



LESSON 20

DEMONISM

Introduction

Having exposed the superstitious pagan origin of Spiritism (the belief in a mythical "spirit realm" inhabited by good and bad "spirit beings"), we can now examine a further aspect of this diabolical philosophy: **Demonism** (the belief in mythical "spirit beings" whose purpose is to scare, torment and possess people). This perverted myth has been used, over the centuries, by priests to control people through fear. Once indoctrinated to believe in the existence of so-called "wicked supernatural beings" ("demons," "devils," "ghosts," etc.) that have the power to possess people and control and torment them, a person is vulnerable to priestcraft manipulation. However, knowledge of the true scriptural meaning of "spirit" (motivation, disposition) frees one from the power of such manipulation.

With the true meaning of "spirit" in mind, we will now examine the scriptural use of the terms "unclean spirit," "evil spirit," "devil" and "demon" and the expressions, "being possessed" and "casting out." Once superstition and mysticism are removed, the true nature of these terms and expressions is revealed and the priestcraft's manipulative power is destroyed.

Evil and Unclean Spirit(s)

In the King James Bible the terms "evil spirit(s)" and "unclean spirit(s)" appear thirty-four times. A person inclined toward demonism will interpret these references as instances in which wicked supernatural "spirit beings" are meant. However, this is not the case, as we will see.

King James Translations

"evil spirit(s)"
13 times

"unclean spirit(s)"
21 times

Evil Spirit(s)

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Judges 9

1. Verse 23 states that God sent an _____ spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem.
2. According to verse 23, what was the result of this action? _____

Does the above verse mean that God sent some kind of evil invisible "spirit being" placed between Abimelech and the men of Shechem? Nowhere in this episode is there any evidence of such an invisible creature. When we apply the correct meaning of "spirit" to this passage, we can see that God caused the men of Shechem to have an evil disposition or attitude toward Abimelech which motivated them to do evil against him. The treachery done to Abimelech was not the work of some mythical "spirit being." Rather, it was the result of an evil attitude or motivation on the part of mortal men.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 16

3. According to verses 15 and 16, what was it that troubled Saul? _____
4. From where did this trouble come? _____
5. Verse 23 states that when David played a harp, Saul was _____ and was _____.
6. What then departed from Saul? _____

Are we to believe that God caused an evil "spirit being" to possess and trouble Saul, and that David's harp playing caused this creature to leave him? Such a proposition is ridiculous. Again, applying the correct meaning of "spirit" to this account, we can see that Saul was troubled by an evil disposition or state of mind – i.e. he was disturbed, agitated, irritated. David's playing soothed him and made him feel better – the mental anguish subsided. No mythical creature left him; rather, his negative disposition was replaced with a positive state of mind.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 18: 6-16

7. What does verse 10 indicate came upon Saul? _____
8. According to verse 11, what did Saul try to do to David? _____
9. Verses 12 and 15 indicate that Saul was _____ of David.

Did some so-called evil "spirit being" possess Saul and try to kill David? No, Saul acted upon evil motives – i.e. he was motivated to kill David because he had bad feelings toward David and was afraid of him. No so-called supernatural "spirit being" would be afraid of a mortal man. However, Saul was afraid of David's popularity with the people and because Yahweh was with David and not with Saul. Saul was motivated by a spirit of jealousy and fear, not by some mythical spook creature. See 1 Samuel 19 for a similar attempt by Saul to kill David.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 7:18-22

1. Verse 21 states, "And in that same hour he [Jesus] cured many of their _____ and _____, and of evil _____; and unto many that were _____ he gave sight."
2. In describing His healings in verse 22, did Jesus say anything about casting so-called evil "spirit beings" out of people? _____

Applying the correct meaning of "spirit" to this passage, we see that Jesus cured people of evil dispositions – i.e. evil motives – as well as physical ailments. This included erroneous beliefs and thoughts that existed in their minds. The preaching of the gospel (the giving of truth) cured such a problem. Replacing false information and beliefs with truth is what Jesus did for people. He replaced evil motives and patterns of thought with godly motives and Christian principles. He is doing this today. This is the giving of life through the New Covenant. This giving of life is a tremendous healing process. To relegate this miracle to the casting out of so-called wicked "spirit beings" from people's bodies is a tragedy and a disgrace to the glory of Christ and His gospel.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 19:11-20

3. According to verse 12, _____ departed from the sick and _____ spirits went out of them.

Notice how diseases, as well as evil spirits, departed from the sick. Are we to believe that these "diseases" were live creatures? Why, then, would the "evil spirits" be any different? Both departed from people, but that doesn't prove they were live creatures. Obviously, this verse means that sick people were cured of their perverted states of mind (evil spirits) as well as their physical infirmities (diseases).

FIND THE ANSWERS

Acts 19:11-20 Cont'd

4. According to verse 13, _____ called over those which had evil spirits and said, "We _____ you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."

In the preceding passage, the word "adjure" is translated from the Greek word "horkizo" (# 3726 in *Strong's Concordance*) which is defined as "to put on oath, i.e. make swear." The word "exorcists" is translated from the Greek word "exorkistes" (# 1845 in *Strong's*) which is defined as "one that binds by an oath (or spell), i.e. an exorcist (conjurer)." According to *Strong's*, this word is derived in part from # 3726 which was defined above. These Judeans were practicing magic, or sorcery, and claiming it to be in the name of Jesus (by His authority). Obviously, these men were believers in demonism.

conjure

1. To call upon or entreat solemnly, especially by an oath.
2. To summon (a devil or spirit) by oath or magic spell.
3. To cause or effect by or as by magic.

conjurer

1. One who practices magic or legerdemain (sleight of hand).
2. One who entreats.

The American Heritage Dictionary

FIND THE ANSWERS

Acts 19:11-20 Cont'd

1. Verse 15 states, "And the evil spirit _____ and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

Some would use this verse as proof that the "evil spirit" must have been a live creature because it spoke. In actuality, the man was speaking on the basis of his evil disposition or motives – i.e. his evil spirit (state of mind, attitude) was being expressed through speech. Note, also, that the man was responding to a statement made by men who believed in the existence of evil "spirit beings." It was the man, himself, speaking – telling them that he recognized Jesus' and Paul's authority, but he did not recognize their authority.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Acts 19:11-20 Cont'd

2. According to verse 16, the man with the evil spirit _____ upon them, and _____ them, and _____ against them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.
3. Verse 19 states, "Many of them also which used _____ brought their books together, and burned them before all men..."

Verse 16 is used by some to prove that evil "spirit beings" can inflict physical bodily damage on people and, thus, must actually exist. However, note that this verse clearly states that it was the man that inflicted the damage – not an invisible spirit. It was the man's disposition that moved him to attack the conjurers.

The phrase "curious arts," mentioned in verse 19, could have been literally rendered "magic practices" – a reference to sorcery and witchcraft. Within the context of this account, it is obvious that this phrase relates back to the mention of "exorcists" in verse 13. Evidently, those who burned their books realized the error of their ways and repented. Their form of magic (speaking to and casting out evil "spirit beings") was exposed for what it was – a hoax and a fraud used to manipulate others.

Unclean Spirit(s)

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Zechariah 13:1-4

1. Verse 2 states, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the _____ out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the _____ spirit to pass out of the land."

The above verse is the only reference to the term "unclean spirit" in the King James Old Scriptures. Does this verse mean that God was going to chase a so-called "ghost" or bad "spirit being" out of the land? Few serious Bible students would agree with that interpretation. What makes more sense is that Israel was suffering from a depraved disposition. She had adopted a sinful attitude. She practiced idolatry. She listened to shameful prophets who spoke lies in the name of Yahweh. She had a natural disposition of rebellion against God which needed to be purged. By purging her unclean spirit, God would change Israel's outlook on life, causing her to reconsider His ways and prefer God's ways rather than her own.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. According to Matthew 10:1, Jesus gave His disciples power (authority) against _____ spirits, to _____ them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and disease. (see also Mark 6:7)

Some use the above verse to show that Jesus gave His disciples the magical power to exorcise evil "spirit beings." One who is oriented toward a belief in demonism would naturally reach that conclusion. However, applying the correct meaning of "spirit" to this passage, we see that Jesus gave His disciples the authority to cure those with unclean dispositions – i.e. those with impure motives or attitudes. The word "unclean" is translated from the Greek word "akathartos" (# 169 in *Strong's*) which is defined as "impure."

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 6:17-19

3. Verse 18 states, "And they that were _____ with unclean spirits: and they were _____."

Demonists interpret the above verse as meaning that Jesus exorcised demons. However, there is absolutely no mention of "exorcism." Instead, this passage of Scripture says that these people were **healed**. Jesus didn't exorcise "spirit beings." He **healed** people with spiritual and mental vexations. There is a big difference between "exorcism" and "healing." We must be careful not to read into Scripture what is not there.

healing

"The act or process by which a cure is effected."

heal

"1. To cure of a disease or wound, and restore to soundness, or to that state of body in which the natural functions are regularly performed.

2. To subdue; to remove; to remedy.

3. To restore to purity; to cleanse; to purify."

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary

exorcism

"The expulsion of evil spirits from persons or places by certain adjurations and ceremonies; also the solemn ceremony or incantation used for this purpose.

Exorcism was common among the Jews, and still makes a part of the superstitions of some churches; the Greek and Roman Catholic churches using it in the baptism of both infants and adults and in specific cases where individuals are supposed to be possessed by evil spirits."

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 5:12-16

1. According to verse 16, what happened to those vexed with unclean spirits who were brought to Jerusalem? _____

Again, these people were healed of their unclean spirits right along with those who suffered physical sickness. No so-called supernatural "spirit beings" were "exorcised" from these individuals. They suffered mental turmoil and were given sound minds. The specific kinds of spiritual and mental disorders are not indicated; but, like today, a wide variety of perversions and confusions existed which impaired normal behavior.

At this point in our study, it should be noted that the Greek and Roman cultures were steeped in demonism. It was a common belief that individuals with mental disorders and physical maladies were possessed by a demon (evil spirit being). Many of the Judeans embraced this pagan concept. In fact, the Israelites in the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities were exposed to this kind of superstition and certainly brought some of this type of thinking with them when they returned to their homeland. Individuals who sincerely believed they were possessed by evil beings from some so-called "spirit realm" would tend to behave accordingly, and their peers (if they believed in demonism) would treat them accordingly.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 8:4-8

2. Verse 7 states, "For unclean spirits, _____ with loud _____, came out of many that were possessed with them..."

The above translation makes it sound like the unclean spirits were crying with a loud voice. However, a more literal rendering of this verse would have the ones with unclean spirits crying out. How could immaterial beings without physical vocal cords and mouths speak audible words? Voices come from people – from human mouths – not from immaterial spirit beings. It is not uncommon for a person to cry out during mental anguish, physical pain, or punishment.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Mark 1:21-28

1. Verse 23 indicates that a _____ with an unclean spirit _____ out.
2. The man says in verse 24, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to _____ us?"
3. In verse 25 Jesus _____ the man.
4. Verse 26 indicates the unclean spirit had _____ the man.

Some would have us believe this passage is a conversation between Jesus and some so-called ghost or "spirit being." However, verse 23 clearly states that it was the man who was crying out. Jesus wasn't talking to some kind of "spirit being." He was talking to a man who had a bad spirit. From the man's response in verse 24, he apparently feared that Jesus would somehow expose or judge him for his wickedness.

After the man was rebuked by Jesus, he was "torn." The word "torn" in verse 26 is translated from the Greek word "sparasso" (# 4682 in *Strong's*) and is defined as "to mangle, i.e. convulse with epilepsy." *Strong's* also notes that this word is apparently strengthened from the Greek word "spao" through the idea of "spasmodic contraction." The man was mentally torn; he wrenched and cringed. But, he could not resist Jesus who freed him from the burden of his bad spirit and healed him – made him whole. This is not an account of a struggle with some kind of ghost. Rather, it describes a miraculous healing – a change of disposition or conscience.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 9:37-42

5. Verse 39 states, "And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he _____ again, and _____ him, hardly departeth from him."
6. Verse 42 states that the _____ threw the child down and _____ him.
7. Verse 42 also says that Jesus _____ the unclean spirit and _____ the child.

Notice that it was the child that cried out, obviously from the anguish and pain he was suffering. The word "teareth" in verse 39 is from the same Greek word (# 4682) used in Mark 1:26, meaning "to convulse with epilepsy." The word "tare" in verse 42 is translated from the Greek word "susparasso" (# 4952) which *Strong's* defines as "to convulse violently." From the use of the words "foameth" and "bruising," it is reasonable to conclude that the boy was experiencing some type of epileptic seizure. Any bystander who believed in demonism that witnessed this bizarre behavior would likely assume he was possessed by a so-called evil "spirit creature." However, verse 42 clearly states that Jesus healed the child – He did not "exorcise" him.

It is interesting that the terms "spirit," "devil" and "unclean spirit" are used interchangeably in this account, indicating they are equivalent in meaning: referring to the boy's affliction. Let's examine a second record of this episode for more information.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 17:14-18

1. In verse 15 the father states that his son is " _____ , and sore vexed."
2. According to verse 18, Jesus rebuked the _____ and the child was _____ .

The English word "lunatic" comes from the word "lunar" which means "moon." It is translated from the Greek word "seleniazomai" (# 4583) which *Strong's* defines as "to be moon-struck, i.e. crazy." Why was the boy considered "moon-struck?" He was having some kind of seizure in which he lost bodily control, causing him to fall and thrash about – i.e. he was acting crazy or insane. The word "lunatic" is an idiomatic expression. It doesn't literally refer to the "moon." Instead, it is used to describe someone who exhibits crazy or insane behavior. This boy was obviously suffering from some type of nervous or mental disorder, quite possibly epilepsy.

The word "devil" in verse 18 is used again to refer to the boy's mental disorder. Like the word "lunatic," "devil" is an idiomatic expression. It doesn't refer literally to some kind of so-called "spirit being." Instead, it referred to some type of mental disorder that caused the boy to behave or think in bizarre ways.

At this point someone might argue that the use of the pronoun "he" in verse 18 in the phrase "he departed out of him" proves that this "devil" (demon) was a living "being." However, the literal rendering of this verse is, "And Jesus rebuked it, and the devil came out of him; and the boy was cured from that very hour." By using the personal pronoun "he," rather than "it," the translators infer that this "daimonion" (devil or demon) is a living "being." This, of course, was the established "church" position at the time. However, that does not make it right.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 4:23-25

3. Verse 24 states, "...and they brought unto him [Jesus] all _____ people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were _____ with devils, and those which were _____ , and those that had the palsy..."
4. According to the last part of verse 24, what did Jesus do for these people? _____

These people were physically and mentally sick. They did not have ghosts or evil spirit creatures inside them. Jesus was not sent to fight supernatural "spirit beings" in some so-called "spirit world." He came in the flesh, in the physical world, to flesh-and-blood mankind to heal them – i.e. to change sinful man. People were sick and Jesus was the cure. To make Jesus out to be some kind of "ghost buster" reduces the glory of the gospel to the level of pagan mysticism and superstition.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Mark 5:1-20

5. Verse 2 indicates Jesus was met by a _____ with an unclean spirit.
6. According to verse 4, the man had often been _____ with fetters and chains.
7. In verse 7 the man cried with a loud _____ and asked Jesus to not _____ him.

Mark 5:1-20 Cont'd

1. When asked his name, the man answered in verse 9, "My name is _____ :
for we are _____ ."
2. Verse 15 indicates the people saw the man who had been "possessed with the devil"
sitting and clothed and in his _____ .

This passage is a favorite for those who try to prove that evil "spirit beings" exist, that they possess people, and that they can be exorcised. However, let's analyze this account. First of all, note that it was the man who cried out and conversed with Jesus, not some kind of so-called "spirit creature." Secondly, the man obviously believed he was possessed by a great many "spirit beings" because he talked and acted accordingly. People had also treated him as a possessed person, tormenting him by binding him with shackles and chains. He probably felt Jesus and those with Him were going to do the same and begged Him not to do so. Thirdly, after the man was healed by Jesus, he was found to be in his "right mind." This shows that his problem was mental disorder, not possession by some so-called "spirit beings." Note, again, that the terms "unclean spirits" and "devils" are used interchangeably. They are both idiomatic expressions referring to a state of unsound mind. The Matthew and Luke accounts of this story also use these terms alternately (Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39).

Unclean Spirit = Devil

Other examples in Scripture show how the terms "evil spirit" and "devil" are used synonymously.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Mark 7:25-30

3. Verse 25 states that the daughter had an _____ .
4. In verse 26 the woman asks Jesus to cast the _____ out of her daughter.
5. Jesus tells the mother in verse 29 that the _____ is gone out of her daughter.

Read Luke 4:31-37

6. Verse 33 states that the man had a _____ of an unclean _____ .
7. After Jesus rebuked the man, verse 35 says, "And when the _____ had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not."
8. Verse 36 indicates that the people were amazed because Jesus had power and authority over _____ .

The word "devil" in the above examples is translated from the Greek word "daimonion" (# 1140). Unfortunately, *Strong's* defines this word as "a demonic being" which is how the pagan Greeks used the term. Greek mythology is full of such "spirit creatures." However, this definition does not fit the Scripture passages we have just studied. In those examples, this Greek word (daimonion), which was translated as "devil(s)," is used synonymously with the term "unclean spirit(s)" which we have seen is an idiomatic expression referring to human mental or behavioral disorders. In Scripture, the idiomatic expressions "possessed by devils" and "having unclean spirits" refer to a person who is plagued by some kind of physical or mental disorder. In like manner, the idiomatic expression "casting out of devils" refers to the curing or healing of such infirmities.

Casting Out of Devils

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 9:32-34

1. Verse 32 states that a _____ man possessed with a devil was brought to Jesus.
2. According to verse 33, what was the dumb man able to do after Jesus cast the devil out? _____

This man was obviously afflicted with a physical or mental disorder which prevented him from speaking. In idiomatic terms, he was "possessed by a devil." Once Jesus corrected his disorder ("cast out the devil"), he was able to speak. This passage describes a healing, not the "exorcising" of a so-called "spirit being."

Summary

In this lesson we have seen that Scripture uses the terms "evil spirit(s)," "unclean spirit(s)" and "devils" in referring to bad dispositions and physical or mental disorders. These terms are not used in Scripture to refer to mystical, make-believe, supernatural "spirit beings" (the products of men's superstitious imaginations). We have also seen that the phrase "casting out of devils" is an idiomatic expression for the healing or curing of people suffering from various physical and mental maladies. Scripture does not use this expression for the so-called "exorcism" of "spirit creatures."

Demonism – the belief in wicked supernatural "spirit beings" (ghosts, demons, devils, etc.) that possess, haunt and torment people – is a product of pagan mysticism. It has no foundation in God's Word. Such beliefs are contrary to Scripture. In fact, Scripture warns against getting involved with such heathen things.

As soon as Christians quit believing in and fearing non-existing spooks, ghosts, demons, devils, etc. from a make-believe "spirit world," and begin to rely on the truth of God's Word, they will be freed from the yoke of priestcraft manipulation and control.



LESSON 20

DEMONISM

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1. evil
2. The men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech.
3. an evil spirit
4. from God
5. refreshed; well
6. the evil spirit
7. an evil spirit from God
8. kill him with a javelin
9. afraid

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1. infirmities; plagues; spirits; blind
2. He included no such thing.
3. diseases; evil
4. exorcists; adjure

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1. answered
2. leaped; overcame; prevailed
3. curious arts

Page 195

1. idols; unclean
2. unclean; cast
3. vexed; healed

Page 196

1. They were healed.
2. crying; voice

Page 197

1. man; cried
2. destroy
3. rebuked
4. torn
5. foameth; bruising
6. devil; tare
7. rebuked; healed

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1. lunatic
2. devil; cured
3. sick; possessed; lunatic
4. He healed them.
5. man
6. bound
7. voice; torment

Page 199

1. Legion; many
2. right mind
3. unclean spirit
4. devil
5. devil
6. spirit; devil
7. devil
8. unclean spirits

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1. dumb (meaning unable to speak)
2. He was able to speak.

For additional study we suggest the book:

Spirits On Trial, by Ben Williams

American Christian Ministries, PO Box 740, Grangeville, ID 8330

Notes: