

Expelling Demons

“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues” (Mark 16:17).

Here Christ joins closely together two manifestations of supernatural power which are to confirm the testimony of Christian believers. The first is the casting out of demons; the second is speaking with new tongues. Today in the church at large, we hear much about speaking with new tongues (especially as the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit), but very little about the casting out of demons. How is it that these two manifestations have become so completely divorced from each other?

Actually, Christ places the casting out of demons *before* the speaking with new tongues. There is significance in this order. The intention is that people shall *first* be fully delivered from demons *before* they seek the baptism in the Spirit and the speaking with new tongues. However, through lack of discernment and understanding, this is not normally practiced in the church today. The result is that people nowadays are quite often baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak with new tongues but still need deliverance from demons after that. It is time for the church to devote prayerful, open-minded study to the subject of demonology.

The New Testament Greek word for “demon” is *daimonion*. This is the diminutive form of another Greek word, *daimon*. In Greek mythology and folklore, these words were used to describe a special class of beings to whom were attributed varying degrees of supernatural influence or power. Various cults and superstitious observances centered in these beings, and they played an important part in the daily lives of the common people.

In the King James Version the Greek word *daimonion* is often translated “devil.”

However, this is incorrect. The word “devil” is formed from the Greek word *diabolos*, which means literally “slanderer.” In Scripture, this is normally reserved as a title of Satan himself.

Associated in the New Testament with the noun *daimonion* is the passive verb *daimonizomai*. The literal meaning of this verb is “to be demonized”—that is, to be in some way under the influence or power of demons. Thus the meaning of the verb is very general. In the King James Version this verb is usually translated by some phrase such as to be “possessed” or to be “vexed” by demons or by evil spirits. However, there are no distinctions in the original Greek text to which these various different English words correspond. Some preachers have worked out elaborate distinctions between possession, oppression or obsession by demons. However, there is nothing in the original Greek to support these distinctions.

Two other phrases normally used in this connection in the New Testament are “evil spirit” and “unclean spirit.” A comparison of Revelation 16, verses 13 and 14, would seem to indicate that the two phrases “unclean spirits” and “spirits of demons” are used more or less interchangeably.

Psychology normally recognizes three main elements that are associated with the concept of personality. These three elements are: knowledge, will and emotion. It is important to see that all these three elements of personality are found in the New Testament picture of demons.

Demons possess *knowledge*. In Mark 1:24, the demon in the man in the synagogue at Capernaum said to Christ, “I know who You are, the Holy One of God!” In Acts 19:15, the evil spirit in the man at Ephesus said to the seven sons of Sceva, “Jesus I know [acknowledge], and Paul I know [know about]; but who are you?”

Demons possess *will*. In Matthew 12:44, the unclean spirit who has gone out of the man but can find no place of rest, says, “*I will* return to my house from which I came.” In Luke 8:31–33, the demons in the man of Gadarenes displayed very strongly their will not to be cast into the abyss, but rather to be allowed to enter into

the swine.

Demons possess *emotion*. In James 2:19 we read, “Even the demons believe—and *tremble!*”

Another fact that attests the personality of demons is their ability to *speak*. This is recorded in many passages of the New Testament. From the standpoint of psychology, we normally attribute the concept of personality to anything that is able to express its meaning in intelligible speech.

By every standard, therefore, we see that demons display all the attributes of *personality*. This is of tremendous importance. Christian believers are in no position to deal with demons successfully until they recognize that they are persons, not things. A demon is not a habit or a mental state or a psychological condition. A demon is a *person*.

One means by which the presence or activity of demons may be detected is the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit called, in 1 Corinthians 12:10, “discerning of spirits.” Many Christians who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit manifest some measure of this discernment, but quite often they do not fully realize the nature of this operation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore they do not make effective use of it. Discernment of this kind needs to be cultivated by regular exercise. For this reason, we read in Hebrews 5:14 of believers “who are of full age [maturity], that is, those who *by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*” In the church today there are all too few believers who exhibit this mark of spiritual maturity.

If Christians are willing to exercise their spiritual senses, they will soon begin to discover that there are many different symptoms that commonly indicate the presence or activity of demons. Some of the most common of these symptoms are set forth below under two headings: first, psychological, related primarily to the inner nature and personality; second, physical, related primarily to the outward bodily appearance and condition.