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DOES SATAN HAVE ACCESS TO OUR MINDS?¹

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“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5 NIV).

While we would greatly overestimate Satan’s power by supposing that he can interact directly with us in a physical sense, an equal and opposite error would be to suppose that he does not have access to our minds.

First, while Satan cannot read our minds, he can influence our thoughts. Thus, the Bible instructs us to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11 NIV). Without it, you are a guaranteed casualty in the invisible war; with it, you are invincible. Spiritual warfare is waged against invisible beings that personify the extremities of evil; and their weapons are spiritual, not physical. While they cannot bite us physically, violate us sexually, or cause us to levitate, they can tempt us to cheat, steal, and lie.

Furthermore, it is crucial to note that if we open the door to Satan by failing to put on the full armor of God, he does, as it were, sit on our shoulders and whisper into our ears. The whisper cannot be discerned with the physical ear; it can, however, penetrate “the ear” of the mind. We cannot explain how such communication takes place any more than we can explain how our immaterial minds can cause the physical synapses of the brain to fire; but that such mind-to-mind communication takes place is indisputable. If it were not so, the Devil could not have tempted Judas to betray his Master, seduced Ananias and Sapphira to deceive Peter, or incited David to take a census.

Finally, while fallen angels are not material beings and thus cannot interact with us directly in the physical sense, they are as real as the very flesh on our bones. No doubt much to the Devil’s delight we often depict him as either a cartoonish clown with an elongated tail, red tights, and a pitchfork — or as a cultural caricature. Far from silly or stupid, however, Satan appears as a cosmopolitan angel of enlightenment. He knows full well that without our spiritual armor we are but pawns in a devil’s game.

In the final analysis, the whole of Scripture informs us that spiritual warfare is the battle for the mind.

Can Christians Be Demonized?

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4 NIV).

Over the years, I have read a wide variety of stories that claim to support the notion that Christians can be demonized. In the end, they all have one thing in common: they greatly overestimate the power and province of Satan. Some deliverance ministers make a more valiant attempt than others to provide a biblical basis for the contention that a Christian can be inhabited by a demon. Inevitably, however, Scripture itself undermines their stories.

First, Christ himself precludes the possibility that a Christian could be inhabited by demons. Using the illustration of a house, Jesus asks, “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?” (Matt. 12:29 NIV). In the case of a demon-possessed person, the strong man is obviously the Devil. In a Spirit-indwelt believer, however, the strong man is

God. The force of Christ's argument leads inexorably to the conclusion that, in order for demons to possess believers, they would first have to bind the one who occupies them — namely God Himself!

Furthermore, I discovered an equally airtight argument against Christian demonization in the gospel of John. The Jews once again were accusing Jesus of being demon possessed. Rather than circumvent their accusations, Jesus condescends to reach out to His accusers with reason. The essence of His argument is, "I am not possessed by a demon" because "I honor my Father" (John 8:49 NIV). The point is impossible to miss: Being demon possessed and honoring God are mutually exclusive categories.

Finally, Scripture does not contain a single credible example of a demonized believer. Instead, the consistent teaching of the Bible is that Christians cannot be controlled against their wills through demonic inhabitation. The principle is foolproof. If you are a follower of Christ, the King Himself indwells you; and you can rest assured that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4 NIV).

— Hank Hanegraaff

NOTES

1. Adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, *The Bible Answer Book* (Nashville: J. Countryman, 2004). For further study, see Hank Hanegraaff, *The Covering: God's Plan to Protect You from Evil* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2002).