

The Existence of Demons and Fallen Angels

We know that demons are real for the same reasons we know angels are real - Scripture tells us they're real. Demons are fallen angels, in other words, the angels who chose to follow Satan in his rebellion against God are the angels who are called demons.

A. What does the Old Testament say about demons?

We find many references to demons in the Old Testament, and different terms that are used to refer to them. In Deuteronomy 32:17 they are called by the Hebrew word "*shedhim*" which literally means "lords." The Septuagint (LXX) translates this word as "daimon," from which we get "demon." The New American Standard Bible translates this Hebrew word "demon" in this passage and in Psalm 106:37 as well.

Deuteronomy 32:17

"They sacrificed to **demons** who were not God,
To gods whom they have not known,
New *gods* who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.

Psalm 106:37

They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the **demons**,

"The Israelites considered idols to be demons who allowed men to worship them. The images were visible symbols of the invisible demons." (Sarles)

In Leviticus 17:7 the term "*seirim*" is used, this term literally means "he-goats," and the NASB translates this Hebrew term as "goats demons."

Leviticus 17:7

"And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the **goat demons** with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations."

Another term referring to demons in the Old Testament is the Hebrew term "*elilim*," which literally means "idols," and conveys the idea of "nothingness" or "emptiness." We see this term in Psalm 96:5, where the NASB translates it as "idols." These demons that were worshipped actually amounted to false gods, empty of genuine divinity and having nothing in resemblance to the real God.

Psalm 96:5

For all the gods of the peoples are **idols**,
But the LORD made the heavens.

From the Old Testament references to demons we can conclude that among the Hebrew people some had joined other peoples or nations in worshiping what amounted to demons. It is interesting to consider similar practices today. For example, consider the manner in which Roman Catholicism

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treats its “saints.” Roman Catholic “saints” are “venerated” (which amounts to worship) in very much the same way in which pagan traditions treated these demons. Roman Catholicism credits particular “saints” with specific powers, that is with patronage or lordship over particular things. This superstitious approach to their “saints” is very much similar to what pagan cultures from around the world did and do in their polytheistic religions.

It is also interesting to notice how modern cultures that reject the supernatural have adopted the very same practices in other ways. The idols of the ancient pagans were thought up in order to obtain some sort of help for men seeking self serving goals. Today people invest their time and effort in things that amount to the same —the means through which they can obtain their desires. Many people treat human inventions as their idols. From the football fans who dedicate their Sundays to the sport to celebrities who risk their lives in order to obtain the “perfect” look. People everywhere treat “things” as idols today.

B. What does the New Testament say about demons?

The New Testament makes the same assertions about demons as the Old Testament. Demons are mentioned by every New Testament author, except the author of Hebrews (if we agree that Paul was not the author as some have argued).

In Matthew 8:31, for example, the word “daimon” is used. The word is believed to have origins from the word for “knowing” and “intelligent,” that is, the Greek word “dao,” dating back to Platonic times. “Daimon” is also believed to have derived from the scholarly word for “divine,” “dai,” and has also been used for “disrupt.” In Homeric Greek the term “daimon” was equated with the term for God, or “qeob.” In post Homeric Greek the term was used intermittently of men and of gods. In the New Testament, the use of the term is exclusively of agents of evil.

Matthew 8:31

And the **demons** began to entreat Him, saying, “If You are *going to* cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.”

In John 8:48 and 49 the term “daimovnion” is used and translated “demon.” This is the most commonly used term to identify demons in the New Testament, occurring some 63 times. It is actually a diminutive term for “daimon,” in other words, it means “little demons.”

John 8:48-49

48 The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a **demon**?”

49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a **demon**; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

Demons are also referred to as “spirits” (Greek “pnevmata”) as in Luke 10:20, and in some 42 other passages of the New Testament.

Luke 10:17-20

17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

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18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

19 “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.

20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the **spirits** are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

Revelation 16:14

for they are **spirits** of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

As we saw earlier, demons are angels who followed Satan. Since they are angels, the New Testament calls them angels too. An example of this designation is found in Matthew 25:41.

Matthew 25:41

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his **angels**;

The New Testament uses related terms to describe the activities and effects of demons.

“Daimonisqeiv” meaning “to be possessed by a demon” is used some 13 times in the New Testament (including Luke 8:36). The term “demonic” or “daimoniwvdh” is used to describe the character of worldly wisdom, that wisdom which is not from God. The term “deisidaimoniva” is translated “religion” in Acts 25:19 and literally means “demon fearers.”

Luke 8:36

And those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was **demon-possessed** had been made well.

James 3:15

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, **demonic**.

Acts 25:19

but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own **religion** and about a certain dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

C. How do they relate to Christ?

Finally, the existence of demons is proved by the testimony of Christ, and their nature is made clear to us by His attitudes and actions towards them. In passages like Matthew 17:14-20 we can see Jesus testifying of the reality of demons, as He recognizes the source of the man’s ailments and attributes it to a demon. In Matthew 25:14 Jesus indicates that Satan and his demons are morally responsible. In addition, Jesus never corrects the contemporary Jewish belief in the existence of demons.

Jesus clearly showed that He recognized the existence of demons as He cast them out from people multiple times and gave His disciples the authority to do so too.

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Matthew 10:1

And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Luke 10:17-20

17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

19 “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.

20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”