

Observations on Demon-Oppression #1

In the NT, Jesus and the disciples were often said to “cast out demons”, and that was even part of Jesus’ commission to his disciples.

Modern educated man discounts the supernatural, saying that people's problems aren't with demons, but are all either physical or psychological. They sneer at the “primitive” idea of casting demons out of people.

If demonic oppression was so common in Jesus’ day, why not today? Did the demons just decide to stop oppressing people? Did we “graduate” to a more sophisticated interpretation of abnormal behavior? If Jesus were here today, would he do the same things, or would he accede to psycho-therapy?

Demonic oppression is still real, and demons won’t leave if we ignore them, or just treat the symptoms. Casting out demons is a major part of the gospel message, and is why we use the term “full-gospel” – meaning, not just salvation as forgiveness, but also including the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, physical healing, and deliverance from demonic oppression.

Observations from Scripture

1. Jesus’ ministry was consistently described as three-fold: teaching, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing.
 - Mt. 4:23-24, 9:35
 - Mk. 1:39 – He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.
 - Lk. 4:18-19 – The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
2. Jesus’ healing ministry consisted of both healing and the casting out of “devils” (KJV).
 - Note 1: In the Greek, “devil” applies to Satan himself, otherwise they are called “demons”
 - Note 2: While the KJV consistently uses the term “possessed with devils”, the Greek might be translated “demonized”, if that were a word. The ESV is better, rendering it “oppressed by demons”.
 - Mt. 4:23-24, 8:16-17
3. Sometimes, physical problems were addressed by “healing”, and at other times by casting out of a demon.
 - Mt. 9:32-33 – a dumb man was healed by casting out a demon
 - Mt. 12:22 – a demon-oppressed man was blind and dumb, but was healed
 - But in Jn. 9, the blind man was healed, with no reference to a spirit.
 - Lk.11:14 – when the demon came out, the dumb spake
 - Lk. 6:17-19 – People came to Jesus that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.
 - Lk. 7:21 – in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits
4. How did he do it? Simply by speaking the command, or on occasion, laying on of hands.
 - Mt. 8:16 – he cast out the spirits with a word
 - Mt. 15:28 – O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.
 - Mk. 9:25 – Jesus said, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.
5. Jesus did not need to be personally present to cast out a demon. Mk. 7:30
 - Mt. 15:21-28, Mk. 7:25-30 – the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman

6. Jesus here referred to healing (and being set free from demon-oppression) as “the children’s bread” (Mt. 15:26).

Also Lk. 13:11-17 – And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

7. Demon-oppression was sometimes passive (blindness and dumbness), but at other times very aggressive (the Gadarene demoniac, or the man who attacked the seven sons of Sceva, in Acts).

8. Oppressing demons could cause self-destructive and tormenting behavior

- the man’s “lunatic son”, whom the spirit often caused to fall into the fire, or into the water. The boy would cry out, and be bruised. (Lk. 9:39, Mk. 9:17-29)
- The Gadarene demoniac would cry, and cut himself with stones (Mk. 5:5)

(to be continued)