



Demons and Satan

READING FOR THIS LESSON:– Matthew 8:14-34

Devils and Demons

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, and there are two Greek words translated "devil" in our Bibles – and they mean different things:-

"diabolos" – which means "slanderer" or "false accuser".

"daimon" – which means "evil spirit".

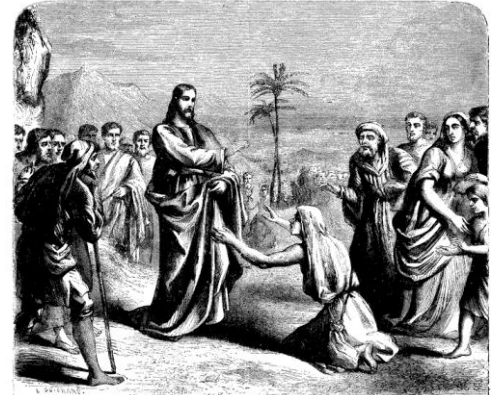
The word "*daimon*" is used when we read that Jesus "*cast out devils*". Jesus cured every kind of sickness from which people suffer – he restored sight to the blind; hearing to the deaf; the lame were able to walk; cured mental sicknesses; etc.

In those days, when a sickness was hard to understand, the people said that the person was "*possessed by a demon*". So when Jesus healed such people, he was said to "*cast out the demon*".

In Matthew 8:16-17, we read that,

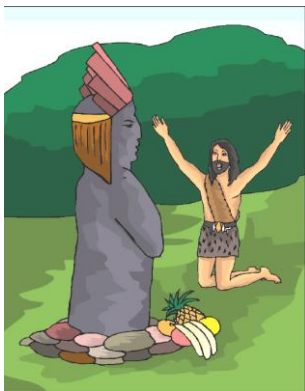
"..many who were demon-possessed (Greek "daimon ") were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

From this quotation we can clearly see that "*demon-possessed*", is the same as "*infirmities*" or "*sicknesses*".



Idols that were "demons"

In the Old Testament the word "*demons*" often refers to idols, for example,



"They worshipped their idols, which were a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons." (Psalm 106:36-37).

There is a similar use of the word in the New Testament, where we read,

"Do I mean that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons." (1 Corinthians 10:19-20).

The true believers worshipped the one true God and Creator - all other gods were just idols, here called "*demons*" and were lifeless objects which people worshipped in vain.

What does the word “*devil*” really mean?

The other Greek word used for “*devil*” is “*diabolos*” and means “*slanderer*” or “*false accuser*”. It is used of someone who speaks bad things about others. In Titus 2:3 we read,

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanders or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.”

In 1 Timothy 3:11 we read,

“In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers.”

Similar words are found in 2 Timothy 3:3.

What does the word “*Satan*” really mean?

The word “*Satan*” is also used in the Bible – usually; in the New Testament. It means “*an adversary*” – that is “*someone who opposes*” or is “*against*”. So when Peter tried to persuade Jesus to turn aside from the way in which God has said he must go – the way of the crucifixion, Peter became an adversary. Jesus said to him,

“Get behind me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:23).

Anything, or anyone, which works against God, may be called “*Satan*”, so when Paul was prevented from going to see the Thessalonian believers, he wrote to them,

“..Satan stopped us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

But a satan is not always an evil adversary. In Numbers 22:22, we read of a false prophet called Balaam. He was going on a journey against the will of God, and so we read,

“But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him.”

Here we have a faithful angel of God, doing God's will in stopping Balaam travelling to curse Israel. The word “*oppose*”, or “*adversary*” in other translations, is the Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament) word “*satan*”.

Temptation in the Garden of Eden

When God called to Adam who was hiding from Him, and asked him if he had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam answered,

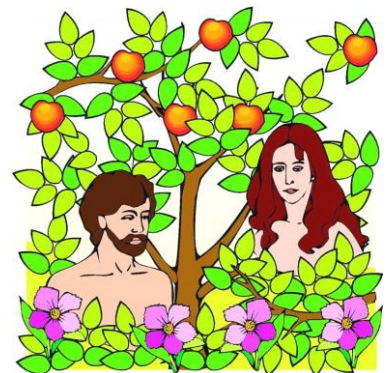
“The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” (Genesis 3:12).

Adam was really trying to blame God for giving him the woman, and that the woman was to blame for giving him the forbidden fruit. But really, it was **his own** fault.

God asked the woman what she had done, and she replied,

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (verse 13).

Adam and Eve tried to blame someone else, rather than take the blame for their own wrong actions.



We are like that and do not like being held responsible for our own wrong thoughts and actions. That is one reason why people like to blame the devil or satan for their wrong actions.

The serpent was just a snake but God allowed it to speak, – just as He allowed Balaam's ass to speak (Numbers 22:28). God allowed Adam and Eve to be tested – and they failed and sinned.

The serpent did not **make** them eat the fruit, it just made the suggestion from its **own** reasoning. Adam and Eve made their **own** decision to eat the fruit.

Who was Lucifer?



There is another passage, which we must look at, because some people think it teaches us that satan is a fallen angel. It is in Isaiah 14:12, and it reads,

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!"

In some translations, e.g. the King James Version, "*morning star*" is translated "*Lucifer*". Lucifer is really a Latin word and not found in the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

But if we read the whole chapter, we find that this "*Lucifer*" is the King of Babylon (verse 4), and the prophet is foretelling his downfall. In verse 15, Isaiah speaks of this king's death,

"But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

Summary

1. The devils cast out by Jesus were sicknesses, thought to be caused by evil spirits, which had taken hold of them.
2. The Bible uses different words for "*devil*" and "*devils*".
3. The word "*satan*" means "*adversary*" – that is someone who opposes. Such an adversary can be good or evil.
4. Men who give in to temptation, and behave wickedly, are sometimes called "*Satan*".
5. We find it easy to blame other people for our mistakes. Hence people like to believe in a devil or satan who they can blame for making them sin.