

Can Christians Be Indwelt by Demons?

by Keith Malcomson

A true born-again Christian cannot have demons indwelling them, and demon possession is only real for unbelievers.

Scripture: Matthew 12:22, Luke 8:2, Luke 8:35, John 10:21, Colossians 1:12

Topics: "Demon Possession", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Keith Malcomson preaches on the importance of being delivered from the power of darkness before being translated into the kingdom of Christ, emphasizing the need for a complete transformation at the point of Salvation. He uses the example of Christ binding the strong man before entering the house to illustrate the expulsion of demons before Christ can dwell in a person. Through biblical examples like the Demoniac of Gadara and Mary Magdalene, he highlights the immediate and complete deliverance from demon power that occurs when Christ casts out demons, leading to a transformed life and zealous witness for Christ. The sermon also delves into the biblical terminology surrounding demon possession, clarifying that demonization refers to actual demon indwelling and control, which is never seen in born-again believers.

Transcript

Part 1 - A HOUSE DEDICATED TO CHRIST

Col.1:12-13, "Giving thanks unto the Father...Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"

We read that we are first "delivered from the power of darkness" then "translated into the kingdom" of Christ. This must happen in order for us to change countries, dominions and citizenship.

Before being "translated" into Christ's kingdom, we were "delivered" (rescued) from Satan's kingdom. Deliverance from "the power of darkness" comes before "translation" into God's kingdom at the point of Salvation.

We read in Matthew 12 of one coming to Christ who was "possessed with a devil" whom Christ healed. When the Pharisees heard of this they accused Him of casting the demon out by the power of "Beelzebul the prince of the devils."

As Christ goes on to respond to this accusation he explains that one cannot "enter into a strong man's house" unless he "first" bind him. The "house" is a person and the "strong man" is a demon. The term

"strong man" means:- 'mighty, powerful or forcible one.' Christ explained that before He could enter the house - that is the person - He must "first bind the strong man." He can only then spoil his goods (Mt.12:22-29). The word "bind" means to place in bonds or to tie up.

Here is one demon 'possessing' (indwelling; inhabiting) one person. Christ had to "first" bind the demon which meant the act of casting the demon out (v28). To "cast out" means:- to eject; expel; drive out. Only then could he spoil (seize) the property.

The "strong man" and "Christ" cannot possess, inhabit and seize the house at the same time. It is one or the other. Christ of course is mightier than any demon and will not tolerate sharing a property - no matter how many separate rooms there are. In fact in Luke 11:22 Christ says that He: i) attacks him, ii) "overcomes" him - subdues, conquers, iii) and takes away his armour which he trusted in and which enabled him to rule the house.

No where in Scripture do we have teaching concerning a demon (strong man) dwelling in a person (house) at the same time as Christ or the Holy Spirit. In other words a true born-again Christian cannot have demons indwelling him.

In Mt.12:43-44, Christ speaks once more about an individual being indwelt by a demon and uses the example of the house again:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished."

"Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Here is a demon that once indwelt an individual. We are told that he had "gone out" of that person - a term used in connection with "casting out" a demon. Although we are not told by what means he was expelled or left. This same demon returns to the same person (house) in order to inhabit it once more. He finds the house i) empty (vacant), ii) swept (cleaned out), iii) and garnished (set in order; decorated).

These are like those of whom Peter spoke, whom he likened unto pigs that had been washed, but who had not experienced a changed nature; a born-again experience in which Christ comes in to dwell (II Pet.2:18-22). They were clean but not indwelt by the person of Christ. This house was temporarily free of its demons. It was swept out and even made to look orderly with decorations but this person never allowed Christ to come in to dwell and to live His life in them.

Now when this demon returns with seven other wicked spirits, there is no one living there who can stop them re-entering and indwelling the person once again. Now they are in a worse state than previously. To play games with the things of God is dangerous.

If Christ had been living in that house, if He had been indwelling, this could not have happened. The only cure to indwelling demons is an indwelling Christ.

Part 2 - BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

During Christ's ministry he cast demons out of many. Let's look at two examples that the Holy Spirit has given to us as examples of what was typical.

The Demoniac of Gadara

In three of the Gospels we read of Christ and His disciples coming to Gadara by boat (Mt.8; Mk.5; Lk.8). Upon arriving there two men met Him who were "possessed of devils." Mark and Luke concentrate on the testimony of one of these men who came to be known as the Demonic of Gadara.

Previous to Christ delivering this man he had lived amongst the tombs since being possessed a "long time." At an early stage and on various occasions the demons would "catch him" (seize him). At those times, which were frequent, the local population would try to with strain him with "fettters and chains" but he simply broke them - this was not natural strength. Finally these demons drove him into the wilderness and mountains where he lived amongst the tombs. He lived in a state of nakedness, crying and cutting himself day and night. He was so "exceeding fierce" that none of the local people could pass by there.

Thank God that that was not the end of the story: "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him" (Mk.5:6). What a marvellous thing. A legion of demons could not keep this man from Christ. The very demons of Hell acknowledge the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ. i) They acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, ii) they acknowledge that their future punishment is torment, iii) and they acknowledge that Christ has the power to cast them totally out of an individual, without any reference to legal power or rights, and to free the man totally from their power.

When Jesus asked them what their name was they answered: "My name is Legion: for we are many." They then requested that they be cast into a herd of about 2000 swine which were nearby. Once He allowed them to go they "entered into" the pigs causing them to run "violently" down a steep embankment into the sea drowning them all. The herders ran to the city and once they told the people what had happened almost the whole city and countryside went out to see.

"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid" (Lk.8:35).

Here is one man who was indwelt by a legion of demons which could have been about 6000 demons in total. This would mean that just three in each of the pigs was enough to cause them to commit suicide. This man was no follower of Christ when possessed. But when Christ cast the demons out in one act in one moment all left and not one remained. The man was immediately set free from all demonic power. When the people came to see the man he was sitting at the feet of Jesus as a genuine follower and disciple of Christ. He was now in his right mind. And he was now clothed properly (meaning nakedness is demonically inspired).

The man wanted to stay with Christ but He told him to go home to his friends and to "shew how great things God hath done" unto him in having compassion upon him. The man returned home and began to "publish" (to herald like a town crier) to the whole city "how great things Jesus had done unto him." Although just a new convert set free from 6000 demons there was nothing delicate or fragile about his salvation. Christ could send this lone witness back into his city to proclaim the goodness of God.

He needed no further deliverance ministry. It did not take weeks, months or years to expel the demons. Once the demons were expelled the man was translated into the kingdom of God and was a shining testimony of freedom in Christ.

Mary Magdalene

In Lk.8:2 we read of "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils." And a little later we read in Mk.16:9 concerning her "out of whom [Christ] had cast seven devils." When she first appears on the scene of time this is her testimony and it is held forth until the time of Christ's death, burial and resurrection as a witness to His mighty delivering ministry.

The name "Mary Magdalene" was given to this little lady to distinguish her from the other Mary's mentioned in Scripture. She was from Magdala on the coast of Galilee. We are not told of the events, circumstances or reasons that led to her being possessed of seven demons but prior to her conversion those who knew her were very well aware that she was afflicted by demon power. It was evident, visible and known to all. Among those who were from Magdala none were so afflicted as her.

These seven demons were literally dwelling within her. Who can imagine what affliction and torment these seven devils caused her. Later it is revealed that she was a woman of "substance" (property or possessions - Lk.8:3). She had money but money could not help her against demon powers.

The fact of her deliverance from demon powers which Christ "cast out" out of her was a well known testimony in the early church. Please note that during those first years of her salvation her testimony does not change. It was always the "seven devils." Please note this number did not grow as she grew in Christ over the next two or three years. Christ cast seven demons out and no more. This was not progressive ministry over a few years. This was not an example of a Christian having demons cast out after her salvation. First she was delivered and then saved. Christ had to bind and cast out these strongmen before claiming her as His own.

All we read about after her conversion is her utter devotion to Christ. She was one of several women who joined and travelled with the apostolic band which included Christ and the twelve disciples. She is mentioned fourteen times in the gospels. Eight of those times she is mentioned first when mentioned with other ladies. These ladies used their substance to finance this band of preachers who went forth preaching, teaching, healing and casting out demons. What hope and joy her testimony and witness must have brought to many oppressed souls. There is no talk of her still having demons or receiving such ministry while travelling with the apostolic band. No, she testified of a past deliverance which was never repeated.

With the Demonic of Gadara and Mary Magdalene we read of experiential testimonies which mention nothing of a ministry of deliverance after salvation - in fact the very opposite. We read of two people who once set free from demon power became shining witnesses of freedom in Christ and zealous witnesses for Christ. These are the only experiential testimonies which carry weight for they are biblical ones given by the Holy Spirit and of course will be typical of thousands of others who Christ delivered in His ministry.

Part 3 - TERMINOLOGY

To be able to answer the question of whether a Christian can be indwelt by a demon or not it will help to clearly understand what the biblical words actually mean in the New Testament in context rather than how

they are used today by Christians who define their convictions by what they have experienced, seen or heard.

Daimonizomai

The Greek term daimonizomai is used 13 times in the New Testament and only in the Gospels. The following are the references where this word is used and how it is commonly translated into English:

"those which were possessed with devils" Mt.4:24; "that were possessed with devils" 8:16; "possessed with devils" 8:28; "possessed of the devils" 8:33; "possessed with a devil" 9:32; "one possessed with a devil" 12:22; "vexed with a devil" 15:22; "them that were possessed with devils" Mk.1:32; "him that was possessed with the devil" 5:15; "to him that was possessed with the devil" 5:16; "he that had been possessed with the devil" 5:18; "he that was possessed of the devils" Lk.8:36; "of him that hath a devil" Jn.10:21.

Those who teach that Christians can have demons usually prefer to translate this Greek word as 'demonized.' They make much of how this word is translated into English. They are willing to say that Christians cannot be possessed by demons, in the sense of being owned by demons, but they do teach that Christians can be demonized, meaning indwelt or outwardly oppressed by demons. They sometimes teach that full demon-possession is rare and confined to unbelievers but that demonization is frequent and is common amongst all believers. They try to infer that purely on the basis of this confusion in the translation of this word many Christians reject the teaching that they can have demons indwelling them.

They teach that this term daimonizomai can mean someone controlled and indwelt by a demon but also someone who is outwardly oppressed and influenced by a demon. They make it a broad term making it a common and frequent experience amongst Christians in the Church. They also make it a term of degrees meaning that it can range from extreme possession to mild oppression and can be used of those who are unsaved as well as those who are saved.

To Have a Demon

The Greek term ech[■] daimonion is also used in the New Testament in connection to a demon's influence upon a person. It basically means 'to have a demon.' This is used 8 times in Matthew, Mark and John. Once it is used in connection with the Demonic of Gadara (Lk.8:27) who is also called daimonizomai three times (Mk.5:15, 16, 18) and who is said to be a "man with an unclean spirit" (Mk.5:2). This reveals that these three terms are synonymous in describing the state and condition of the one man. The other seven times this word is used it is in connection to the accusation that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ both "had a devil." The following eight references reveal how and where it is translated into English:

"He hath a devil" Mt.11:18; "He hath a devil" Lk.7:33; "which had devils" Lk.8:27; "Thou hast a devil" Jn.7:20; "hast a devil...I have not a devil... hast a devil." Jn.8:48-49, 52; "He hath a devil" Jn.10:20

Possess

Nearly all those who promote the teaching of the demonization of Christians try to infer that our English version of the Bible is wrong in speaking of demonization as possession. But it will be clearly seen in the following quotes that the word possession is a very good English translation of daimonizomai and conveys an accurate meaning as long as the English word is understood correctly.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines it: "Of a person or body of persons: To hold, occupy (a place or territory); to reside or be stationed in; to inhabit (with or without ownership)."

The American Heritage Dictionary defines it: "to gain or exert influence or control over; dominate"

W. E. Vine translates the verb this way: "To be possessed of a demon, to act under the control of a demon."

The Online Etymology Dictionary defines it: "to hold, occupy, reside in (without regard to ownership)...to hold as property"

All of these translations, definitions and explanations of the English term 'possession' perfectly describe the New Testament teaching concerning the indwelling of demons. Those who try to infer that daimonizomai cannot mean 'possession' are totally incorrect. They are merely redefining words in order to establish their own teaching. The translators of the King James Version of the Bible had a full grasp of the English language as well as Greek and Hebrew. They also had a full grasp of what the New Testament taught in connection with daimonizomai.

Demonization

If we study each reference where these terms are used we are able to then clearly define and summarize the biblical teaching of demon possession or demonization as revealed by the Spirit of God in the written Word.

1. A person who is 'demonized' or who 'has a demon' is one who has one or more demons dwelling inside of them, in their body. Demons literally make this person their house. This is not an outside influence but an internal influence. These terms are never used in connection with oppression, temptation or other attacks which come from the outside. The tense of daimonizomai means it was something that happened at an actual point in time in the past.

2. When demons indwell an individual they exert an abnormal, unnatural, control and dominating influence upon the person physically or mentally. This may be manifest through dumbness (Mt.9:32), blindness (Mt.12:22-29), insanity (Mt.17:15), as well as in cutting oneself and nakedness (Mk.5:5, 15). It would seem that the demons also have the ability to speak and act freely without restraint from the individual (Mk.5:7-9). The personality of the demons may literally be manifest and so utterly hide the personality of the man or woman they indwell. It is a serious dominating influence not a mild influence or natural fear. Demonization manifests in mental and physical torment rather than any particular dominant sin.

3. The only cure is that the demon or demons be cast out through the power and authority of Jesus Christ. Every time Christ encountered such a person we read of Him casting the demon out. Each time that the demon or demons left a dramatic change was brought about physically, mentally and spiritually that was immediately noticeable to all and experienced by the individual.

4. These terms never refer to a born-again believer. Not once is there any sign in any of the 13 uses of daimonizomai that one single believer was referred to as demonized. Not one. I would encourage you to simply read through these verses listed above in order to confirm this for yourself. Again the 8 times that ech daimonion is used it always refers to a false accusation against Christ and John the Baptist apart from once. The one time it is used differently is when it refers to the Demonic of Gadara. So the only actual example of someone 'having a demon' is in extreme demon possession.

Conclusion

When such words and teachings as demonization and of a person having a demon are used in connection with Christians we can see from scripture that it is being taken out of context as well as misused and abused. Demon possession is real. The terrible affliction and torment of those possessed is very real and terrible. But the teaching that most Christians are demonized, either indwelt by a demon or at least controlled by a demon, is totally unbiblical. The contemporary teaching of demonology is a million miles from the biblical teaching of demonology. Demonization does happen today but all unbelievers are not demonized never mind most Christians.

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