

Angels and Demons.

(The Nature and Activities of Demons)

Question 1—*What is the nature of the demons?*

Answer—Like the angels, the demons are not individuated persons, but each is a specie, being each one itself an incorporeal spirit comprising numerous personal potentialities (these are purely intellectual potentialities being inclined to this or that object), *cf.* Ezek. 1:5, 6 *with* Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30. In the case of the holy angels, these personal potentialities are kept unified by the beatific vision, and these various “faces” (*prosopōn*; *πρόσωπον*; *i.e.*, personal presence or relational circumstance) minister to the creation *via* a communication amongst themselves respecting the vision which they behold, *cf.* Ex. 25:20; Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:7, 8; whereas, in the case of the demons, the divine encounter serves only as a threat to torment them with thoughts of destruction, *cf.* Mark 1:23-26; and their human encounters are for the same purpose, to torment and destroy, *cf.* Mark 9:17-22.

As personal spirits, the demons, like the holy angels, are able to communicate with other personal beings, *cf.* Acts 19:15; moreover, they react to their encounters with Jesus as personal beings, *cf.* Mark 9:25, 26. Thus, they obviously exercised their wills in rebelling against God, Jude 6; and, in the Gospel, they clearly do so when they appeal to Christ not to cast them into the abyss, *cf.* Luke 8:32.

Again, as angels, they are by nature spirits, in contrast to flesh and blood, or corporeal beings, *cf.* Eph. 6:12. Therefore, they are by nature accounted among the invisible creatures of God, *cf.* Col. 1:16; though, as angels, they may from time to time take upon themselves visible forms, *cf.* Job 4:15-21. Sometimes, they might appear as angels of light, 2 Cor. 11:14, 15; *cf.* Gen. 3:1-5; other times, they might appear in some more threatening or fearsome form designed to strike terror into the hearts of men, *cf.* Rev. 9:7-10; 16:13, 14. However, though they are agents of deceit, *cf.* 2 Cor. 11:3; they are not able to deceive the Lord Jesus, *cf.* Matt. 4:1-11.

These demons are beings of powerful intellectual capacity and overwhelming strength by which they quite easily overmaster men, especially fallen men, *cf.* Eph. 2:2. They apparently maintain a network, or hierarchy of sorts, through which they transmit information and are enabled to execute broad plans of deception, *cf.* Eph. 6:11, 12; 2 Cor. 2:11. They possess a strength by which they may control or overpower men, particularly those unbelievers who are prone to dabble in occult matters, *cf.* Acts 19:13-16. So, the demoniac of Gerasenes reflects the great power of those evil spirits possessing him, *cf.* Mark 5:1-4; and, for this reason, the casting out of Legion into the herd of swine gained the attention of the multitude, *cf.* Mark 5:13, 14. Nonetheless, they are subject to the will of Christ when He casts them out, *cf.* Mark 1:27.

They have the powers to torment men to the point of driving them to seek death, *cf.* Rev. 9:3-6. From their mouths they are able to delude fallen men so that they die, *cf.* Rev. 9:18, 19; 12:15. By this power, they are able to cause lying wonders and miracles to arise, *cf.* 2 Thess. 2:9. This, too, though often extensive so that they can mimic true miracles, *cf.* Ex. 8:5-7; they are circumscribed by the Almighty so that they are not able to copy others, *cf.* Ex. 8:16-18.

Question 2—*What are the activities of the demons?*

Answer—When we consider the activities of the demons, we must look at their general scope, their specific applications and their limitations placed by God:

First, these demons belong to the kingdom of Satan who, being himself a mere creature, is limited in both space and time, is also limited in his power and stands in need of these other spirits to carry out his designs, *cf.* Matt. 25:41; Rev. 9:11. Additionally, we know that these fallen angels are arrayed under his power such that they act as an undivided army yielding an unquestioning obedience to him as their leader, *cf.* Matt. 12:24-26. Being incorporeal spirits, they are constantly working their evil for they do not need to rest as men do, *cf.* 1 Pet. 5:8. With this vast alliance of wickedness, they engage themselves to transmit

information, share power and promote their evil through various combinations, *cf.* Rev. 12:9. They exercise this kingdom of darkness over individuals of mankind, *cf.* Eph. 2:1, 2; and over the kingdoms of the nations, *cf.* Dan. 10:13, 20; 1 Cor 15:24. This kingdom of wickedness reigns over the philosophy of fallen men and directs the course of all the nations that remain deceived bending them toward destruction resisting the Gospel claims pressing the right of Christ, the Mediator and Governor of the nations, *cf.* John 12:31; Eph. 6:11, 12; 2 Thess. 2:8-10.

The scope of their activities consists in promoting rebellion against God amongst the sons of men, *cf.* 1 John 5:19. They are themselves morally perverted whereby they are denominated unclean spirits and evil spirits, *cf.* Matt. 10:1; Luke 7:21. This moral perversion is rooted in rebellious creature-centered philosophy brought amongst the angels by Lucifer, *cf.* Isa. 14:14; who also brought this message of rebellion to mankind in the garden, *cf.* Gen. 3:5. This rebellion is epitomized in the Antichrist who is the man of sin, or lawlessness, seeking to exalt himself above God, *cf.* 2 Thess. 2:4, 5. It is the work of the demons to gather the nations together for Armageddon, prior to the Millennium, *cf.* Rev. 16:14; and their rebelliousness will be confirmed after that period when they are released from their prison for a short time prior to the Second coming, *cf.* Rev. 20:7-9.

Second, their work is rooted in slandering God and suggesting that there is some unfaithfulness, unfairness or injustice in Him, *cf.* Gen. 3:1-5. In the Old Testament, the worship of idols was considered to be the worship of demons, *cf.* Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:36-38; this view is continued in the New Testament, *cf.* 1 Cor. 10:19-21. This is because demons drive men to idolatry and keep them deceived often through a display of supernatural powers, *cf.* Deut. 13:1-3. For this reason, the plagues of Egypt were said to be against the Egyptian gods, both the idols and their demons, *cf.* Ex. 12:12; and they prevailed over the Egyptian magicians, or astrologer-priests (*ḥarṭōm*; חַרְטֻמִּים), *cf.* Ex. 7:11-13; 8:18, 19; 9:11.

These demons sometimes afflict men through what appear to be natural causes, *cf.* Job 1:12-19; 2:7. They also promote philosophies and beliefs which are creature-centered and designed to degrade man from the image of God, *cf.* Rom. 1:18-32; Eph. 2:1-3. This is often accomplished through false prophets or false messiahs, which lead the non-elect astray, *cf.* Matt. 24:24. Through these there is a general perversion and promotion of immoral and sensuous lifestyles, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:1-18. They sow false followers of Christ in the world, *cf.* Matt. 13:37-42; and they blind the minds of unbelievers so that they might not see the truth of God's salvation through a Redeemer, Christ, *cf.* 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. In the realm of religion, they promote a false legalism, *cf.* Gal. 3:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-8; while often encouraging licentious living, *cf.* 1 John 3:8; Jude 4.

The Scriptures reveal that demons may invade and gain control, or possession, over men, *cf.* Luke 22:3, 4. Thus, while the Bible does recognize some ailments as natural, it also understands that some physical and mental afflictions are demonic, *cf.* Matt. 4:24; Luke 7:21. They are implicated in causing dumbness in men, *cf.* Matt. 9:32, 33; blindness, *cf.* Matt. 12:22; bodily deformities, *cf.* Luke 13:11-17; and convulsive fits, *cf.* Matt. 17:15-18. They are also active in driving men to deliberate self-injury, *cf.* Mark 5:5; 9:22; and they drive men to destroy others, *cf.* Rev. 18:2, 24. In this, we see they are often the underlying cause of mental disorders wherein the characters of insanity appear—withdrawal, nakedness, gloominess, filthiness and compulsive behavioral problems, *cf.* Luke 8:27-29. So, too, those given to suicidal fits may trace their distress to demonic forces, *cf.* Mark 9:22.

Moreover, the Bible makes very clear that Satan's evil forces, the demons, are set in contest against Christ and believers, *cf.* Eph. 6:10-12. This they do by attacking their confidence in God and His Word, *cf.* Matt. 16:22, 23; 1 Tim. 4:1. They are active in tempting believers to sin, *cf.* 1 Chron. 21:1-8; Rev. 2:12-14. So, they seek to draw believers into immorality, in order to destroy the marriages of Christians, *cf.* 1 Cor. 7:2, 5. Sometimes they cause physical illnesses or fleshly hindrances designed to draw believers into despair or, at least, incapacity, *cf.* Job 2:7-9; 2 Cor. 12:7.

The demonic forces apply their divide and conquer strategy by destroying the genuine basis for unity in the church through doctrinal divisions arising from false teachers or fad theologies, *cf.* 1 Tim. 4:1-3.

They call into question the Deity of Christ, or His true humanity or even the historicity of Jesus, *cf.* 1 John 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:16. They promote practical divisions through jealousies, selfish ambitions, arrogance and cults of personality, *cf.* Jas. 3:14-16; 1 Cor. 3:1-4. To this, they utilize the harshness and lack of forgiveness which arises from these contests, *cf.* 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Eph. 4:26, 27.

Third, these demons are both controlled and overruled by God, *cf.* Job 1:12. God uses demons to administer correction to those who defect from the truth, *cf.* 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; or, who fall into immorality, *cf.* 1 Cor. 5:1-5. Through difficulties inflicted by them, believers may grow in discernment, *cf.* Job 40:1-3; 42:1-6; and they are taught to trust God more firmly, *cf.* 2 Cor. 12:7.

God has used these demons to defeat the wicked and ungodly, *cf.* Ps. 78:49; and He uses them to effect His judgment against the wicked, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:20-23.

There is a demonstration of God's power over evil and rebellious creatures whenever these demons are cast out, *cf.* Luke 10:17-19. Christ is shown to be the stronger man who delivers from Satan and his demons, *cf.* Matt. 12:28, 29. His miraculous deliverances prove His claims to supreme authority, *cf.* Mark 1:27. So, God's justice and judgment against evil will be demonstrated when He casts Satan and his angels into the lake of fire, *cf.* Rev. 20:10.