

CHAPTER 12



The Devil Is Just Sick

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Yeshua was exhorting His disciples to go and preach the truth along with healing diseases. The command to cast out devils here is a command, which either means to heal illnesses and diseases that are being described as devils or to teach people who are willing to hear the ways of truth and thereby cause their “devil,” false teaching, to be cast out. Ancient Aramaic/Hebraic culture would have seen a “devil” as a person with some manner of illness and often as a person with mental illness or someone who is being adversarial to themselves or to another. This is why Yeshua said one of His disciples is a “devil” on the eve of His betrayal. This is seen in the Gospel of John.

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve. John 6:70-71



Matthew 10:25

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

See Chapter 13 for comments on this topic.

We make note of this verse here because of the mention of the name Beelzebub. The name Beelzebub is believed by some to be another name for Satan. Beelzebub has variant spellings and as an ancient false god of Ekron, came to be known as an evil entity by some segments of the first century society. The fact that some believed Beelzebub was a real entity with actual powers does not change the fact that this false God was the invention of the minds of men. In the mind of the Biblical writer, Beelzebub was not anything in form, substance, or power. Beelzebub is a term easily recognized to mean little more than a false God and the false ideas associated with it. The JFB commentary points out that this name is from Scripture and is notable enough to mention by Yeshua. Use of common terms and words would have been very commonplace for a Messiah who was intent on communicating His message to the culture He existed in. Beelzebub, also called Beelzebul, is a false god and is, as Yahweh would say, “nothing” or “no God at all.” Please note that spellings of the name vary from source to source.

All the Greek manuscripts, write "Beelzebul," which undoubtedly is the right form of this word. The other reading came in no doubt from the Old Testament "Baalzebub," the god of Ekron (2Ki 1:2), which it was designed to express. As all idolatry was regarded as devil worship (Lev 17:7; Deu 32:17; Psa 106:37; 1Co 10:20),...⁵³

Baalzebub is known as the “Lord of flies” and *Baalzebul* is known to mean, “Lord of dung.” The latter is said to be a

⁵³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible

contemptuous term of the Jews who mocked the Philistine god by altering the name to reference dung instead of flies. When we see this kind of mention of the god Beelzebub we might be inclined to think, “Oh, Beelzebub must be real.” I assure you though, just because one group mocks another group’s imaginary friend, does not make the imaginary friend, Beelzebub in this case, real. Just hang around a playground long enough and you might see the little folk mocking each other’s imaginary friend once in a while.”

In John’s Revelation, we have further affirmation that these gods, such as Beelzebul (a variation in spelling) or any God are not able to see, hear, or interact with their worshippers. The revelator is making a powerful statement towards the idea that anything that was worshipped by the pagan and the Gentiles that is seen as a demon believed to have powers to see and hear today, are 100 percent nothing and therefore non-existent as a supernatural being. Something that cannot see, hear, or walk is something that has no real existence at all.

Revelations 9:20

*And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: **which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:***

It is clear that “devils” were thought to be real by many in the period of John’s writing, this is seen by the statement declaring that they should not worship devils. In the list as you see, devils are part of the idols constructed by human hands. Once again, believing something to be real does not make it so, believing in the Easter Bunny does not bring him to life any more than believing in the false god Beelzebul makes him real and brings him to life.



Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

See comments on Luke 12

In this verse, we see Yeshua is concluding His instructions to the twelve disciples. (see Chapter 11 verse 1) This involves warning them there is a chance some men might want to harm them. Yeshua is acknowledging that there is a human force, which is able to kill the body. The reference to a group as, “them” is a reference to human beings. If demonic beings existed that could do harm enough to kill a human, then Yeshua might have contrasted Yahweh’s sovereign power to destroy life and assign one to eternal death, which is “hell”, with the so called “satanic” force. A mythological force that is said to have so much impact on humanity that many ascribe the illnesses and often times the deaths of those who are seen as innocent, to a cosmic “satan.” They that kill the human body are mere men.

Of note, is the mention of body and soul in this passage. Briefly, I will explain that man is a soul. The formation of a man figure that was breathed into and given an animating force by the Creator, is a soul. Living man does not have a soul living man is a soul. Simply put, man can indeed destroy the body but man has no power to deny the resurrection to life again of that body. Such denial of resurrection, a person ever existing again, is to throw the soul into Hell. Hell is simply death and eternal destruction from the presence of the Creator. God is the only one who can cause a person, which is a soul, to cease to exist forever; therefore, neither the body nor the animating force (soul) would ever live again. Man cannot accomplish this act only the Creator can.



Matthew 11:5

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

In the above statement by Yeshua there is an interesting component of the alleged ministry of Messiah missing. Why does this statement not say ... *“and cast out demons...”*?

So far, in Christianity most believe Yeshua cast out demonic spirits and that the ability to do so was a sign of Him being the Messiah. However, when Yeshua tells John's disciples to go and report to John the things that He is accomplishing as proof of who He is, He makes no mention of a power to affect demonic entities at all. Would not a Messiah who was interested in helping John see that He was the one John was waiting for mention that there were also demons and unclean spirits being cast out of people?

If those demons actually existed and Jesus was removing cosmic spirit beings from people, why did he not mention it in the statement about the things He is accomplishing? I believe it is fair to expect the mention of demonic deliverance by Yeshua if it were occurring as has been believed since early in the Christian tradition. However, when Yeshua mentioned the conditions He had reversed and healed, He did not need to state He was a demonbuster. This is because the conditions He mentioned healing people from are the demons that had been cast out. Demons are the unwanted mental and physical ailments and afflictions that come upon mankind. The only possible connection to what demons are in this passage is the mention of preaching to the poor. Those who did not have the truth, which is to have a demon, now have it after being preached to by Christ.



John Has A Devil

Matthew 11:18

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

What would “they” mean by saying John has a “devil?”

John the Baptist was the son of the priest Zechariah and did not continue in his father’s footsteps by serving in the Temple as a priest. John was a radical and not at all inclined to accept the status quo of the Pharisees or Sadducees who ran the Temple and guided the religious culture. John dressed in animal skins and ate locust and honey, which means he was living in the wild much of the time, and he baptized people with the baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah. To the elite group who directed most of the religious life in the community, it appeared that John was a heretical wing-nut. In saying he has a “devil” they are simply identifying John’s perceived heresy and anti-establishment attitude. To the pious Pharisees anyone who did not come into line with their thinking was a heretic and therefore were said to “have a devil.” Albert Barnes has a clear understanding of the meaning of that phrase;

He hath a devil - He is actuated by a bad spirit. He is irregular, strange, and cannot be a good man.

The Pharisees thought John was not worth listening to because he did not behave in the manner they prescribed and he refused to comply with and teach their rules. In the Pharisees’ accusation that John has a “devil” they are likely not speaking of a supernatural spirit inhabiting part of John. Neither should we accept their testimony that John is irregular, strange, and cannot be a good man. Saying John had a devil was simply the Pharisaic way to state the opinion that John was a heretic and somewhat mentally unstable.



Go To Hell Capernaum!

Matthew 11:23

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Was Capernaum really in Heaven? Is Capernaum really in Hell somewhere under the Earth now?

We have spoken of this verse somewhat in *Volume 1 of Satan Christianity's Other God* but allow me to explain here how it pertains to the topic of the non-existence of "Satan." It is really helpful to see how most believers choose to interpret this passage in a different manner than other passages that mention hell or Satan.

Here we see the Messiah use metaphorical language to describe the high position Capernaum attained to and that it will be brought to the lowest position in comparison to other cities. The status it will shortly experience will certainly be low when compared to its present status. Flawed logic uses the references in Ezekiel to the King of Tyre being brought down to the pit as literal but chooses to believe this statement by Yeshua is a metaphorical reference. How can we say the pit in Ezekiel is a literal Hell reference but not say the same of this statement by Yeshua? If in the quest to prove there is a Satan, based on accepting as literal, the references to hell and the pit in the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah, then one should remain consistent and accept the Messiah's words to Capernaum as literal. We should expect to understand His words in Matthew 11:23 as meaning Capernaum is a city that was actually in Heaven at one time but is now geographically situated in Hell. After all, passages such as Isaiah 14 where a King falls from Heaven and Ezekiel 28 where a king is going to be "brought down", are literally interpreted by many to be used as proofs that Satan and therefore hell exists. For the inquiring reader I have covered these both fully in *Satan Christianity's Other God*. Here is one of those passages.

Ezekiel 28:8-9

They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.

Isa 14:9

Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Either the passages in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Matthew are about an earthly figure and city and must be interpreted metaphorically as to the destination of the figure, or they are to all be interpreted literally. We can't pick and choose when to take "the pit" literally and when to take it figuratively. If we use other mytho-poetical verses in the Bible as proof there is a "satan" then the statement from Matthew 11 should be proof that Capernaum was in Heaven but is going to be cast to Hell. The apostolic writer often makes use of metaphor to accentuate and pronounce a point as is done here by Yeshua. I will try to state it clearly, so you can see how we are often inconsistent in our interpretation of passages thus making room to allow our unbiblical teaching to survive.

Are You Consistent In Your Interpretation Of The Bible?

If we take as literal the Old Testament statements about "the pit" and "hell," and do not take literally that Capernaum is actually in "Heaven," then we are inconsistent in our interpretation. We make ourselves victims of an error in logic by choosing a literal application for Ezekiel's language about the King of Tyre all the while realizing that Yeshua could not have meant that the city of Capernaum is geographically positioned in Heaven and is doomed to literally land in a geographic hell. Some of the verses we have believed in the past to be pointing to a literal "satan" or literal "hell" no longer have to be forced to maintain a literal meaning. Don't be afraid to accept the metaphor of Hell and Satan. Capernaum is no more in Heaven and going to be in a literal "Hell" some day, than was the King of Tyre understood to be

literally in the Garden of Eden and literally assigned to the mythological Hell.

CHAPTER 13



Does Satan Heal The Sick?

Christ Accused Of Using Satan's Powers

Matthew 12:22-29 – Mark 3: 22-27 – Luke 11:14-26

Mat 12:22-29

- 22 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.
- 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?
- 24 But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.
- 25 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:
- 26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?
- 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.
- 28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.
- 29 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.

Mar 3:22-27

- 22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.
- 23 And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?
- 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
- 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.
- 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.
- 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Luk 11:14-26

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others, tempting *him*, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house *divided* against a house falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

See comments on Matthew 10:25 in the previous chapter

The above passages are placed together so you are given the full account and can see all of the statements supposedly made by Yeshua in the account we are about to discuss. In this story of the healing of a blind and dumb man, we find that we don't get the full story from any single writer. This appearance of discrepancies between accounts is common with other stories shared by the writers of the Gospels. We often see different accounts of a story giving different details. One will see a more clear picture if they assess the sum of all the parts. "The devil is in the details" is an apt figure of speech to consider if we are correctly understanding what the devil is in a story such as this. First of all, we are told in Matthew 12:22 that a devil was brought to Yeshua and it was blind and dumb. Notice the details here tell us the condition or physical ailment of the person was a "devil." It is reasonable, as I have said earlier, to understand the term "possessed with a devil" (*daimonizomai*), as meaning one who is struggling with a serious condition of some sort. Or, that person is seen as a devil. That being, one who was seen as not normal in the eyes of the general populous. By using the term *daimonizomai*,

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The writer attested to the fulfillment of a prophecy and in employing the commonly understood term for sickness and infirmity. The writer did not intend anything other than physical conditions.⁵⁴

In the details of verse 22 of Matthew, we are told that one affected by an adverse health condition, “a devil”, was brought to Yeshua contending with blindness and dumbness. In reading this we must remember;

“a devil” can be the person or it can be the condition the person is afflicted with.

Therefore, context is key in delineating between the two. It is said that Yeshua healed him. The strong statement of Yeshua healing this man is an indicator that this is a physical condition that today, would often be treated by a physician. The “devil” Yeshua healed in this man is not a supernatural spirit inhabitation; rather, it is a condition that has left this man blind and dumb.

The people in this account are amazed to have seen a blind and dumb man have his hearing and speech returned miraculously. I suppose amazement is to be expected in the face of a miraculous instantaneous healing. It appears that this was one of the immediate, miraculous healings, at the hands of Yeshua. The Pharisees who were among the people did not approve. The Pharisees knew of Yeshua as a leader and were not blind to the authority He walked in. As part of an expectant culture that was looking for the Messiah, they refused to acknowledge Yeshua could be this One to come. Yeshua was not at all behaving in the Pharisaical manner the Pharisees expected the Messiah would behave in, so instead of recognizing the healing as a miracle from one who operates in the power of God, they derided Yeshua with an inane accusation. The accusation of Yeshua “casting out devils”

⁵⁴ See Chapter 8 – “Possessed With Devils May Just Mean You’re Sick”

by Beelzebub could be one of two things. The first is that the Pharisees were referring to the god of Ekron, known as Beelzebub, who was believed to have provided miracles for its followers. Through their lore they had come to accept that Beelzebub actually existed, when in fact it was an imagination of a man's mind and completely powerless to the point of non-existence as a supposed supernatural entity. In seeing Beelzebub as such, they might have been stating that this condition on this man is from Beelzebub and now this man Yeshua, who was working in Beelzebub's power, is removing it. This is a theory much like the one the old friend of mine had that I mentioned earlier. The similar theory was stated during a discussion about the healing my wife had experienced. He was so deluded in saying Satan can give disease and then lift the disease off the recipient in order to keep the recipient from turning to God for assistance.

The other option is that the Pharisees understood the “devil” as a health condition and even at that they claimed Yeshua was healing a physical malady by the power of some “demonic”, supernatural being. Both views of this accusation are ridiculous and Yeshua points out just how ridiculous they are by telling the listeners that it makes no sense for a Satan to cast out Satan, otherwise this supposed kingdom of “Satan” would fall. Yeshua is not agreeing to the idea that there is a “Satan,” He is only expressing to those who are listening that the Pharisees’ doctrine is tragically flawed and they are messed-up in their theology. Yeshua wants those around Him to think about what was said and if the Pharisees are to be respected and listened to as a group of religious leaders, then they mustn’t deserve much adulation because they are so confused. They actually think that “Satan,” a supposed cosmic being would work against the evil that it has brought forward itself. Yeshua identified the illogic of their claim by responding to their inane accusation. This great teacher often taught in this way. He would not directly debate the error of a statement or doctrine, rather He would adeptly point out how illogical and unreasonable certain statements and doctrines of the

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Pharisees were. Further to that, Mark tells us that this little lesson in logic Yeshua was presenting is a parable.

Mark 3:23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

A parable told by Yeshua to express a point and illuminate a truth would not be a story that uses real and true characters, but as with other parables, the characters are most often fictitious. Robertson Word Pictures expounds on the point of a parable being misused when the specifics of it are taken as literal;

The word parable (*parabolē* from *paraballō*, to place alongside for measurement or comparison like a yardstick) is an objective illustration for spiritual or moral truth....

...As a rule the parables of Jesus illustrate one main point and the details are more or less incidental, though sometimes Jesus himself explains these. When he does not do so, we should be slow to interpret the minor details. Much heresy has come from fantastic interpretations of the parables.⁵⁵

The Pharisees Had A Need To Discredit Yeshua

Remember, the Pharisees were more concerned with their reputation and wanted to weaken the authority Yeshua had, as well as to damage the measure of respect He was earning from the people. Until now, the people following Yeshua and the true teaching He brought were basically left to walk out their faith how it was prescribed by the Pharisees. Albert Barnes connects the Pharisee's action with their ill motives in his commentary on verse 22 of this chapter;

⁵⁵ Word Pictures in the New Testament, By Archibald Thomas Robertson.

But when the Pharisees heard it ... - It was necessary for the Pharisees, who had determined to reject Jesus of Nazareth, to account in “some” way for the miracles he had performed.

Here was a manifest miracle, an exertion of power unquestionably superior to what people could put forth. The common people were fast drawing the proper inference from it, and coming into the belief that this was the Messiah. The authority and power of the Pharisees were declining. Unless, therefore, some way should be devised of accounting for these facts, their influence would be at an end. Whatever way of accounting for them was adopted, it was necessary that they should acknowledge that there was “superhuman power.” The people were fully persuaded of this, and no man could deny it.⁵⁶

Yeshua was not going to let this pride filled brood of vipers diminish the work He had done by trying to confuse the listeners with their illogical argument. Yeshua knew that a sensible person could see how idiotic the Pharisees were if He just pointed out the illogicness of their view. Not needing to say that there is no Satan as a means to refute the belief of the Pharisees and others within earshot, Yeshua decided rather, to weaken the logic of their argument. By focusing on the foolishness of the Pharisees' statement that claimed Yeshua removed the deafness and dumbness by employing the power of a demon, He was ensuring those with any sense who were witnessing this conflict would see that the Pharisee claim to authority should not be heeded seriously. The Pharisees were once again shown to be illogical and to have confused theology. And Yeshua was able to pinpoint this major flaw. He did so in such a way so as to elucidate the foolishness of the Pharisees and therefore help both those people who believed in a “Satan” or some type of a cosmic being, as well as those who did not believe in a cosmic “satan,” to see that the Pharisees ought not to be listened to in this area.

⁵⁶ Matthew 12:22 note from Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Albert Barnes (1798-1870)

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Jesus did not bother to protest by saying “Satan does not exist” because His purpose here was to have the crowd recognize the weak theology of the Pharisees. The manner in which He chose to do it was effective at revealing this point to all hearers, no matter what they believed of an evil cosmic power. Logically, an evil cosmic power will not oppose the work of itself.

A speaker using a parable would do well in a crowd so familiar with a parable. By using a parable, Yeshua knew that those who would be able to glean the truth from His parable would definitely do so and those who were unwilling to see any lesson or truth would ignore the message as if there were none. The latter of this group of hearers would simply think Yeshua was just another good storyteller who was somewhat entertaining. Alternatively, in the case of those who were decidedly resistant to hear the message, they would claim Yeshua had a devil. Which is precisely what the Pharisees did in John 10:20. Being accused of having a devil happened to Yeshua on occasion by those religious leaders who had their false doctrine set in concrete. No matter what the Man Messiah did, said, or taught, these men were unwilling to extract truth from the depths of Yeshua’s teaching in parable. They were unwilling, even stridently opposed, to find the meaning that would lead them toward life.

Look at the statement “he has a devil” in the writing titled Luke and then take note of the commentary on this phrase by John Gill. Gill understands this phrase to speak of madness.

Luke 7:33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

and ye say, he hath a devil; is mad, or melancholy; for madness and melancholy, or the hypochondriac disorder, was by them sometimes imputed to a diabolical possession, and influence, as the cause of it; and though these men pretended to great austerity of life, and frequent fastings, yet John was too

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abstemious for them, and they could not agree with his doctrine nor method of living

To have a devil was seen as speaking or acting in an unacceptable manner, saying things that were unspeakable to some. For instance, in hearing Yeshua speak of the desire for the Jews to kill Him, some of the audience thought His statement so outrageous that they said He had a devil. They were not saying a supernatural, cosmic being was influencing Yeshua. “Having a devil” to the first century folk was akin to someone saying today “Don’t listen to him, he’s lost his mind.” Again, we see the idea of having a “devil” referring to one being seen as a nut job, stated in the letter titled John;

And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? John 10:20

CHAPTER 14



How Did Seven Unclean Spirits Get In Her?

Matthew 12:43-45

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. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Please see the comments on Mark 3 for an understanding of the above story

A Strong Man Is A Deep-seated False Idea Or Wrong Teaching

What then are we to understand of the statements about binding the strong man and the unclean spirit who goes out of a man? First off, I would like to make mention of this passage as it appears in Luke. According to Luke this unclean spirit goes walking through the desert;

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

Luke 11:24 KJV

However, according to Revelation 9:20, “Devils” can neither hear see nor walk. Something that doesn’t see, hear, or walk doesn’t exist.

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: (Revelation 9:20 KJVA)

Based on common demonology concepts, we are led to believe the demons/unclean spirits, which are also called “devils,” are able to extort information and hear our conversations to use our words for their evil purposes. Well, in Luke 8:24 we are told the “unclean spirit”, which is the same as a devil, goes walking around looking for rest. In one place we are told devils cannot walk or hear and in the other, we are told the devil is walking; and by extension, seeing and hearing. This is an apparent contradiction and can be explained.

Comprehending this parable can be done either by recognizing the symbolical uses of the term “unclean spirit” as meaning the illness or condition the person has been delivered from; or, as might be suggested by the structure of the sentence, the human man is himself the “unclean spirit” who has been delivered from his condition. This explanation suggests that he then wanders about and doesn’t find rest, which means he doesn’t walk out his life in a way that will compliment and support his healing. Because of not finding the rest he needs, the man becomes sick again.

Is it sensible to think the man himself could be called an “unclean spirit?” I see no reason why calling someone by that term to identify their behavioral patterns is any different than calling someone who travels the world and picks up and goes here or there at a moment’s notice, a “free spirit.” A free spirit is a term

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that carries the same identifying properties as the term unclean spirit.

I was talking with a friend recently about an old acquaintance who has seen much of the world and is still unmarried in her early 40's. In our conversation, we talked about this old acquaintance as being a "free spirit." If it is possible that a person who travels the world on a whim is a "free spirit" it is therefore possible for a person who is known for his or her undesirable behavior to be an "unclean spirit." A free spirit wanders about doing their own thing wherever they like, while an "unclean spirit" means the person is known to have behavioral patterns that reflects their rejection of Yahweh, His commands, and His truth. If the "free spirit" of the person was said to have left that person for a time, that would only mean they were no longer behaving in a manner that has them traveling with unabashed freedom. It would not mean a supernatural entity of freedom had left them any more than does the removal of an unclean spirit mean a supernatural demon has left the man in the above story. To carry this thought a little further one could reasonably state that our friend's free spirit came back with a vengeance if she were to resume her avid travels in a pronounced and newly inspired manner.

Is Alcoholism A Demonic Spirit?

One of the cases of a "demonic spirit" that hit closest to home was the case of my Father In-Law. This man had many strengths but he found himself continually drawn into abuse of alcohol. I was given the opportunity to speak the eulogy at his funeral a number of years ago. Everyone in attendance was familiar with the tragic tale of Neil's life and the demons of alcoholism he contended with. Knowing the history well myself, I found the words to express how this man was tormented his entire life with his addiction and it was no secret the addiction was responsible for Neil's early death at age 62. With that in mind we remembered Neil not for his

failures brought on by the demon of alcoholism, rather we remembered Neil as a man who wouldn't quit. Until the very month he died, alone in a slum apartment in the core district, Neil continued to try to quit drinking. This man never quit quitting. That was a testimony to his strength. To give up drinking only to be dragged back in by succumbing to the strong addiction, only to try to quit again is not something to be taken lightly. This was a powerful unclean spirit. The demon of alcoholism was not a literal spirit; however, it was powerful and continued to be akin to a personal entity as it relentlessly drew this poor tormented spirit towards death. The spirit of alcoholism was removed repeatedly but it returned with a vengeance every time.

How Do Seven Spirits Return To The Man?

What might it mean for the house to be swept clean and then seven spirits return, find it empty and make things worse than before? Once the unclean spirit has been healed in the man, if the man lives in such a way as to bring on this illness again, one might say that seven “spirits” have returned to afflict him. Or, because of issues that are in his mind which have not been addressed after receiving health, the sickness then returns and is now worse than the first time. This is typical of the alcoholic who joins a 12 step program and successfully overcomes his or her drinking addiction, only to fall off the wagon and become a more voracious drinker than he or she was before the unclean spirit of alcoholism was cast out of them. One might say that 7 devils more wicked than the first have attacked the man. Personification of various issues and illnesses is not unusual even today. Although I have stated the person himself might be called the unclean spirit, it is also likely the unclean spirit is the disease, condition, or illness. It is important to keep this in mind as we see the term “unclean spirit” used in the Bible. I have heard of cancer patients being said to be ravaged by cancer or that the cancer is attacking their spine. This is a personification of an inanimate entity. Therefore, in a

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time such as the first century, where many medical conditions were unlabeled, to have a devil or an “unclean spirit” was little different than naming the particular illness that might be returning to a victim who was once free of that illness.

The mention of “*seven more wicked than the first*” in the passage in question is not stated to indicate a specific number of supernatural “demons” any more than the statements about legion were made to represent a hundred, a thousand, or more, supernatural demons in the men Yeshua encountered in the cemetery. Rather, the number 7 is used as a means of communicating that the man who was once healed, gets really, really sick. “Seven demons” speak of the man becoming noticeably worse now than before because the state of mind is affecting the man’s condition. This style of communicating the seriousness of a situation is little different than saying, “I’ve been sick forever.” Anyone knows I have not literally been sick forever but that it is a really long time.

The number 7 is a number that teaches a point when used in a parable by Yeshua. The likely reason He says 7 more will return to the man, is so the hearer can see how serious things will get if the person who receives healing, chooses not to walk in the will of Yahweh after they are healed. According to studies of the Aramaic culture, the “strong man” refers not to a literal “demon” but to whatever illness it is that is affecting a person’s life. If the sickness is eradicated through a miracle or other process, it is considered in the Aramaic/Hebraic culture that the strong man has been bound.⁵⁷

Binding the strong man means the health condition has been removed or overcome. Yeshua was telling us in the parable by using the term “**the strong man**,” that He was healing the sicknesses. The sickness was overcome by the power of Yahweh, as opposed to by the power of an ancient false god as the Pharisees and scribes were suggesting. The phrase “the unclean

⁵⁷ Idioms of the Bible Explained & A Key to The Original Gospels – George M. Lamsa, Harper Collins 1985 originally published 1931

spirit goes out of a man”, is an Aramaic colloquialism.⁵⁸ This phrase simply means the man is healed and if one looks at this from the ancient perspective that Lamsa does, they will find it is understood a worse sickness will come if one goes out and practices evil after receiving healing.

In hearing the phrase **“the unclean spirit going out and wandering through dry places”**, we are told poor choices are made after they had been healed. Dry places is a metaphor for living a life of bad choices and poor decisions.

As for the **“house being swept and garnished,”** the parable continues with yet another metaphor that would be understood by the ancient Eastern hearer. This colloquialism is speaking of even worse sickness setting in, which now will not be healed because the choices that were made by the one who received the healing have caused **“his last to be worse than the first.”** An example of a healing occurring and then in time, the condition returning more seriously than before, can be seen with Cancer. Frequently a person who has cancer might be cured (be delivered from the unclean spirit) or go into remission for a time then the cancer returns and is much worse for that person the next time, often bringing death (his last is worse than the first). In this instance it is the condition that is the unclean spirit and not the person.

Of course one might accept the interpretation, **“he took seven other spirits worse than himself,”** as meaning there are now at least seven demons inhabiting the wretched soul of the man who is now beyond healing or deliverance that will lead him to health. However, when set in a parable in an Aramaic culture, this statement means that other conditions and diseases have compounded in this man and there now would be several conditions affecting him. As Lamsa puts it, there are now a number of serious conditions that have cropped up to affect the man, sickness begets sickness.

⁵⁸ As is stated by Dr. George Lamsa in “Gospel Light.” pg. 138 – George M. Lamsa edited by James Magiera, A.J. Holman Co. 1939 & The Aramaic Bible Society 1995

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That is if the patient had insanity, now he has heart trouble, pneumonia and other diseases.⁵⁹

As an example of this, a long-time older friend comes to mind. This gentleman who is in his late 60's, has been significantly above a healthy weight for his body type and age for a number of years now. The weight started to come off after he made a few lifestyle changes. Then an injury to his knee occurred. During rehabilitation, he suffered a back injury. Now, not working any longer, the weight began to climb again. This particular case then resulted in an emergency visit to the hospital for abdominal pain, which was explored and eventually diagnosed as gall bladder trouble including gall stones. Along the way this friend was also diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and was required to watch his sugar intake carefully. One thing led to another and because of a weight problem that was not managed successfully, the unclean spirit returned and brought seven more to dwell in this house. A house often represents a person's body and the use of "house" in certain instances in Matthew, should be seen this way. Another take on this statement is found in Assyrian vernacular. It is said by the Assyrians when an unpopular man brings four or five guests with him to an event or a gathering, he has brought other evil spirits like himself. This may be the meaning here but the primary choice for explaining this passage seems to relate to devils and unclean spirits referring to sickness and erroneous beliefs.

With the foregoing in mind for this brief passage of Matthew 12 and the corresponding passages in Mark and Luke, we have Yeshua healing a deaf and blind man, and the people are amazed. Of course, the Pharisees don't like seeing the honor that is shown to Yeshua so they try to discredit Him by claiming He is healing these diseases by some power other than Yahweh. Yeshua knows their hearts and that they want to discredit Him, so Yeshua

⁵⁹ pg. 138 of Gospel Light – George M. Lamsa edited by James Magiera, A.J.Holman Co. 1939 & The Aramaic Bible Society 1995

addresses their foolish comment by pointing out their ludicrous logic. Never stating there is a cosmic adversarial force opposed to Yahweh, Yeshua confidently speaks of how if there were such a force and it was opposing itself, it would not possibly be able to continue existing as a kingdom.

The Matthew account, slightly different from the Mark and Luke accounts, interjects another healing story before speaking of the “strong man.” Then, as a way of speaking the truth of where this miraculous power is coming from, Yeshua says, “I don’t do miracles by the power of some evil force. If miracles are happening and I am casting out illnesses, referred to as “devils,” with God’s power, then pay attention because this is the Kingdom of God right in front of you.” As a great teacher who used parables so those who had eyes to see would see, Yeshua then relates a healing from a sickness to a strong man being bound. He indicates that once the sickness or infirmity is no longer affecting an individual, they ought not to make bad choices because it is possible they will not only have a relapse but will receive other compounding conditions, spoken of as “seven other spirits more wicked than himself.”

Yeshua warns the hearers that the latter condition will be worse than the first. Such a sensible healer Yeshua was. He not only healed people miraculously and put people on the path to getting healed, but He encouraged them to make wise choices as pertained to their healing so that they could continue to enjoy the benefits of good health; otherwise things might get worse.

Although this may be one of the more focused-on passages to try to convince people that “satan” and “demons” exist, this passage can be reconciled with the teaching of the non-existence of “Satan” found in the Hebrew Scriptures. If one is willing to lay aside their understanding that has historically been imposed on them and view this parable through the ancient cultural understanding as Lamsa and others have done, then one is able to understand it as it was intended by the writer.

CHAPTER 15



The Evil Of A Viper's Heart

Matthew 12:34-35

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

So many of us have been told that evil comes from “satan” suggesting if it wasn’t for “satan” tempting people to do and say evil, then only good would occur. That theory has been stated in many different ways and the blame much of the world puts on some definitive evil force for the wickedness that is done and said, has long been an issue that limits humans from taking full responsibility for any wrong choices or words.

In the above passage Yeshua is concisely stating where evil comes from. Specifically as it pertains to the hurtful, prideful, or demeaning words one speaks. Yeshua says this evil comes from the heart. Jeremiah has told us the heart is deceitfully wicked above **all else**, and here Jesus is very clear on stating that it is from the heart where evil proceeds. God created man with the potential to obey or to disobey, that is, man has the potential to do good or to choose evil. This then is part of Yeshua’s understanding. Yeshua knows the human heart can choose evil if one submits to the evil inclination, called the *yetzer ha ra* in