

January 9, 2022

Viewpoint from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

Do Demons Possess People Today?

By Edward O. Bagwell, Jr.

Occasionally, I run into those who want to know whether or not demons possess people today. Sometimes we see accounts of supposed demon possessions in newspapers, in magazines, or on television shows. Demon possession has also been a favorite subject in Hollywood, with such moves as “The Exorcist” and “The Omen.” With so much fanciful material bombarding our lives, it is no wonder that we run into people who have questions concerning this. Let’s then, look at what the Bible says about it.

First of all, one who examines the Bible will have to immediately admit that demons or unclean spirits did possess people in the days of Christ. There are numerous examples. There was the man in the synagogue (Mk. 1:23-28). There were two men of the Gergesenes (Matt. 8:28-34). There was Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9). There were others as well. Jesus demonstrated His power by casting out these demons, and was even wrongly accused of using Satan’s power to cast them out (Matt. 12:24). The power to cast out these demons was also given to His disciples (Matt. 10:1; Lk. 10:17). So no one can deny the fact that demon possession did occur at one time.

The question that we want to address, however, is whether or not demons still possess people today. Let me say from the outset that I believe that the Bible strongly indicates that people ceased to be possessed by demons after the days of the New Testament. There are several things that causes one to come to this conclusion. First, the ability to cast out demons was usually connected with the ability to speak in tongues, heal people of diseases, and to prophesy (Mk. 16:17, 18; Matt. 10:1; cf. Matt. 7:22). We know from 1 Corinthians 13 that the ability to prophesy and the ability to speak in tongues ceased with the coming of the complete revelation of God. We realize that, in general, the miraculous spiritual gifts that the early disciples possessed were given to them in order to confirm the word that was being revealed at the time (Mk. 16:20). When the

(Continued on page 2)

***Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our
worship together and hope to see you again.***

(Continued from page 1)

complete revelation had come, there was no more need for them. These spiritual gifts then ceased from the earth upon the completion of God's revelation, and one would assume that the ability to cast out demons ceased with the ability to speak in tongues and prophesy and heal the sick and so on. If the ability to cast out demons has ceased, then it would follow that the possibility to be possessed by demons no longer exists. It would be ridiculous to think that God would allow us to be possessed by demons with no way out of it.

I'm sure, however, that there may be some reading this who will say, "All right, I realize that the ability to prophesy and speak in tongues have ceased, because they are specifically mentioned as things that would pass away. But demon possession is not so mentioned, so how can you be so sure that it ceased at the same time?" I think that we can turn to Old Testament prophesy for that answer. Several Messianic prophecies tell us about what will take place during the time that the Messiah's kingdom is established. One such prophesy is found in Zechariah 13:1-4. Here Zechariah talks of a day when "a fountain shall be opened" to his people "for sin and uncleanness." This is clearly a reference to the time when the blood of Christ would be made available to take away sins. The prophesy goes on to say that three other things would happen "in that day." He says that the name of idols would be cut off from the land — a reference to the fact that those in God's kingdom do not worship idols but the true God. He goes on to say that the prophet and the unclean spirit would be caused to depart from the land. As we have already seen, eventually prophesy ceased in the kingdom; it was done away with. Now if one claims to be a prophet we know that he is a liar, as Zechariah says, "if anyone still prophesies," he will be told, "You have spoken lies." It is impossible for one to speak prophecies when prophecies have ceased; and if one does, you know he is a false prophet. But notice that at the same time the prophets were to depart from the land, the unclean spirit was to depart from the land. So just as surely as prophecies have ceased, people have ceased to be possessed by unclean spirits or demons. Homer Hailey makes the following comment concerning this prophesy: "In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles" (A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, p. 392).

While demons do not possess men today, we need to realize that it is possible for us to allow Satan himself to control our lives. It is him that we need to be concerned with today and not some demons that might possess us. While the demons of Christ's day came in and took control of someone against their will, Satan can only control our lives if we allow him to do so. So we need to be diligent in our efforts to keep him from controlling our lives (1 Pet. 5:8, 9). We need to turn to Jesus and let him control our lives.

Gossip

By Clarence R. Johnson

King Solomon, the sage of Israel wrote, *“A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body”* (Pro. 18:6-8). And again, *“A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends”* (Pro. 16:28).

This truth has been recognized by many before and after Solomon. Friendships and family ties have been sacrificed at the altar of gossip. Even whole nations have been brought low by slander.

Each of us, at one time or another, has been the object of another’s gossip. We know all too well the power of the tongue to hurt and destroy. Perhaps the gossipier needs to be reminded that *“whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (Gal. 6:7). Perhaps that is why the wise man said, *“whoever speaks slander is a fool”* (Pro. 10:18). Jesus Himself admonished, *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them . . .”* (Matt. 7:12).

A good rule to follow when tempted to repeat a juicy morsel of gossip might be to ask one’s self a few pertinent questions: (1) do I know this to be a fact, (2) would I be willing to put it in writing and sign my name to it, and (3) will those to whom I tell it be made better by this

knowledge? If we cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, let us refrain from the temptation to “tell all.” If someone approaches you with a bit of slander, ask him to submit to this same three question test. If he “flunks out” consider the source of that which you have heard, and pour cold water on the fire of contention.

“Where there is no wood, the fire goes out: and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body” (Pro. 26:20-22).

Voter Confusion

By Edward O. Bagwell

I heard of a fellow whose wife kept nagging him to “join the church.” It was one of those churches that required one’s telling an “experience” before “voting him in” and baptizing him. The nagging finally got to him, so at the next “revival” he responded to the invitation. He told of a very moving experience that he had. Impressed, the church “voted him in.”

His conscience got to bothering him, so he went back to the church and told them that he had made the whole “experience” story up. They immediately “voted him out.” The man told his wife, “Now that is a pretty come off, I told them a lie and they voted me in. Then I told them the truth and they voted me out.”

It's Always Needed

I heard a story of a man in the mid 1950's entering school to study engineering. A professor told the entering freshmen class to buy the best slide rule they could afford. The reason: "You will be dependent on it all your 'professional life.'" Well, of course, it wasn't too long before the slide rule was replaced by the calculator. We've seen those same sorts of things in fairly recent years: 8 tracks, cassette tapes, and even VHS tapes! Things that today we consider essential may quickly become obsolete. Tomorrow they may be discarded as antiques that cannot provide the help we need.

At least one thing from the past, however, will always be needed and never become obsolete. It is the Bible, God's Holy Word. No matter how much technological change and progress takes place, the Book will remain the one sure means for getting the right answers to the complicated questions: our origin, our purpose, our needs, and our final destination.

— *Author Unknown*

The Bible: ***Read it, Believe it, Obey it!***

January Birthdays:

The 22nd Jennifer Collins; 23rd Paula Brown; 25th Jacqueline Pryor; 25th David Justice; 27th Johnny Little; 29th James Brown.

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.
Worship 10:30 A.M.
Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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