

CAN CHRISTIANS HAVE INDWELLING DEMONS?

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” –1 Corinthians 3:16



Recently, a woman from a very conservative church informed my wife she had 80 to 90 devils cast out of her since being born-again. She also implied that these indwelling demons were the key to her previous spiritual problems. Needless to say, my wife was somewhat a taken back. Can Christians have indwelling demons and therefore need these spirits cast out? In this article, we will consider this controversial topic, one that has divided Christians, and particularly Pentecostals, for decades.

Of course, we believe the answer to this question is a resounding *no*. But to prove this, we will go to the Word of God for our answers.

To rightly address our question it is imperative that we qualify our terms. There are two terms that refer to “*demon possession*” in the New Testament. One Greek word, found thirteen times in the N.T., “*daimonizomai*”, is usually translated “*to be possessed by devils*”. The second term, “*daimonion echein*”, is used eight times and means “*to have a devil*.” In each case these terms are used, indwelling evil spirits are either evident or implied (incidentally, this is what is meant by *demon possession*). By “*Christian*,” we mean those individuals who have repented and exercised faith in the gospel whereby they have been regenerated. And by “*indwelling demon*,” we mean an evil spirit living inside the human body that must be cast out.

Now, there is no question that demons can inhabit sinners, this is a Biblical fact. Moreover, we would agree that it's possible for demons to influence, tempt, oppress, buffet, and otherwise oppose Christians.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...” -1 Peter 5:8

But can demons indwell a believer so as to necessitate the need for an exorcism (*to be cast out*)? Let's consider this question in light of the Scriptures.

FIVE BIBLICAL REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE INDWELLING DEMON SPIRITS

Throughout the Scriptures, God condemns mixture, especially of the sacred and the demonic.

1 Cor. 10:20-21 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Under the old covenant, God was quick to withdraw His presence and bring judgment whenever Israel dabbled in demonic idolatry.

Deut. 32:16-20 They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

Moreover, it stands to reason, that if God utterly forbid the demonic from the O.T. tabernacle, how much more the N.T. habitation of the Spirit. Furthermore, would God command N.T. believers not to be unevenly yoked with unbelievers and then allow demons to live inside of them?

2 Cor. 6:14-16 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Thus, to suggest that the Holy Ghost will inhabit the same temple as a demon spirit is not only contrary to Scripture, it's illogical.

A Biblical definition of Regeneration negates demon-infestation.

Col. 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

There are many Scriptures that teach the absolute transformation that takes place at conversion. However, but for the sake of discussion, let's simply consider 2 Corinthians 5:17.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If a man is demon-possessed/infested, it stands to reason he got in such a condition while living in sin/unconverted. Thus, if demon-infestation is part of the old-life it must be "passed away" if a man is truly in Jesus. Hence, those who are "demon possessed" as sinners will be "demon-free" when they come to Jesus and are converted to Christianity.

This is likewise consistent with the testimony of the deliverance ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 5:18 ...he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

Mark 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Thus, the Bible teaches that those that are born of God cannot be under the authority of Satan.

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

Not only will Jesus refuse to share His abode with devils, demons would never desire to live with Jesus.

In the Gospels, we see that in every encounter the Lord Jesus Christ had with demons, there was confrontation and exposure. In every example, Jesus cast the devils out. Are we so naive' to believe that the Jesus that refused to tolerate demons in anyone throughout the gospels will live with them in our bodies today? Likewise, when demons came into contact with *Jesus* they took control of their host and sharp confrontation took place.

There is not one example, specific or implied, of a Christian having the devil cast out of them in the Scriptures.

2 Cor. 13:1 ...in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

There are, of course, examples of believers giving opportunity to the devil. But, nowhere, in the gospels is there an example of Jesus casting the devil out of a believer.. Nor is there evidence that the Apostles ever did so either. Well, can we find any teaching in the Epistles to indicate that Christians can have indwelling demons? No, Christians are never warned that hindrances in their spiritual walk are, or even may be, due to indwelling demons. Thus, proponents of this doctrine cannot show us one example, in the N.T., of this happening to Christians, or being taught to Christians.

Even if it were possible for a Christian to be demon-possessed, according to Scripture, it would prove fruitless for the Devil.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Notice, there is “he that is in us” and “he that is in the world.” But, as we have seen, the idea that Christians can have indwelling demons is unscriptural. However, in circles which believe such foolishness, bondage to sin is one of the irrefutable sign of demon infestation. So, even if it were possible, according to the Bible, the demons would have little hope of overcoming.

THE SPIRITUAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THIS FALSE DOCTRINE

Believers are distracted from the real remedy, the Word of God.

Psalms 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

In this hour of apostasy, there is a famine of the hearing of the words of God. Consequently, the winds of false doctrine are blowing. Few want to hear of repentance, faith, submission to the Lordship, and discipleship. Folks want a quick-fix solution to the sin problem without truly subjecting themselves to the Savior from sin, Jesus, the Word. Thus, doctrines such as this ultimately divert men's attention to the real remedy found only in Jesus. Many follow the empty lies promoted by these false "deliverance ministries" often becoming discouraged, disillusioned, and jaded.

Secondly, men are encouraged to blameshift. Adam loves to blameshift. As long as we shift blame we can never be free. When I was young there was a comedian who popularized the saying, “the devil made me do it.” Likewise, the false doctrine that teaches that Christians can have devils makes those who sin a victim. "I'm not really responsible," they reason. This, in essence, promotes a denial of the sufficiency of the work of Christ and Scripture. Deviant behavior is blamed on Satan and demons rather than on the individual. This is very dangerous.

In conclusion, we see that the Bible does not support the idea that Christians can have indwelling demons. You may have demons, but if you do, you're not a Christian.

–B.W.