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What You Need to Know About Angels: Part 3

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ANGELS

PART THREE

This final brief study will center on fallen angels, or demons.

1. What are the causes leading to demon possession?

It can be safely concluded that the overwhelming number of unsaved people are not nor have ever been demon possessed. But some have been, are, or will suffer from what must be the most terrifying and torturous encounter a human being could ever experience! How does this happen? What personal actions precede its deadly onslaught? Here we dare not be dogmatic, but the scriptures would seem to suggest the following causes:

- A. Total disobedience to and utter disregard for the revealed will of God. The classic and tragic example of this was Saul, Israel's first king. Note the steps leading to downfall:
 - 1. The sowing
 - a. His unlawful intrusion into the office of the priesthood (1 Sam. 13:9)
 - b. His rash vow which mainly led to defeat in battle and would have resulted in the death of his son had not Israel's soldiers intervened (1 Sam. 14)
 - c. His utter disobedience in a battle with the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15)
 - 2. The reaping
Saul will now reap the bitter harvest of his sins.
"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him"(1 Sam. 16:14).
The final tragedy occurred when he turned to the witch of Endor for help, being forsaken by God (1 Sam. 28). This would then lead to his death.
"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the LORD; therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse"
(1 Chron. 10:13-14).
- B. The worshipping of idols
"They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God"
(Deut. 32:16-17). This would lead to Israel's downfall.

- C. Practicing the occult
"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer"(Deut. 18:10-11).
 Two of the most troublesome cases concerning demon possession in the entire Bible involves a small girl (Mark 7:25) and a young boy (Mark 9:21).
- D. By way of inheritance. It has been suggested demon possession may be inherited and passed on from father to son, mother to daughter, etc. However, there is no scriptural record of this.
- E. By way of transference. This says one may "catch" demon possession like a deadly virus of some sort from another person. Again, however, this theory has no biblical support.

2. Is the present day practice of exorcism (casting out of demons) a scriptural one?

- A. Some would say YES—
 - 1. Because Jesus once gave His followers the power to do this
 - a. As bestowed upon the twelve (Matt. 10:1)
 - b. As bestowed upon the seventy (Luke 10:1, 17)
 - c. As bestowed upon all believers (Mark 16:17)
 - 2. Because of the example set forth by the early church
 - a. Peter cast out demons (Acts 5:16)
 - b. Philip cast out demons (Acts 8:6-7)
 - c. Paul cast out demons (Acts 16:18; 19:11-12)
 - 3. Because the spiritual gift of discernment (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 John 4:1) may involve exorcism
 - 4. Because of the predicted intensification of demonic activities in the last days (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 10:4)
- B. Some would say NO—
 - 1. Because exorcism in the New Testament was clearly related to the gift of healing, which spiritual gift was temporary along with the other sign gifts (tongues, miracles, prophecy, etc.). Thus, this gift was phased out upon the completion of the ultimate and perfect gift, the Bible itself! See 1 Cor. 13:8-10.
 - 2. Because of the non-scriptural (and indeed, sometimes, nonsensical) manner in which exorcism is practiced today.

3. Can a Christian suffer from demon possession?

This question has been hotly debated by theologians over the years.

- A. Some would say YES—
 - 1. Based on Peter's condemnation of Ananias (Acts 5:1-3)

2. Based on Paul's admonition to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:24-26)
3. Based on personal experience
In 1969 well-known evangelical scholar Dr. Merrill F. Unger stated in his book titled *Biblical Demonology* that a believer could not be demon possessed, based on the assumption that an evil spirit could not indwell the redeemed body together with the Holy Spirit. However, in two subsequent books, *Demons In the World Today* (1971), and *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (1977) Dr. Unger reversed his original position, writing that, under certain conditions, carnal believers might indeed be subjected to this frightening experience. Unger came to this conclusion after listening to and visiting with various missionaries around the world who related many accounts where Christians displayed every evidence of having demons within!

Dr. Fred Dickason would concur with Unger's conclusions. He writes:

From my own study and interviews with those who have carefully and biblically treated the demon possessed, I must conclude that, under unusual circumstances, genuine Christians may become possessed at least to some degree even to the point where they speak with strange voices or in foreign languages. (*Angels, Evil and Elect*, p. 108, Moody Press, Chicago)

Both these gifted and godly scholars would however readily agree that, in the final analysis, holy scripture must interpret and define personal experience and not the opposite.

- B. Some would say NO—
1. Based on Jesus' testimony
 - a. The action
"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?" (Matt. 12:22-23).
 - b. The accusation
"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matt. 12:24).
 - c. The answer
"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how

shall then his kingdom stand?"(Matt. 12:25-26). "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad"
(Matt. 12:29-30).

Here Jesus says any successful intruder entering a house must first of all overcome or deal with the man who dwells in that home thus, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is the "strong man" who dwells within each believer (1 Cor. 6:19), any would-be evil spirit attempting to invade that body must first overcome the third person in the Trinity, an utterly impossible task to say the least!

2. Based on Paul's testimony
"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"
(Rom. 8:38-39).
"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"(Col. 1:13).
"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it"(Col. 2:15).
3. Based on Peter's testimony
"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"(1 Peter 3:18).
"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him"
(1 Peter 3:22).
4. Based on John's testimony
"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world"(1 John 4:1-3).
"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not"(1 John 5:18).
5. Based on the distinction between possession and oppression
This is simply to say on occasion dark demonic forces may so attack and oppose believers from without, causing them to almost feel as if they were experiencing possession from within! But from

a theological perspective the concepts of oppression and possession are light years apart!

4. What is the future destiny of bad angels?

- A. To be judged by Christ and His Church
"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?"(1 Cor. 6:3).
- B. To be cast into the lake of fire forever
"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"
(Matt. 25:41).
"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment"(2 Peter 2:4).
"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day"(Jude 6).

5. Is there any chance whatsoever for the salvation of a fallen angel?

Dr. Fred Dickason observes:

Furthermore, we may deduce that evil angels are non-redeemable. Those that followed Satan in his sin, fell decisively and are permanently left in their evil state without recourse or even the possibility of redemption. They are irrevocably consigned to the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41).

What evidence is there for such a position? First, there is no record of any angel ever being delivered from sin. True, this is an argument from silence, which is never too strong; but if Christ's redemption extended to angels, we could rightly expect some mention of it in God's revelation of the grace of His Son's work. We read of many other accomplishments of the death of Christ besides the redemption of man, but nothing of the salvation of angels. We read of His cross as their judgment (John 16:11; Col. 2:14-15), but it is never presented as their blessing in any sense.

Second, there is the definite statement that Christ did not take hold of angels to save them, but only of believing man (Heb. 2:16). He passed by angels to help man.

Third, it is implied in Heb. 2:14-17 and is evident from the very nature of angels that Christ did not and could not take upon Himself the nature of angels. Hebrews tells us that Christ saves those who are His "brethren"

(2:11). He had to be made like them, in fact one of them, to save them; so He took upon Himself "flesh and blood" (2:14). This means that He entered into the race of men by the virgin birth, retaining His deity in essence (though not always its expression) and adding to His person sinless but genuine humanity. As the God-man He is a genuine representative of the race because He is truly human, as well as divine. On the cross, Christ was the effective Mediator between God and men because He was the God-man, representing both God and man in the settlement of our debt of sin. For man He suffered the penalty as a genuine substitute, since He genuinely participated in our humanity.

Christ could not lay hold on angels in like fashion to represent and to redeem them. Their very nature forbids it. Angels are not a race to which genuine additions may enter. They are individually separate creations of God, and they do not procreate (Matt. 22:28-30). Christ could not become their Kinsman-Redeemer by birth or creation and so represent angels as a class before God.

But since Christ did become the last Adam, the Head of a new race or men reborn by faith in Christ, we have a song no angel can sing—of Jesus the God-man and His saving grace (John 1:12-13; Heb. 2:9-12).

We must reject any teaching of universal restoration of all men, or even of Satan, to God. Only humans can be saved, and only those who trust Christ in this life will be saved. So taught Christ who died and rose again (Matt. 25:41; John 5:29; 8:24). The lake of fire is an eternal torment for wicked men and angels (Rev. 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:11-15).
(*Angels, Elect and Evil*, pp. 41-42, Moody Press)