

Blessed Are Those Who Hear & Obey

A common concern or worry of every Christian at some point in life is can a demon possess a Christian? It is clear from the New Testament that demons can possess or afflict people. The gospels reveal some demons can prevent people from speaking, and so the demon was called a mute demon (Luke 11:14). Other demons caused people to be extraordinarily physically strong (Luke 8:29-30), both blind and mute (Matthew 12:22), be mentally unstable (Mark 5:15), or have convulsions (Luke 9:42). The message is that demons can cause a variety of physical illnesses. Some have taught that Peter was demon possessed when Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Matthew 16:23). The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 that a demon or a messenger of Satan was attacking him. Consequently, it is common for some Christians to be concerned at some point, “Can I be possessed by a demon?” This study is about demon possession. Our study is in Luke 11:24-28.

Christians Cannot Be Demon Possessed.

Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that a Christian can be demon possessed. It is important to notice that the New Testament never explicitly describes any incident where a Christian is demon possessed. Acts 19:11-17 tells us that a group of non-Christians tried to cast out a demon.

The non-Christians were seven sons of Sceva and a Jewish chief priest. The chief priest was a very important, high ranking religious leader. They were exorcists according to verse 13. They were using the name of Jesus to cast out demons.

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”



they were warned to stop.¹ Maybe they were warned to stop because of what happened to these exorcists. Verses 15-16 tell us that the demon attacked these eight men and the demon left them naked and wounded.

And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on

them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Acts 19:13 (NASB)

Jesus was being magnified. Acts 19:16-17 (NASB)

What is important to note is that this did not happen to the apostle Peter in verses just before this incident occurred (Acts 19:11-12). Why did this happen to the sons of Sceva and the

The Graece Magicae Papyri states that Jewish priests did, in fact, try to cast out demons using the name of Jesus, but

1. K. Preisendanz. Papyri Graecae Magicae, I (Leipzig, 1928), Pap. Bibl. Nat. Suppl. gr. 574, lines 3018-19; Tos. Hullin 2.22-23; TJ Shabbat 14.4.14d and 'Adodah Zarah 2.2.40d0d-41a; TB 'Adodah Zarah 27b. cited in footnote 32 of F.F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts, Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1988, p. 368.

Jewish chief priest? The answer is given to us in 1 John 4:4. They were not Christians.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4 (NASB)

List of Demons Cast Out in the New Testament

(duplicate examples in the gospels are not listed)

Passage	Description
Matthew 8:16	Jesus cast many demons out with only a word.
Matthew 8:28-34	Jesus cast demons out of 2 extremely violent men.
Matthew 9:32-33	Jesus cast a demon out of a mute man.
Matthew 12:22	Jesus cast a demon out of a blind and mute man.
Matthew 15:22	Jesus cast a demon out of a woman's daughter from a distance.
Matthew 17:18	Jesus cast a demon out of a lunatic man who was also ill.
Mark 1:23	Jesus cast out a demon with, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"
Mark 9:25	Jesus cast out a <i>deaf and mute demon</i> from a deaf mute boy.
Mark 16:9	Jesus cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene
Luke 4:33	Jesus cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue.
Luke 4:41	Jesus cast out many demons.
Luke 6:18	As Jesus was casting out demons people were also healed.
Luke 11:14	Jesus cast a <i>mute demon</i> out of a mute man.
Acts 5:16	Demons were cast out of people.
Acts 8:7	Demons were cast out from many people.

1 John 4:4 states that the Holy Spirit is greater than Satan and any of his forces. Therefore, every true Christian can be confident that they cannot be possessed by a demon.

Demons Can Influence A Christian. However, the New Testament does tell us that two apostles were attacked by demons. Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, was not a follower of Christ. It is obvious that he was named as a disciple (Matthew 10:2-4), spent time with Christ and enjoyed the company of Christ, but scripture states that he was the son of perdition (John 17:12). From the beginning, he was a thief who stole money from Christ and the disciples (John 12:6). At the end of Christ's ministry, money was more important to Judas than Christ. In the end, Judas betrayed Christ because Satan entered Judas, that is, possessed him, and as a result he went to the chief priests and plotted the betrayal of Christ (Luke 22:2-6). Finally, at the Last Supper, Judas left the upper room in order to betray Christ. He did this after Satan took possession of Judas once again (John 13:27-30). Later Judas betrayed Christ and then hung himself in grief. Satan did not care that he hung himself. Judas is an example of a person who enjoyed being around Jesus and experiencing

"the Christian life" but he was not a real follower of Christ. The ultimate proof was that Satan could possess his body and move him to do what Satan wanted.

Peter was influenced by Satan to motivate Christ not to die on the cross, but he was not demon possessed. The lie

that Ananias and Sapphira told is a good example of demons being able to place thoughts into the minds of Christians (Acts 5:3). While the passage does not state that they were Christians, the assumption of the passage is that they were Christians. As proof, Acts 2:32 refers to the congregation of those who believed, and the passage continues into Acts 5. It is important to note that the chapter division did not exist in the manuscript that Luke wrote. The chapters were added to the Bible in 1571. Also, Acts 4:34 reveals that it was the custom for the Christians to lay proceeds of sales at the apostles' feet. There is every reason to believe that Ananias and Sapphira were Christians. Therefore, the message of Acts 5:1-10 is that a Christian husband and wife sold some property and then pretended to give all of the money from the sale to the apostles. They lied, and verse 5 reveals that Satan influenced them to lie.

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? Acts 5:3 (NASB)

This is one more proof that demons can influence Christians,

but they cannot possess a Christian. Ananias and Sapphira committed the “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). They were disciplined by the Lord (Hebrew 12:4-11) and the discipline was severe.

Illustration of Demonic Possession. Our last study in Luke 11 was about demon possession and this study is too! In Luke 11:14 we were told that Jesus was casting out a demon. The important fact was that Jesus was doing it again! The author Luke and the Holy Spirit do not say “again” but He was doing it again. That is, demons were being cast out. As a result the crowds had accused Christ of using demonic power.

Then He responded with the a curious statement that is recorded in Luke 11:24-28,

When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” Luke 11:24 (NASB)



Jesus says that an unclean spirit or a demon goes out of man. The term “unclean spirit” is common in the New Testament, occurring 13 times. He does not say that the demon was cast out by an exorcist but that appears to be what He is describing. The demon might have been cast out by a Jewish exorcist, one of His disciples or Himself. However, it is obvious that how this happened is not important to Jesus since He did not tell us. The important point is that the demon has the left a man and the man is finally free.

Demons Seek Waterless Places. Next we are

told that the demon wanders through waterless places. The Greek word for the phrase “passes through” is *dierchomai*. It has the meaning of “to travel around through an area, with the implication of both extensive and thorough movement throughout an area—‘to travel around through, to journey all through.’”² That is, the demon was moving around seeking another person to possess.

We are told that the demon was moving through waterless places. The Greek word *anydros* simply means “no water.” The word also appears in 2 Peter 2:17 and Jude 12 to refer to clouds and springs without water. Apparently, Jesus is making the point that demons seek to possess living creatures

that contain water. Humans are made of 50-78% water.

The amount of water in the human body ranges from 50-75%. The average adult human body is 50-65% water, averaging around 57-60%. The percentage of water in infants is much higher, typically around

75-78% water, dropping to 65% by one year of age.³

Every living creature is composed of water. Jesus is saying that demons seek to possess some living creature. A good example is the account of the man possessed by a legion of demons.

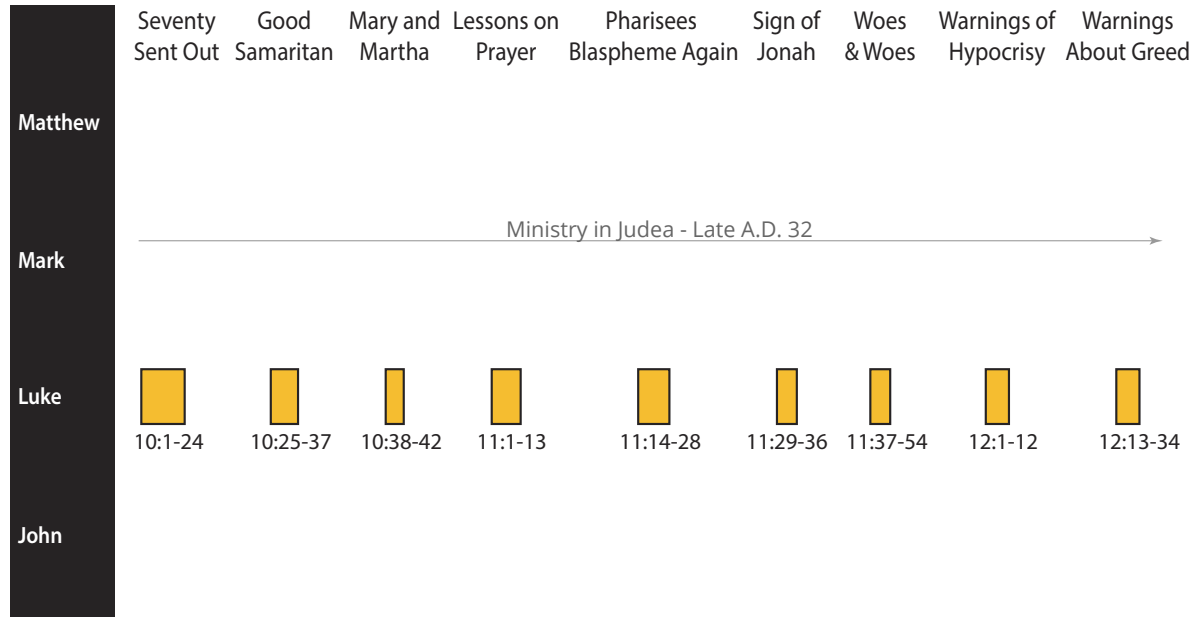
Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart

2. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains. United Bible Societies. 1996, vol. p. 184.

3. Anne Marie Helmenstine, Ph.D. “How Much of Your Body Is Water?” (www.thoughtco.com/how-much-of-your-body-is-water-609406)

Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Judea - Late A.D. 32



into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. Luke 8:30-33 (NASB)

Notice that the demons wanted to possess the pigs. It appears that they did not want to wander about in waterless places but would prefer some creature. Living creatures contain water. This could be the explanation of the phrase “passes through waterless places seeking rest.” However, this conclusion could be wrong since Scripture never defines waterless.

Moral Man Is Cleaned Up. In the illustration, Jesus stated that the demon was actively seeking a place and not finding a place. Both “seeking” and “finding” are present participles in the Greek text. That is, the demon was busy seeking but was not finding a new place in which to live. The demon was trying to find a place to dwell but it was not successful. This suggests that demons want to possess certain types of humans and not just any human. With all of the people in

the world, one would think that a new home would have been easy. If most of the world was filled with Christians, we could understand the demons need to be searching, but Jesus told us that few people are Christians He said that few find the way (Matthew 7: 13-14). Therefore, it would appear that demons seek certain types of non-Christians to possess.

Finally, it decided to return to its former house.

And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.

Luke 11:25 (NASB)

When it returned to its former home, Jesus said that it found the house swept and put in order. The Greek word for “swept” is *saroo* and it just means “to sweep with a broom.” The Greek word for “put in order” is *kosmeo* which means “to decorate.” Both are perfect participles which means that the work had been completed. This suggests that the demon had trashed its former home in some way, but now the house had been cleaned and fixed up.

This reminds me of a contractor who had been hired to clean up and repair a home after it had been trashed by

a renter. I saw the contractor from across the street and his crew working day after day. Once day I walked across the street and asked him what he was doing. He stated that he was repairing walls, removing carpets and then continued describing the work that had to be done. I asked how much was the estimated cost for the repairs. He said the cost for the repairs was about \$24,000. The home was valued at about \$150,000. I was amazed at the damage the former renters had caused. Surely, the owner lost money with that former renter.

Now we should not think that the demon destroyed the man internally, but when it possessed the man it damaged him too, just like the renter did. The demon may have caused the man to be mute, blind, deaf, paralyzed or violent, for example. But now the house is clean and decorated. That is, the man was healed, if he was sick. The man was not violent (Matthew 8:28). The man was morally clean. Now the man has control of himself. He was not being controlled by a demon. The man was fixed up and looked great! The man was like a house, an apartment or condominium that was ready for a new tenant. Sounds like a place many of us would like to live in.

Does this mean the man was now a Christian? No! The man was only morally clean. This is a picture of the man who has cleaned himself up. He is the moral man among us. This reminds me of a man who would criticize others for not being a person of “class.” The word “class” was used to refer to a high standard of moral behavior. He wanted to be morally ethical. He did not steal or commit adultery, and was a faithful and honest man. That describes this man to whom the demon returned to.

The man was not a Christian. A Christian is one who believes Jesus Christ is God who died for our sins, returned to life, and is now back in heaven. True belief can be easily identified because it always results in repentance over one’s sins and the person will give their life away to God. Those are the marks of true faith in God. This man had not done that, yet he looked like a “good” man. Why do we know that this man was not a Christian? Remember that in the introduction we discovered that a Christian cannot be demon possessed and notice what happens next,

Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

Luke 11:26 (NASB)

Degrees of Evil Among Demons. The frustrated demon returned with seven other demons. Jesus says that the other demons were more evil than the first one. That comment by Christ reveals that some demons are worse than other demons. Just as there are some people who are more evil than others, there are degrees of evil among demons. For example, Scripture teaches that some demons are so evil and disobedient that God does not allow them to move around the universe. Consequently, God has put them into a prison called the “abyss.” Scripture refers to this abyss sometimes as a prison or eternal bonds. Genesis 6:1-2 refers to some demons who were so evil that they wanted sexual intercourse with human women and consequently, God cast them into the abyss until the tribulation period occurs (Luke 8:30-31, 1 Peter 3:9; Jude 6; Revelation 9:11, 11:7, 17:8, and 20:1-3).

Last State of That Man Was Worse. When the demon returned, he invited other demons to join him and they came and lived together as group of college students in a fraternity, but these demons were not like frat students. Jesus tells us that the last state of the man was worse than before.

The message is that the moral man or woman cannot permanently transform himself. The cultured, sophisticated man or woman will look good on the outside but it is only the outside that looks good. The moral person is like a birthday gift that looks fabulous on the outside because it is wrapped with ribbon and bows, but inside the box is filth and rot. The moral person thinks he or she is a good person because they see the good works that they perform or because they compare themselves to others who are more evil than themselves. But the truth is that they lust just like the more wicked. They are gluttons and hate too! They do not see their real self.

There was a fantasy movie called “The Never Ending Story” in which a young boy is on a journey to save fantasia or fantasy land. At one point in the movie the boy is told to enter a cave, but he is warned that when he enters he will discover his true self. He was also warned that some leave screaming in

pain too! Jesus' illustration is that the non-Christian cannot clean himself because he is trapped under the influence and control of the devil. The apostle John states this truth this way,

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:18-19 (NASB)

The apostle and the Holy Spirit state that the devil cannot touch a Christian, and non-Christians lie in the power of the evil one. Do you? The man in the illustration was in the power of the evil one. That is why the first demon could return to him and wanted to return to him. The demon could not enter Christians who were already filled by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-23 reveals that the Holy Spirit transforms a Christian little-by-little. Progressively, the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc. A man or woman who truly displays these qualities is a Christian. They will increase with time and such a man or woman cannot be possessed by a demon.

Exorcism and Faith. Have you wondered how this illustration of a demon possessed man and the demon who wanders through waterless places connects to the previous study titled, "Pharisees Blaspheme Jesus Again" (Luke 11:14-23)? In that study, the Pharisees had been accusing Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil. Jesus replied that if Satan's kingdom was divided then it would not stand, and immediately asked, "By whom do your sons cast them out?" Then Jesus told the crowd that He was stronger than the devil when He said,

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. Luke 11:21-22 (NASB)

This illustration reveals that when Christ cast out demons they did not come back, but when the sons of the Pharisees and other Jews cast out demons, the demons returned. Next, the illustration in the study reveals that when Jesus cast out demons, the person also responded in faith. That is, the exorcism included the person responding in faith to Jesus Christ. But when the Jewish sons cast out a demon, it returned.

Blessed Are Those Who Hear and Obey.

After Jesus finished giving the illustration about the demon, we are told that a woman raised her voice and spoke.

While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." Luke 11:28 (NASB)

She did not shout but raised her voice so that she would be heard. She understood that one of the greatest blessings for a woman was godly children and in this case, Jesus was not only godly, He was God in human flesh. However, this woman may not have understood that. The book of Proverbs has much to say about a mother and her children.

**A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
Proverbs 10:1 (NASB)**

**He who assaults his father and drives his mother
away
Is a shameful and disgraceful son.
Proverbs 19:26 (NASB)**

**Listen to your father who begot you,
And do not despise your mother when she is old.
...**

**The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who sires a wise son will be glad in him.
Let your father and your mother be glad,
And let her rejoice who gave birth to you.
Proverbs 123:22, 24-25 (NASB)**

He who robs his father or his mother
And says, "It is not a transgression,"
Is the companion of a man who destroys.
Proverbs 28:24 (NASB)

The rod and reproof give wisdom,
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to
his
mother. Proverbs 29:15 (NASB)

The message of these proverbs is that a mother can be shamed by her children or a child can bring joy to his or her mother, as well as his or her father. The dear lady in the crowd was correct.

Then Jesus contrasts her true statement to a superior statement.

But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who
hear the word of God and observe it." Luke 11:28
(NASB)

Jesus is not contradicting the Scripture in Proverbs. He is making the point that there is something else that is more important and gives us another beatitude. The Greek word for "hear" is *akouo* and the Greek word that is translated as "observe" is *phyllasso*. Both Greek words are present participles which means that Jesus is referring to ongoing activities of hearing and observing. Only those who are Christians will be able to keep the commandments that they hear. Only the Holy Spirit can help a Christian constantly hear and obey. The mark of a Christians is one who obeys.

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if
we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have
come to know Him," and does not keep His com-
mandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but
whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has
truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in
Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself
to walk in the same manner as He walked. 1 John 2:3-6
(NASB)

Her comment helped to emphasize Jesus' message about the moral man, who can be demon possessed, will not hear and obey God because he is not a Christian. The Christian is the one who is blessed.

Conclusion. The woman's response and Jesus' reply to her help to explain the illustration about the demon who left and returned. The one who is blessed is the person who is constantly hearing and actively seeking to obey what God commands. This person will not have to worry about demonic possession. He will be blessed!

For example, we read in Colossians 3:16,

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with
all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another
with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing
with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians
3:16 (NASB)

The Greek word that is translated as "richly" is *plousios* and it primarily means "a large amount" with the nuance of being valuable. That is, Christians who spend a great amount of time in study of the Word of God will have a heart that is filled with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs and be singing with thankfulness! May you experience this type of blessing!