

The Origin of Demons

A. Some speculations

Unwarranted, speculative views regarding the origins of demons come just as easily from Naturalists as they do from supernaturalists. In this context, Naturalists are people who adhere to the philosophy of Naturalism, which is basically a world view that only accepts natural elements and forces as true and rejects as false anything supernatural or spiritual. Staunch Naturalists reject all the supernatural and argue that the demoniacs referred to in Scripture must be mere myths. The Naturalists accept that the authors may have believed their descriptions of demons, but say that in reality the authors were merely observing psychological disorders and writing about them. On the other hand, some supernaturalists go as far as saying that demons are the souls of dead men who have returned to the earth. Clearly, there is no Scriptural support for either of these extreme views.

To argue that mental illness accounts for the phenomena of demon possession described in Scripture is to deprecate the seriousness of what the Bible describes as demon possession. The Medieval Church may have made the mistake of confusing the two, but that does not prove that Jesus made that mistake.

The belief that we have access to the dead is not Biblical. There is no indication in Scripture that this is something that we can do now, but there are clear commands that it is something that we should not attempt, and also clear statements that men only live once. The only exceptions can be found in 1 Samuel 28 and Matthew 17 (paralleled by Mark 9 and Luke 9). In 1 Samuel 28 Saul asked the medium, or the witch of Endor to bring up Samuel. When she saw Samuel she was surprised that he had actually come. This indicates that the norm was that she either made up what she saw or that if she saw something whatever she saw she knew was not genuine. The exception here was allowed by God to more clearly demonstrate His judgement on and to Saul, and to show how God had given Saul up to his own ways (Romans 1-3).

In Matthew 17 and its parallel passages, Peter, James and John saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus at His Transfiguration. This was also not a normal event. Here Jesus was merely allowing His Apostles to see Him in His glory as He had prophesied earlier that some would (Matthew 16:28).

Leviticus 20:27, “Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their blood guiltiness is upon them.”

Hebrews 9:27, “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

Some unwarranted views regarding demons seek to twist what Scripture says in order to explain the existence of demons. There are some who believe that Satan ruled over a race of pre-Adamic men on earth, this belief is commonly referred to as the Gap Theory of Creation. People who hold this view believe that this state of affairs was effective during the time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. They believe that this is when Satan fell and that as a result of his fall the men who were alive then also fell, and that it was their spirits who became the demons. People who hold this view go on to say that the creation history revealed to us in Scripture is merely the account of a recreation of the earth, and not the original creation. To support this position, its supporters point to Acts 23:8-9,

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where the terms “angel” and “spirit” are used as if to distinguish different types of beings. They also claim that the description in the Gospels of demons as desperate to possess men show that they are disembodied spirits.

Acts 23:8-9, "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there arose a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” "

A kind way to describe the Gap Theory of Creation is as grammatically possible, but not necessary. The whole of Scripture does not support this conjectural theory. It is clear that more often than not this theory is held by believers because they choose to accept modern scientific claims of an old earth and of old age of fossils. They effectively compromise what the Bible teaches so that the teachings of modern science don't have to contend with biblical truth. Hebrews 9:27 does not support the Gap Theory as there is just no supporting evidence in the Bible for a pre-Adamic race of men. Besides, death did not come into the world until Adam sinned (Romans 5:12), so if any beings had been created between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, these beings could not have died until after Adam sinned.

Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

In addition, the supposed distinction between angel and spirit in Acts 23 is forced and not necessary. Angels are described as spirits elsewhere in Scripture (Hebrews 1:14) and Peter's spirit is possibly referred to as an angel by Luke (Acts 12:15).

Hebrews 1:14, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”

Acts 12:15, "And they said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was so. And they kept saying, “It is his angel.” "

B. What the Bible says

The biblical view of the origin of demons is that they are angels who followed Satan after his fall. We see this explained to us in passages like Revelation 12:4 and Matthew 25:41.

Revelation 12:4, “And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

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;

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In Matthew 12:24-26, Satan is referred to as the ruler or leader of the demons. The Greek word indicates that he is the first among similars. Satan is the chief of the demons, but a demon himself too.

Matthew 12:24-26, "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the **ruler of the demons.**" And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?"

Demons are further described as having a similar essence as angels (cf. Hebrews 1:14, Luke 8:2).

Luke 8:2, "And *also* some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out."

Demons and Satan perform similar activities:

- They both enter or possess men (Satan in Luke 22:3; and demons in Luke 11:14).

Luke 22:3, "And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve."

Luke 11:14, "And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb; and it came about that when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled."

- They both wage war against God, as seen in Revelation 9:1-11 and 12:7-17.

In order to explain demons as anything other than angels who sinned we would have to make too many unwarranted assumptions. It is good hermeneutic practice to choose an explanation that has the fewest assumptions. This principal is especially true in our case when the only supportable position is the one with the least amount of assumptions.