

Doing the Stuff – Jesus and demons

We have an election coming up. And I encourage you to participate fully. Make sure you are registered to vote and exercise the privilege. Some of you are members of political parties (which is great), most of you are not. Some of you have strong political views, few of you express them very openly or frequently. I doubt that you have people confronting you on your political opinions very often.

But let's say that you developed a real political conviction and as a result joined a political party – maybe you are one of the increasing numbers joining UKIP or the Green Party. And then you started wearing a party rosette and the party tie. And whenever there was an opportunity in conversation you pitched in with a political viewpoint.

All of a sudden I think you would find that there was some reaction. Some people would start avoiding you, others would argue with you, some might even raise their voices. Other political opinions would be expressed. Your life would change from a quiet, non-contentious existence to one full of sound and fury. You would become aware of a political opposition to your views.

One of the first things you learn when you become a Christian and get baptised, is that you have opposition, a spiritual enemy. In the bible we often see Jesus dealing with demons. And the bible talks about the Satan. We sometimes call it spiritual warfare and we become more aware of it as we become more spiritually aware.

Whereas before you may never have even given this much thought, everything was quiet on the spiritual front, now that you are following Jesus, there is sound and fury. You become aware that there is an evil spiritual opposition out there.

We are at the end of a teaching series called Doing the Stuff. We have examined several different aspects of doing what Jesus did: sharing our faith, serving the poor, healing the sick. Today we are going to look at what Jesus did to demons.



C.S. Lewis is famous for summing up a wise and balanced approach to this subject when said, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail the magician and a materialist with the same delight." Screwtape Letters, Preface.

It is important to keep that balance in mind when we approach this subject.

Luke 4:31-37

31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people.

32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice,

34 "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!"

37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Luke sets this account very early in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus emerges from obscurity to get baptised by John (our next baptism is on 31 May).

Luke then establishes Jesus' authenticity with a long genealogy which leads into the 40 days in the wilderness without food when he battles with the Satan and defeats him.

Jesus returns and has a meteoric rise to fame as he starts preaching and ministering.

Then we get this passage. Jesus says very little about the enemy, here or elsewhere. In fact the bible has only a minimal amount of teaching on this. Just enough for us to know the truth without getting side-tracked. The main thing we see when we look at Jesus is not talking-about demons but casting-out demons.

There are two clear things in the way Jesus deals with demons:

- 1. He uses his authority**

Verse 32 describes how people recognised his authority and then up pops a demon to challenge it. Jesus had already established a spiritual hierarchy whilst in the desert. Jesus is at the top of it. The demons are long way down, below him, below us, below the angels. He has authority.

- 2. He has power**

Verse 36. Demons don't have much power. They are easily disposed of by Jesus. His spiritual power is more than sufficient. He doesn't even break sweat.

Demons are like those cardboard cut-outs they use on firing ranges. It's a big, man-sized model but when you hit it, it falls backward easily because it is only held up by a small lever at the bottom. Demons make a big show, sometimes a big noise, like here in Luke 4, but once Jesus' power is exercised they fall over. Authority and power.

There is nothing good about a demon. Jesus treated demons like cockroaches – he has authority over them and he has power over them and he just steps on them.

In Luke 9:1 Jesus commissioned his disciples, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases ... one of several similar commissions culminating in the final commission (Matthew 28:18-20) to this disciples to pass it on to us. Jesus releases authority and power to us to do what he did.

Who can be demonised?

Everyone can be attacked by the enemy, including Christians. However, Christians can't be possessed by demons. When you surrender your life to Jesus, you invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and when he takes up residence in your life there is no room for any other. The Holy Spirit has possession of your soul and the enemy has no power to take it back.

In what ways can you be demonised?

What's the difference between being afflicted by the enemy and being possessed?

The enemy will have a go at people anyway he can. Few will be possessed although that does happen. The scale runs from demonically-influenced temptations through to affliction, sickness, oppression, bondage, possession. We use the word demonised which is a transliteration of the word daimonazai, which is what is most often used in the bible. "Got at" by the enemy.

What causes demonization?

Lots of things give the enemy a foothold. It's like being a large house (like HMC – podcast explain), we have to make sure all the doors and windows are shut so that the thief can't get in. When we first become a follower of Jesus we may have lots of windows and doors to shut, some we didn't even know were there. Over time things happen that may open the windows and doors again and when the Holy Spirit draws our attention to them we need to repent and close the window.

What do those windows and doors look like?

1. Sin (sexual, pornography, drugs & alcohol abuse)
 2. Occult (horoscopes, Ouija boards, tarot cards, palm reading)
 3. Inheritance from family
 4. False religions, new age, cults
 5. Addictions, compulsion
 6. Idolatry (celebrity worship, consumerism)
 7. Media (films – not Sean the sheep, music – not One Direction)
 8. Traumatic events – victim or perpetrator
- How do we minister to people who are demonised?

John 10:10 says that Jesus came that we may life and have it more abundantly. When God created the world, he did so in a perfect way, full of laughter and life. The enemy's sole purpose is to spoil and destroy. As we look around at the pain and suffering in our world we can see evidence of his general activity. That doesn't mean that if you are sick you need a demon casting out of you. The enemy has generally brought sickness and suffering into the world.

However, the enemy does specifically afflict some people some of the time. We are all getting cleaned up but there is a way to go. If you are struggling in your walk with Jesus it can often be as a result of the enemy continuing to have a foothold in your life. And that is not a good thing so let's deal with it whenever we see it!

The key thing is not to get dragged into a confrontation with the enemy on his terms.

When we pray for people who are afflicted by the enemy we remember that **the demon isn't the issue, the issue is the issue**. Whatever has caused the problem in someone's life, opened a door – that's what we address through repentance and prayer.

Healing Prayer

I taught about praying for the sick a few weeks ago and much of that is relevant in ministering to those who are demonised.

Jesus showed us the way. We are to use the power and authority he has delegated to us. We are not to use many words or to shout and scream. Just like any other form of prayer ministry we are to protect the dignity of the individual and invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers:

- The time of prayer will often include repentance
- and renouncing the enemy's work
- then receiving forgiveness
- we speak in Jesus' name and tell the evil spirit to go and
- then ask the Holy Spirit to fill the person.

How do I operate with authority and power?

The disciples knew about demonization all too well – and when you have seen it you will recognise it all too easily. Jesus sends us out with his power and authority to dispose of demons. We are to bring people to repentance, to cast out the demons, to minister healing and to help people close the doors and windows in their lives which give access to the enemy.

Luke 10:17-20, The disciples returned, saying, "Lord even the demons submit to us in your name." Jesus gave a little skip and a jump but then he cautioned them: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions (an image of Satan from Genesis 3) and to overcome all the power of the

enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

It's a question of what gets your attention. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven. In your own salvation. From there you will find that the spirits submit to you.

Daniel 11:32 says, after a discourse about what Satan will try and do, “With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.”

Do you want to know how to operate in this area with authority and with power?

The key to resisting the enemy and exercising authority over Satan's attempts to afflict us is - an increasingly intimate relationship with Jesus.

How do you nurture that relationship?

- By joining with your brothers and sisters to worship and celebrate in his presence on Sundays
- By committing yourself to a housegroup - to know and be known
- By reading the bible and praying
- By giving generously and fasting

It's called discipleship – being a disciple of Jesus. As you surrender your life to the love of Jesus and pursue him you will find two things:

- (1) you will be closing windows and doors securely and will find that the enemy has less and less purchase in your life and
- (2) you will be able to minister with more power and in more authority.

Conclusion

Yes, demons are a reality.

They are not to be sought out, neither are they to be ignored.

And they are not to be feared.

Jesus showed us what to do when we encounter the enemy and he give us the power and authority to do it.

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8 March 2015