

March 2009 Q & A: Does Demon Possession Take Place Today?

Introduction:

Mark 5:1-20 tells the story of the Gerasene demoniac. An unclean spirit had possessed a young man. He could not be bound. He could not be subdued. He spent his time among the tombs, crying out and cutting himself. When Jesus arrived, He cleansed the man of the spirit. We can learn many things from the text, but in this lesson we simply want to ask the question—does this still happen? Do demons and unclean spirits continue to possess people? Is it possible we are possessed and don't know it?

Discussion:

- I. The demons recognized a time was coming when something would change.
 - A. In **Matthew 8:29**, the demons say, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" In **Luke 8:28-29**, the demons asked Jesus not to torment them. Interestingly, the basis for that was that He had commanded them to leave the man.
 - B. The text doesn't tell us exactly what "the time" refers to. We must speculate. However, clearly the demons themselves recognized there would be a time when Jesus was to torment them. That torment does not seem to be merely some kind of disciplinary punishment but rather the removal from man and, seemingly, the inability to possess man.
- II. Jesus claimed there was a time coming when the strong man of the world would be bound.
 - A. In **Mark 3:27**, Jesus was defending Himself against the accusation of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. He said, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house" (ESV).
 - B. Jesus' point is that He had entered the house of the strong man, that is, Satan. He planned to plunder this house. To do that, He had to bind the strong man. Binding the strong man referred to removing demons and their possession of men. Thus, Jesus' plan was to bind Satan and his demons from having that ability. Then Jesus would plunder the house, that is steal men and women from the traps of Satan because Satan could not control them.
- III. The Old Testament prophesied that possession by unclean spirits would stop.
 - A. In **Zechariah 13:2**, Zechariah prophesied there would be a day coming when the prophets and the unclean spirits would be removed from the land. As we read the entire chapter, we see this day is tied in with the age of Christ's sacrifice and covenant. In other words, the period of our covenant is marked by the lack of prophets and unclean spirits.
 - B. Of course, we know that **I Corinthians 13:8-13** demonstrates prophecy would end along with all the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This would happen when that which was perfect had come. Some believe "the perfect" means Jesus in His second coming. While Jesus was perfect, He is not the subject of these verses. Rather, in this context, the perfect is contrasted with the partial. You have something that is partial and something that is perfect or whole and complete.
 - C. If I brought you part of an apple pie, what is the whole? Apple pie. If I brought you part of a cheesecake, what is the whole? Cheesecake. In this context, instead of just assuming something to be perfect, we need to consider what is the partial. The partial is the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to **Hebrews 2:3-4**, we learn the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to reveal and confirm the will of God. Thus, the partial is a partial revelation and confirmation of God's will. The perfect then is the complete or whole revelation and confirmation of God's word. Thus, according to **I Corinthians 13:8-13**, the perfect refers to the complete and finalized revelation and confirmation of God's will. It refers to the completed Scriptures.

Conclusion:

Therefore, we conclude quite correctly that once the will of God had been finally and completely revealed, there was no more need for the partial and God quit using it. As was prophesied in **Zechariah 13:2**, the prophets ceased from the land as did the unclean spirits. Now that we have the completed Scripture which can make us complete in every good work (**II Timothy 3:16-17**) we see there is no more demon or unclean spirit possession.