

## Devil Possession, Mental Illness, and Bad Behavior

- I. This study will attempt to answer the following questions from the scripture:
  1. Is devil possession real?
  2. Can a child of God be possessed by a devil?
  3. How can a person be delivered from devil possession?
  4. Is mental illness real?
  5. Can one's circumstances cause mental illness?
  6. Can bad or strange behavior be mistaken for devil possession or mental illness?
  7. Can bad behavior cause mental illness?
  8. Can devil possession be mistaken for mental illness?
  9. How can we tell if a person is possessed by a devil, is mentally ill, or is just behaving sinfully?
  
- II. Devil possession is real (**Mat 8:16**).
  1. Devils and unclean spirits are two names for the same thing (**Mar 5:12-13; Mar 7:25-26**).
  2. There are two types of devil possession.
  3. Sometimes devils possess a person to make them act insanely and self-destructively.
    - A. This is the most obvious of the two.
    - B. There are many examples of this in the Bible, such as:
      - i. The wild men of the Gergesenes/Gadarenes (**Mat 8:28; Mar 5:1-5; Luk 8:26-27**).
      - ii. The boy who was possessed of a devil that threw him into the fire and into the water, tore and bruised him, and made him foam at the mouth (**Mat 17:15,18; Luk 9:38-42**).
    - C. Devil possession can also manifest itself by physical ailments such as blindness and dumbness (**Mat 9:32; Mat 12:22**).
    - D. Devils can inflict severe pain on the person whom they are possessing (**Mar 9:17-18,20,22,26**).
    - E. Unclean spirits *vex* people (**Act 5:16**).
    - F. Vex v. - 1. *trans.* To trouble, afflict, or harass (a person, etc.) by aggression, encroachment, or other interference with peace and quiet.
    - G. A person who is possessed of a devil is not in their right mind (**Mar 5:15**).
  4. Sometimes devils possess a person to inspire them to do Satan's will.
    - A. This is the "cleaner" version of devil possession.
    - B. This type of possession can include:
      - i. Possession of kings and rulers who execute Satan's bidding.
        - a. The kings of Persia and Greece had devils animating them (**Dan 10:13,20**).
          - (i) This can be reasonably concluded because they were formidable foes of the angel which spoke to Daniel (**Dan 10:13**).
          - (ii) No *man* is a match for an angel (**2Ki 19:35**).
        - b. The rulers of the Jews and Romans were inspired by the devil to conspire against Christ (**Act 4:25-27**).

- c. They were under Satan's power of darkness (**Luk 22:53 c/w Eph 6:12**).
  - ii. Possession of preachers who preach Satan's doctrine.
    - a. Satan's ministers are ministers of righteousness (**2Co 11:13-15**).
    - b. They preach doctrines of devils (**1Ti 4:1**).
  - iii. Possession of others in order for them to do Satan's will.
    - a. The devil put it in Judas' heart to betray Christ (**Joh 13:2**).
    - b. Satan entered into Judas to get the job done (**Joh 13:27**).
- 5. The generation of Christ's day were filled with devils (**Mat 12:45**).
  - A. This is because they had made a covenant with the devil (**Isa 28:14-18**).
  - B. God destroyed them for it (**Isa 28:18 c/w Mat 23:33-38**).

### III. Can a child of God be possessed by a devil?

1. Possessed *ppl. adj.* - 1. a. Occupied; held as property; taken possession of, seized, assumed  
2. a. Inhabited and controlled by a demon or spirit; demoniac, lunatic, mad, crazy.
2. A child of God has the Spirit of God dwelling in him (**Rom 8:9**).
  - A. From this, one might conclude that a child of God cannot be *possessed* by a devil or unclean spirit because he is under the control of the Holy Spirit and could not therefore be controlled by an unclean spirit.
  - B. The Spirit of God that dwells in a child of God doesn't control him like a hand in a glove though.
    - i. A good example of this is that our human nature (our flesh) wars against the Spirit of God which is within us (**Gal 5:16-17**), and it (the flesh) often wins (**Rom 7:14-23**).
    - ii. The flesh sometimes brings our spirit into *captivity* (**Rom 7:23**).
    - iii. Captivity - 1. The condition of a captive; the state of being held prisoner by an enemy or conqueror
    - iv. The flesh (the sinful human nature) of a child of God can conquer and take *possession* of him.
    - v. Therefore, the Spirit of God dwelling in him can relinquish control of the person if He chooses to.
  - C. If the Spirit of God can relinquish control of a child of God and allow his flesh to take over, then the Spirit of God could likewise relinquish control of a child of God and let an unclean spirit control (possess) him.
  - D. An illustration of this is when the Spirit of God departed from Saul and an evil spirit troubled him (**1Sa 16:14**).
3. The devil can take a child of God *captive* (**2Ti 2:26**).
  - A. Captive *adj.* - 1. a. Taken prisoner in war, or by force; kept in confinement or bondage.
  - B. Being taken *captive* and being *possessed* are synonymous.
4. There were numerous people out of whom Jesus cast devils who immediately or later showed evidence of being a child of God, such as:
  - A. The man of the Gadarenes (**Mar 5:1-20; Luk 8:38-39**).
  - B. Mary Magdalene (**Mar 16:9; Luk 8:2-3**).

- C. It appears that a child of God can be possessed of a devil which will prevent them from coming to Jesus in faith to be healed (see Section X, 1), but once the devil is cast out of them, they can desire to follow Jesus.
- 5. A child of God can also be *influenced* and affected by a/the devil.
  - A. Peter is a good example of this.
    - i. Peter was a child of God, which was evidenced by his faith (**Mat 16:15-17 c/w 1Jo 5:1**).
    - ii. Yet, Satan influenced Peter to contradict Jesus Christ (**Mat 16:22**).
    - iii. Jesus called Peter Satan, identifying the satanic inspiration of Peter's words (**Mat 16:23**).
  - B. Children of God can be tempted by the Devil who is the tempter (**1Th 3:5**).
    - i. Eve was, and she succumbed to the temptation (**Gen 3:1-6; 1Ti 2:14**).
    - ii. Jesus was, but He didn't give in (**Mat 4:1-11**).

#### IV. How can a person be delivered from devil possession?

1. The apostolic gift of casting out devils ceased in 70AD.
  - A. Jesus had the power to cast out devils (**Mat 8:16**).
  - B. Jesus gave His apostles the power to cast out devils (**Mat 10:8**).
  - C. Paul cast devils out of people (**Act 16:16-18**).
  - D. Other ministers in addition to the apostles had this gift in the early church such as Philip the evangelist (**Act 8:5-7**).
  - E. Miraculous gifts such as casting out devils ended around 70AD at the end of a period of signs and wonders that lasted 40 years (**Mic 7:15 c/w Joh 2:11**).
  - F. See the series on The Sign Gifts for further proof of this:  
[www.MinneapolisChurch.net/charismatics](http://www.MinneapolisChurch.net/charismatics).
  - G. Of course Jesus can still cast out devils anytime He wishes since angels and powers are all subject unto Him (**1Pe 3:22**).
  - H. Ministers and Christians can and should pray that God will deliver a person from devil possession if it be His will to do so (**Jam 5:16**).
2. Sometimes an unclean spirit will voluntarily depart from a man (**Mat 12:43**).
  - A. That is no guarantee that he will stay departed though (**Mat 12:44-45**).
  - B. If a person doesn't fill the void with godliness, when they return it will be worse than before they left.
3. A person can be delivered from the harassment and influence of the devil by the following methods.
  - A. Resist the devil with the word of God.
    - i. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (**Jam 4:7; 1Pe 5:8-9**).
    - ii. This is done by using the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, as Jesus did (**Mat 4:1-11; Eph 6:17**).
    - iii. This is done by turning it over to God and asking the LORD to rebuke the devil as Michael the archangel did (**Jud 1:9**).
    - iv. We must put on the whole armor of God to withstand the assaults of the devil (**Eph 6:11-17**).
  - B. A person can recover themselves from the snare of the devil with good instruction from a preacher and with the help of God (**2Ti 2:24-26**).
  - C. Don't give place to the devil (**Eph 4:27**).

- i. Give v. - 47. **give place** (const. to). †a. To give ground, yield to pressure or force (obs.). b. To quit one's place to make room (for another); to yield precedence; gfig. to be inferior, †yieldæ to. gc. To yield or defer (to advice) (obs.). d. To be succeeded or superseded (by another person or thing).
  - ii. Don't make a place for the devil to have a residence in you.
- D. Get out of false religion which is the habitation of devils (**Rev 18:2**).

V. Is mental illness real?

1. Yes, it is. The Bible calls it *madness* or being *mad* (**Ecc 1:17; Pro 26:18**).
  - A. Madness - The quality or condition of being mad. 1. Mental disease, insanity; now applied esp. to insanity characterized by wild excitement or extravagant delusions; mania.
  - B. Mad *adj.* - 1. a. Suffering from mental disease; beside oneself, out of one's mind; insane, lunatic. In mod. use chiefly with a more restricted application, implying violent excitement or extravagant delusions: Maniacal, frenzied.
2. The Bible also calls it being *lunatic*.
  - A. Lunatic *adj.* - 1. Originally, affected with the kind of insanity that was supposed to have recurring periods dependent on the changes of the moon. In mod. use, synonymous with insane;
  - B. Lunatic *n.* - A lunatic person; a person of unsound mind; a madman.
  - C. There were lunatics in Jesus' day (**Mat 4:24**).
  - D. Lunatics are not necessarily possessed with devils (**Mat 4:24**).
  - E. But sometimes lunacy is caused by devil possession (**Mat 17:14-18**).

VI. Can one's circumstances cause mental illness?

1. Yes, oppression can drive a wise man *mad* (**Ecc 7:7**).
2. This happened to Israel as a judgment against them from God (**Deu 28:15 c/w Deu 28:28 c/w Deu 28:33-34**).
3. God will judge his own people with *madness* (**Zec 12:4**).
4. God can make diviners *mad* (**Isa 44:24-25**).
5. God judges nations and makes them *mad* by destroying them (**Jer 25:15-16**).
6. Hatred of Jesus Christ will cause *madness* (**Luk 6:11**).
7. Sever traumatic events such as war can cause a mental illness termed *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD).

VII. Can bad or strange behavior be mistaken for devil possession or mental illness?

1. Yes, it can.
2. David acted *mad* and deceived men into believing that he was (**1Sa 21:13-15**).
3. Elisha sent one of the children of the prophets to anoint Jehu king of Israel and to give him a message from God and those who saw him thought he was *mad* (**2Ki 9:1-11**).
4. People thought the Lord Jesus Christ was *mad* (**Joh 10:20**).
  - A. They thought Jesus was *beside himself* (**Mar 3:21**).
  - B. Beside - 5. *fig.* senses from 4. a. Out of a mental state or condition, as *beside one's patience, one's gravity, one's wits*; now only in *beside oneself*: out of one's wits, out of one's senses;

- C. Of course Jesus was not behaving sinfully, but they mistook what seemed to be strange behavior to them for mental illness.
- 5. The Pharisees thought that the Lord Jesus Christ had a devil (**Mar 3:22; Joh 8:48,52**).
  - A. They thought that He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (**Mat 9:34; Mat 12:24**).
  - B. They were the ones who were devil possessed (**Mat 12:45**).
- 6. The Jews said that John the Baptist had a devil (**Mat 11:18**).
- 7. Festus thought Paul was *beside himself* and *mad* (**Act 26:24-25**).
- 8. A bunch of tongue-speaking charismatics would appear to be *mad* to a sane person, and rightly so (**1Co 14:23**).
- 9. There are many supposed mental disorders today that are (at least in most cases) nothing more than bad behavior left unchecked, such as *Oppositional Defiant Disorder* and *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (ADHD).
  - A. If a person shows signs of having sufficient intellect and a rational mind capable of understanding their own decisions and actions, then he is likely not mentally ill, but is rather just a brat.
  - B. In most cases, making them zombies by doping them up with psychotropic drugs is unnecessary and dangerous (mass-shootings, anyone?).
  - C. Many of these supposed mental illnesses can be cured in early childhood with liberal doses of vitamins N (NO!) and B (beatings) (**Pro 22:15; Pro 23:13**).

VIII. Can bad behavior cause mental illness?

- 1. Yes, it can.
- 2. As fallen sinful creatures, madness is naturally in our hearts (**Ecc 9:3**).
- 3. The apostle Paul was persecuting the church with a clear conscience (**Act 23:1; Act 26:9**) and yet was *mad* (**Act 26:11**).
  - A. Mad *adj.* - 1. a. Suffering from mental disease; beside oneself, out of one's mind; insane, lunatic. In mod. use chiefly with a more restricted application, implying violent excitement or extravagant delusions: Maniacal, frenzied.
  - B. Paul was not mentally ill because of a chemical imbalance in his brain, nor was he possessed by a devil; rather, he was deceived (**1Ti 1:13**).
  - C. Paul's mental illness was self-inflicted.
- 4. The false prophet Balaam was full of *madness* because of his inordinate love of money and honor (**2Pe 2:15-16**).
  - A. Balaam was not mentally ill because of a chemical imbalance in his brain, nor was he possessed by a devil; he was just a sinner.
  - B. Balaam appeared to have it together on the outside (**Num 22:18**), all the while being nuts on the inside.
  - C. Balaam's mental illness was self-inflicted.
- 5. Ammon had a sinful desire for his sister and was so *vexed* that he made himself sick (**2Sa 13:1-2**).
  - A. Vexed *ppl.* - 1. Troubled, harassed; kept in a disturbed or unquiet state.
  - B. Ammon ended up acting out his lunacy and raping his sister (**2Sa 13:11-14**).
  - C. After he raped her, he ended up having bipolar disorder symptoms and hated her more than he loved her a short time earlier (**2Sa 13:15-17**).
  - D. Ammon's mental illness was self-inflicted.

6. Depression can lead to a broken spirit (**Pro 15:13**).
  - A. A broken spirit can cause bodily problems (**Pro 17:22; Psa 32:3-4**).
  - B. The solution to this depression which brings physical affliction is repentance and confession of sin (**Psa 32:5; Psa 38:17-18; Psa 51:1-4; 1Jo 1:9**).

IX. Can devil possession be mistaken for mental illness?

1. Yes; there was a boy whose father thought he was *lunatic*, but who was actually possessed by a devil (**Mat 17:14-18**).
2. Lunatic *adj.* - 1. Originally, affected with the kind of insanity that was supposed to have recurring periods dependent on the changes of the moon. In mod. use, synonymous with insane;

X. How can we tell if a person is possessed by a devil, is mentally ill, or is just behaving sinfully?

1. In the Bible, a person who was possessed by a devil or an unclean spirit never came to Jesus to be healed, but rather someone else brought them to Jesus.
  - A. There is not one instance of a devil possessed man coming to Jesus of his own will in the Bible.
    - i. Every time a devil-possessed person came to Jesus, it was because someone else brought him to Him (**Mat 4:24; Mat 8:16; Mat 9:32; Mat 12:22; Mar 1:32; Luk 4:40-41**).
    - ii. On other occasions, people came to Jesus seeking help for their devil-possessed family members (**Mat 15:22; Mar 7:25-26**).
  - B. The only exception to this is the wild men of the Gadarenes/Gergesenes who came to Jesus, and even worshipped him (**Mat 8:28; Mar 5:1-2,6; Luk 8:27**).
    - i. But the only reason that the men approached Jesus was because the legion of devils in them wanted Jesus to not cast them out (**Mat 8:29; Mar 5:7; Luk 8:28**).
    - ii. Another example of this was the man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit that came to Jesus, not to follow him, but rather to tell him to leave him alone (**Luk 4:33-34**).
  - C. Therefore, since no devil-possessed person in the Bible ever came to Jesus in faith, nor desired to be healed by Him, it is reasonable to conclude that if a person is suffering severe mental or physical affliction and they believe the truth about Jesus and they desire Him to heal them, then that person is likely not possessed by a devil because devil-possessed people don't act in this way.
    - i. In this case, when a person comes to Christ in faith and desires to be healed by Him of his possession-like symptoms, he is likely undergoing affliction either because of a legitimate mental illness, or because of sinful behavior which has caused mental instability and/or the chastening hand of God to be upon him. (See Section VIII)
    - ii. It is also possible that God is allowing one of his children to be *afflicted* (not possessed) by the devil to prove and try them like He did to Job (**Job 1:12-22; Job 2:6-10**) and the saints of the church of Smyrna (**Rev 2:10**).
  - D. On the contrary, if a person is acting insane and is suffering mental or physical affliction and wants nothing to do with the true Jesus and resists Him, then that person very well could be devil-possessed, or he could be mentally ill.

2. If a person appears to be devil-possessed and wants nothing to do with Jesus, then leave them alone.
3. If a person appears to be devil-possessed and claims to believe in the true Jesus and is seeking deliverance from the true Jesus, then whether they are actually possessed or not, they should do the following:
  - A. Quit complaining about the punishment for their sins (**Lam 3:39-40**).
  - B. Acknowledge their sins and quit blaming God, others, or their circumstance for their problems or affliction (**Psa 51:3-4**).
  - C. Repent and confess their sins (**1Jo 1:9**).
  - D. Forsake their sins (**Pro 28:13**).
  - E. Call on the Lord Jesus for deliverance (**Rom 10:13**).
  - F. Read the Bible (**Psa 119:9-11**).
  - G. Seek first the kingdom of God (**Mat 6:33**).
  - H. Seek counsel from a man of God (**Pro 11:14**).
  - I. Adopt Job's attitude (**Job 1:21-22; Job 13:15**).
  - J. Remember that you are being punished less than your sin deserves (**Ezr 9:13; Job 11:6; Psa 103:10**).
  - K. Remember that suffering is only temporary, even in this life (**Psa 30:5**).
  - L. Realize that the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory which awaits us (**Rom 8:18**).
  - M. If the person will not do these things, then let them alone and let God deal with them.
4. If mental problems persist, a person should seek medical attention because they may be suffering from a mental illness.