reflecting God’s glory (2Co 3.18). We can produce sacred moral space in our world by thanksgiving, prayer and the declaration of God’s truth. See: Deu 20.5; Isa 58.6-12; Mat 18.20; Joh 17.17; 1Co 7.14; Eph 5.26; 1Ti 4.5.

Our Minds Are A Spiritual-Moral Domain

Contrary to secular reductionist beliefs, the human mind is much more than the chemical interactions of the brain. Our mind is a spiritual thing. *As such, the human mind is not a closed system, but is permeable to other minds in the spiritual realm.* In other words, the human mind is regularly penetrated by thoughts that originate from without. Ideas dawn in our minds that we take as our own when in reality God or Satan has whispered them into our thoughts. We have overwhelming testimony to this truth in Scripture: God directly influenced Pharaoh’s

⁴ People should not avoid ecological deserts any more than John the Baptist did (Mar 1.4; Luk 1.80; 3.2). The Israelite woman of Rev 12 will be *protected from Satan* in the desert (Rev 12.6,14).

thoughts in the book of Exodus, for example, and in John 13.2 we read of the devil putting it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Science also provides insight into this matter of our minds' permeability. Doctor Richard A. Swenson writes:

It has now been demonstrated that ALS patients, with electrodes on their scalp can control a computer screen by manipulating brain waves called slow cortical potentials. Using a "thought translation device," these patients can "amplify and dampen their brain waves in a way that allows them to select letters on a video screen and spell out messages." "For the first time," says one of the researchers, "we have shown that it is possible to communicate with nothing but one's own brain and to escape, at least verbally, the locked-in state."

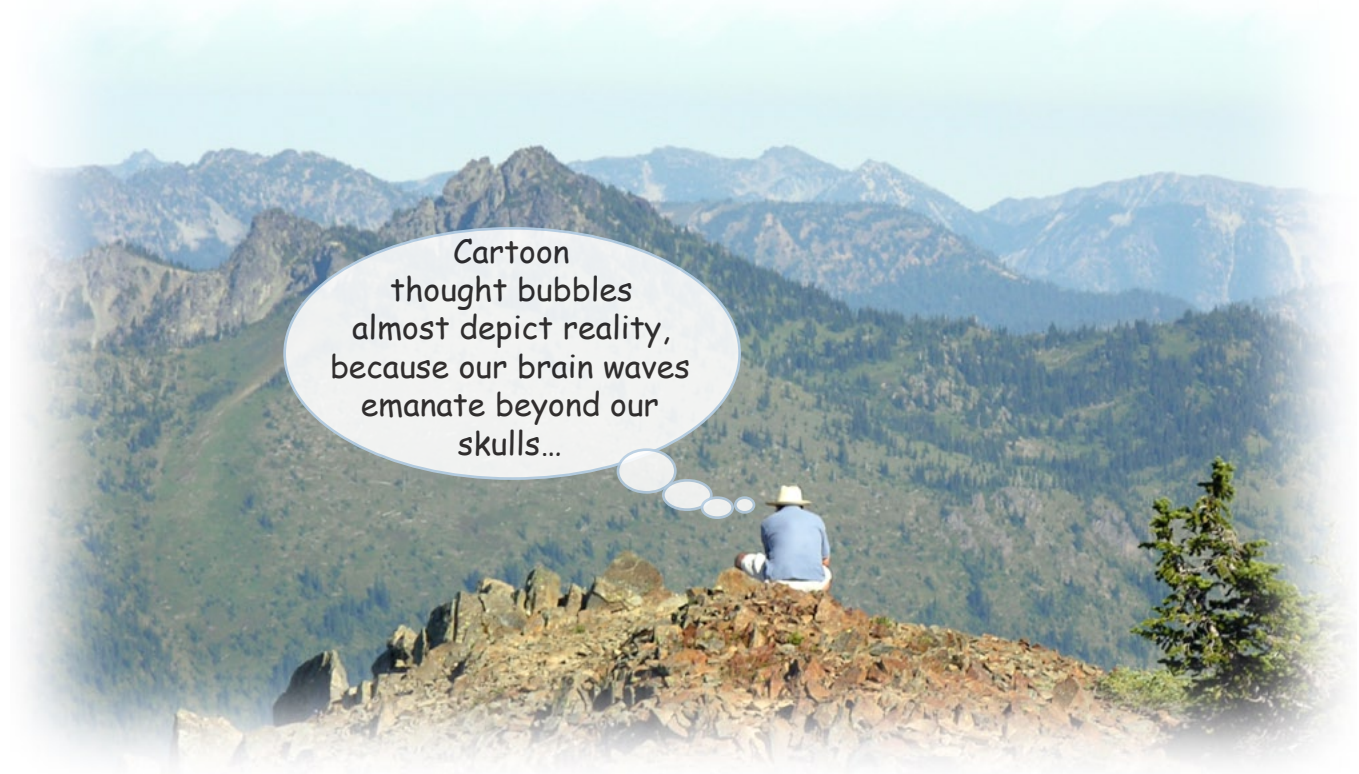
This provides exciting possibilities for fully paralyzed people— even those with feeding tubes and respirators— not only to spell out letters on the computer screen, but also to turn on and off the lights, run electronic equipment, and even "think" directions to their own wheelchairs. Taking it one step further, the possibility exists of going wireless: "If the electronics are sensitive enough, they might be able to grab brain waves out of the air."

Still, ...we act as if we naively assume our thoughts are private and thus exempt from God's monitoring. I don't believe it for a minute. If we speak words, He hears. If we merely think silent thoughts, He hears just as clearly. We can't hide inside our craniums, so it is no use pretending about it.

...If in the process of "thinking," we generate electrical signals, and if in some general form these electrical signals can penetrate the skull and be picked up on the scalp and even in the air beyond the scalp, then it is certainly possible for God [or other spirits] to intercept such thoughts at any point in the process.⁵

Since our minds are such an "open book," it behooves us to saturate them with God's words from Scripture so that we can easily distinguish between thoughts that come from Him and thoughts that come from the enemy. Since our minds are a spiritual-moral domain, we should endeavor to fill them with praise and thanksgiving, making them a true temple to the living God that demonic spirits will shun.

5 Richard A. Swenson, M. D.; *More Than Meets The Eye*, (NavPress, Colorado Springs, 2000), pp. 42,43.



Cartoon
thought bubbles
almost depict reality,
because our brain waves
emanate beyond our
skulls...

Our Dreams Are A Spiritual-Moral Domain

When we see an angel in a dream, do we see a picture of an angel, or do we see an actual angel? The language of Mat 1.20 and Mat 2.13,19 implies that angels actually enter the “moral space” of our dreams. At the very least, Scripture indicates that God and angelic beings can manipulate the thoughts and images of our dreams. We should recognize, therefore, that any given dream *could be* a spiritual event (Acts 2.17). If we awake with a sense that God has directed one of our dreams, we will want to note down the essence of the dream and then consider whether God is indeed speaking to us through it. On the other hand, should we be awakened by a dream that seems to have filled the whole room with an atmosphere of evil, we should respond with warfare prayer.

What Should We Do About Defiled Moral Space?

If we defile our own minds or bodies by sin, the straightforward solution is personal repentance (1Jo 1.9). We must not provide a “foothold” for demonic spirits in our lives by failing to repent of known offenses (Eph 4.26,27).

If we were made vulnerable to demonic attack by the known sins of our parents or grandparents, we do well to make a simple confession of those “sins of our fathers” (Lev 26.40). To confess such sins does *not* mean asking God to forgive our ancestors or us for those wrongs. The biblical word *confession* means “to say the same thing, to agree with.” Confessing the “sins of our fathers” simply means to tell God that we agree with Him, that those acts of our ancestors were *sin*, and that therefore we ourselves renounce such acts, and purpose through the blood of Jesus to distance ourselves from such defilement. Such a confession pulls the rug out from under any opportunistic demon who falsely thinks he has a legal claim in our lives because of the rebellious acts of our forefathers.

What Do Demons Do?

The name *Satan* means “adversary” and “accuser” (cf. Rev 12.10). True to his name, Satan is quick to accuse us before God (Job 1.9-12; 1Ti 5.14). He does this out of his burning hatred for God, and with an unflagging desire to undermine God’s agenda (cf. 1Thessalonians 2.18). Evil spirits under Satan’s rule naturally take every opportunity to oppose God’s people as well, and they employ a variety of schemes to do it (2Co 2.11).

Satan’s favorite trick is deception, and he and his demons use it to derail both pagans and Christians (2Co 11.3; Rev 12.9). 2Co 4.4 tells us that “the god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ....” We have all seen this blindness in the irrational excuses people give for refusing to receive Christ. Sometimes, Satan will use people as his agents of deception. Satan did this with Elymas the magician (Acts 13.8-10), and with false teachers in the early church (Rom 16.17-18; 2Co 11.13,14). It may appear to us that false teachers in the Christian community are simply ignorant, but Paul implied that demons are behind any teaching that adds to or subtracts from the simple gospel of Christ’s finished work (1Ti 4.1).

Unfortunately, evil spirits can also manipulate the material creation in various ways so as to afflict people physically. We see this in the story of Job (Job 2.7), Paul (2 Corinthians 12.7-10), the woman with the bent back and others (Mat 9.32,33; 12.22; Luk 13.11-16). We shouldn’t fear this power of demons, for the Lord will enable us to address any demonic afflictions with discerning prayer.

Can A Christian Be Demon Possessed?

The Short Answer

NO!

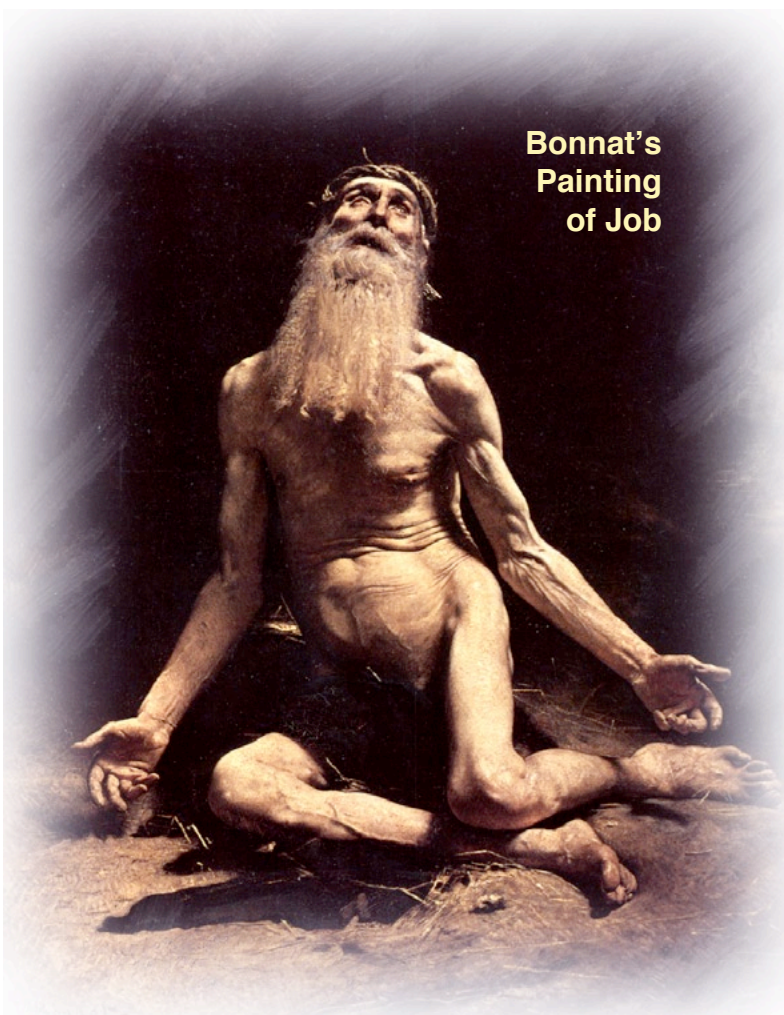
The Longer Answer

The question, “Can a Christian be demon possessed?” is problematic. First of all, the Greek NT does not use the word “possession” to speak of something demons do. The NIV and other versions have done us a disservice by using the word “possession” to translate the two Greek verbs used by the NT in connection with demonization. Those words are *ekho*, meaning simply “to have,” and *demonizome*, a generic verb meaning “to demonize.” Neither of these words have any inherent connotation of “ownership” nor of “complete control” which the word *possession* connotes to us. Furthermore, in the NT, it is always the human subject who “has” (*ekho*) a demon, not the other way around. A literal translation of Mar 3.22, for example, where the NIV renders “He is possessed by Beelzebub!” is really, “He **has** Beelzebub!” The fact is that both *ekho* and *demonizome* are used in a very generic way simply to indicate that a person has some negative, personal association with an evil spirit.

Secondly, asking the question, “can a *Christian* be possessed?” may be limiting. Normally for us, *Christian* means a believer during this present age, someone who has come to faith since the time of Christ. This connotation of *Christian* tends to limit our consideration of data to the NT, and may subtly encourage the misconception that demonization is a new phenomenon that appeared in the time of Christ and is not addressed in the Old Testament.

Therefore, the better question is: “Can a believer be *demonized*?” In other words, can a believer, a child of God in any age, be in any way chronically afflicted or oppressed by an evil spirit?

To this question we must say *Yes* (Job 1 and 2; 2Co 12.7-10). We know, for example, that God declared Job a perfect man (Job 1.8, Hebrew text), and that Job was a Christian in the sense that he looked forward to the coming Messiah (Job 16.18-21; 19.25,26). He was unquestionably a “believer,” but Satan stirred up enemy marauders against him, brought supernatural fire from the sky to kill his livestock, brought a great wind (Hebrew = *spirit*) from the wilderness to kill his children, and afflicted him with a skin disease — then Satan



Bonnat's
Painting
of Job

alienated Job's wife from him and used her to suggest suicide (Job 1,2). As if that weren't enough, an evil spirit put discrediting thoughts toward Job in the minds of Job's friends (Job 4.12-17), and tormented Job with night terrors (Job 6.4; 7.13-15).

Then we have the case of the Apostle Paul, obviously a Christian. Paul had a physical problem that so tormented him that he pleaded with God three times for its removal. We don't know what Paul's affliction was, though Galatians 4.15 hints that Paul may have had serious eye trouble. What we do know is that Satan was behind Paul's affliction (2Co 12.7). Of course Satan attacked Paul and the other apostles constantly through the persecution of antagonistic hearers, but we see that Satan can sometimes even touch a believer's physical body (compare the case of the righteous woman in Luk 13.11-16).

The Solution

If personal sin has exposed us to demonic attack, the solution once again is repentance, along with restitution when appropriate. Perhaps the most important principle of spiritual warfare in the whole Bible is in Psa 81.13-16:

Psa 81.13 "If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, **14** how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! **15** Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever. **16** But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Given the choice to fight demons ourselves or have God fight them for us, wouldn't we choose the latter? Here's how! If we repent and follow God's ways, we won't have to fight off those demons who found a basis in our sins to afflict us; God will subdue them for us.

Sometimes, however, as in the cases of Job and Paul, the demonic attack comes *in response to righteousness*, not sin! In such cases, we can rebuke demonic spirits in the name of Jesus, but sometimes God will call us to endure the demonic trial for an extended period (like Job and Paul) in order to accomplish deeper divine purposes.⁶

How Should Christians Interact With Demons?

We Should Keep Our Spiritual Hedge In Good Repair

We often pray for God to put a "hedge of protection" around a Christian friend. However, a "hedge of protection" actually comes standard with our salvation; to be surrounded by God's protection is the default position of every believer (Job 1.9,10; Psa 125.1,2; 2Th 3.3). The problem is that we ourselves create a breach in our hedge of protection when we cling to unrepented sin. God feels no obligation to protect us when we rebel and so we lose the safety of his "shadow" (cf. Num 14.9; Psa 91.1; Isa 5.4,5; consider also Eze 22.29-31).

Once again, repentance is the simple solution, along with restitution when applicable. This will close the breach in our hedge of protection.

However, when we fail to repent in a timely fashion, the breach in our hedge allows Satan to enter our spiritual landscape and establish a "foothold," a little space from which to hatch further temptation and deception (Eph 4.26,27, see Greek or NIV). From that tiny

⁶ I do *not* suggest we accept demonic afflictions. We should assume God's intent to deliver and heal us. If God wills otherwise, He is able to tell us clearly as He did Paul.



This diagram depicts a person's spiritual life as a two-dimensional plot of land, surrounded by God's hedge of protection. Sadly, the hedge has a breach in it, produced by the person's unrepented sin.

The enemy comes in and gains a foothold. The foothold is in a back corner of the spiritual landscape, a relational area that doesn't get attention every day (bitterness toward dad?). The enemy hides here and builds a stronghold. The unwary person goes about his business in the main living area of his life (work? school? home?), without having to be confronted about his stronghold. Sooner or later, however, the person revisits the problem area of his life and finds that the sin is now much stronger.

The point of keeping our hedge in good repair is to cultivate a healthy spiritual life that bears much fruit. This is to the Father's glory (Joh 15:8)

base of operations, Satan begins to build what Scripture calls a "stronghold" (a fortress). This spiritual stronghold is built of untrue stones, every one of which is a lie we have embraced so as to hold onto our sin. In time, the demonic activity emanating from the evil stronghold brings devastation to our own spiritual life and to the lives of many around us. While we are in this condition, our spiritual "orchard" produces only rotten fruit.

We Should Put On God's Armor

Therefore, rather than allow the devil to establish a foothold in our lives, we should stand against his schemes with our spiritual eyes wide open. Perhaps the most direct instruction the Bible gives us about taking such a stand in the spiritual battle is in Eph 6.10-18:

Eph 6.10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God so that you can **take your stand** against the devil's schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **13** Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. **14** Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that

comes from the gospel of peace. **16** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **18** And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. [NIV]

It's tempting to take this Ephesians passage as metaphorical, and think that Paul is only talking about the internal battle we all have with selfishness (cf. Rom 7.18-25). However, Paul speaks here of a real war with a discrete enemy (the devil, the evil one), and the risk of real casualties. So, the apostle instructs us to put on the full armor of God. The word *armor* here means both defensive and offensive gear, and it is not simply the armor that God provides for us, but the armor that God himself wears and uses (Isa 59.17-19; cf. Wisdom 5.15-20)! Each item of God's armor is spiritual, not material. As Paul said to the Corinthian Christians:

2Cor 10.3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are **not the weapons of the world**. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **5** We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. [NIV]

The spiritual battle is against “the father of lies” (Joh 8.44), and therefore it is primarily a battle of ideas. That is why we must protect ourselves with the “belt of truth.” The spiritual breastplate and footwear are the obedience that solidifies the truth in our hearts. The shield of faith is our settled confidence in the truth, and our helmet is the salvation that makes it possible to perceive, obey and trust the truth of Jesus Christ. Finally, the sword of the Spirit is our offensive weapon, the true word of God, with which we attack every false idea that the enemy throws at us, and with which we cut away the chains of deception that bind unbelievers.

“The spiritual battle is... a battle of ideas.”

As we faithfully fight God's battle, wearing God's armor, our goal is to gain the same freedom from Satan's influence that Jesus had. Jesus said, “the ruler of this world ... has no hold on me” (Joh 14.30, NIV). We fight to gain that freedom for ourselves and for everyone around us!

We Should Take Our Place In The Chain Of Command

Though the battle is real, we engage in it without fear. We advance boldly because Christ has made us more than conquerors (Rom 8.37). By His atoning sacrifice, Jesus “disarmed the [demonic] powers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col 2.14,15). In a very real sense, Christ has already won the war and what remains are just “mopping up” missions that will lead to the final manifestation of victory at the apocalypse (Rev 11.15).

By virtue of Christ's atonement, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to” Him (Mat 28.18). This explicitly includes authority over all Satanic and demonic powers, for God...

Eph 1.20 ...raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, **21** far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. **22** And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The Authority Structure In The Spiritual Realm

Heb 1.4-6: So he became... superior to the angels... And... God... says, "Let all God's angels worship him."



Heb 1.14: Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Mat 18.10: "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."



1Jo 5.19: ...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Eph 6.12: ...our struggle is... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Eph 1.20-23: ...Christ... far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Eph 2.6: And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...



We understand that since God placed *all things* under Christ's feet, and since we are *Christ's body*, all things are under our feet as well! It is in the Name and through the blood of Jesus Christ, that we as believers have authority over demonic spirits, and are commissioned just as the first disciples to cast out demons when the need arises (Mat 10.8; Mar 3.14,15; 16.17; Luk 10.19).

We Should Take Up Our Responsibility Of Binding And Loosing

Satan has been legally defeated and condemned at the cross of Jesus (John 16.11b), but his capture, incarceration and final destruction await the return of Christ (Rev 20). Until then, Satan and his minions continue their guerilla warfare against mankind in general and against Christian believers in particular. Thankfully, in Christ we have the authority to "bind" evil spirits and "loose" their victims.

Binding and loosing in spiritual warfare is based upon discerning prayer, but is a step beyond petition. **To bind and loose is to make an authoritative declaration to the spiritual realm** that stops evil and releases good. We do this based upon discernment of what has *already* been bound or loosed in heaven.

As Derek Prince wrote:

You can only bind on earth what has already been bound in heaven. But it still places the responsibility upon us because, until we pray, the binding is not effective. It requires earth's action to make heaven's decree effective.⁷

“Binding and loosing is... a step beyond petition.”

The NT records the granting of this authority by Christ to his disciples, when He said:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth **shall have been bound** in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth **shall have been loosed** in heaven. (Mat 16.19, NASB, emphasis added to highlight this correct translation of the Greek.)

The privilege of binding and loosing has very practical application when we discern demonic hindrance to our evangelism, counseling or healing. In defense of His own success in casting out demons, Jesus asked:

Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (Mat 12.29, NASB)

Occasions will arise when we must first bind evil spirits by an authoritative declaration in the name of Jesus, before we can "carry off" the soul ensconced in the devil's house and set the person free with the gospel. Sometimes, the demonic interference to our evangelism will come from a third party who must be bound, as Paul did with Elymas the magician, before the message can penetrate and reach our audience (Act 13.8-12).

Our authority to bind and loose also applies to problems with "haunted" houses. Last year some Christian friends asked me to join with them in praying over their new house where they were experiencing eerie phenomena. Before we met for prayer, the Lord showed me in a dream that the problem had something to do with the killing of animals. On the day

⁷ Derek Prince, "Aggressive Prayer," *New Wine*, March 1977, 7, 24. Quoted in *Binding & Loosing* by K. Neill Foster and Paul L. King (Christian Publications, Camp Hill, 1998).

that we gathered on site for prayer, the Lord reminded the home owners that some Satan worshippers had snuck onto their property on Halloween and used their scrap wood pile to sacrifice a cat! In prayerful declarations, we bound all evil spirits who took that pagan sacrifice as a pretense to haunt the property. It required continuing vigilance in prayer and declarations of Christ's authority over the property, but the demonic manifestations dissipated.

Why would the Lord Jesus have *us* bind or cast out evil spirits directly — albeit in His name —, rather than have us ask *Him* to bind them? The answer is: because He is preparing us to rule with Him (Isa 32.1-5; 2Ti 2.12; Rev 2.26,27; 5.9,10; 20.4), and our destiny requires that we learn to act as regents now. As Paul asked the Corinthians (1Co 6.2), “do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” Don't we remember that we will judge angels, along with the ordinary matters of life after Christ returns (1Co 6.3; see Greek or NRS)? Yes, we will judge the fallen angels and consign them to the eternal fire prepared for them (Mat 25.41). Therefore, we can and should, in all humility under Christ, command these evil spirits now.

What Common Ideas About Demons Lack A Biblical Basis?

Perhaps no other teaching is so apt to be twisted and wackily applied as the Bible's teaching on demons and spiritual warfare. This should not surprise us. Satan would rather we completely ignored the reality of evil spirits and remained ignorant of what the Bible teaches on the subject. The enemy has succeeded in convincing much of the Church in highly developed nations that demonic manifestations are an exclusively third world phenomenon. However, if we insist on learning about demons and their presence in our own cities, Satan will do all he can to get us to go overboard in our practice of spiritual warfare. The devil would happily help us lose our focus upon the supremacy of Christ and the centrality of the Great Commission.

Here are some ideas that **do not** have a biblical basis:

False Idea No. 1: We Should Seek Out And Topple Territorial Spirits

One way Satan may divert our attention away from a single-minded pursuit of Christ and His commission is to involve us in the pursuit of so-called territorial spirits. Biblical hints of a hierarchy in the spiritual realm (Eph 1.21; 6.12), and Daniel's mention of a spiritual “prince of Persia” suggest that there are indeed evil spirits with authority over regions (Dan 10.13). However, while we have a mandate to “cast out demons” upon encountering them (Mar 3.15), we have no biblical encouragement to *go looking* for demons to cast out; they'll come to us soon enough as we do the work of advancing God's kingdom! Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles ever went on a demon search, and the only demons they addressed were those afflicting individuals, not those oppressing regions or nations. Jesus did have to rebuke Satan himself (Mat 4.1-11), but He did this in a situation of personal temptation, not in an attempt to pry Satan's hands from a geographical region.

In the absence of a biblical mandate and strategy for seeking out and engaging territorial spirits we should humbly avoid this sidetrack and focus on the activities that God has explicitly called us to.

False Idea No. 2: Ability To Cast Out Demons Proves We're Special

Part of the temptation to seek out territorial spirits may be one's desire to feel he or she is doing something strategic for God. In response to this legitimate desire, Scripture would remind us

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of the strategic value of fixing a widow’s kitchen sink or of feeding a homeless person (Isa 58.6-12; James 1.27). We should never feel that we need to prove something by casting out demons, whatever their rank, because our significance to the heart of God is already established by the fact that our names are written in heaven (Luk 10.20). On the contrary, an unbalanced focus upon “deliverance ministry” can lead to the worst kind of self-deception, namely the belief that we have a relationship with Jesus when we don’t! When false Christians on the day of judgment claim to have cast out demons

and done miracles, Jesus will not contradict them, but will declare that He never knew them, i.e., never had a relationship with them (Mat 7.22,23). A relationship with Jesus Christ does not consist in performing showy miracles, but in a God-given trust in and love for Jesus Himself. We manifest that love and trust simply by humble obedience (Mat 7.24,25).

False Idea No. 3: One Third Of All The Angels Rebelled And Became Demons

“Shouldn’t we all get busy casting out demons, though? After all, they’re everywhere because a third of all the angels followed Satan and became demons!”

This 1/3 ratio of demons to holy angels is a persistent biblical misinterpretation. The book of Rev says:

Rev. 12.3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. **4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. ... Rev. 12.7** And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. **8** But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. **9** The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

The one-third idea comes from verse 4 where Satan (the dragon) flings “a third of the stars” down to earth. The stars are not Satan’s angels, though — Satan’s angels are mentioned later in verses 7 and 9. The stars do not follow the dragon in rebellion but are maliciously flung down by the dragon. This casting down of the stars in verse 4 is a *defeat*.⁸

Who then are these stars defeated by the dragon in Rev 12.4? The answer is that they’re people! The Greek text of the Rev does not say, as the NIV translates, “stars out of the sky,” but rather uses the genitive case to speak of “the stars *of* heaven.” While at first glance this would seem to mean stars [up] *in* heaven, the emphasis is really on the fact that these stars *belong* to heaven, or are under heaven’s jurisdiction. The vision of the woman in Rev 12.1 introduces us to these stars as representing the sons of Israel. The woman framed by the sun, moon and *stars* represents Israel, for the symbolic picture is taken from Joseph’s dream in Gen 37.9 where the stars represent the 12 sons (tribes) of Israel. In fact, stars in the Bible often represent Abraham’s descendants, for as a symbol they allude to God’s thrice repeated promise to Abraham to make his descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens (Gen 15.5; 22.17; 26.4; see also

⁸ Just as the word signifies for the devil’s angels in verse 9.

Exodus 32.13; Deu 1.10; 10.22; 1Chronicles 27.23; Jer 33.22).

The stars that the Dragon casts down are descendants of Abraham. This is confirmed by Daniel 8.10-12, the passage to which Rev 12.4 alludes. In Daniel's prophecy it is the dragon's agent, the "little horn," i.e., the Antichrist, who casts the stars down to the earth. The agency of the Antichrist alerts us to the fact that the defeated stars in view are earthly, not just heavenly luminaries. Furthermore, the agency of the "little horn," that is, of the Antichrist, tells us that this "casting down" is yet *future* and, therefore, has nothing directly to do with the primeval rebellion of Satan's angels. Gabriel interprets Daniel's vision for him, explaining in Daniel 8.24 that a future "stern-faced" king would "destroy *the mighty men and the holy people*." In other words, the Antichrist will bring down Israelite "mighty men" — whether spiritual or military leaders is not clear — and saints. This is exactly what is in view in Rev 12. The dragon persecutes the woman (Israel), her son (Christ) and the rest of her offspring (Christians). As Daniel's vision explains, the stars swept from heaven by the dragon's tail are Israelite luminaries, either spiritual or military leaders who are defeated, at least physically, by the Antichrist.

So, if not one third, how many of the angels *did* rebel and follow Satan's leadership? More than enough! The Bible nowhere tells us the numerical quantity of evil spirits nor how they compare in number to the holy angels — it only tells us how to deal with them.

False Idea No. 4: Demons Are The Ghosts Of Dead People

History and experience tell us that however many demons there are, the number is vast. Are they reproducing? Are their ranks increased by the ghosts of dead people? No, the Bible gives no indication that spirits are able to reproduce, and it explains very clearly what happens to the souls of people who die.⁹ In spite of the claims of mediums and their counterfeit ghosts, the souls of dead people do not linger on earth to haunt houses or communicate with loved ones at séances.

False Idea No. 5: Demons Can't Read Our Minds

"If they aren't really the ghosts of departed loved ones, how can the spirits at séances reveal privately known details about the people in the audience? Demons can't read our minds, can they?"

Well, they may not *need* to read people's minds to impersonate deceased relatives. W. E. Vine has this to say about what demons know and how they know it:

The Hebrew and Greek words which describe these spirits have significant meanings. The Hebrew word is *shedim*, which denotes "mighty ones"; the Greek is *daimones* (or *daimonia*), i.e., "knowing ones." Their superhuman power is illustrated in the records of the Gospels and the Acts, and further in the physical condition of modern mediums and other subjects of Spiritist control. In regard to their knowledge, it is evident that demons have closely observed the ways and doings of men, and the dealings of God with humanity. They have thus been enabled to understand considerably the constitution of man and the conditions of his life. They can have little difficulty, therefore, in impersonating the departed, whose lives they have watched. Their knowledge of human affairs, coupled with the fact that they act under the guidance of Satan, enables them to predict the future to some extent.¹⁰

So then, Demons know a great deal about us simply by observation. However, they *can* also read our thoughts!

⁹ In spite of persistent speculation, both Jewish and Christian, about the "sons of God" in Gen 6.2 being fallen angels, the Genesis text simply cannot be made to prove this nor to support the idea of spiritual entities having the capacity to unite sexually with humans.

¹⁰ Vine, W.; *Collected writings of W. E. Vine* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1997, c1996).

We have noted above that our minds are an “open system” permeable to thoughts from outside, and that our own thought waves can be “picked up ... even in the air beyond the scalp.” In my personal testimony entitled, “What I Learned From The Ouija Board,” I share how before my conversion I carried on a mind-to-mind conversation with a deceiving spirit.¹¹ First using a Ouija Board, and then practicing a common occult activity called “automatic handwriting,” I would simply *think* a question or statement, and the spirit would respond just as a person might in conversation. I continued the conversation each afternoon for days, and in complete silence except for the scratching of a pencil on paper as the spirit wrote out answers to questions I asked by thought alone. The conversation ended when I read Deu 18.10-12 and began to catch the “spirit guide” in obvious lies.

No doubt countless mediums can confirm the ability of evil spirits to read our thoughts. Nevertheless, many Christians have felt compelled to deny that demons have this ability. Theologian, Wayne Grudem, says, “we should not think that demons can ... read our minds or know our thoughts.”¹² In support of this assertion, Grudem uses first an argument from silence: “God knows people’s thoughts ... but there is no indication that angels or demons can know our thoughts.” Then Grudem says, “In fact, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that no one speaking by any other power than the God of heaven can tell the king what he had dreamed,” and quotes Daniel 2.27-28:

Dan. 2.27 Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, **28** but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these...

This is an interesting argument, but fails to distinguish between the power to read human thoughts, and the permission from God to reveal those thoughts. The fact that the Babylonian magi could not get their false gods (demons) to reveal what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed, does not prove that the demons did not *know* what the king had dreamed. A demon with some proximity to Nebuchadnezzar may well have known what the king dreamed, but was unable to reveal it to a human. God alone determines who can *reveal* hidden things, and when and where they can reveal that information (cf. 1Co 14.24,25), but this does not prove that our private thoughts are unknowable in the realm of angels and demons.

The Glory Of A Sanctified Mind

The Bible nowhere says that angels and demons are unable to read our minds, so one wonders why Christians so often affirm this idea. What are we afraid of? Why should it bother us if a demon knows our thoughts? Have we got something to hide? No! On the contrary, let evil spirits hear our minds praising Jesus and thanking Him for His shed blood. If we think on such things, demons will not stick around to listen but will flee in agony.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. — Philippians 4.8

¹¹ <http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/ouija2.pdf>

¹² Grudem, Wayne; *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1994), ch. 20.