

## **PART II. THE DEVIL'S ANGELS**

*“Immediately the Spirit impelled him to go into the wilderness.*

*And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan...*

*And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath*

*He entered the synagogue and began to teach...*

*Just then (lit., and immediately) there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!”*

*Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”*

*(Mark 1.12-13, 21-27)*

Mark's Gospel shows us that Jesus' public ministry began with a confrontation with the devil and his angels. When the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, the Spirit immediately thrust him into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. Matthew 4.1 says that Jesus was *led* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (see also Lk 4.1-2). Before Jesus preached to people in the wilderness, he had to overcome Satan, the tempter. Mark gives us an account of the first day in the public ministry of Jesus in Mk 1.21-39. When Jesus entered Capernaum, where he moved to begin his public ministry (Matt 4.13), Jesus immediately (i.e., as the first step he took in his ministry) entered the synagogue of the Jews to teach. Here, in his first public address he was interrupted by a demon called an unclean spirit. His authority over demons was the first public manifestation of his role as the Christ, the Anointed One. Notice Mark's use of the word *immediately* both for Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and for the encounter with the demons. Jesus' confrontation with spiritual darkness was right up front in his ministry. He dealt with the devil and his angels.

Satan's work was to interfere with Jesus' relationship with God. God from heaven declared Jesus to be his beloved Son. Satan took this up and sought to direct Jesus in the way he should act out what it means to be the Son of God. This brings into focus the distinctive role of Satan as shown by the first part of our study. The devil has his role in getting between mankind and God. Jesus overcame the tempter and was true to his relationship with God his Father. In this spiritual victory he turned to the people to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. Here in his audience he confronted the other side of the kingdom of evil. Now it was not the devil tempting him but demons who took over the lives of individuals and through these people had their place in human society, even in the synagogue.

The devil works in between God and mankind. Where the devil has cut off people from God, the demons work to establish the hold of spiritual darkness in the lives of people. In the second part of this study, we will look at what the Bible teaches about the activity of these angels of the devil.

In our study, we will trace the activity of the devil's angels as it is presented throughout scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. We will see that their activity moves along with the development of history as presented in scripture. We will present a history of demonic activity.

## **A. THE ANGELS THAT FOLLOW SATAN (Rev 12.3-4)**

In the first part of our study, we saw that a prophetic vision is presented of the corruption and fall of the most exalted creature in heaven, the anointed cherub, and this fallen cherub answers in every way to Satan. The Bible does not give us any vision of the angels that followed Satan that is comparable to this. Biblical doctrine, however, makes this much clear. There are a large number of demons who are the devil's angels. Just as Satan was created, so were they. In the created hierarchy of angels, these angels are inferior to Satan, and this accounts for the fact that Satan is their ruler (Matt 12.24-26). Jesus called the demons the devil's angels (Matt 25.41), and we have a vision of what this means in Rev 12.7-8. Just like Michael the archangel leads the other holy angels in war, so Satan is the leader of his angels. They follow him and fight in his war. The relationship between the devil and his angels points to the fact that they followed him in his rebellion against God in heaven.

Does the Bible give us a vision of the original fall or revolt of many angels in heaven? The only vision that points to such an event is found in Rev 12.3-4. Satan is seen as a sign in heaven. He is seen as a great red dragon whose "tail swept (lit., sweeps, present tense) away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." In the Bible the angels are referred to as the starry host of heaven, so the imagery of the stars as angels is true to scripture. But, this in itself does not establish the point being made. Many interpreters of the Apocalypse refer this part of the vision to Dan 8.10. There the prophet sees a small horn which "grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth and it trampled them down." This horn even magnified itself to be equal to God, the commander of the Host (v 11). The little horn is Antiochus Epiphanies who is a prototype of the Antichrist. As a human king who usurps the kingdom over other rulers, he casts down earthly rulers who are seen as stars. The counterpart and fulfillment of this in the Apocalypse is not the vision of the dragon but of the beast in Rev 13.1-10.

The vision of the dragon in heaven is one of Satan throughout all of history as the ruler of the world. In this vision, there is no reference to Satan toppling a third of the world's rulers. In fact, this would go against the point of the vision. The dragon is seen as the spirit who rules through the Gentile powers. In Rev 13.2 and 7, the dragon's throne and authority which he gives to the beast is seen as over all tribes and nations. The vision of the dragon in heaven in Rev 12.3-4 leads to the climax of the war in heaven in which the devil fights with his angels. This suggests that the stars that the dragon draws behind him are his angels.

What does the vision of the dragon's tail drawing after him a third of the stars suggest about the devil's angels? First of all, it presents the obvious. The devil is the leader of the fallen angels. The demons are under his rule. We have presented the biblical teaching on this already. We also see that the devil only took a part of the angels, and this is obvious from all that the Bible teaches about the angelic realm. The vision adds that he took with him only a third and so has the smaller portion of the angels in his service. This is significant for our faith. The power of the devil and demons over the world looms large over us, but this is not due to the fact that they have the larger portion of angelic might which God created. In fact, they constitute a smaller army. This may lie behind the defeat that the devil and his angels suffer in the war in heaven. Once the Son of Man was enthroned in heaven, the war began, and in this war in heaven the devil and his angels are progressively defeated. We looked at what this means in the first part of our study. Our point now is that the upper hand in angelic might is held by the holy angels who wield heaven's power on behalf of the heirs of salvation.

The vision also shows that Satan brought about the demeaning fall of the angels who follow him. He cast them to the earth. As angels they were created to serve God in his rule in heaven. Following Satan, they must now fight God by building up Satan's kingdom from the earth. Satan enthrones himself as the god of this world by holding mankind under his sway. As we will see, demons serve Satan by holding human beings under the power of darkness. Satan places himself between God and mankind, and the demons secure the hold of evil over people on earth.

The vision of the dragon does not present Satan in his original act of sin. Rather, it presents him in his rule throughout history. We must see the vision of the angels who follow him in this light. Rev 12.4 does not present a vision of the initial revolt of the angels in heaven. It only shows that Satan is such a mighty heavenly ruler that he draws a third of the stars or angels behind him. From the fact that he has subordinated under his rule all the demons, we can see at least the proportions of the revolt in heaven. Evil originated with the anointed cherub, who was king among the angels. A third of the angels were drawn into his service. But, here we must keep in mind the nature of angelic sin, a point we made in our study of the doctrine of angels. Angels see God directly. No angel could be deceived into sinning. So, each of the wicked angels sinned totally from himself and is fully responsible for his sin. A demon is not deceived but is a source of deception.

## **B. THE ANGELS WHO DID NOT KEEP THEIR OWN DOMAIN (Gen 6.1-4)**

The first account scripture gives of the activity of wicked angels is found in Gen 6.1-4. This account is so brief and concise that it is actually cryptic. Its meaning must be deciphered. Added to this is the fact that the sin of the wicked angels is rather unusual, and for many unbelievable—that the sons of God took to themselves human wives. We have other scriptures to guide us in our interpretation. Here is one case where we must interpret scripture by scripture.

2 Peter 2.4-9 marshals three examples that show that the Lord knows how “to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority (vv 9-10). The three examples are taken from Genesis. They are the angels who sinned, (2Pt 2.4), the ancient world that was destroyed in the flood (2Pt 2.5) and Sodom and Gomorrah (2Pt 2.6). The three examples follow the narrative of Genesis: Gen 6.1-4; chapters 7 to 8; and chapter 19. The way Peter follows Genesis shows that by the sin of the angels he is referring to the incident recorded in Gen 6.1-4. So, we have scriptural support for the identification of the sons of God in Gen 6.2 as angels.

Jude takes up the first and third of Peter’s examples and points to the nature of the sins involved. He says that the sons of God were “angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode” (Jude 6). He further identifies their sin when he says that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah “...in the same way as these (i.e., the angels of v 6) indulged in gross immorality and went after strange (lit., different) flesh...” (v 7). By “different flesh” Jude may refer to the fact that the men of Sodom went after the angels who appeared in the city. But, the men of Sodom did not know that they were angels any more than Lot. Also, the sin is not just that of Sodom but of the other cities that were destroyed. So, Jude is most likely referring to the fact that they overstepped the limits of the sexual relationship set by God. What Jude makes clear is that the angels crossed over the boundary between their nature and that of people in seeking sexual relations with women and that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities transgressed the sexual boundaries. This double transgression is the sin of the apostates against whom he is writing. They “...defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties” (Jude 8). They did not heed the boundaries imposed on sexual relations or the boundary between human beings and angelic authority and majesties.

Jude gives us the key to interpreting the account in Gen 6.1-4. It is about angels abandoning their position as heavenly rulers. They are angels who did not keep their domain. The Greek word is *arche* which means rule and is used for angelic rulers in Col 1.16. In not keeping their rule, they abandoned their proper abode which was heaven. They took up an earthly position by taking wives. In light of this, we will now look at Gen 6.1-4 which gives us the first account of the action of wicked angels which we commonly call demons.

### **1. The sons of God (Gen 6.2)**

The expression, the sons of God (*bene elohim*) is only used of angels in the OT (Gen 6.2, 4; Job 1.6; 2.1; 38.7). The similar expression *bene elim* which is translated in the NASB as “the sons of the mighty” is used

for angels in Ps 29.1 and 89.6. Peter and Jude are true to the OT language when they take the sons of God in Gen 6.2 to be angels.

In Job 1 and 2 the sons of God are in the heavenly court assembled before God. This place for these sons is specified in Ps 89.6-7. The Lord is incomparable in the skies among the sons of the mighty (*bene elim*, v 6). He is greatly feared in the council of his holy ones and awesome above all who surround him (v 7). The sons of God have their position in heaven, the place of rule over the earth. Jude refers to this in speaking of the angels not keeping their domain or rule and leaving their habitation in heaven to take their place on earth.

Psalm 82 connects the rulers and judges on earth with the sons of God in the heavenly court. The Psalm opens with, "God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of rulers" (v 1). This calls up the vision of God presiding over his heavenly court. But, the Psalm goes on to address and rebuke the judges who are set over the people (vv 2-4). The psalmist said of the judges, "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High" (v 6). These judges are called gods and sons of the Most High because they have a place in God's ruling council. Though they were called gods and the sons of the Most High, they "...will die like men and fall like any one of the princes" (v 7). While they shared in the divine rule, they will go down as mere men. The Psalm closes by addressing God: "Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possess all the nations" (v 8). The gods or sons of God have failed and must die like men, and God must carry out the role of judge for the whole earth.

Psalm 82 confirms what we have seen. The sons of God or the sons of the Most High are those beings who are in God's ruling council. In the first instance, the sons of God are angels. Human rulers are seen as participating in God's government. This is forcefully brought out in the vision of Zech 3.1-7. The high priest who governs God's house and has charge of God's courts has free access among the angel of the LORD and Satan in the presence of God (Zech 3.7). The correlation between the rulers in heaven and on earth is brought out in Ish 24.21. In the first part of this study, we have looked at this passage.

The way the sons of God are introduced in Gen 6.1-2 confirms that heavenly beings are in view. The sons of God are set in antithesis to men (*adam*) in v 1 and in contrast to the daughters of men (*adam*) in v 2. Everything points to the fact that these sons of God are angels, but the parallel between ruling angels and men is not to be forgotten. We will return to this.

## **2. The pattern of the narrative**

The brief account of Gen 6.1-4 is part of the larger history which runs from the Garden of Eden to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 2 to 11), and we should not read the strange account in isolation but within the larger developments. We will look at some of these developments to understand how the story is set and how the activity of these angels is to be understood.

### **a. The theme of procreation (Gen 6.1)**

The opening line in v 1 takes up the creational theme of procreation. The setting is that men began to multiply on the face of the land. Thus, the blessing to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth in Gen 1.27 is being fulfilled. In the Garden of Eden, this theme of procreation is brought before the serpent and Adam and Eve in God's judgments on the first sin (Gen 3.15-16, 20). The narrative of events outside of the Garden begins with Adam and Eve bearing two sons (Gen 4.1-2), and the genealogies show how the human race began to multiply (4.17-5.32).

When we read Gen 6.1-2 in direct relation to the genealogy of Adam just before it in chapter 5, we see a significant shift take place in the theme of procreation. God made man as male and female (5.1-2), and as such they procreated (vv 3ff.). The genealogy states that it is the males who fathered the male next in line, and he "had other sons and daughters". Procreation was to happen through human fatherhood. The line was to be carried on through the males. This is basic to the whole Bible. Now notice the change. The sons of

God took up procreation with the daughters. They took over the role of the males, and the aberration was brought in through the daughters.

**b. The pattern of sin and judgment (Gen 6.1-3)**

The little that is said in Gen 6.1-3 is put into a pattern that answers to the fall that took place in the Garden of Eden. The sin is initiated from outside of the human race. In the Garden it was the serpent, and now it is the sons of God. Also, as the serpent worked through Eve, so now the sons of God carry out their scheme through the daughters. As in the Garden, after the sin was committed God responds. God's response of judgment in Gen 6.3 echoes his judgment on Adam and Eve in Gen 3.22-23.

The issue in the first sin is that man became like God by knowing good and evil (Gen 3.22). By forbidding the knowledge of good and evil, God was forbidding man to cross over the boundary between God and mankind. Satan understood this and tempted Eve to gain the knowledge and become like God (Gen 3.5). God did not reverse the effects of the first sin. Adam and Eve were left with the burden of this knowledge. However, God barred them from the tree of life so that they would die. In death, God said that the truth of Adam's own existence as cut off from God would be seen. He is dust, and to dust he will return (Gen 3.19). If man has become like God in having the knowledge of good and evil and deciding from within himself what is right and wrong, he is shown not to be a god in that he must die.

God's response to the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men strikes the same note. As in Gen 3.22, God is taking note of man's state (he is flesh) and decides on the appropriate judgment: God decreed that man's days would be shortened to 120 years. God pressed on mankind its mortality, the very mortality decreed in Gen 3.22. Let us take a closer look at this.

God's Spirit is, in the view of the OT, the source of our life in the body. Only when God sends forth his Spirit, are living beings created. If he takes away their spirit, they die (Ps 104.29-30). "If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust (Job 34.14-15). God made such a determination in Gen 6.3 when he said, "My Spirit shall not strive (or better, remain) with man forever. God is not first of all thinking of the individual's life span, because people did not live forever. Rather, he is thinking of the current human race now corrupted by the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. The shortening of life has its basis in human nature. God said, "...because he also is flesh." To be flesh is to have a weak and mortal nature in contrast to spirit beings (Ish 31.3; 40.7). Despite the union with the sons of God, man remained flesh, and the shortened life span of the race (shortened by the flood) would prove mankind's mortality.

God's judgment is given before we are told of the prodigious offspring of the unions. This lets us know that God is not judging the offspring in v 3 but what the point of the unions between the sons of God and the daughters of men was. This fact throws light on the nature of the sin being committed. The sons of God as spirits are immortal. By seeking to procreate with women, they sought to raise up flesh to the power and longevity of spirit nature. If they had succeeded in this, then the original sin would be perfected. Man had already become like God in having the knowledge of good and evil and being an autonomous and self determining being. What established the boundary between God and man was that he was weak and mortal. His weakness is seen in that he must work by the sweat of his brow, and his mortality is seen in his death. If man became a hybrid between spirit beings and flesh, he would have triumphed in his sin against God. Man being flesh had no power to raise his nature. The initiative had to taken on the side of the spirit beings. As Satan tempted Eve to become Godlike, so the wicked angels try to perfect the wicked Godlikeness.

Now we can see something of the proportions of what was plotted. God barred man from the tree of life by stationing the cherubim. The sons of God in Gen 6.2 sought to provide an alternative to this. Working with the daughters, they would make the seed of the woman, which God said would crush the serpent's head, carry through the purpose of Satan in man's self deification.

A question that needs to be asked is: did these unions involved human sin? The fact that God judges the human race for these unions suggests that they did. It is significant that the sons of God did not force or



rape the daughters of men. They took them as wives, and this means that the women and their fathers, at least, would have consented to the unions. We must also take in the full weight of the statement that the sons of God “took wives for themselves, whomever they chose” (Gen 6.2). This suggests that the whole race was at their disposal. Genesis 6 is giving an account of the involvement of the whole race in a horrific transgression of the limits set on human nature. As Eve was judged for letting herself be deceived, and as Adam was judged for listening to his wife, so the human race was judged for receiving the “benefit” of the hybridization.

### c. The results of the unions (Gen 6.4)

The results were the human prodigies mentioned in v 4. But, before we look at them, we should take note of what did not happen. God took note in v 3 that indeed man never ceased to be flesh. The transgression on the part of the angels did not succeed in bypassing the creator’s limits imposed on man as flesh, and it did not overcome the judgment that man must die. In fact, it had the opposite effect—the life span of the race was shortened first by the flood, and then the individual life span was scaled down to a maximum of 120 years after the flood.

After God secured the boundaries that he set, and even closed in the boundary of death, he let the effects take place. Verse 4 begins with the observation that the Nephilim were on the earth in those days. It is not suggested that the Nephilim were the products of the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men. The comment is parallel to the aside in Gen 12.6: “Now the Canaanite was then in the land” (see also Gen 13.7). The meaning of the word Nephilim is uncertain, but the one other time it is used gives us an idea of what they were. In Num 13.32-33 the Nephilim are a race of men of great size or giants of which the sons of Anak were a part. These Nephilim were not descendants of the sons of God in Gen 6.4 for they were all wiped out by the flood. We must conclude that the Nephilim were the result of a natural and genetic development in the propagation of the race. By the time of the marriages of the sons of God to women, the human race had developed these gigantic specimens. The report of the spies in Numbers 13 showed that they inspired an awe and fear that eclipsed faith in God.

Added to the Nephilim, and probably as a subclass of them, the children born to the sons of God from the women “...were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” The Hebrew term translated with *mighty men* is the term used for heroic warriors. The phrase translated with “men of renown” is literally, “men of name.” This is echoed by the Babel builders who wanted to make a name for themselves by their collective effort (Gen 11.4), and it stands in contrast to God’s promise to make Abraham’s name great (Gen 12.2). The point is that to be a man of name or renown is to have an identity that is larger than life for a human being. God made Abraham’s name great, for God in his greatness was identified with the patriarch. The mighty men were men of name because of the mighty power that they were endowed with through their relation with the sons of God. These men were not gods or semi gods. They were flesh, mere mortals. But, they were prodigies and at least gave the impression of being super human.

The unions between the sons of God and the daughters of men had a real effect on the human race. It was a threshold event that raised sin in the human race to a total racial corruption. Up to this event, the sins that Genesis recorded were those of individuals; Eve, Adam, Cain and Lamech. With Gen 6.1-4, the corruption begins to be racial. The narrative in Genesis 6.5f. presents the wholesale corruption. The wicked angels had the effect of totally corrupting the human race.

## 3. Doctrinal comprehension

What are we to make of the marriage of angels to women? How does this fit into our doctrinal understanding?

Peter tells us that God did not spare these angels “but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment” (2Pt 2.4). Jude says that God has kept these angels “in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). These angels who crossed the boundary between a spirit being and flesh were removed. They are not free to work on earth. This means that the

demons who are at work at present are not from the set of angels who carried out this sin. In scripture, there is no account of any such act having been carried out after the flood. Prophecy which presents the culmination of all evil in history does not give a vision of such a sin being committed again. We can safely conclude that a marriage union between angels and women will not and cannot happen again. But, that does not end the significance for the human race of what the wicked angels did.

**a. A lesson for all time**

The way the incident of Gen 6.1-4 lives on in human history is indicated in the closing remark: "These were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." At the time that Israel was in the land of Canaan, the myths and legends of the nations recalled times when gods and mortals interbred to generate hybrids and when there was a super race. These stories were all presented in the colour and form of pagan polytheism. The narrative of Gen 6.1-4 clarifies the situation. The hybridization of mankind is a sin and a disaster. It did not bring about human beings who were half gods. Rather, it left them as mortal and only accelerated corruption and ruin. In letting the sons of God cohabit with woman, God only judged this idea, that lives on in paganism, of the realization of human deification. The pagan myths and legends are false for they give an account within the false framework of polytheism. The idea in these myths that human beings who were half gods were superior to our natural and created state is shown to be false. It is a violation and is destructive.

The idea and fantasy of people crossing over the divide between flesh and spirit beings persists with the human race. We see a form of this in the destructive heresies the Peter and Jude expose and warn against. There is no reality to what these false teachers are claiming. Jude says that they are infringing on the domain of angels by dreaming (Jude 8). Paul makes a similar observation. The person involved was "... taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (Col 2.18). The demons now only work to delude the mind to imagine a crossing over to the realm of angels.

Today the ideas involved in Gen 6.1-4 live one in popular fantasy in the idea of superheroes. The human mind is still entertained and obsessed with human beings who (in pseudoscientific terms) mutate to develop super human powers. If people could develop such mutants, they would gladly do it and give themselves over to it. On this theme, Gen 6.1-4 speaks. The development of superheroes would leave men as mere flesh and only accelerate the corruption and demise of the human race. This will be finally seen in the rise and demise of the beast. Satan gives to the beast all of his authority so that he is set up as a god, but this will only result in corruption and sure judgment from heaven.

Doctrine is what we must teach, and Gen 6.1-4 teaches an important truth that brings clarity into an area of human confusion.

**b. The theological difficulty**

Jesus stated clearly that angels in heaven do not marry (Matt 22.30). So, what are we to make of the marriage of the sons of God to the daughters of men? What are we to make of their attraction to woman in Gen 6.2?

We should begin by noticing that Gen 6.1-4 does not penetrate into the realm of the sons of God. No explanation as to how this happened and no description of the process involved are given. This is true to the outlook of the entire OT. In the OT the realm of the demonic is left under a veil. Only through Jesus is the veil lifted so that we are given a direct view of demons.

In the Gospels we learn that demons do violate the created order. Angels were not created to possess a body, and no holy angel would desire to indwell a body. Yet, we see the demons requesting to enter bodies, even the bodies of swine (Matt 8.31). For some reason, they do not want to be in a disembodied state. Jesus said that when a demon is cast out it seeks rest and does not find it. So it returns to the body which it once inhabited and calls it, "My house." If the demon finds it empty, it will strengthen itself against being cast out and inhabit it again (Matt 12.43-45). The demon does not simply take on the body as a shell. He works

through the sinful passions of the body. We see this in the demonic work of giving psychic powers, as seen in the demon possessed girl in Acts 16. The sorcery is not just a work that demons desire to do; it is also a work of the flesh (Gal 5.20). As we will see shortly, the demon also took over the person's identity. Possession was of the whole person. All this may seem strange to us. It is abnormal and is contrary to the created nature of angels. But, as fallen angels they work to violate the created order, and how far they will go in this we do not know.

The fact that union between the sons of God and the daughters of men only produced children that were flesh shows that indeed the sons of God could not mix the nature of angels and mankind. To put it in modern terms, the wicked angels had no genes to pass on to the women. Also, they are not God and had no power to create. Gen 6.1-4 does not tell us how they carried out the marriages.

If we take what is shown up about demons through their encounters with Jesus, we would have to conclude that the son of God worked through some kind of demon possession. This would not be outside of the view of the sons of God in the OT. We noticed that what the sons of God did in their rule was carried out on earth in human rulers. This correlation between members in the heavenly ranks and men on earth leaves the possibility open that the sons of God worked through their earthly counterparts. In such a case, a wicked angel would have left his position as heavenly ruler and taken over the identity and ego of a person on earth. The demon possessed man of Mark 5 may show something of the way a wicked angel could take over a man to become the husband in a marriage. The demon possessed man took on the identity of the legion of demons when he requested, "Do not torment me" (Mk 5.7). But, just before this the demons spoke as separate from him. The demons swing between their identity as separate from the man (only speaking through him) and their identification with the man, taking over his ego. In the case of the sons of God becoming marriage partners, the spirits would have identified completely and permanently with the men they took over so that the men lost any human identity in distinction from the demon. The result would be that the woman would not be conscious of marrying a man but of one of the sons of God.

The fruit of such a union would be nothing more than a human being. The human being would have superhuman traits which, however, were possible within the confines of human nature. We also saw that the children born in these unions were classed with the Nephilim in Gen 6.4. This may point to the fact that the wicked angels used the bodies of the Nephilim for their wicked deed. If this was the case, the angels simply took up the genetic potential of the human race, as that had developed, and joined it with angelic strength. What this could achieve is seen in Mk 5.3-4 and in the beast of Revelation 13. But, the idea of a hybridization of the human race was only an illusion, and demons traffic in illusions.

We have tried to understand what happened in Gen 6.2 in light of what is exposed about demons in the Gospels. There may be one significant difference between the sons of God and the demons of the Gospel accounts. Jude called them rulers. He uses the term for angels who are over the lowest rank called authorities in Col 1.16. The demons that possess people are, most likely, of the lowest rank. This means that the sons of God may have been able to gain a more powerful hold than the demons of the Gospel stories.

Whatever way the wicked angels carried out their scheme, all was a violation of the created order. This causes confusion in the created order, which in turn confuses our doctrinal understanding. Demons do not leave the data for doctrine clean and tidy. The Spirit of God who gave us the scriptures did not disclose the metaphysical facts (what was involved in the union between spirits and flesh) but the moral truth in the confusion, and this is the truth that we need.

### **c. The first mark of demonic activity**

The great sin of the sons of God is that of mixing what God has established as apart. They work to realize in human experience what Satan tempted Eve to undertake—to cross the line between man and God. Demons work to generate the experience that human and divine natures are in common and can be merged. They failed to achieve this in the reality of human nature, but they continue to undertake to achieve this in human minds and in the illusion of certain experiences. But, in their work the death and ruin of mankind.



## C. DEMONS AND THE WORLD OF NATIONS

Our word demon comes from the Greek word *daimon* used in Matt 8.31. The common form of this word, used in the NT for demons, is *daimonion*. The Hebrew term for *daimonion* is *shed*. This word is used only twice in the OT (Deut 32.17; Ps 106.37) and is translated with *daimonion* in the LXX.

Moses points out in his song in Deuteronomy 32 that when Israel sacrificed to strange gods the people actually sacrificed to demons who were not God (v 16). Psalm 106.37 points out the same sin after Israel entered the Promised Land. The Psalmist adds the observation that Israel mingled with the nations and learned their practices, which were idolatry and sacrificing to the demons (Ps 137.36). The OT is clear that the idol is not a living being, but this does not mean that the idol worshipper did not serve a real spirit. The two passages we have looked at show that behind the idols there were spirits. Paul takes this up in 1Cor 8.4-6 and 10.19-22. On the one hand, the idol is nothing (10.19) and the gods of the Gentiles are only so called gods (8.5); but, on the other hand, the things that the Gentiles sacrifice to idols they sacrifice to demons and not to God (10.19) and participation in idolatrous meals is to become sharers in demons (v 20).

Idolatry dominated all the nations throughout biblical history from Abraham onward. This means that as the human race broke down into nations the demons established themselves as the spirits that held the place of deity over all the peoples of the world. When we see the strong and persistent hold that idolatry held over the world of nations in the OT, we realize that after the flood the grip that demons had over the race strengthened. How did this come about and what was involved in it?

### 1. The next threshold in the history of sin (Gen 11.1-9)

The human race was broken down into nations at Babel. The story begins with the observation that the whole earth used the same language and the same words (v 1), and it ends with the people scattered over the face of the whole earth speaking different languages (v 9). This was another threshold event that changed the course of history.

The story of the building of Babel fits the pattern of sin and judgment found in the narratives of the fall in the Garden of Eden and of the breakthrough of wickedness related in Gen 6.1-4. The setting for the sinful action is given in Gen 9.1 where God renews the blessing of creation that mankind is to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The sons of God in Gen 6.2 attacked the first part of this decree: mankind as male and female were to procreate. The Babel builders undertake to work against the second part of the decree: to fill the earth.

**Our observation enables us to make an important observation.** Genesis 1 to 11 present three thresholds in the history of the sin of human race. Each one worked on an aspect of the creator's decree. The first was the sin in the Garden. Here the issue was that God created man as his image and imposed on him the limit that while he shared in God's nature as the image of God he was not to elevate his nature to the role of God by making his nature define what is good and evil. The second threshold sin worked against the decree that male and female be fruitful and multiply. Here the effort was to use procreation to overcome the limits the creator placed on man when he made man flesh and then when he passed the sentence of death of sin. This effort was overthrown by the flood, and sin took a new starting point. The first two threshold sins sought to deify the nature of the individual, through knowledge and through birth. Both attempts were cut down by God's judgment. The third attempt drew on man's collective strength (Gen 11.4). What he cannot achieve individually, he undertook to achieve collectively. Mankind could build a city to stay together. They could build a tower whose top would reach into heaven. In this we see the attempt of man to rise above earth to heaven. Through this, people sought to make a name for themselves. Here we see them attain the position of renown through might that the offspring of the sons of God had (Gen 6.4). God took note that mankind could by its collective strength reach a level of power so that nothing that man wills to do will be impossible (Gen 11.6). This is approaching a level of power that belongs to God only. To actualize this collective power, mankind had to overturn the decree to fill the earth.

We have seen that like the sin of Genesis 3 and of Gen 6.1-4 the sin of the Babel builders was both a transgression of a decree of creation and an act of surmounting the limitations that God has placed on man as a creature of flesh. As in the earlier threshold sins, God responds to mankind's attempt at rising above its limitations. God observes and takes note of what mankind is attaining (Gen 11.6). Then God determines a judgment that will cut man down to size (v 7). This judgment cuts down man in his attainments and enforces the creator's decree that was being transgressed. Man is divided and scattered. But, the judgment does not remove the sin from the human heart. The people that went out from Babel all took with them the change in human identity forged at Babel. As nations, people have a collective identity in the unity of their own group. God did not identify with any of the nations that formed under the judgment of Babel. This means that they had to establish their own collective identity in the world, and into this vacuum the demons came. All the nations were united under false gods and in the worship of idols.

## **2. Demonic power behind idolatry**

Paul points out in 1Cor 12.2 the role of demonic power in idolatry. He said, "You know that when you were Gentiles, you were led away (or carried off), however you were led, to speechless idols" (literal transl.). Paul is pointing to the two sides of idolatry. On the surface, it is clear that the idol is dead and does not speak. The idol does not call the worshipper to worship. It is speechless. Yet, people were carried off to idols. There was a compulsive force that led the people to worshipping idols. Paul does not want to go into the actual subjective experience and conditions for this. It could work in different ways, but whatever way they were led they all ended up worshipping idols. In the next verse (1Cor 12.3), the apostle points to the sphere of this kind of force. It was a matter of spirits speaking, spirits who take over the unique role of the Spirit of God who speaks the truth of God in and through us. That is why the gift of prophecy, through which the Spirit of God speaks, is coupled with the gift of the distinguishing of spirits (1Cor 12.10; 14.29).

The OT gives us one window into the workings of a demonic spirit. In 1Kings 21.19-23, a demon goes to be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all of the prophets of Ahab. This causes the whole horde of prophets to be united in their false prophesying and to go on for a long time in a mind numbing chant. When the leader was contradicted, he asked the true prophet, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" (v 24). This man was under the sure experiential impression that the Spirit of the LORD was on him. The delusion had fully gripped him.

### **a. The hold and effect of idolatry**

The power of the demons over the mind is seen in the nature of idolatry. The Bible makes clear that the logic of idolatry is absurd. Everyone who steps back and looks at idolatry can see that the idol is not a god. But, the hold of idolatry, for all of its contradictions, is so strong. Even Israel under the light of God's revelation struggled under a strong gravitational pull towards idolatry. What overrides and controls the human mind so powerfully? It is the demons.

Paul lays out the perversion of the idolatrous mind in Rom 1.18-32. The fall into darkness happens when people do not glorify God as God or give thanks (v 21). In the darkness that results, the idolatry takes over. The first movement of the mind is to naturalize the divine nature (v 23). Divine nature is degraded to that of the corruptible creature. The second move is to deify the creature and worship it (v 25). This we see in idolatry. By making an image of deity, the divine nature is made to be like the physical creation whose image is given to it. But, then the created nature is elevated and worshipped as God. Here we see the mark of demonic work. We saw that in Gen 6.1-4 the wicked angels worked to mix the nature of flesh with that of spirit. They failed to achieve this. Now, after Babel, they took over the minds of people to hold them in a state in which the human perception of the divine confuses the divine and the physical natures. The result of this confusion of divine and physical natures is the self-degradation of the human race (Rom 1.24-31) which seals in people's hearts the sentence of death (v 32).

## **b. Psychic activity**

Idolatry is tied to psychic activity. The link is stated in Gal 5.20 which couples idolatry and sorcery. We see the same link in 1Sam 15.23. The Law of Moses forbids all forms of psychic activity practiced by the nations (Deut 18.9-14). The idolatrous nations listened to the psychics, but Israel is forbidden to listen to them (v 14). Instead Israel is to listen to the prophet that the Lord will raise up for his people (vv 15-22). The true prophet will only speak in the name of the LORD at God's initiative and never in the name of another god (v 20). Here the LORD is setting the word of the psychics in opposition to the prophetic word. Isaiah works with this contrast in Ish 8.16-22. Those who consult the psychics do not go to the law and testimony, the word of the LORD given to Israel (vv 19-20). For them there is no dawn but only the darkness of judgment (vv 19-22).

Paul encountered the psychic activity which dominated the Gentile nations in his missionary work. Here we see that it was demons who spoke through the psychics (Acts 16.16-18; 19.11-20). The psychics consulted the dead and worked with various magical practices which manipulate physical objects. None of this was real or actually worked. It was only an illusion. It was a façade behind which the demons spoke to the people, and it held them away from the truth of God.

## **c. The marks of demonic activity**

Idolatry and psychic activity share a common deception. They both tie the human mind's sense of the divine nature to physical and visible things. Involved in this association of the divine with the physical is the removal of the boundary between God and the material world of which man is a part. In this confusion, man seeks to manipulate and control at his will and by his efforts the spiritual powers that govern the world. Through this, man can put his hands on the levers of spiritual power. Here we see the common thread between Satan's temptation of Eve, the sin of the sons of God and the delusion of idolatry that the demons have worked among the nations. There is this persistent spiritual activity of stepping over the boundary that divides man as flesh from God and at raising mankind to a level on par with deity. Again we see the mixing of the nature of the world of which we are a part and the nature of deity. The result is corruption and death.

The demonic delusion of idolatry connects with Eve's first sin in a specific way. When Eve set out to become like God, she was moved by what she saw with her eyes and conceived of with her imagination (Gen 3.6). She began to define what is truth by what she saw and how things impressed her. Idolatry locks the human mind into this level of perception. The idol worshipper defines the divine by what he sees, wants and imagines. As such idolatry and sorcery are works of the flesh just like fornication and other vices of human nature are (Gal 5.19-20). The demons' role is to hold the mind which is aware of deity in a strong subjective state of experiencing a spiritual power that controls man. Ezekiel prophesied that it is only when man is regenerated by the Spirit of God that his heart is cleansed of the filth of idolatry (Ezk 36.24f.).

## **D. DEMONS EXPOSED AND CAST OUT**

The OT lets us know that there are demons behind what we see, but it does not expose the demons. We notice a great change as we turn from the OT to the Gospels. All of a sudden, before Jesus Christ the demons speak and show themselves boldly. What lies behind this great change in the history of revelation?

Each Evangelist sets the focus of his Gospel by the first story he relates of Jesus' public ministry. In Mark's gospel it is the casting out of a demon in the synagogue. By relating this story up front, Mark put the spotlight on Jesus' authority over demons. Jesus' presence drew them out, and then he cast them out. In this part of our study on demonic activity, we will take our lead from Mark.

## **1. The time had come**

If we only had the Gospel of Mark, we would soon get the impression that demon possession dominated Galilee at the time of Jesus. The first time he taught publicly in the synagogue he was confronted by a demon possessed man. The people were not shocked by the fact that a demon had attended the religious service but by the authority of Jesus over the demon. The news spread around and people brought the sick and demon possessed to Jesus in the evening (1.33-34). Mark says that he cast out many demons. We get the same impression that demon possession was a particular affliction in the land in 3.7-12. In view of the need, Jesus called to himself the twelve with the purpose that they might preach and have authority to cast out demons (3.13-15). We ask why the land is so full of the demon possessed.

### **a. A matter of timing (Mk 1.15)**

Mark opens up the account of Jesus' public ministry with a summary of his gospel message. This message focused on the schedule. Jesus' announcement began with, "The time is fulfilled...." The idea in this announcement is that God had assigned to the age a certain duration to reach its consummation, and this time period has been fulfilled. What marks the fulfillment is that "...the kingdom of God is at hand." Israel's history had one destiny—the kingdom of God. All that has to be realized in Israel's history toward this has been accomplished. So, Jesus began his public ministry on schedule. Paul expresses this same truth in his statement, "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son..." (Gal 4.4).

The kingdom of God is God's reign given to the Son of Man for the holy people of God to rule over the earth. This is outlined in the vision of Daniel 7. The realization of this kingdom required the defeat of the kingdom of Satan and his demons. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit, and by this Spirit he cast out demons. This fact signaled for the people that the kingdom of God has come upon them (Matt 12.28). The fact that demon possession dominated the land at the time of Jesus is part of the time being fulfilled. The stage was set for Jesus to manifest the full scope of his work in bringing in the kingdom of God.

Our study is showing that there is a history to demonic activity. As history moved toward the time for Christ to come, the demonic activity stepped into the foreground, and from the point of view of God's government of history this served to set the stage for the full manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God and of his salvation. But, what were the conditions on the human side for the bold presence of demons in the land?

### **b. Where Israel was at**

Throughout the history recorded in the OT, Israel fell repeatedly and increasingly into idolatry. Our study has shown what the demonic activity was in this. God judged Israel for its chronic idolatry through the exile. When the Jews returned from Babylon, the nation was cured of pagan idolatry. Between the close of OT prophecy (Malachi) and the time of Jesus, the Jews became fiercely monotheistic and zealous for the Law of Moses. This means that the demons lost their old mask of idolatry behind which they had worked.

The ministry of John the Baptist showed up the spiritual hardness of the leaders of the legalistic nation. They would not submit to the call to repentance, and used their claims to the covenant between Israel and God to avoid taking the position of a repentant sinner. For this John called them a brood of vipers (Matt 3.7) which is an allusion to the seed of the serpent in Gen 3.15. The ministry of Jesus pressed the issues further and exposed the hardness of heart of the people. In this state of hardness, the demons established themselves within the religious society. Jesus pointed out that the demons who possessed people in the society were actually taking possession of that generation of Jews (Matt 12.45). Through the demon possessed, the demon possessed the society.

Without the mask of idolatry to work under, the demons took a direct and open place in the nation. The Jewish people were fully aware of the reality of demon possession. They also were aware that their religion gave them no authority over demons and no deliverance from the affliction. In fact, the Law of Moses makes no provision for the casting out of demons. A person who was involved in psychic activity had to be

executed. The sad result was that the people had to resign themselves to living with the affliction of demon possession while going on with their orthodox religiosity. Through this the demons established on the ground the sense that evil had a stronger hold than the God of the Jews. In this sense of defeat to the kingdom of Satan among the people of God, Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God near.

One of the effects of monotheism on the human mind is that it focuses the mind on the problem of evil in the world. In polytheism, the idea of the divine nature is corrupted so the dominance of evil is not a serious problem. The rule of evil is accounted for by the vices of the gods and their limited powers. But, when we believe in one true God who is sovereign over all and not the source of evil, then our mind is focused on the power of evil that is opposed to God. We see this effect on the Jews' mind in the Gospel. They knew of demons and were quick to ascribe what went against their religious beliefs to demons, but as Jesus pointed out they utterly lacked in spiritual reason and moral compass in this. They quickly attributed to the devil the work of the Spirit. This religious confusion made them open prey to the demons who sought to possess them at will. Jesus presses this point in Matthew 12. While monotheism took away from the demons the mask of idolatry, it made the Jews relate directly to the demons. Because they were hardened in heart, they were open to the demons who took their place in the nation in a direct way without any mask.

## **2. The mark of demon possession**

In the Gospels, the demon possessed are put in a class with the sick and the authority to heal and cast out demons are joined together (Mk 1.34; 3.10-11; Matt 4.24; Lk 6.17; Matt 10.1). The demon possessed suffer deranged and self destructive behaviour (Mark 5). They experience convulsions or seizures (Mk 1.26) and act like lunatics (Matt 17.15). This does not mean that in the Gospels epileptic seizures are simply seen as demon possession. In Matt 4.24, demon possession is distinguished from various diseases and pains (torments), on the one hand, and from other kinds of seizures (the Greek word means being moonstruck or lunatic), on the other. Demon possession brings about symptoms of epilepsy or lunacy, but these are not the real mark. The real mark is spiritual.

The demon in Mk 1.21-28 showed himself in the synagogue by crying out and identifying who Jesus really was. Mark relates, "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" (Mk 3.11). Jesus did not permit them to speak "...because they knew who he was" (1.34). The mark of the demons in the Gospel account is that they had a spiritual perception and knowledge of Jesus as the divine Son. To gain a biblical understanding of demon possession and the casting out of demons, we must begin here.

### **a. Recognition of the Son of God**

In the mystery of godliness, it is said of Jesus that he was seen of angels (i.e., as the risen Christ who was vindicated as to his divine claims in the Spirit) and proclaimed among the nations (1Tim 3.16). Angels are spirits, and they see the divine Son of God. We see this angelic capacity in demons when they had a direct knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God. People, however, are flesh and cannot see God or the deity of the Son of God. People only have the natural capacity to see Jesus with their physical eyes. They only see him as a flesh and blood man. This means that Jesus in his deity cannot be presented to the eyes of people. Rather, he must be presented through proclamation, and people must come to faith through hearing (Rom 10.17). Here again we see the difference in the order of being between angels and people.

Mark relates that when the demon possessed encountered Jesus the demons would declare out loud who Jesus was. Jesus always silenced them. Mark gives us the reason: "and he earnestly warned them not to tell who He was" (Mk 3.12). The Lord did not want the demons to carry out the work of informing people as to his divine identity.

God's way is for people to recognize Jesus through the Spirit. So, John the Baptist did not know the Son of God but was told to recognize him by the Spirit descending upon him (Jn 1.33). The Spirit who was upon Jesus as the Anointed, the Messiah, put into effect in human lives the power of God. Through this divine work in people's lives, bringing real and visible healing, the Spirit set before people's eyes the evidence



that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus' way was to have people who were his disciples and who received the Spirit from him announce to the world who he was (Mk 3.13-19; Acts 1.8). Paul points out the result of this: the gospel comes in word and in power and in the Holy Spirit seen in the messengers (1Thess 1.5). Christ's person, i.e., that he is the Son of God, and his work, i.e., that he saves people, are inseparable in his manifestation in the world. Who Jesus is is made known in what he does for people, and people can only come to know who he is by being changed by him. The demons' announcement of who Jesus was threatened to upstage the process by which Christ was to be made known.

The demons took their angelic knowledge of the Son of God and sought to upstage the Spirit. They took possession of human beings, and this went ahead of the Spirit's work of indwelling people. They also jumped ahead and tried to carry out the role of the Spirit as the divine witness to Christ. They did not impart the Spirit's kind of witness which comes in redeeming power, delivering people. Rather, they imparted an angel's knowledge of the mere fact that Jesus was the Son of God. Thus they would put people in possession of knowledge about the Son of God without people knowing the power of salvation as the work of God. In this, the demons would make the knowledge of the Son of God demonic. It would be knowing and believing that there is one God and that Jesus is his Son without having that knowledge as a power that changes one's own spiritual character (Jas 2.18-19). In effect, the demons worked to confuse the whole order of God. Human beings would be given angelic knowledge, and this would upstage the witness of the Spirit of God. Human beings would have intellectual knowledge without the divine power of the truth to save and transform them. If Jesus had accepted the witness of the demons because it was factual, the demons would have usurped the position of the Spirit of God. They also would have denied man a direct relationship with God in which it is God by the Spirit who makes Christ known.

In a sense, the demons were well positioned for the fullness of times. They had taken their place in the land and were ready to upstage the whole program of gospel proclamation. Jesus, however, turned it all around. He used their boldness and aggressiveness as the occasion to manifest his own authority by the Spirit of God.

While we are on this subject, we should make an important observation. Jesus never set out to hunt down or point out demons. He simply moved forward in the power of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to people. It is the demons who took the aggressive initiative. They acknowledged who he was and sought to take over the work of witnessing for him. Jesus responded by casting the demons out. We see the same in Acts 16. The demon possessed girl followed the apostolic missionaries and declared who they were and what their message was and this annoyed Paul. The apostle responded by casting out the demon. In Acts 19.13-16 we see exorcists who are out looking for demons to cast out, and the demons subdue the exorcists—a real warning for any who set out to hunt demons.

We must make two observations of critical importance of the subject of casting out demons. First, the demon will only recognize the fullness of the Spirit and the name of Christ in the proclamation. We see this set in the ministry of Jesus. The Spirit had descended upon him (Mk 1.10) and in the power of the Spirit he proclaimed the gospel (v 15). His first work was to teach with divine authority (vv 21-22), and in this context he cast out the demon (vv 23-28). Demons will not bow to mere human beings using the name of Jesus as a magical formula (Acts 19.13-16). Before the demon is cast out, the demon bows before the authority of Christ which is present and operative by the Spirit who fills the messenger to speak the word of Christ with divine power.

The second observation is that while the demon knows that he is under the authority of Christ where the word of Christ is spoken in the fullness of the Spirit, the demon will try to take over and establish himself on the side of the word of Christ. The demon possessed girl in Acts 16 illustrates this. She was publicizing that the apostles were carrying out a mission from God, a fact of which people were not aware. This means that demons do not necessarily show themselves in open hostility to Christ, expressing themselves in assaults on him. Their first line of attack is to try and take up the objective truth and establish themselves as the spirits that will add the supernatural witness to the human witness or teaching.

## **b. Destructive effects**

In the gospels, demons identify themselves by their spiritual recognition of Jesus as the Son of God, but they are also known by people for the destructive behaviour they inflict on the people they possess. The fact that they destroy the ones they possess agrees with what we have already seen. Satan seduced Eve to reach for Godhood, but in this he was a murderer and engineered the death of mankind. The sons of God took the daughters of men, but in the process they took apart the marriage relationship as set up by the creator and brought wholesale corruption and ruin on the race. In their work through idolatry and sorcery, the demons seal mankind in the process of self degradation. Now we see that when they possess people, they are destructive to the human beings they take over.

The destruction that the demons work is first of all spiritual. As we have seen, they give to the possessed a knowledge that is not true to what it means for us to be human. The Spirit of God never does this. He ever makes us learn and enter spiritual truth in a way that is true to our created constitution. The way the Spirit teaches us is tied to the process of maturing and growing. The Spirit does not take over and override our mind but sanctifies us totally. He ever teaches us according to what it means for us to be the image of God. We know God as the truth of God is given for us to be shaped by God and reflect God. In this he brings about self control (an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit). Demons in contrast make people lose their self control.

The destruction that the demons work is also bodily. They bring about symptoms of sickness, but these symptoms have a spiritual cause. The Spirit, in contrast, never inflicts sickness through his work within us. While he does not always heal us of our sicknesses, his work within us ever has the effect of sanctifying the body and giving it strength so that we can serve God in the body.

We took note of the fact that Jesus never went after the demons. But, demons did not simply encounter him as he moved ahead in his ministry. People who had demon possessed people in their life brought them to Jesus along with the sick. They were motivated by the fact that these loved ones suffered under the affliction of possession. But, as they were brought to Jesus, the demons always recognized Jesus immediately and took their place under his authority. We gain an insight here. The very afflictions that the demons work make people seek help, and in this search people do come to Jesus.

## **3. Demons in retreat**

Before Jesus, the demons fell down (Mk 3.11), and they had to take the place of being under his authority. At his command they had to leave the body of the person they possessed. But, they only complied; they did not truly surrender to Jesus. Once released, they went on to work as demons. In retreat, they worked to re-establish themselves.

A close look at the Gospel account of the demons' encounter with Jesus shows that from the outset they related to Jesus with a sense of spiritual war. Their attempt at making Christ known to the people was only part of the war, an attempt at conquest. When it failed, they took on new strategies which proved much more successful.

### **a. Their challenge and appeal**

The demon in Mk 1.24 opens up with a question which the NASB translates as, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?" In Greek, the question is rather cryptic. A word for word translation would be, "What to us and to you?" This expression is taken, rather literally, from the Hebrew in the OT (Jdg 11.12; 2Sam 16.10; 1922; 1Kings 17.18; 2Kings 3.13; 2Chr 35.21), and it has the sense of, "What do we have to do with you?" The question is a defensive statement that offers resistance to another who wants to engage you. The question challenges and so denies the other persons grounds for engaging you. To understand the point of the question, we have to ascertain what the person is being engaged in.

The second question that the demon asks points to the issue between the demons and Jesus: “Have you come to destroy us?” In Matt 8.29 this concern is put as follows: “Have you come here to torment us before the time?” The demons knew that the Son of God was their judge. We can see the logic of the demon’s question in Mk 1.24 if we carefully follow the development of the story. Jesus taught in the synagogue, and the people were amazed that he taught as one having unique authority (vv 21-22). The demon cried out as the people were under this impression of authority. The demons knew that they would be judged by the authority that Jesus had as the Holy One of God.

The demons knew that the Son of God had come to engage them on earth (which was their turf) in the conflict between God and Satan. Jesus verified that he had come to conquer Satan’s kingdom in Mk 3.27. In view of this, we must understand the demon’s question, “What do we have to do with you?” in the context of conflict and warfare. This question is used in such a context twice in the OT in Jdg 11.12 and 2Chr 35.21. The question is put to a king who wants to engage another in war to deny the grounds of engaging in battle. If someone wanted to engage you in a fight and you had no desire to fight him, you would ask him what cause he has against you. When you put this question to him, you declare that you do not want to engage in the battle and are seeking to turn him away. That this was the concern of the demons is clear from the story of the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark 5 and Matt 8.28-34. The demons acknowledge that as the Son of God Jesus has the authority over them. They bow before him and are ready to carry out his orders. But, they challenge what they fear—the Jesus has come to destroy them by tormenting them before the time (Matt 2.29), by sending them out of the country (Mk 5.10) and by commanding them to go away into the abyss, which means they would no longer be free to work on earth (Lk 8.31).

The demons saw Jesus’ ministry as moving against them to judge them. On the one hand, they acknowledged that he was their divine judge, and they had to obey his command. On the other hand, they did not want a confrontation. By declaring, “What do we have to do with you?” they were protesting against the Son of God coming onto their turf. They did not want to engage with him. Their only appeal against the exercise of Jesus’ authority as judge was that he not use it to banish them from earth. Their strategy for further work on earth hung on this appeal.

The demons made their fullest and boldest appeal through the Gerasene demoniac. In Mark 5.7, the demon possessed man put Jesus under an oath when he said, “I implore (adjure) You by God, do not torment me!” Even though the voice switches from the first person plural to the singular “I” and “me”, the demons are speaking through the man. The torment they refer to is the torment of the final judgment passed on demons (Matt 8.29) when they will be sent into the abyss (Lk 8.31). Against the use of Jesus’ authority to torment them, they appeal to God. Matthew 8.29 shows why: the demons knew that it was before the time for the final judgment. Jesus, who ever carried out the will of the Father, never stepped ahead of schedule. He cast demons out of people for in him the kingdom of God had drawn near, and it was the time to deliver people. But, he never took the next step of banishing the demons from the earth. This point is brought out in Mk 5.10. When the demons knew that Jesus would cast them out, they implored him not to send them out of the country. Now it is not just a question of being sent into the abyss. They wanted to be allowed to stay in the country where they were. Jesus also never removed demons from a certain region in the world. He used his authority only to cast them out of people.

The fact that Jesus only cast demons out of people and not out of the regions where people lived mean that the demons were left to work on earth and in countries after they were cast out. The spiritual evil was not removed. In a sense, demons only went sideways. They had to get out of the way before Jesus at his word, but they were left to work further; and in this the demons adopted new strategies to strengthen their hold in the world.

#### **b. Strengthening their grip**

We see the demons working strategically in Mark 5. The demons did not simply obey Christ’s command to come out of the man. Rather, before leaving they asked not to be sent out of the country and to be allowed to enter the herd of swine. We gain an insight into their ways here. They can only take up their place in the country by possessing bodies. Since Jesus did not come to remove them from the country, he granted them

permission. At this point things take a surprising turn. Rather than using the swine for permanent residence, they drove the swine to their death and so put an end to their new homes. Their interest was not in swine. The effect of this event shows their strategy. The death of the swine damaged the local economy and moved the people to beg Jesus to leave the region. Jesus gave the people their wish, and this meant that the only one who had the authority over the demons was gone. Now, the demons were free to possess people again and hold the region in the grip of demonic terror. Now they have the stronghold of the people's own will not to have Jesus in their country. Demons must obey Christ, but Christ will let people have their wish when they reject him. This gives the evil spirits a sure hold. They know this and work to secure it.

Mark 5 shows that while the demons have to retreat before Jesus Christ, they strategize and work to make the people reject Jesus. They do not have to possess people for this. They use the psychology that Satan used against Job. People are devoted to their own material well being rather than to God. The people would rather live with their economy secured under demonic terror than have the power of Christ that frees from spiritual bondage if that spiritual freedom will take a toll on their economy.

Jesus taught in Matt 12.43-45 that demons will seek to return and strengthen their hold after they have been cast out. For the demon not to possess a body is a homeless and restless condition. Jesus describes the demon's homelessness as waterless places. This suggests a desert where there is no life. The demon only has his place in a region where people live, and for this he must take up his residence in someone. To fully understand this, we must draw on the created nature of angels as set forth in Col 1.16. There is a hierarchy of angels, but at all levels they are created to exercise authority. The lowest level of angels are called authorities. The demons that possess people are, most likely, of this rank. As authorities they are without work or place if they do not have people to control. A demon that has not the control over someone is like a governor who is exiled and has no one to govern. This man is lost and has no place.

The deposed demonic authority seeks one thing—to return and take possession. Having been defeated and cast out, he works to strengthen his position. Jesus said that he takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. The number seven carries its symbolic meaning here. The demonic hold the second time round is complete for all time. The thought here is that this set of demons will not be cast out.

What is this strengthened condition? Jesus is speaking of the demonic situation in that generation of Jews. The demons took their place in the nation by possessing people in it. Jesus cast them out and so cleaned the nation of the unclean spirits. But, through this a new level of hardness developed, seen in the rulers' accusation that Jesus cast out demons by the ruler of demons. Jesus pointed out that this sin was unforgivable. The spiritual condition of that generation grew seven times worse. This condition would have its corresponding side in the realm of demons. The hold that the demons would have in the nation through possessing people in it would become worse.

We might ask why the situation was left so vulnerable. The key to the answer is given in the way the demon found his former house—it was empty and ready to be moved in. This was the problem with the Jewish people. They welcomed the miracles and even Jesus' preaching to a point, but they did not receive the word of the kingdom into their hearts. This left them very vulnerable; and since the demons were left in the land they could retake the people whose hearts had not taken in the word.

### **c. The new struggle (Mark 9.14-29)**

Jesus pointed out that the casting out of demons by the Spirit of God shows that the kingdom of God has come upon them (Matt 12.28). The kingdom of God comes upon people as God's authority by the power of the Spirit coming against and defeating the kingdom of Satan, which is the rule of demons on earth. In the vision of Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days gives the kingdom to the Son of Man (Dan 7.13-14), but at the close of the vision the kingdom is given to the people of the saints of the Highest One (v 27). Jesus worked within this pattern. He first preached the gospel of the kingdom and demonstrated the nearness of the kingdom by exercising divine authority to cast out demons (Mark 1). Then he appointed the twelve apostles "...that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons" (Mk 3.13-15). He sent them on their first mission in Mk 6.1-13 which they carried out by

preaching and casting out demons and healing. On this first mission, the disciples were successful. Wherever they went, the demons yielded before the authority they had from Christ. But, the next time we see them seeking to cast out a demon they are struggling.

Mark 9 relates that while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James and John, the other nine disciples were below struggling and failing with a rather difficult case of demon possession. We must take in the meaning of the transfiguration to understand the struggle. The transfiguration was a vision of Jesus in his glory as risen and ascended to heaven. Jesus is seen with a changed and glorified body with a radiance that cannot be achieved on earth (v 3). Matthew 17.2 says that he shone as the sun which means that he had a heavenly glory. While he was in this glory, below the disciples were struggling with a demon. This prefigures the scene after Christ's ascension. He has triumphed completely and is glorified in heaven, but his disciples are left on earth where they are called to put into effect the authority of Christ against the demonic kingdom of darkness.

The experience of the Mount of transfiguration signaled the shift in the battle with the demonic that was about to happen. Jesus had told the disciples that he, as the Christ, must die and rise again (Mk 8.27-38). Then he gave a vision of the glory into which he was to enter and left the disciples below to learn what their struggle on earth will be.

The central issue in the story of the disciples' struggle is raised by the question they put to Jesus: "Why could we not drive it out?" (v 28). They had been successful earlier in casting out many demons so it baffled them why they could not cast out the demon this time. Jesus' answer points to the problem. "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" (v 29). First he points to the reason for the struggle on the side of the demon. He says that in part the problem lay in the kind of demon they were dealing with. Jesus dealt with the demon according to the kind he was when he addressed him as a deaf and mute spirit (v 25). The demons would neither hear nor speak.

To understand Jesus' point, we must comprehend a feature of demon possession. The demon did more than simply inhabit the person's body. He also took over the person's identity and ego, as we have already noticed. The father of the demon possessed boy told the disciples that the spirit makes the boy mute (Mk 9.17). Through this, the demon positioned himself in the boy so that he would not engage in any rational communication with people. This was unusual. In the other cases of demon possession which Mark relates, the demons were ever communicative. They both heard and spoke through the persons they possessed. This meant that they had to communicate to Jesus. They were compelled to acknowledge the authority of Jesus and listen to his command to be silent and come out. When the disciples cast out demons on their first missionary exercise, they would have dealt with this kind of demon. Now, the situation changed on them. This demon would not interact with them. They approached the changed situation in the same way they had dealt with the earlier and common cases, and they failed.

One thing that the disciples had to learn is that when dealing with demons one is not dealing with a spirit that always acts the same. The demons vary their strategy and work to strengthen their hold in people, as we have already noticed. Their first and main strategy was to be vocal and try to impose themselves on the process of making Christ known. Christ silenced them. By speaking up they identified themselves and were cast out. The case of this boy at the bottom of the Mount of Transfiguration shows a strategy that can resist the authority brought against them more effectively. That is the strategy of shutting down all verbal communication. So, a simple word in the name of Jesus did not do.

Jesus pointed out another side of the difficulty. This kind of demon can only come out through prayer. Prayer is the exercise of faith concentrated on God and in which we deliberately turn away from what the eye can see on earth. Jesus stressed the role of faith in this case in Mk 9.23: "All things are possible to him that believes." The demon took on a character designed to preempt faith. In Mark 1 the demon only threw the man into convulsions on his way out. This time he made a dramatic and fearful show up front (Mk 9.20). The sight would have the effect of terrifying and gripping the mind. To understand how this would affect the mind of the disciples, we must understand that in the Bible faith is a steadfastness of mind on God through his word and is in contrast to wavering back and forth (Jas 1.6-8). The antics of the demoniac would work to make the mind of the disciples react and so break the concentration of faith. That this



worked is seen in the scene Jesus encountered when he came down from the mountain (Mk 9.14). The demon had attracted a large crowd, and this alone will distract from faith. Also, the failure to cast him out stimulated an argument with the scribes. The scribes, no doubt, used the failure to challenge the disciples as to their ideas about the kingdom of God, and the disciples turned from the plight of the boy and his father to take up the intellectual debate.

The scene that Jesus met at the foot of the mountain is a sad picture of the state of Christians on earth. We profess the name of Jesus and that all authority has been given to him and that we are commissioned to do his work. We work with simplistic ideas of victory over spiritual evil that prove helpless. The demons change the face of evil on us and we are confounded. In the failure, we turn from the work of faith to discussion and debate. The mission to bring deliverance to people is turned into a debate with scholars and an endless psychobabble. All the while, the father who brought the problem case to the disciples is left in his desperation.

After Jesus cast out the demon, the disciples brought their question and with it their debate with the scribes to Jesus. Jesus pointed out the need to be discerning as to the nature of the spiritual bondage. We cannot be mechanical in dealing with the problem. To deal with demons, what is needed is faith, and this faith requires the exercise of prayer. We must take our stand in the presence of God and receive our light and ways from him. We cannot expect to be able to deal with spiritual problems if our mind has been taken up with the things of sight and of the world. In the face of spiritual darkness which grows darker and more confusing with time we must take time with God to be able to stand and act in his will and by his power.

Jesus pressed the role of faith in his reply to the boy's father. Notice how desperate the Father had become in the face of the disciples' failure. He presented his plea to Jesus in these words, "But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" (Mk 9.22). He did not ask on the basis of confidence that Jesus was able to cast the demon out. The problem looked so overwhelming that he thought that not even Jesus, for all power that Jesus had demonstrated, might be able to do anything. The power of the demon began to loom over the authority of Jesus in the eyes of people. This is what the demons want to achieve: to make the power of Christ appear ineffective and even defeated by evil in the minds of people.

Jesus saw through the desperate father's plea and dealt with the human problem. He replied by first of all taking up the note of doubt in the man's plea, and asked, "If you can?" Was it really a question of whether Jesus could do anything? No! The problem lay with the disciples who tried to help and the father who sought help. God works through faith. So, he said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9.23). The first work that Jesus attended to was the work of building faith in the father. Here Jesus was effective. The father cried out, "I do believe; help my unbelief." The father made a confession of faith. This faith was in Jesus, for he prays to Christ. It is not believing as a psychological state but faith formed by the word of Christ through which the Spirit works (see Gal 3.1 and 5). The man had no faith in his own believing. He confessed his sin of unbelief as expressed in his first request to Jesus (v 22). He prayed for faith. Here lies the real need. Like the father, disciples profess faith. We all say before Christ, "I do believe." The Latin term for this is *credo* from which we get our word creed. Christians are a people with a creed. But, this is not enough. Even with our profession of faith, we are weakened by unbelief, and this comes out when we stand desperate before stubborn evil that will not yield to our creed. Through this we come to the need to be helped in our unbelief. The first work of God in us to make us overcome evil is the divine work to grant us pure faith, and that is faith without unbelief. This answers to the strategy of this kind of stubborn demon. The demon's way was designed to overthrow all faith.

Matthew, in his account of this incident, adds a saying of Jesus that deals with the magnitude of the problem. The faith that is needed must move a mountain (Matt 17.20). A mountain is large. In comparison to the vastness of the kingdom of demonic evil, the disciple's faith looks like a grain of mustard seed which was proverbial for its smallness. The wonder is that the disciple's faith can move the mountain, but for this the disciple needs pure faith. Here we come back to the key concept in faith: it is a steadfast stand, without wavering, in response to the word of Christ. We hold take our steadfast stand as brought about and defined by the word of Christ alone. In the face of the terrorizing evil, this faith is formed through the constant exercise of prayer.

In all three Gospels that relate the story we have been considering, the Evangelists follow the incident with Jesus pressing on the disciples that he must be delivered over to death. Luke adds a key note: "Let these words sink into your ears" (Lk 9.44). Jesus was facing a spiritual problem in the Jewish nations and in his disciples. The ears were shut so that the word that brings about faith is not heard. What we see in the strategy of the demon answers to what was happening to the people. Jesus came to preach the gospel and call people to faith. A sad result was that people's ears were being closed. The disciples' first spiritual struggle was with this problem. Only in faith could they confront the demonic hold on people.

## **E. DEMONIC ACTIVITY AFTER CHRIST**

When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, "...this hour and the power of darkness are yours" (Lk 22.53). The demonic powers for an hour triumphed over Christ. Now, they secured the spectacle they wanted: a Christ who was crucified as sure foolishness to Greeks and as a scandal to Jews. Christ now is positively unbelievable to people in their natural state of mind. This much they permanently secured for themselves through the cross.

Jesus rose in triumph over the demons (Col 2.15), and the Gospel went out by the power of the Spirit. Acts 1.8 presents the program for the disciples' witness. They were to begin with Jerusalem and Judea, and then the witness was to move to Samaria and finally to the remotest part of the earth. Acts shows how this was fulfilled, and how the casting out of demons under the Spirit filled ministry of proclamation of the gospel took place at each phase. When the ministry of the gospel under Peter spread from the temple to the streets of Jerusalem, the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem brought those who were sick and afflicted with unclean spirits and all were healed (Ac 5.16). When Philip carried the gospel to Samaria, the proclamation was accompanied by the casting out of demons and healing (Ac 8.7). The last missionary frontier in Acts was Ephesus. Ephesus was a stronghold of idolatry and the practice of magic. Through the ministry of the gospel, many were healed and evil spirits went out of people (Ac 19.11-12). Luke's account of the spread of the gospel makes this much clear: the proclamation of the gospel in the fullness of the Spirit was accompanied with the authority to cast out demons.

We saw from the Gospel of Mark that when demons were cast out of people they remained in the country and worked to re-establish themselves as spiritual authorities. In Acts we see the demons retreating before the gospel. So, we are led to ask where the evil spirits appear next. The answer is given in the letters of the apostles.

### **1. Demons infiltrating the churches**

Paul warns in 1Tim 4.1, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." This was written to Timothy in Ephesus, the place where Paul saw the gospel triumph powerfully over the demons. In Ephesus Paul had his greatest success in preaching the gospel in a Gentile city. The impact of the gospel ministry in this city was equal to Peter's impact in Jerusalem. The gospel shook the whole city and spread to the regions around. Paul celebrates this triumph with the letter to the Ephesians. His first key theme is that the believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. The vision is that of enthronement in heaven above all rule and authority with all things put under Christ's feet (Eph 1.20-22). All demonic rule and authority is placed under the enthroned Christ, and as head over all things he is given to the church which is his body and has received all that is in him (1.22-23). This is seen in that those who once were under the ruler of the authority of the air (Eph 2.2) are now seated with Christ in the heavenly places above all of the authority of spiritual darkness (vv 5-6). The experience of salvation for the Ephesian Christians was not simply one of being rescued from under the authority of Satan but of being identified with Christ in his complete triumph over the whole hierarchy of spiritual rule.

In the triumph of salvation, Christ has formed the church. Paul takes this up as his second theme in Ephesians 2.11-3.21. Satan and the demonic rulers and authorities hold their position by ruling over people, not simply over individuals but over the nations as social units. The growth of the church among the

nations is the sign of their defeat. A community is being formed throughout the world that is not under their rule and actually triumphs over their spiritual rule over the nations. The spiritual rulers fight to reassert their dominion by bringing the believers in the church back under their spiritual sway. Paul uses the metaphor of winds for this activity. In Eph 2.2 Paul depicts Satan's universal authority over the world in terms of the air. The air is the invisible atmosphere in which people live and move, and from this spiritual atmosphere believers have been saved and raised above it to being seated in the heavenly places (v 6). Paul picks up the atmospheric metaphor against the struggle over immature believers. Now it is the winds of doctrine that blow from every direction (4.14). The authority of the air is seeking to reassert itself through false doctrine.

In Ephesians we see that the winds of false doctrine are already blowing, but the church is seen as strong. The tone of this letter is that of triumph and celebration. Things have changed by the time 1Timothy was written. The church now is plagued with false teachers (1Timothy 1), and the Spirit is warning of an apostasy led by doctrines of demons. The demons which had to retreat from before the apostolic proclamation of the gospel are returning to take over the doctrine in the minds of people within the church.

## **2. Demons leading the way out of the churches (1John)**

The warning of the Spirit in 1Tim 4.1 was soon fulfilled with full force. John was the last of the apostolic witnesses to minister on earth (1Jn 1.1-4). He had to labour to stabilize the children of God against the movement of the antichrists that emerged as an exodus from the church (2.18f.). False prophets went out into the world who denied the apostolic confession of Jesus Christ (4.1-6).

The demons made a great gain through the movement of antichrists that left the church. The antichrists were from the world and therefore spoke from the world and the world was listening to them (4.5). They got the ear of the world, and they controlled the way the world came to understand Jesus Christ. The demons have finally succeeded in what they sought to do when they first encountered Jesus. We saw that they wanted to be the spirits who would make Jesus known. Jesus silenced them. At the end of the apostolic age, the demons succeeded at taking the understanding of Christ out of the true family of God and the sphere of the Spirit's operation, and they gained the ear of the world for a presentation of Jesus that is of the world.

The apostasy from the faith that arose from within the churches marks a new phase in the history of demonic activity. We saw from Mark 5 that when the demons had to leave the possessed man, they worked to turn the will of the population against Jesus and so gained a stronghold through the people's rejection of Christ. Jesus pointed out that because that generation of Jews did not receive the word, the demonic hold over them would be strengthened, so that it would no longer be a matter of casting out demons. We see from the apostle's letters that the demons have re-entered after the powerful advance of the gospel on Gentile territory and began to work from within the churches through the minds of men to take over the human understanding of Jesus Christ. The demons have gone even further than making people mute and deaf, i.e., unresponsive to the word of Christ, as we saw in Mark 9. The word of Christ has been taken over in the very minds of people. They work now through the minds of people, and the very terms of the faith, such as the name of Jesus, are taken over so that they lose their true meaning and force in people's minds. As Paul points out, a different Jesus is preached (2Cor 11.4), and this means that the battle is first of all one of sorting out terminology and coming to a clarity about the true gospel in the endless array of variations and false gospels.

The apostles make clear that the only way the true believers are to resist and triumph over the demonic activity that arises from within the context of church life is to stand firm in the truth of the gospel and resist the pressure to allow the truth to be mixed up with false and contrary notions. It is not now a matter of casting out demons the way Jesus and the apostles cast them out. Jesus confronted a condition that was formed before the gospel was proclaimed and rejected. Our whole study has shown that the way demons operate is not fixed. They act like spiritual authorities who will ever change with God's historical revelation to gain spiritual control over people. Any simplistic ideas that we have to go on casting out demons the way

Jesus did is itself a delusion that can be used by the demons for it distracts us from the real battle. We must follow the history of revelation as that is set forth in scripture.

### **3. Satanic and demonic activity in the world that has rejected the gospel**

The demonic activity leading people to abandon the faith and leave the churches of believers to form their own mission and communities beyond the gospel is seen in an eschatological light. Paul wrote that the Spirit said that the departure from the faith would take place in the latter days. This means that the departure and the doctrines of demons would be a mark of the age as it moves on to its end. John ties this exodus to the Antichrist who is coming and will mark the end of the age.

The demons in their mode before the gospel was preached had to retreat before the gospel. They, however, worked to find instruments from within the churches that they used to form types of Christianity beyond the truth of the gospel. Out of this movement, Satan will generate the Antichrist who will counterfeit the true Christ.

The Spirit through the apostles never tells us to chase down this movement of apostasy. Rather, the teaching of the apostles is that we must stand firm in the truth and maintain the true identity of the family of God. There is no mission towards the antichrists. The Spirit of prophecy shows that the movement of antichrists moves the world to its final ruin. Toward this ruin, Satanic and demonic activity is unleashed on the world. We read of this in 2Thessalonians 2 and in the visions of judgment from heaven in Revelation. Since this demonic activity is unleashed on the world as a judgment for rejecting the gospel, there is no action of faith to remove the demons in this activity. This agrees with what we saw earlier. Until the time comes for Christ to send the demons into the abyss, they are left on earth to continue their work. They work to retake the world that has not believed the gospel, and they do this with the strengthened grip given to them through the hardening that happens as the world rejects the gospel. It is all part of God's judgment on unbelief. While we must accept this side of the truth presented in scripture, we must not be defeated in spirit. As the world moves to the end, the Spirit will ever work through the word of Christ to deliver people from the authority of darkness and transfer them to the kingdom of God's Son (Col 1.13).

#### **The human side**

We have focused on the action of demons, but our study also shows up the human side in the spiritual bondage. The demonic control over people does not just happen. It takes place in a context. First of all, it takes place under Satan's work. Where the human mind is cut off from the word of God, there the demons can come in and take a hold of people's lives. We see this in that Genesis 3, in which Satan worked to turn mankind away from God, comes first; and this is followed by the activity of demons in Gen 6.1-4. The activity of the sons of God took place at the end of the history of the race before the flood. The human race had fallen into sin, and civilization had developed in sinful ways through Cain and Lamech and his sons. The world was set up for the evil scheme of the sons of God, and God let it happen to ripen the world for the judgment of the flood.

We saw that the demonic takeover of the nations in idolatry followed the rebellion and pride of mankind at the tower of Babel. As the nations went out apart from God, the demons took over and established the spiritual stronghold of idolatry. Jesus made it clear that the return of demons with seven times the strength was due to the heart not receiving the word. This points to the condition for the demon possession we see in the land of the Jews at the time of Jesus. The Jewish religious establishment had turned the covenants of God into a covenantal stronghold against the call to repentance. In this condition the nation for all of its religiosity was open to demons.

When the Spirit warned that people in the churches will pay attention to doctrines of demons, he identified the spiritual character of the people taken captive. They are professing Christians who speak, "...by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience with a branding iron..." The Spirit points to a moral condition for the susceptibility to the doctrine of demons. At the end, when God will allow Satan to

raise the beast from the abyss, the spiritual delusion will be brought over the world because they did not welcome the love of the truth (2Thess 2.10-12).

The reality of demonic activity presses on us the fact that spiritual darkness is far greater than we are. When we are saved, we are saved from a spiritual authority that is over the whole world. Salvation is so much greater than deliverance from our personal sins. But, when people reject the gospel or depart from the faith, they are participating in a spiritual evil that is far greater than they are. The air is spiritually charged, and when people make personal decisions on spiritual matters, the stakes are high. They reach to the heavens.

What we have learned about the devil and his angels means that "...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6.12). The hierarchy of spiritual wickedness is not limited to demons who work on the ground to possess people. It includes the demonic rulers who control the spirit of the age and of nations. The pressure is on to bring the believers under the spiritual ruling notions and principles under which the world functions and is united. Our foes are great. But, God in Christ has triumphed over them. The armour which God wore in his battle against them has been given to us so that we might put it on (v 11). God fought the battle for us and gives us a participation in his battle by the very means with which he fought and won. With God's armour we are not asked to go out and take the ground of the demons. No, our place has been won for us and given to us by Christ. We simply have to stand on this ground. All the demonic powers are arrayed against us to move us off of the ground of grace in Christ. If all we do is stand, they lose, for it is their strategy and campaign to regain us. If we stand, we win, but to stand we must withstand.