

DEMONS – Real or Imagined; evil spirits or mental disorders?

(A response to articles by Duncan Heaster and Mark Scull)

The question of what is meant by ‘demons’ and ‘evil spirits’, etc., in the Bible is a challenging one. On the surface it may seem simple but closer examination reveals great controversy and difficulties of language, of culture, of context, and of translation.

Any articulation of a position on this issue should therefore be tempered with caution and humility and even perhaps the realization that we may not know the ‘whole truth’ of the matter this side of eternity.

I do think though, that our starting point and perspective in evaluating any arguments and positions of contention on this issue should be based on seeking what is the Creator’s worldview on evil.

Demons, whatever their reality are a manifestation of evil, and therefore an issue of theodicy. (Theodicy is the branch of theology that defends God’s goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil. See a most interesting article by Dr William Dembski on this topic [here](#). In this article Dembski states that “*Evil is but a temporary feature of the world. Created as it is by God, the world is destined to fulfill God’s good purposes*”. I think that this simple but very basic truth is vital to hold on to.)

God reveals Himself through the dual revelations of His Holy Scriptures and Nature. While there are many scriptures that indicate that our Creator reveals Himself through His creation, Psalm 19 v 1-4 is a good example:

- 1 *The heavens declare the glory of God. The expanse shows his handiwork.*
- 2 *Day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they display knowledge.*
- 3 *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*
- 4 *Their voice has gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world.*

To fully address this issue then, we may need to look at both the Bible and what the best evidence is from science and personal experiences of ‘two or more (qualified) witnesses’.

So firstly, what does the Bible really tell us in respect of the sovereignty of God and therefore what our subsequent worldview should be? Few would disagree that the Creator of this Universe has declared through the Scriptures that He is in charge over all. Many of the prophets of the Bible see evil around them and cry out ‘How long, Oh God’. (egs. Ps 74:10, Ps 89:46, Hab 1:2). They know that the Almighty will remove the evil, they trust in Him, but desire God to act quickly. They therefore show that they understand that God is sovereign over all.

Let us look for example, briefly at Job.

Job complained bitterly to God about his horrible suffering. His “comforters” told him it was his own fault, but Job did not accept their conclusions. Job, however, had no other viable explanation and longed for a chance to present his case before God Himself. He got his opportunity as described in Job chapters 38 - 42.

Most of the responses are a series of rhetorical questions God asks Job which Job could not answer. The first question shows the basic issue in all the questions: “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding*” (Job 38:4).

Seen from the perspective of God’s position as Almighty Creator, Job’s complaints are impertinent and insolent. God as Creator has knowledge, power, sovereignty, and wisdom beyond all human reasoning. Job could not hope to answer a single one of the dozens of questions. God’s power and wisdom are evident in creation and man’s finiteness is such that he lacks understanding and knowledge. Thus, man is dependent on God for what He knows. For man to doubt the motives and actions of God is the height of folly.

There is an interlude in the rhetorical questions in Job 40:1-8 that is very important in understanding the message of the Book of Job. God asks, “*Shall he who argues contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.*” (Job 40:2). The point is that no one can possibly reprove God, so no man can give an adequate answer. Job gets the point and responds: “*Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add no more*” (Job 40:4,5).

God further asks Job, “*Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.*” (Job 41:11).

The whole creation belongs to God and He can rule His own universe as He sees fit. He owes man nothing! He reserves the right to dispose of all that is His according to His good pleasure. After hearing more about God's power over all of creation, Job replies: *"I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted."* (Job 42:2).

This section of Job is key to understanding the answer it gives to the problem of evil. The context indicates that what Job says in verses 2-6 is pleasing to God. For example, right after Job speaks and says, *"Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:6), God commends Job.

Therefore the writer of Job is indicating that his response in Job 42:2-6 is correct. God says to Job's comforters, "You have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7b).

The key things that Job said were that God had all power — "Thou canst do all things" — and that God was fully able to execute His plans — "no purpose of Thine can be thwarted."

This is reminiscent of a passage in John:

"And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him'" (John 9:2,3.)¹

Scripture declares that God is in control of everything in the universe

He has created everything, and this includes spiritual powers called to do evil such as the Angel of Death who killed the first-born in Egypt or Satan when called to bring evil against Job. We see from Micah 1:12 that the Creator is the source of ultimate evil as well as good. *Mic 1:12 "Evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem"*

Any Satan, whether a personal devil or a human being (the adversary) can only do what God allows him to do.

Within Christianity and Judaism we see a number of competing worldviews.

A very common one amongst Pentecostals for example is the 'warfare worldview' which claims that history is played out as a battle between the forces of evil and believers.

According to this view, God works through believers as much as they allow Him to. The more knowledge and power believers gain the better they can defeat the forces of darkness. If believers lack knowledge and techniques for spiritual warfare they will be victims and not victors. There are casualties in this battle and God does not assure the outcome.

An alternative is the 'providential worldview' which argues that God is always in control and uses many agents to deliver people from the hostile powers and evil people. These agents may be angels such as the Angel of Death, Kings of foreign countries who he anoints for a time for His purposes such as Cyrus, or whole nations such as the Chaldeans (see Habbakuk), or his principal agent, the Messiah Yeshua and His body of believers. These agents can be evil or good, human or spiritual.

God uses these agents to bring those who are prepared to circumcise their hearts to a saving faith. Those who believe and obey are "saved to the utmost" (Hebrews 7:25) and need not fear any hostile human or spiritual forces.

The 'providential worldview' can therefore also include the reality of demons, fallen angels, curses, principalities and powers as well as good angels and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The crucial point here is to see that the sovereignty of God does not in itself exclude the possibility of evil spiritual forces or even 'demons'.

The Christadelphian worldview appears to be one that, though it does not deny evil, does appear to deny much that is spiritual. It appears to argue that most evil is the result of man's self-will, man's rebellion against God. This view holds that the 'demonic possessions' referred to in the NT were examples of people with mental illnesses that Yeshua healed and that this was to demonstrate his power and authority over all sickness and infirmity. This view is possibly a special case of the 'providential worldview'.

The 'providential worldview' is not all inclusive in that we may still experience misfortune and perhaps even evil as a result of our

¹ This section on Job mostly from <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue78.pdf>

own errors or lack of judgment. The laws of nature may also impact negatively on us without this being the result of some manifestation of evil. We may even suffer 'for Christ' and in this case we should be thankful of the evil that may come upon us.

The 'providential worldview' believes in God's sovereignty over all the forces of darkness. Spiritual forces of darkness cannot harm believers without first getting permission from God. What He allows them to do is always for our greater good. The key issue is not our knowledge about the forces of evil but our knowledge of God through the gospel and His Scriptures.

The battle is between the lie of 'Satan' that man can be like God and the truth of the gospel message, which declares that through repentance and obedience and thanks to the completed work of our Messiah, we can be 'Sons of God'..

So to summarise the Biblical foundations, we see that the Creator is in control of all; including any men or natural or spiritual forces that He may use in any way, including the manifestation of evil, and that we, human beings must trust God even beyond our understanding.

When we turn to look at what light science and personal anecdotes may shed on the question of demons we find again many unanswered questions. Science has as yet been unable to probe the spiritual dimension, even though science has confirmed the existence of dimensions beyond the four well known ones of height, width, length and time.

With regard to personal experience, there are a great many stories which appear to clearly indicate the existence of demons, yet at the same time there is much debate over the validity of such subjective experiences.

I refer you to [Frank Selch's article](#) for more on this and to an article by Bob DeWaay [here](#).

Before we look at the arguments presented by Duncan Heaster and Mark Scull, it is important to recognize that the existence of evil spirits or 'fallen angels' in no way diminishes the sovereignty of God, if these are spiritual beings which God uses for His purposes. In the same way that it was clearly God's purpose to test Job and to allow the Satan to afflict him with boils.

Job 2:6-7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

The Book of Job is also very instructive regarding HaSatan, the adversary. Clearly, this being is most likely not human as God gives him significant power over Job such as the ability to give him boils. Thus it seems fairly clear that this 'Satan' is a spirit being who brings evil upon Job. Thus by definition Satan here is an 'evil spirit', but clearly one who is ultimately under the authority of God, as is the whole creation. The same conclusions appear valid for the Angel of Death.

Let us now turn to some comments by Duncan Heaster in the attached document "An Extract from the Book Bible Basics on Demons".

Duncan begins by acknowledging the sovereignty of God Almighty and then states:

Job was a man who lost many of the good things which God blessed him with, but he did not say: "These demons have taken away all God gave me". No: listen to what he said - "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" Job 1:21 "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not received evil? Job 2:10

While Duncan is correct that it was God who was ultimately responsible for the evil that befell Job, Duncan appears to be trying to deny that Satan (an angelic adversary) was involved in the evil which came upon to Job. He then goes on to argue that demons are not gods and that there are no gods beside Yahweh. This is of-course true but irrelevant. In arguing that evil spirits exist and have some part to play in the history of humanity, no-one is arguing that they are gods. They may be worshipped as 'gods' in the same way the wooden idols are, but this in no way changes the reality that there is only One God.

Duncan notes that the Apostle Paul uses the word 'demon' and idol' in some way interchangeably in 1 Corinthians 10.

This may also be seen in Ps 106. Deuteronomy 32 is also instructive here. Clearly, the Israelites had accepted the pagan 'gods' of the gentiles around them and had participated in idolatrous behavior by bowing before the 'idols' (carved representations) of these demons and 'Mighty Ones (gods)' who really had no power, at least when compared with the power of the Almighty.

Thus, the apparent interchangeability of the terms 'demon' (Strong's #7700) and 'idols' (Strong's #6091) is because of the fact that the idols represent the demons, not because the demons are just carved bits of wood!

When Paul states that an idol or a demon is ‘nothing’ or a non-entity (of no matter²) in the world, he is referring to its power relative to the One and Only God, Yahweh. He is not saying that demons (or carved pieces of wood that represent them) don’t exist and are instead ‘mental disorders’. As Yahweh is the source of all power, these demons only have power to create evil to the degree and within the boundaries set by Yahweh.

Duncan goes on to refer to Acts 17 and states:

In v22 he says, “Ye are too superstitious (literally: devoted to demon worship), and he explains how God is not present in their demons, or idols, then demons do not have any power because there is no other source of power in this universe – ie they do not exist.

I am not sure where Duncan got his definition from for ‘too superstitious’ in verse 22. Most versions translate this word as religious or too religious, thus the definition ‘devoted to demon worship’ is an extrapolation and interpretation not an accurate definition. More significantly, to argue that they do not exist because the source of all power is God is erroneous. They can exist and have as much power as the Creator chooses to give them.

I think the Scriptures version is more helpful:

Acts 17: 22 And having stood in the midst of the Areopagus Sha’ul said, “Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every matter. 23 “For passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN MIGHTY ONE. Not knowing then whom you worship, I make Him known to you: 24 “Yahweh, who made the world and all that is in it, this One being Master of heaven and earth, does not dwell in dwellings made with hands.

The men of Athens worshipped demons that they believed ‘dwelt in’ their man-made idols (again this is not the same as being the idols). Paul told them here that the true and only ‘Might One’ was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Duncan goes on to say that *“Believing in demons shows a lack of faith in God.”*

I can not see how Duncan arrives at this conclusion. To take Yeshua at his word, and without applying modern mindsets to his actions is to believe in demons as he appeared to. There is no lack of faith in God in this. It is only a lack of faith if someone who, believes in demons and then fails to trust in Yahweh for protection from them. Even while believing in demons, I can still believe with my whole being that only God is King of the Universe and Creator and Sustainer of all.

He also, in addressing the issue and references to demons in the NT says that *“Those “possessed with demons” are said to be “healed or cured” (Mt 4v24; 12v22; 17v18) implying that demon possession is another way of describing illness.”*

Let us look at these verses mentioned:

Mathew 4: 24 And news about Him went out into all Syria. And they brought to Him all who were sick, afflicted with various diseases and pains, and those who were demon-possessed, and epileptics, and paralytics. And He healed them

Matthew 12: 22 Then they brought to Him one who was demon-possessed, blind and dumb. And He healed him, so that the blind and dumb man both spoke and saw.

Matthew 17 18 And Yeshua rebuked the demon, and he came out of him. And the child was healed from that hour

In Matt 4:24, how else would you describe the removal of evil spirits (if they are inhabiting a person) than by healing, when this affliction is listed along with the given range of illnesses and disabilities? In Matt 12:22, do you think that the Messiah Yeshua would remove a demon from someone but then leave him blind and dumb. Yeshua was involved in healing the whole man, so any demonstration of his power would most likely involve the removal of all afflictions. So when we get to Matt 17, it seems reasonable, given the precedent established to describe the removal of a demon as ‘healing’. If a person can be possessed by an evil spirit being then while under such possession they are clearly not fully themselves. To remove such an affliction is surely to improve the overall well-being of a person and therefore to call it ‘healing’ seems appropriate.

² 1 Cor 8: 4 So then, concerning the eating of food offered to idols, we know that an idol is **no matter** at all in the world, and that there is no other Elohim but one. (The Scriptures 1998)

Duncan appears to argue that Yeshua knew that there was no such thing as demons, but went along with the misconceptions of his day in order to demonstrate God's authority over all. Duncan states *Because it (the Bible) uses the language of the day does not mean that it or Jesus believed in demons.*

While Duncan contention here may be correct, it is not necessarily correct. In fact, close examination of all the accounts of Yeshua's encounters with demons, suggest that his behavior was honest and open with no obvious intent to deceive. The biblical accounts indicate that he spoke to these demons and that they spoke to him.

If he knew, and the inspired Bible writers knew, that they were simply people with certain mental illnesses, then it is very hard to avoid the implication of deception here. I do not believe that Duncan has, at least in this extract, adequately addressed the issues raised by me in my last article (see [appendix](#)) on these encounters.

Duncan also states:

Those who believe that the New Testament records of "demons" prove that such beings do actually exist are duty bound to accept that the sea is really a monster, and that lightning is actually a huge serpent. This is surely a powerful point; there must be a recognition that the Bible uses the language of the day in which it is written, without necessarily supporting the beliefs which form the basis of that language.

The argument that those who believe that the Bible does speak of real entities that are demons, must also believe in lightning being a serpent is not logically valid. All such uses of metaphors and personifications, etc. need to be investigated on their own merits.

Duncan also states that:

Jesus said: "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out?" (Mt 12:27). 2 Kings 1v2 clearly tells us that Beelzebub was a false god of the Philistines. Jesus did not say "Now look 2 Kings 1v2 says Beelzebub was a false god, so your accusation cannot be true".

Again, I find Duncan's reading of scripture more interpretation than exegesis.

Look at 2 Kings 1:2-4 *"Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness." But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went."*

I see nowhere here, nor in the rest of the chapter, where the Bible tells us the Baalzebub did not exist. Clearly, we learn here the error of seeking the wisdom of demons or false gods, that is, of worshipping (bowing down before) such spirits. This chapter says nothing about the existence in actuality of Baalzebub.

Neither Duncan Heaster nor any of the other Christadelphian writers I have studied so far have been able to address a number of significant Biblical descriptions of demons. For example, if demonic possession is only a mental illness and the Bible clearly describes those with this particular 'mental illness' speaking to and recognizing the Messiah, then the implications of their knowledge and actions needs to be explained from this perspective.

I would now like to respond to Mark's last article on this topic "AAA_Sumary_Satan_and_Demons_3.4.09"

Mark quotes extensively from Dennis Bratcher whom I certainly respect for his scholarship. I find little to fault with the quotes of Dennis in establishing the context and indicating that these 'foreign gods' or demons were really not gods in the sense that their power was of no matter or no real consequence to those who put their trust in Yahweh. This however, does not establish that these 'demons' or spirit beings who manifest evil do not exist at all.

Mark goes on to say: *"We need to be very careful because if we say there is a supernatural Satan being or demons that we are not giving life to gods that do not exist then we really cannot claim to believe in ONE GOD!"*

While we would all agree, I think, that we do believe in the One and Only True God, Yahweh, I think we need to be very careful not to accuse others of duplicity or unfaithfulness because they do not agree with us. As I hope I have made it clear, belief in 'evil spirits' or in angels performing acts we see as evil such as the Angel of Death, does not imply a belief in other God's beside Yahweh. To worship such beings, if they are real or not, is to be unfaithful. Believing in their reality is not.

Mark quotes Dennis again and this paragraph is interesting:

*All of this clearly indicates that this word שַׁעִיר (sa'iyir) is not used in Hebrew Scriptures to mean anything close to our idea of "demonic powers" but exclusively to refer to the idols of the pagan deities who were recognized to be **nothing or empty, devoid of any power**. This negative connotation of the imagery of "he-goat" may well be related to the use of a goat in the Israelite sacrificial system as the bearer of the sins of the people (for example, Lev 16:21-22), although it is impossible to know which way the influence ran.*

Firstly, 'idols of pagan deities' are representations of demons. Whether these demons are real or figments of man's imagination, nothing written here establishes the conclusion that they are 'devoid of any power'. In fact the reference the follows to the 'he-goat' should remind us of Alexander The Great, a man admittedly, but a man of great power. This should remind us that our God does sometimes give great power to evil men and therefore, by inference, why not to evil spirits?

I think the following paragraph by Dennis is most informative.

*It can be debated whether Israelites viewed these idols in ontological terms, whether they would ever have asked if the gods they represented "really" existed or not. They would most likely not have asked such a question, since those **categories of ultimate reality are alien to the ancient world**. They tended to express things in functional terms (what they can do) rather than ontological terms (whether they exist). However, it is clear that the biblical traditions did not view the (שָׂדֶה, seed) or the שַׁעִיר (sa'iyir) as anything to be feared.*

This I totally agree with. Nothing Dennis has written clearly establishes the non-existence of evil 'demonic' spirits but along with the ancient Hebrews we who put our trust in Yahweh have nothing to fear from these beings!

Mark goes on to speak about how scripture informs as that evil comes out of the heart of man. Again, clearly true but also clearly not exclusive when we consider the Exodus and the Angel of Death or Job's story. The heart of man is not the only source of evil.

Mark also states:

"Like the Angels of God in Heaven" surely this is an exalted place and one beyond the contamination of sin, corruption and death, and we should be careful about speculating that God's glorious Angels can sin and become tormented evil cruel unholy creatures that would still share his domain! Or have the ability in anyway to question His authority by tampering with his design and creation. This suggestion alone is questioning the very nature of Yahweh's ever-present power and presence in our creation.

This is conjecture and while it may be true there are Biblical examples that appear to contradict it. The adversary (HaSatan) in Job and the Angel of Death are but two such examples of glorious angels called to manifest evil.

Frank makes an interesting point that the Satan in the Book of Job was on earth not in the heavenly realm. This is at least consistent with the concept of fallen angels having been removed from the realm of God's Throne, et still able to confront God.

The real question is not can we imagine God creating angels that have free will and can therefore fall into sin; but do the Scriptures tell us whether this has happened?

There are a number of scriptures that many Christian theologians at least have argued do teach that such events occurred (see Is 14 and Ezek 28 as among the possible examples, although there are reputable scholars such as FF Bruce who do not necessarily see these passages as referring to a supernatural Satan).

1 Chronicles 21:1 also indicates a possible supernatural Satan, although again, this may not be conclusive either way.

Mark's article speaks much that is very similar to what I have summarized here in supporting a 'providential worldview' where we acknowledge that Yahweh is the ultimate source of all good and evil.

He then goes on to state:

Yahweh brings evil on his own people! Why then would he need a competitor to provide evil as a contrast to good?

Perhaps this is the crux of the matter.

I do not see evil spirits as a competitor to Yahweh, but rather as another force and entity in this very complex universe which is ultimately there to serve God's good purposes.

Some examples that demonstrate this are:

- 1) the power of Scripture over evil though Yeshua answering Satan with 'It is written';
- 2) the demonstration of His authority in the casting out of demons and,
- 3) the supernatural worlds recognition of His authority and Sonship, along with our consequential recognition of the Yeshua's authority even over the spirit world (and as stated in Hebrews 1)

Today we have made great progress in medicine to the point where we can heal many infirmities without needing to resort to the miraculous. Anecdotal evidence from many credible witnesses suggests that there is still a limit though to what medicine can do; a limit that only true repentance and faith in and of Yeshua appears able to overcome. This is a lesson that today's scientific world is yet to learn.

Perhaps, this is again as God intended. While mankind continues to built his tower of Babel in this age and predicts quite confidently that the time is at hand when we will be almost immortal thanks to our scientific progress; we will never become God and we ultimately need to recognize that, though made in His image, we are Sons only and must always bend the knee in obedience to our Creator and His Messiah.

To quote Frank:

The origin of a supernatural Satan, or Adversary of the Most High God, is virtually impossible to establish and prove from Scripture. Yet, there seems to be sufficient evidence to show that both God and mankind have a supernatural enemy. I believe that it is important to hold several things in tension on this subject, viz. there is a world of the supernatural, but at the same time we must not negate our own responsibility in terms of following the teaching of Scripture.

... An inescapable reality is that Yeshua acknowledged the existence of a literal Satan and as a spiritual entity. The question of a (possibly supernatural) Satan should therefore never be an issue for Christians! ...

Behind all this seems to be a negative, clearly evil, unifying spirit, which causes people to focus on the wrong issues. Since we are surrounded by the supernatural, to reject the existence of an actual Satan, and forces under his control, is foolhardy.

Simply, if we lack the humility to accept that we as frail humans cannot possibly assume to understand everything in heaven and on earth, we will set ourselves up for deception. The evidence of an actual, supernatural Deceiver on the prowl is vast and a wise person should accept the possibility of his existence.

In summary, I agree the evidence from the TaNaK is incomplete and tentative. Yet the further revelation from the Messianic Writings can not be so easily explained away. Certainly, I have not personally read any compelling arguments that can explain away the encounter of Yeshua in the desert with Satan or Yeshua's encounters with demonically possessed people.

Coupled with the very clear evidence for the supernatural, I still believe great caution is warranted in any push to remove all suggestion of evil spiritual influences from our Bible.

As I stated at the start of this article "we may not know the 'whole truth' of the matter this side of eternity". I for one, am not certain of the reality or otherwise of 'demons' but having tried to fairly weigh up the evidence from so many good scholars and commentators, I still err on the side of taking Yeshua's demon narratives at face value.

Paul Herring 15th April 2009

Appendix:

Yeshua's encounters with Demons:

The standard Christadelphian understanding of the references to casting out demons by Jesus in the NT, is that this 'demon's were actually just people suffering from some mental disorder which Jesus cured them of.

In discussing this with some Christadelphian brothers and sisters, I asked the following question via email. At this time I have had a reply and made one response. Please see below:

My original email:

In evaluating the question of demons vs mental disorder, could you please answer the question below:

There are many passages in the NT that describe Yeshua as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God or the Son of Man.

These passages appear to fit into one of 6 categories. There are either:

- 1. Scriptures declaring the Messiah (inspired writings of the disciples);*
- 2. Comments made by the disciples or friends of Yeshua who recognized his authority and Messiah-ship (eg Nathaniel and Martha, the sister of Lazarus) or the blind man who was miraculously healed (and his parents).*
- 3. Some of the witnesses to his crucifixion*
- 4. His adversaries amongst the Pharisees and Scribes etc who accused him of claiming to be the 'Son of God' but who did not believe he was,*
- 5. Demons (or people with mental illness)*
- 6. The Satan (or Yeshua's own flesh nature) in the desert temptation.*

The question then is, if the average 'man in the street' 2000 years ago in Israel is not described as being aware that Yeshua was the Son of God and the leaders of Israel were arguing that he wasn't and were decidedly hostile to anyone who said he was, then how come people with a mental illness (if that is what 'demonic possession' really is), were so clearly and emphatically unafraid of publicly declaring their belief that Yeshua was the Son of God?

Note that this declaration generally occurred before they were healed and in some cases after healing (which of-course would be most expected in the same manner as for the blind man).

If a person with an mental disorder recognizes that Jesus is the Son of God, and as we learn in 1 John 4:15[1] he is then saved perhaps all sinners are better off to have such a mental disorder? Alternatively, if it is a demon, we know the spirits believe and tremble. (James 2:19) This does not mean they (demons) are saved as they are already spirit beings (endowed with immortality).

[1] 1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

The first email response:

Hi Paul would this title condense your question in fewer words?

If people supposedly are possessed by spirit entities the hypothesis is they are of divine origin and consequently have a far superior knowledge to the ordinary person.

This theory would exclude of course that the mentally ill had, ever heard seen, met or had knowledge of Yashua the anointed apart from the realms of the divine mind, after all who can know the mind of the Lord or who can declare things that have never happened as yet, were these demons at the creation.

Rom 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?

Isa 40:12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Isa 40:13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counselor hath taught him?

Isa 40:14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?

IT would appear from the words of Jesus the knowledge that he was the Son of God had been revealed to them by Jesus himself either prior to the current contact or at the present time.

Luk 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said,

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

A KEY VERSE

Luk 10:22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

This seems to suggest that Yashua anointed reveals to people he is the Son of God, the Pharisees usually asked the question rather than recognize the Anointed as the Son of God.

Luk 10:23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

Luk 10:24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Same in Mat 11v27

Luk 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

It would be unreal to suggest that not many people had heard of or seen the Messiah, the results of his miraculous healing would have spread like wild fire, that is why many people sought him out to be healed or heal their family members. Think of the feeding of the thousands for example.

I believe like the two thieves on the cross, it is obvious one was very conscious of who Jesus Christ was, how did he know and likewise the people who are recorded as being demon possessed would have known of him or seen him before and they did show more faith than the Pharisees and company.

Down through the ages man has always sought causes for illnesses, they did not have the knowledge we have available today, why even the washing and sterilization was not considered a problem, they tried witchcraft, blood letting, prayer. Incenses, some herbs, sweating, beating, burning. The people in those days did not know or understand, Bipolar, paranoi, schitzaphrenia, psychosis. Psychosomatics, madness by whatever title. We of course I wonder sometimes are we any different or in desperation we fall back on these old ideas, which I believe demon possession is one of them.

I believe Jesus healed individuals of their personal diseases by the miraculous power given to him by God' I don't believe the demons were healed as people believe AND I would suggest that modern medicine can be used in many cases to cure madness and many diseases of the mind. It would appear from the bible that demon possession referred not only to mental disorders but also physical problems, because of the condemnation we are under we are all going to die the result of breakdown of the body physical and mental, Alzheimer's and senility are features common to many elderly people and draw ones days to conclusion, the exception of cause would be those who are alive and remain unto the Second Coming.

Then the mortal bodies if found worthy will be changed the corruptible will put on incorruption, all maladies mental or physical will be done away with, not the casting out of demons but the change of nature to one that is not corruptible and we shall be like the angels who never die, the mortal shall be rewarded with immortality. Who has the keys to Immortality God and rest assured we will only receive that gift by the grace of God. It is incomprehensible to myself that having achieved that it will be a permanent state and we will not want to or be capable of tangling with the Supreme being that has made us and will remake us Rom 2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Rom 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

1Jo 2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life,

Jud 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

The Words of the Messiah explain they shall never perish

Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

My response to this email:

No, this was not my question.

To summarise my original question a little more:

If the average 'man in the street' 2000 years ago in Israel is not described as being aware that Yeshua was the Son of God, then how come people with a mental illness, were so clearly and emphatically unafraid of publicly declaring their belief that Yeshua was the Son of God?

This question is not implying by the contra opinion, that these spirit entities have a far superior knowledge to the ordinary person. Rather, the implication is that as spirit and immortal beings present since the creation of the universe, they would have a knowledge of the supernatural birth of the Messiah and easily recognize his spiritual as well as human genesis. We see plenty of scriptural support for this in such comments as in James where he says the demons know that God is one and tremble (James 2:19).

The argument that these were demon possessed people in no way argues against the statement that no-one can know the mind of God, Of course, this scripture is really saying we can't know all that God knows. Human beings, and clearly spirit beings can know what God chooses to reveal. The host of heaven obviously know much we don't know having been present at the creation of the universe and man.

Your key verse, along with an understanding of the reality of the times seems to speak against your position not for it.

If we understand Luke 10:22 to say that only people whom God and Yeshua choose to reveal themselves to can know who the Son of God is, then it seems most unlikely that Yeshua would reveal himself to mentally ill people (before he heals them) and yet not to the great multitudes who followed him. We know from the evidence of the his last Passover before his death, that most of those who came to Yeshua for healing or because they had heard what a great teacher he was, etc., deserted him in his hour of greatest need.

Certainly, it is possible that some or most of the mentally ill had heard of Yeshua before they met him face to face, but even so, we would not expect them to almost universally (from the encounters which have been recorded for us), recognize the Messiah. This was not normal, this was not something that was at all common from what we read. We don't read that everywhere Yeshua went he was recognized by the common people as the Son of God. It was generally only those who were truly seeking their Messiah (like Nathaniel) who recognized him (in fact, this is the same today).

Common sense then, tells us that mentally disturbed people are not as a rule going to be better or even as good at recognizing the Son of God. And yet we see in these encounters that these 'mentally disturbed' did he fact recognize and even trembled at his presence. This 'mental illness' perspective still makes no sense to me.

On the other-hand, it makes perfect sense that a demon, a spirit being who was present at the dawn of time would recognize the greatest creation of God, the Messiah and Redeemer of mankind. It also makes perfect sense that they would scream and tremble as they, more than any human would recognize the power and authority that the Son of God commanded.

The authority to call down legions of angels to battle against these demonic spirits. Compare this with the lack of faith of the disciples on the stormy sea. The human followers and companions of Yeshua by and large clearly did not have the same degree of knowledge of the power God had bestowed upon the Son of God (at least not until after the resurrection and the events of Pentecost).

For a human being to recognize the Son of God, there is an implied recognition of his mission and hence of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus makes it clear in the parable of the sower that the Gospel, the 'word of the Kingdom' requires intelligent reception, and this is further emphasized by what happens to those who don't intelligently receive it (see Mark 4:11-12 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.").

Thus, we have another problem with the 'mental illness' perspective, namely, that intelligence is implied and highlighted in the

'mentally damaged' who surely can't be seen as more intelligent than most?

Much of what you write here we agree on but these are extraneous issues. Yes, there is such a thing as mental disorders and yes medicine can achieve much and yes, we will be changed into incorruptible bodies at the resurrection, etc., but none of this is relevant to the question at hand.

In summary, I still see some major impediments in your view of these 'demon' encounters that I can see no reasoned way around.

Shalom, Paul