



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

The Present Activity of the Great Dragon and His Demons

Let's begin with a word of prayer:

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity to turn again to the word of God. We thank Thee Lord for the things that are difficult in Thy word and we thank you for the challenge of them. And we pray that as we consider one of the difficult subjects tonight that the Holy Spirit may guide us into the truth as it concerns the spirit world. We realize Lord, of course, that we do not have the experience with which to discover and catalog and systematize the truth.

We thank Thee that in the word of God we have a revelation that enables us to understand even though we may not have seen. And we pray that as we consider the demon world that we may not only have our curiosities satisfied but also may be prepared to yield to the Holy Spirit and lean upon him and depend upon him so that we may not, by the devices of Satan, be turned aside. We commit this hour to Thee and ask for a blessing upon us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

“The Present Activity of the Great Dragon and his Demons” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Message] Now, tonight I think that since the subject is “The Present Activity of the Great Dragon and His Demons” that one of the most effective things to do is to read a few of the passages in the word of God, which do refer to demonic activity, so that we may have no question about the biblical teaching upon this subject. And so, I’m going to read a few passages from the Gospel of Mark.

Now this, of course, is not the only gospel or the only section of the New Testament that has a great deal to say about demons. But let’s read a few of the verses, beginning with the 23rd verse of the first chapter through the 27th verse of the first chapter and I’ll move on from there. Mark chapter 1 verse 23,

“And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.’ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Hold thy peace, and come out of him.’ And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.’ (Now, move down to the 32nd verse) “And in the evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and those that were possessed with demons.” (I think your text has, devils.) “And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and permitted not the demons to speak, because they knew him.”

Now, Mark chapter 1 and verse 39, “And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out demons.” Now, let’s turn over to chapter 3 verse 11 and verse 12, “And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried,

saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he strictly charged them that they should not make him known.

Now, chapter 5 verse 1 through verse 20 and this will conclude our reading. This of course is not but just a section of the New Testament that has to do with demons, but you’ve seen a few already with the five chapters of Mark. We’ve already had quite a great deal to say about the subject. Now, we’re going to have even more.

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes (or as some of the texts have the Gadarenes) and when he was come out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: For that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, ‘What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.’ For he said unto him, ‘Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.’ And he asked him, ‘What is thy name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name is Legion: for we are many.’ And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the demons besought him, saying, ‘Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.’ And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, they were about two thousand; and were choked in the sea.”

Before I finish the account, let me just point out this fact to you. Occasionally, we will find people who will say that the demonic references of the New Testament are simply the old or ancient way of referring to insanity. Now, I think you can see from this incident that this is a far cry from insanity. Now, many of the effects of demon possession may be very much like what we know today as insanity. But the idea of something leaving one person and then entering a herd of swine and causing the swine to rush down into the sea is I’m sure not on the records of the experiments that have been made on the insane in our asylums. We have nothing like this. This is something that is different from insanity. Verse 14,

“And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the demon, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the demon, and also concerning the swine. And they began to implore him to depart out of their borders. And when he was come into the boat, he that had been possessed with the demon implored him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus permitted him not, but saith unto him, ‘Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’ And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”

Now, in the fourth lecture of this series, we spoke of Satan’s co-workers, or the evil angels. We discussed their origin and their existence. We discussed their identity. We pointed out that the evil angels were certain of the fallen angels. The fallen angels, however, encompassed more than just the evil angels or demons. We talked about their nature; that they were spirit beings, that they were intellectual beings, that they also had a

moral nature, apparently. We talked too about their organization. They are well organized. They have a hierarchy and Satan, of course, is their head. We spoke of their abode, a special group that now is in Tartarus according to 2 Peter chapter 2, a certain group that is in the abyss, they are fallen angels, which are bound, and then we spoke about the free fallen angels and we said that, no doubt, these were the demons which we read about in the New Testament. Now, that designation is not really specifically made in the New Testament. It is an inference; it is a deduction from what we read in the New Testament. Most people agree with it. It’s not something unique with me. They believe that the free evil angels are our demons. At least, the demons seem to be beings which would in every way harmonize with that particular identification.

Then we talked about their activity in their doom. And after a few lectures last time, remember, we discussed the activity of the prince of the angels, Satan, himself. We talked about his present work and how it touches God’s word and how it touches God’s works, how it touches the cosmos and how it touches the Christian. He accuses the Christian; he influences the Christian as he did Peter when Jesus began to announce that he was going to the cross, and also he wars against them.

And this calls, I think, for a separate consideration of the question of the demons and demon possession. And so, tonight we are going to devote our time of study to the question of demons and demon possession. That such a thing exists is clear to all who accept the Bible. And I began tonight by reading these passages so that you would have no question in your mind but that the Bible speaks of demons and demon possession.

Now, regardless of what we may think about it, we will have to agree that the Bible speaks of demons and it speaks of demon possession. And it speaks of demon possession as something different from insanity. It is not just an ancient way of referring to a modern phenomenon as some have attempted to say. It is a very real thing, apparently, and it is something different from insanity. So, the Bible speaks about demon possession.

It is also the necessary conclusion of those who accept any of these things. First, the influence of one mind upon another as, for example, by telepathy, by extrasensory perception (ESP), or by hypnosis. I noticed by the way, if any of you are interested, that the YMCA is beginning some courses right in the immediate future, maybe tonight I don’t know, on self-hypnosis. And if you are interested in that, I suggest you attend that series of meetings and then come and work on me. [Laughter] It may work upon yourself. It may improve your temperament and disposition. I presume that’s the purpose of it.

But, anyway, to be serious, if we believe that one mind may influence another and if we believe that there is such a thing as hypnosis, and apparently there is, then it certainly seems a rather logical thing to grant that demon possession might exist too. Furthermore, if we are biblical believers and we acknowledge that it is possible for the good angels to influence Christians, it certainly is logical to believe that the evil angels might also influence them. Now, influence that’s the key word not possess, but influence them. And also, if we believe that the Holy Spirit, who has been sent to those who believed in Jesus Christ, may influence us in his ministry then it is not inconceivable that another spirit being may also influence us. And also with those who do not know Jesus Christ as savior and do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them it is certainly reasonable to believe that it is possible for another spirit to possess them. So, if we would acknowledge any of these things, it seems reasonable to believe that demon possession might well exist. Then some of you may have had some personal experience that convinces you that there are demons.

Now, let’s look at our subject and first of all we want to discuss what historical evidence for demon possession. And capital A - In Old Testament times. I think we all, and I surely want to confess this, I think we all when we come to a subject like this come with some skepticism. That seems natural to us because we do not have the faculties for seeing invisible spiritual beings. And not a one in this room, so far as I know, is well acquainted with the angelic world. Probably not a single one of you will acknowledge

that you have ever seen an angel. Some of you might think you’ve seen a ghost, but not one of you has ever seen an angel and probably all of you would acknowledge that.

And so, when we talk about the spirit world there is naturally, in man, a sense of skepticism. But we should remember Schopenhauer’s comment “There is also skepticism of ignorance.” And one of the reasons that we may be skeptical is because, simply, we are ignorant. And so, if we are skeptical it is not necessarily that we are skeptical because there is validity to our skepticism. It may be that we are skeptical because we are ignorant of the facts. And I think you can think of many things in your mind immediately which would confirm that.

How many times have you been skeptical of something that someone has said or claimed to have seen or claimed to have documentation for and you’ve been very skeptical but then when you saw the documentation for it then you realized that your skepticism was skepticism of ignorance. You didn’t really know. You might not know, for example, that Charleston is the finest city in the United States because you’ve never been there. Someone left church yesterday morning and met me out at the door and said, “Did you see the article about Charleston in the morning paper?” And I said, “No, I haven’t had the chance to look at it.” And so, I rushed home immediately to look at it. And in the course of it, it said that the natives of Charleston call it the “Holy City.” I like the way they referred to the War Between the States. They called it the “War of Northern Aggression.” [Laughter] In all my years in Charleston I missed that. And I can’t wait to refer to the Civil War in that way with my students at the seminary, most of who come from north of the Mason-Dixon Line. [Laughter]

But now, until you come to Charleston you might have some skepticism about the claim that Charleston is the greatest city in the United States. But once you’re there then you realize that your skepticism was the skepticism of ignorance. So, the fact that we are skeptical let’s not let that lead us astray because skepticism does not necessarily mean that the truth lies with it.

In Old Testament times, we could refer to quite a few places that suggest the activities of demons. One place is in 1 Kings chapter 18 in verse 28 as you remember that this particular chapter has to do with Elijah and his struggle with Baal and the prophets of Baal. And after Elijah issues his challenge, remember, he gives the prophets of Baal the opportunity, first of all, to call down fire from heaven. And they construct their altar and then they begin to call upon their god. And they call upon their god for all of the morning. They called on the name of Baal, we read in verse 26, “From morning even until noon saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them.” And I learned from this, of course, that the prophets were human. Elijah, he had a wonderful time. He said, “Cry a little louder [Laughter] your god may be slightly deaf.” After all, he may be talking, he may be carrying on a conversation and you have to interrupt him, so cry a little louder. He may be pursuing or perhaps he is in a journey or perhaps he’s asleep and you’ve got to wake him up. And then we read in verse 28, “And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with swords and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.”

Now, most feel that these orgiastic activities on the part of the prophets of Baal is a reference to the fact that there was demonic activity among them; for this kind of activity expresses or is the natural expression of that kind of thing. But, of course, it does not say definitely that there is that type of activity. However, many feel that this is in evidence of it.

Turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 21 verses 13 and 14, 1 Samuel chapter 21 verses 13 and 14. And here we’re going to read of David’s feigned dementia. And I’ll just read the two verses, verse 13 and verse 14 of 1 Samuel. “And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and made marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. Then said Achish unto his servants, ‘Lo, ye see the man is mad: why then have you brought him to me? Now, the interesting thing

about this, of course, is that David, apparently, was so familiar with this and Achish was so familiar with it that when David feigned this type of activity, which suggests the demonic, he was perfectly acquainted with the activity and did not question the fact that such might actually have existed, really, in the case of others. Now in David’s case, of course, it was feigned. Well, there are other places in the Old Testament where it is evident that the evil angels are active and engage in activity of a spiritual character.

But let’s come on to the New Testament and capital B - In Christ’s ministry. Now, in Christ’s ministry, of course, you have already listened to me as I’ve read a number of places and I don’t think that we should have any doubt, whatsoever, about the activity of the demons according to the Bible in our Lord’s ministry. Now, sometimes we might ask ourselves the question, why is it that in Our Lord’s ministry there certainly seems to be this out breaking of demonic activity? Why would you think that there should be so much in the ministry of Jesus?

Well, I think the answer to that should not surprise us if we’ll think for a few moments. What was the purpose of our Lord’s coming? Well, in Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15 in the very first messianic promise of the Bible, remember God had stated that “The seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head.” And so, all of the revelation of the Bible from that time on is the story of the out working of the redemption in the one who “would crush the serpent’s head.”

And, remember, John the Apostle said, as I have referred to this text before, John the Apostle said that the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. So, when the Lord Jesus appeared on the scene in his incarnation, it was certainly to be expected that the spirit world would be very much disturbed because this is the one who is going to do the work that will mean the overthrow of the entire system or hierarchy of the invisible world controlled by Satan. So, we should not be surprised if, when Our Lord born and begins his ministry, there should be this amazing expression of satanic or demonic activity. And so, this phenomenal burst is really, in the final analysis,

no marvel at all. Now in our Lord’s lifetime then, on the basis of the testimony of the word, there is no question of its existence.

Capitol C – In the apostle’s time. It did not stop with the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Let’s turn to the Book of Acts and read a few passages. Acts chapter 5 in verse 16 might be the first passage for us. In Acts chapter 5 in verse 16 we read this “There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them who were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.” Notice, “Vexed with unclean spirits.” Then turn over to chapter 8 in verse 7, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things, which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice came out of them that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.” And so, here again, we have demonic activity in Samaria. Turn on to chapter 16 verse 16 through verse 18 in the Apostle Paul’s ministry in the city of Philippi, we have expression of this. Verse 16, “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain maid possessed with the spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying.”

Now modern theologians might have thought this was very good because after all it’s not often that Satan advertises the work of the preaching of the apostles. But the apostles were not happy to have advertisement that came from Satan. If you’ll notice Paul’s response, “The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation.’” The apostles were extremely careful about the method whereby they preached the gospel. And it was not right for Satan to advertise the gospel as far as they were concerned. So they were not too happy with her unsolicited commercials. “And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the

hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the ruler.” So, again in the apostles’ ministry there is this evidence of the unclean spirit that is cast out of this person.

Chapter 19 and verse 12 is the final text we might read, verse 11 “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.” Verse 12, “So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” So, I think that you can see that in the apostolic days, demon possession existed. It existed in our Lord’s time. It existed in the apostles’ time.

Now, does it exist in modern times? Capitol D - In modern times. Now, there is no question but that some restraint exists over the activities of the demons outwardly in Christian lands. I would rather think that this is an expression of 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2 in verse 7 in which the Apostle Paul refers to the fact that there is a “restrainer” in the present time who is restraining the manifestation of the man of sin. And so, there is restraint of sin today. And it is done, apparently, in order that the work of God may be carried out to its certain conclusion.

But, even though there is restraint, I personally feel that on the basis of the evidence that we possess that it can be said that demonic activity, demonic possession does exist today. It exists, often, as it is manifested in spiritualistic phenomena. We only have to think of Bishop Pike and his beliefs and practices with regard to the spirit world to see a manifestation of it, in my opinion.

So, in spite of Christianity, in spite of education, there is still demonic possession. I’ve often thought about this myself and wondered, why it is that in Christian lands there is less demon possession than in non-Christian lands? And, I think, of course, that there is the activity of the spirit in restraint. And there is education which has eliminated to some extent some of the phenomena, which are, no doubt, counterfeits of the real thing and we do not fall for that.

But I often wonder if perhaps Satan, who is surely wiser than most of us, realizes that the easiest way to convince an educated, cultured, modern, contemporary society that he does not exist is to change his manifestation so that he is no longer a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he is, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, an angel of light. And, consequently, the demonic activity, which is being practiced today by Satan and his demons, is the kind that is the most deceptive. It is the kind that exists when a man, robed in the garments of religion, even Christian religion, walks into a pulpit of a church, which has a name out front that says Christian church, and he stands in the pulpit and opens up a Bible and reads the Bible but at the same time delivers a message, which though couched in familiar sounding words, is really a denial of the heart of the message of the word of God, which is the salvation that comes through a crucified Savior. And so, I am inclined to think that the demonic activity, probably, exists to the same degree, it’s just of a different kind. But there is evidence, modern evidence, of demonic activity.

There is a man by the name, or there was a man by the name of Dr. John C. Nevius. He was a missionary to China from 1854 to 1892. He was a medical missionary and he was laboring in Shantung province, in China. And over a long period of time, as you can see, he labored in China for thirty-eight years. Over a long period of time, he investigated phenomena that had to do with demon possession and with other psychical matters. And he has written a book on demon possession and allied themes. It’s gone through a number of editions. It was a book written by a man who had had detailed experience with the phenomena in China as Christian missions made its impact on that land. And Dr. Nevius, in describing the things that happened in China, made special reference to the fact that the things that happened in China were closely parallel to the things that happened when Jesus was here on the earth. For example, the subject at the time of possession passes into an abnormal state, as is described in passages like Mark 9

in the New Testament. “During the transition, he frequently is thrown into a violent paroxysm,” so Dr. Nevius stated.

Well, we just read an account of that in the Gospel of Mark. He sometimes falls senseless on the ground or foams at his mouth. During the attack, he evidences another personality. His normal personality, for the time being, wholly or partially dormant; the new personality presents traits of character that is utterly foreign to those characteristic of the demonized in his normal condition. And the change of character is practically always in the direction of moral impurity.

Many people while being demon possessed display a super human knowledge. Did you notice that the demons know who Jesus is? You know they know he’s the Son of God. Frequently, they appear to know the Lord Jesus Christ as a divine person and show fear of him, Dr. Nevius said. Sometimes, they converse in foreign languages of which in their normal condition, they are totally ignorant. Now, that might throw some light on speaking in tongues today. It just may be that some of the speaking in tongues that people say is speaking in tongues, is not really biblical speaking in tongues at all but is really produced by the demonic.

“Prayer, in the name of Jesus, is the effectual remedy. Some victims being delivered very readily,” Dr. Nevius said, “others, with difficulty, more earnest intercession with some fasting being necessary in some stubborn cases.” And that of course, is in agreement with the New Testament.

I’d like to read you an account of one. This appeared in the *Sunday School Times* about twenty-five years ago. It is a translation of an article that was written first in Swedish, by a Swedish Missionary, who had experience, was translated into English and I think you’ll be interested in it. It begins after a few words of introduction. “It was a dark and cold day in wintertime. The small chapel was nearly filled with attentive Chinese. During the service, the door opened and a man entered accompanied by a woman. My whole attention was drawn to the unusual spectacle. There was something so horrible

about the woman’s personality that, for a moment, I involuntarily paused in my preaching. She sat down near the door. On her face was a continuous mocking leer. She was quiet but here presence caused an indescribable spirit in the meeting. People who had previously been attentive began to be uneasy. Their eyes were turned toward the door and their attention to the service was gone.

“Personally, I sensed the powerful opposition, and my words seemed to be a futile beating in the empty air. Finally, I closed the service and sat down, deeply depressed over the turn of the meeting. The service had hardly closed when one of the workers said, ‘That woman down there is a notorious spirit medium. And her husband has brought her out here that she may be delivered.’

“Now I understood the peculiar influence in the meeting and the opposition that had so suddenly become evident. In the inquiry room, a small group gathered. The woman sat on the hard clay, a little platform. Closely she followed everything that took place about her. The hard cold eyes gazed constantly at us sometimes with a defiant expression and again with fear. Then the struggle began. On our knees, two began to pray then followed a silence. It seemed that the words of prayer were only vain vibrations in the air. Indifference and sleepiness gripped us as never before. Then two of those who were kneeling arose and someone started singing the chorus, evidently, to ease the depression. We placed our hands on the head of the demoniac and commanded the spirit to leave her but nothing happened.

“Then she suddenly burst out in a mocking laugh and triumphantly said to us, ‘When I came here I was afraid of the name of Jesus, for I had heard so much of its power. Now I see that you do not have sufficient power to compel me to leave.’ I have seldom ever felt so crushed and humiliated. In most cases, the evil spirits depart from their victims after a short season of prayer.” This is a man who has had experience.

“But, this was an unusual case. We realized that there must be fasting and prayer to obtain victory. Thus began the intense struggle for a human soul. For two days, there

constantly was one or more praying for her. The evil spirits were hard pressed.

According to the woman’s statement, there were seven demons in her. (Remember, the New Testament speaks of Mary Magdalene as one out of whom went seven devils.) We could plainly discern when the spirits spoke through the woman and when she spoke of herself. One was in the local dialect. The other was in the Mandarin dialect. The evil spirits repeatedly sought to interrupt our intercession by conversation.

“One day, a spirit sharply addressed one of the kneeling brethren. ‘How can you pray for me, when you have yourself the spirit of covetousness in your heart?’ The man became pale, rose from his knees, and left the room. Two others were exposed in the same ruthless manner and they had to confess sins that they had lived in for some time.

“As the intercession continued, the woman became increasingly uneasy. Sometimes she was cast down on the ground and was violently tortured by the spirits. In other times, she was say in a cajoling way, ‘I will leave immediately, if you cease praying.’ And one time when the Spirit of God was mightily over us, the demon said, ‘Cease your praying. I’m choking.’ One afternoon, the demon threatened to kill the woman before he left her but we forbade it in the name of Jesus. It was a wonderful moment when the full deliverance took place. The whole room became light and glorious. The peace of heaven descended upon us. We hardly dared to open our lips during the joyful quietness that came over us all. There sat the woman, happy and rejoicing for the deliverance. She became a real Christian who bore testimony of what the Lord had done for her.

“She had a natural skepticism. It may be the skepticism of ignorance. But many such testimonies in modern times can be given. As far as I am concerned, I think there is good historical evidence for the existence of demon possession.”

Well, let’s move on because I doubt that we’re going to be able to finish our outline tonight.

II – The explanation of demon possession.

“The Present Activity of the Great Dragon and his Demons” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Capitol A – The mythical theory. Josephus originated the expression, “demon possession.” You read through the New Testament you will not find those precise words. You will find so and so had a demon or had an unclean spirit. And then you will read possessed with demons. And the word that is used is a word that really means just demonized. So when you speak of a person as possessed of a demon, they are demonized, according to the Greek expression. Frequently, the expression used is daimonizomai speaking of several. And they are demonized.

Now the mythical theory was the theory of D. F. Strauss who wrote “A Life of Jesus,” which was very famous largely because of his unbelief. Strauss said that “The demons were not real. The demons were just symbolic of the evil in the world. And that they are to be understood as symbolic representations of evil.”

Now, as you read the gospels you will not get the impression that the demons are symbolic. As a matter of fact, in the New Testament you read more of demons in the least symbolic sections of the New Testament than elsewhere.

It’s true that you have a great deal of demonology in the Book of Revelation as it writes concerning the last days; for there seems to be a revival of it in the last days. One of the characteristics of the society that will exist just previous to our Lord’s Second Coming is that it will be a society deeply interested in the spiritualistic, in the mediums. And the things that we see today, there’s a great deal of interest in this, as you know, books are rolling off the press and have to do with this constantly. We may be leading up to the time. But anyway, during that tribulation period there’s going to be a great deal of interest in the demonic. But, you see, in the New Testament where it appears is in the narrative section. In the simple stories of the gospels in which there is very little symbolism. And it is there that we have most of the references to the demons. So, the idea that the word demon or demon possession is supposed to be symbolic is contrary to the kind of literature in which most of the references are found. So I do not accept his theory.

Capitol B – The accommodation theory. Now, some have said that the Lord and the Evangelists really did not believe in demons but they adjusted themselves to the common, erroneous, conviction of the times. And since the people, who were ignorant and uneducated, believed in demons, the Lord spoke of demons and the Evangelists wrote of demons. Now, that is the same kind of reasoning that is used by our contemporary theologians about other things.

Now, they will say, for example, that Jesus did not really believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures but the people then believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament and so he addressed himself to them in accordance with their beliefs; he accommodated himself to them. But Jesus did not believe, for example, that one Isaiah wrote the Book of Isaiah, he knew that several Isaiah’s were involved in the writing of Isaiah. That we have one Isaiah, we have two Isaiah’s, we may even have three or four Isaiah’s, but Jesus accommodated himself to the views of the people of that time and so he spoke about Isaiah. There was no real one original man named Adam who fell in the Garden of Eden and had a wife named Eve. But the people believed that and so Jesus accommodated himself to their views. And so he accommodated himself to their views here.

These persons were afflicted with uncommon diseases and so Jesus referred to the uncommon diseases as afflictions of demons. After all, the symptoms of demonic possession are often the symptoms that you have when have diseases. Some of those that were demon possessed were deaf, some were dumb, and some were torn. The various things that happened to them in their demon possession were like the physical diseases that one may have. However, there is one thing that it is difficult to understand, why do the demons have personality? How is it that the demons are able to speak? And furthermore, how can we explain what happened when those swine went down into the sea and perished. Now, that is something that you cannot explain by an accommodation theory. And so, apparently, the Bible is contrary in its teaching to the accommodation theory. Furthermore, if you think that Jesus and the apostles were intelligent, but the

people were unintelligent and the apostles and Jesus accommodated themselves to them, why is it that when our Lord speaks to the apostles privately he also speaks about demons then? Cause he does in at least one case. So, the accommodation theory does not supply the answers that we’re looking for. Perhaps there’s hallucination.

And Capitol C - The hallucination theory. Psychological delusion of the diseased and distraught person who imagines himself controlled by someone else, but it’s all an hallucination. But again, how can the person who is possessed by a demon manifest such an advanced knowledge of Jesus’ Son-ship and Deity, if it’s merely hallucination?

If that’s all that’s involved, how is it that this persons come out with the “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God,” something that the people of that time, apparently, did not know? How can you explain that? Hallucination does not do that for you. And again we come back to those Gaderene swine, how can you explain that by hallucination? This does not suit the facts of the Bible. So if we’re going to accept the facts of Scripture, if we are going to accept these as historical facts then it seems that we are forced to believe in demon possession. Now, of course, if we deny the Scriptural facts then we’ll have to go at this along another line.

Capitol D - The scriptural theory. The scriptural theory is simply this, that evil personalities reside in men and beyond the usual power of temptation so overbear men that he has a twofold will within him. He knows that he is possessed. And this possession is a special form of satanic power. It’s almost a miracle in reverse. In fact, it’s a kind of satanic miracle. Now, beyond that, it is difficult for us to go.

Let me say one final word about III – The nature of demon possession. I’m sure that much still remains obscure. We would like to ask ourselves the questions, for example, how responsible is a person who is possessed by a demon? As far as the Bible is concerned, I cannot find any evidence that demon possession occurred from birth. There is an evidence of demon possession from childhood. I would presume then that men are responsible for their demon possessions according to the Bible on that question.

You might ask yourself the question, what about possession and disease? The Bible distinguishes between possession and disease and yet there is a great deal of similarity between them. They have much the same effects. What’s the relationship between demon possession and insanity, precisely? I think today if a psychiatrist or a psychologist were to read the Bible, he would say, “Oh, that’s just insanity.” And, of course, we would probably so far as the outward phenomenon is concerned, we would certainly say “yes” there is quite a lot of similarity. But when you say it is insanity, you do not explain “why.” You just simply state the facts.

Now, one last thing. I think there is a difference between demonic possession and demonic influence. That’s what I mean when I have down here possession and demonic influence. Influence is not the same as control. It is possible for Christians to be influenced, we saw that last time. Satan did influence Peter. But, so far as I can tell, the Bible does not give us reason to believe that a Christian can be possessed by a demon. It seems to be an impossibility for the Holy Spirit to indwell at the same time that an evil spirit from Satan indwells. And so, as far as I’m concerned, I do not think that a Christian can be possessed. But a Christian can certainly be influenced.

Now, next time, I might say a word as we begin about exorcizing the demons. Jesus did not exorcize the demons. He did not give us any kind of magical ceremony by which he expelled the demons. He just simply expelled them in his own name, and the Apostles did it in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Let’s stop and close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we than Thee for the revelation of the truth in Thy word and we pray that Thou will give us a sense of our need of reliance upon the Holy Spirit. Our enemy has many devices and stratagems and we pray that we may lean upon Him who can give us victory, the Holy Spirit of God. [Tape ends]

“The Present Activity of the Great Dragon and his Demons” by S. Lewis Johnson
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