

The Satanic Host

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon explores the nature, authority, and influence of the Satanic host, emphasizing the reality of spiritual warfare faced by believers today.

Topics: "Demon Possession", "Satanic Influence"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into a controversial discussion between Christ and the Pharisees, where Christ implies that Satan is a King with authority over a kingdom, as seen in the healing of a man possessed by a demon. The Scriptures reveal the reality and personality of evil spirits, known as demons, who serve Satan through possession or influence. Demon possession, though not limited to Jesus' time, is characterized by wickedness and a desire to hinder God's purpose. Demon influence aims to mislead the unsaved and wage war against believers, as they await their eternal doom.

Transcript

Christ inferred, in one of His controversies with the Pharisees (Matt. 12:22-30), that Satan is a King; and as such is in authority over a kingdom. This particular discussion was in regard to the fact that Christ had healed one "possessed with a demon, blind and dumb." The Pharisees claimed that the demon had been cast out by Beelzebub the prince of demons, or the one whom Jesus, later in the narrative, calls Satan. The passage is as follows: "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? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 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? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come unto you. 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."

By this Scripture it may be seen that the kingdom of Satan is a host of bodiless spirits. Although their origin cannot be definitely traced, it is probable that they were created as subjects of Satan in the primal glory, as he, also, was created as their prince and king. Satan, being in authority over these beings, doubtless

drew them after him in his sinful attempt to thrust himself into the place of God.

It would seem that Satan is in authority over two distinct orders of beings--the Satanic order of the earth, and the Satanic host of the air. It is clear that he secured the scepter of government in the earth from Adam, by right of conquest: while his authority over the Satanic host is, undoubtedly, that which he has been permitted to retain from his creation. If Satan has thus kept his authority over these spirits from the beginning, it follows that they are in full sympathy with him and render him willing service. The following Scriptures emphasize the authority of Satan over these beings: "And if Satan cast out Satan, how then shall his kingdom stand?" (Matt. 12:26). "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).

The reality and personality of this host of evil spirits is taught in Scripture; and a careful study of the numerous passages in which they are mentioned will reveal how God has provided complete instruction in His Word concerning this theme on which so much of the believer's welfare depends.

These spirits are usually referred to in both the Authorized and Revised Versions of the New Testament as "devils," but the word might better have been translated "demons."

In considering the service these beings render to Satan, it is important to distinguish between demon possession or control, and demon influence. In the one case the body is entered and a dominating control is gained: while in the other case a warfare from without is carried on by suggestion, temptation, and influence.

Investigation of the Scriptures in regard to demon possession reveals:

First: That this host is made up of bodiless spirits only. The following Scripture verifies this statement: "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 tak'eth 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" (Matt. 12:43-45). "And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them" (Mark 5:12).

Second: They are, however, not only seeking to enter the bodies of either mortals or beasts (for their power seems to be in some measure dependent upon such embodiment); but they are constantly seen to be thus embodied, according to the New Testament. A few of these passages are given here: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16). "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake" (Matt. 9:32, 33). "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed" (Acts 8:6,7). "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying" (Acts 16:16). "And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And

always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea" (Mark 5:1-13).

Third: They are wicked, unclean, and vicious. Many passages might be quoted in proof of this statement: "And when he was come to the other side of the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way" (Matt. 8:28). "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1). "There met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:2-5). "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming" (Mark 9:20).

It might be added that there seem to be degrees of wickedness represented by these spirits: for it is stated in Matt. 12:43-45 that the demon, returning to his house, "taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself."

The question is often raised whether demon possession obtains at the present time. Although the authentic records of such control are almost wholly limited to the three years of the public ministry of Jesus, it is incredible that demon possession did not exist before that time, or has not existed since. In this connection it should be remembered that these beings are not only intelligent themselves, but that they are directly governed and ordered by Satan, whose wisdom and cunning are so clearly set forth in the Scriptures. It is reasonable to conclude that they, like their monarch, are adapting the manner of their activity to the enlightenment of the age and locality. It is evident that they are not now less inclined than before to enter and dominate a body. Demon possession in the present time is probably often unsuspected because of the unrecognized fact that demons are capable of inspiring a moral and exemplary life, as well as of appearing as the dominating spirit of a spiritist medium, or through the grosser manifestations that are recorded by missionaries from heathen lands. These demons, too, like their king, will appear as "angels of light" as well as "roaring lions," when by the former impersonation they can more perfectly further the stupendous undertakings of Satan in his warfare against the work of God.

Demon influence, like the activity of Satan, is prompted by two motives: both to hinder the purpose of God for humanity, and to extend the authority of Satan. They, therefore, at the command of their king, willingly co-operate in all his God-dishonoring undertakings. Their influence is exercised both to mislead the unsaved and to wage an unceasing warfare against the believer (Eph. 6:12).

Their motive is suggested in what is revealed by their knowledge of the authority and deity of Christ, as well as by what they know of their eternal doom. The following passages are important in this connection: "And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). "And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him" (Mark 1:23-25). "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (Acts 19:15). "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jas. 2:19).

Of the methods of demons in the latter days of the age, the Scriptures bear special testimony. They will cover their lies with the empty form of religion, and by every means make them to appear as the truth, that they may draw both the saved and the unsaved from their hope in Christ: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4: 1, 2). A departure from the true faith is thus predicted to be the evidence of the influence of demons in the last days. This is none other than the great apostasy that must precede the "Day of the Lord" according to II Thes. 2:2, 3.

The believer's security in this unceasing warfare is treated at length in another chapter. It may be noted here, however, that the God-appointed means for this victory are prayer and bodily control, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21); and in the appropriation of the Person of Christ as the believer's sufficiency, as He is set forth in His saving power by the various parts of the "whole armour" of Eph. 6:13-18.

Satan, though proposing to supersede the Almighty, is not Omnipotent: but his power, and the extent of his activity are immeasurably increased by the co-operation of his host of demons. Satan is not Omniscient: yet his knowledge is greatly extended by the combined wisdom and observation of his sympathetic subjects. Satan is not Omnipresent: but he is able to keep up an unceasing activity in every locality by the loyal obedience of the Satanic host, who are so numerous as to be called "Legion."

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