

SOME THOUGHTS ON DEMONS

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I. Introduction

A. C. S. Lewis wrote in the preface of his famous little book, *The Screwtape Letters*, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." Similarly, the Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft states in his book *Angels (and Demons)* (p. 112):

Satan is equally pleased by our overestimating him *and* our underestimating him – as the commander of an enemy army in wartime would be equally pleased if your side greatly overestimated his strength and shook with superstitious fear when there was "nothing to fear but fear itself," *or* if you greatly underestimated his strength, or even stopped believing in his very existence.

B. Many people today have gone to both extremes.

1. Some deny the reality of Satan and demons. This is not surprising given the triumph of naturalism in our society, but it has even reached to those who identify with Christ. Following some prominent theologians from the middle of the 20th century, many professed Christians believe that demons are merely mythological conceptions drawn from the culture of Bible days (per Bultmann) or characterizations of evil social forces and structures rather than personal beings (per Tillich).

2. On the other hand, some who identify with Christ have become fixated on demons and are giving them a prominence and level of attention that is out of balance and, in many instances, unscriptural. Everything for them is about some kind of direct engagement with demonic forces and asserting power over them in the name of Jesus.

II. Existence of Demons

A. The reality of demons is clear from Scripture. They are more prominent in the N.T., there being scores of references to them, but they are also mentioned in the O.T. (e.g., Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37).

B. In the N.T., demon-possession and exorcisms are frequently mentioned, and Jesus cites his power over demons as a sign that in him the kingdom of heaven was being ushered in (Mat. 12:28; Lk. 11:20). Even his opponents acknowledged his exorcisms; they just claimed he did it by the power of demons (Mk. 3:22; Mat. 12:24).

C. To say that demons are merely mythological conceptions from a superstitious culture or personal depictions of impersonal forces is to say that the Bible is false. Scripture clearly indicates that demons are real, personal beings.

1. They speak and are spoken to (Mat. 8:28-31; Mk. 1:34, 3:11, 5:6-12; Lk. 4:41, 8:28-31; Acts 19:13-15).

2. They possess intellect, as they know Jesus to be the Son of God (Mat. 8:28-31; Mk. 1:34, 3:11, 5:6-12; Lk. 4:41, 8:28-31; Acts 19:13-15), recognized Paul and his companions as a servant of God (or possibly portrayed them as servants of an ambiguous deity) (Acts 16:16-18), believe there is one God (Jas. 2:19), and teach false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1-4).

3. They have emotion, as they fear judgment (Jas. 2:19).

4. And they have will, as they did not want to go into the Abyss (Mat. 8:31; Mk. 5:12; Lk. 8:31).

III. Origin of Demons

A. It is clear that they were created by God through Christ. Col. 1:16 stresses that *all things*, including all spirit beings, were created by God through Christ: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him."

B. We know from Gen. 1:31 that all of creation was originally "very good," and we also know from many passages of Scripture that demons are evil (called "evil spirits" in texts below) and unclean (called "unclean spirits" in texts below).

C. From this, we can *deduce* that demons were originally created good and then turned against God.

1. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 may be direct references to this original rebellion. 2 Peter 2:4 refers to "angels who sinned," and Jude 6 speaks of "the angels who did not keep their own domain but deserted their own dwelling." But, depending on one's understanding of "sons of God" in Gen. 6:1-4, these verses may refer to a later, particularly outrageous sin of some angels (i.e., marrying human women).

a. If these verses refer to the original rebellion of angels, then the talk of imprisonment is figurative language intended to show graphically that they are under divine condemnation and that their final doom is assured. In other words, their imprisonment cannot mean they are unable to exert influence on Earth, as Scripture makes clear they have exerted influence on earth, even to the point of possessing people.

b. If these verses refer to angelic sin sometime after the original rebellion, then there are two groups or classes of evil angels: the imprisoned and the free. That suggests that the imprisoned fallen angels have, compared to the free fallen angels, a diminished capacity of some sort, presumably with regard to their ability to exert influence on Earth.

2. Four texts often are cited as direct references to the original fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19; Lk. 10:18; Revelation 12), but it is doubtful they refer to that event. See, e.g., Garrett (35-46), Page (37-42), Oropeza (82-88).

D. We are not told when this angel rebellion occurred, but it apparently happened between Gen. 1:31, where God pronounces all of creation very good, and Gen. 3:1-5, where Satan, through a serpent, tempts Eve to sin.

E. Many people, often guided by what I judge to be misinterpretations of the Isaiah and Ezekiel passages, claim that the angels (Satan in particular) fell because of pride, greed, lust, or ambition, but we are not told why they fell. I think the most that can be said is that God granted the angels free will to determine whether to seek their fulfillment in him or in themselves, and some chose the latter. Why they did so is, as far as I can tell, not revealed.

F. If they were created with a superior innate knowledge of God (but not direct knowledge through a vision of him), their rebellion was done with full awareness, with "eyes wide open." It was thus a final and definitive choice, analogous to Christians who in their clear and measured rebellion fall beyond the point of restoration (Heb. 6:4-6). That being so, they were from that point forward implacable foes; that die had been cast.

G. The fall of Satan and angels raises the question of why God gave them the freedom to choose their own way if he foreknew the evil and suffering that would follow. All I can say is that, as in the case of mankind, God wanted them (like us) to choose him from within a certain epistemological environment, from within a state that offered a certain perception and knowledge of God. To provide that choice was necessarily to provide the potential for rejection. But foreseeing that culpable rebellion, he was able to incorporate it into his ultimate purpose and goal.

IV. Nature of Demons

A. Like angels, demons are spirit beings, meaning they are invisible, nonphysical beings. They are bodiless minds. Humans are a compound of body and spirit.

1. They are called spirits in many passages (e.g., Mat. 8:16, 10:1, 12:45; Mk. 1:23, 9:17-25; Lk. 7:21, 8:2, 10:17-20, 11:26; Acts 5:16, 19:12, 19:13-16; Rev. 16:14), and in Eph. 6:12 the spiritual forces of evil are contrasted to flesh and blood.

2. Unlike angels, however, demons in Scripture never become, or appear to become, physical so as to be visible to all.

a. The serpent in the Garden was clearly animated by Satan, the prince of demons, but the serpent was one of the wild animals God had made (Gen. 3:1).

b. The only times Satan or demons are seen are in visions (Zech. 3:1; Mat. 4:9-10; Rev. 9, 12:7-9, 16:12-16), and the only time we are told anything of their appearance is in Revelation 9 (nightmarish locusts and fiendish cavalry), 12 (Satan portrayed as a great red dragon), and 16:12-16 (frogs).

c. The possible exception to this is Gen. 6:1-4, where some understand the "sons of God" to be fallen angels who married human women and conceived children by them. But even under that interpretation, the angels may have done this by possession of human males rather than materialization (see, Page, 49). (Job 4:15 is Eliphaz claiming divine support for the claim Job is a sinner by appealing to his personal encounter with some kind of heavenly messenger.)

B. Also unlike angels, demons are evil (called "evil spirits" in Lk. 7:21, 8:2; Acts 19:12, 19:13-16) and unclean, meaning incompatible with God (called "unclean spirits" in Mat. 10:1, 12:43; Mk. 1:23-27, 3:11, 5:2-13, 6:7, 7:25, 9:25; Lk. 4:33, 6:18, 8:29, 9:42, 11:24; Acts 5:16, 8:7; Rev. 16:13, 18:2). Paul speaks of them collectively as "spiritual forces of evil" (Eph. 6:12), John says the devil has been sinning from the beginning (1 Jn. 3:8), and in Rev. 12:7-9 we see they are united with Satan in opposition to God (see also, Dan. 10:10-14; Mat. 12:26).

C. As spirit beings and as creatures who have lived thousands of years, demons know things we do not know and are quite skilled at reading humans. Also, as invisible and highly mobile entities, they can gather much information without our being aware they have gathered it.

1. They do not, however, actually know our thoughts.

a. Only God knows people's thoughts (2 Chron. 6:30; 1 Ki. 8:39; Ps. 7:9, 44:20-21; Prov. 15:11, 16:2). That's why Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that no one speaking by any power other than God could tell the king what he had dreamed (Dan. 2:27-28).

b. In this light, it is very significant that the N.T. reports that Jesus knew the thoughts of people (Mat. 9:4, 12:25; Mk. 2:8; Lk. 6:8, 11:17; Rev. 2:23).

2. Nor do they have innate knowledge of the future; that too belongs only to God (implied in Isa. 42:8-9, 46:9-10, and also, I believe, in Satan's participation in the crucifixion of Christ). Their superhuman knowledge of the present and past, however, can give them extreme insight into the future (e.g., Acts 16:16).

D. Demons also manifest superhuman strength when they possess someone. Thus, the Gerasene demoniac was able to break apart chains, and no one from the region could subdue him (Mk. 5:1-4). The demon-possessed man in Acts 19:13-16 overpowered seven brothers, causing them to flee naked and bleeding.

E. Demons, which include Satan, are mere creatures and are in no way equal to God. The Bible knows nothing of dualism, the idea that two equally powerful forces, one good and one evil, vie for control of the world.

1. Demons are in rebellion, but God sets the limits of that rebellion. They are not free to do whatever they choose. For example, in Job 1-2 Satan could not harm Job or any of his possessions without God's permission to do so, and in Lk. 22:31 he asked for God's permission to attack the apostles ("sift you [plural] as wheat").

2. We are sometimes allowed to see how God incorporates the rebellion of demons into his larger plan.

a. The greatest example is the case of Satan's involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus. God's plan included the crucifixion of his Son (Acts 2:23, 3:18; Rev. 13:8), yet Satan influenced Judas to betray Jesus to be crucified (Lk. 22:3-5; Jn. 13:2). (I believe Satan was outwitted by God. He did not know that the crucifixion was the way of salvation. If that is correct, he was not directly behind Peter's attempt to dissuade Jesus from the cross in Mat. 16:23. Jesus there calls Peter "Satan" because Peter was talking in a way that opposed the plan of God.)

b. Paul's "thorn in the flesh," which he specifically calls a tormenting "messenger of Satan," is another example. Paul says it was given to him to keep him from becoming conceited because of the great revelations given to him (2 Cor. 12:7).

3. Of course, God likewise is able to bring good results out of the evil intentions of humans. The classic text is Gen. 50:20 where Joseph said about his brothers having sold him into slavery: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

4. Since demons are subordinate to God, we naturally find in Scripture that they are subordinate to Jesus. This is evident in his exorcisms (Mk. 1:27 -- "He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."). In one case, the demons even beg Jesus for permission to enter pigs rather than be sent to the Abyss (Mk. 5:12; Lk. 8:31). In Mat. 4:10 he told Satan to "be gone," and he left. Ephesians 1:21 and Col. 2:10 specify that Christ is supreme over every ruler and authority, every power and dominion, and every name that is named (note that in Eph. 6:12 these include the demonic).

V. The Claim that Demons are the Spirits of Deceased Evil Humans

A. Recently I learned of the argument that demons are the spirits of deceased evil humans. As I understand it, the argument is as follows:

1. God created all things in the beginning.
2. All things created were originally good.

3. Demons are evil.

4. Therefore, demons are beings who were created good and became evil.

B. So far, so good. My problem is with the following portion of the argument where the proponent claims to prove that the beings who became demons were deceased evil humans rather than rebellious angels.

1. Angels and humans are the only beings who were created good and became evil.

2. All angels that became evil were barred from interaction with mankind.

3. Demons interact with mankind.

4. Therefore, demons are the spirits of deceased evil humans.

C. Regarding B.1, it is not certain that angels and humans are the only beings who were created good and became evil. It is possible that some spiritual beings mentioned in Scripture are distinct from angels rather than being a class of angel. I am thinking specifically of cherubim (1 Ki. 6:24; 2 Chron. 3:11-12; Ezek. 1:4-11, 10:1-20), seraphim (Isa. 6:2-4), and the four living creatures of Rev. 4:6-8. Since it is possible there are created spiritual beings in addition to angels, unless one proves it is impossible for such beings to have become evil, proposition B.1 is unproven. Therefore, any conclusion based on proposition B.1 likewise is unproven.

D. But even if proposition B.1 were proven, there is a problem with proposition B.2. It is not certain that all angels that became evil were barred from interaction with mankind. In my opinion, this claim is based on an overreading of Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2:4. Specifically, it assumes that (a) being kept in eternal chains in the darkness of the underworld precludes all interaction with mankind and (b) all fallen angels are kept in eternal chains in the darkness of the underworld. I think both assumptions are dubious.

1. Regarding (a), Satan is portrayed in Rev. 20:2-3 as being bound with a chain in a locked and sealed Abyss for one thousand years. All who understand this binding of Satan as having already occurred must recognize that it does not mean that Satan has no influence in or interaction with this world. Rather, it means that he is under some kind of restraining influence. If Satan can still interact with this world while bound in the Abyss, I don't see why angels cannot interact with this world while chained in the darkness of the underworld. The talk of imprisonment is figurative language intended to show graphically that they are under divine condemnation and that their final doom is assured. (The fact it is figurative language is apparent, since physical chains do not bind spirits. This is confirmed by the fact 2 Pet. 2:4 indicates, under the most likely textual reading, that the chains or fetters are the darkness to which the angels are confined.) As noted by Sydney H. T. Page in *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan & Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 238:

"That these angels are represented as being in chains does not necessarily imply that they are unable to exercise their pernicious influence over humanity."

2. Regarding (b), it is quite possible that Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2:4 refer only to a subset of fallen angels, those who in Gen. 6:1-4 committed the particularly outrageous sin of marrying human women and having children by them (whether by materialization or possession of human males). However strange this may sound, that is how Gen. 6:1-4 was understood in early Judaism and early Christianity. But regardless of whether that interpretation is correct, Satan clearly is a fallen angel who still interacts with mankind. This means either (1) not all fallen angels are included in the "chaining" of Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2:4 or (2) the "chaining" does not preclude all interaction with mankind. Either way, proposition 6 is incorrect, and thus any conclusion based on that proposition is unsupported.

E. The fact demons manifest superhuman strength when they possess someone (e.g., Mk. 5:1-4; Acts 19:13-16) suggests that they are something other than human spirits. Their extreme insight into the future (Acts 16:16) also may suggest a nonhuman origin.

VI. Number and Organization of Demons

A. We are not told how many demons there are.

1. Some claim Rev. 12:4 and 12:9 indicate that one-third of the angels became demons, but that is a doubtful interpretation of those verses. The vision of Revelation 12 relates to Satan's opposition to Jesus from the moment of his birth, so it is long after the initial rebellion of the angels. The stars flung down from heaven by the dragon in 12:4 simply may be a picture of his great power, and the expulsion of Satan and his angels in 12:9 relates to their defeat that was effected by Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

2. We do have clues, however, that there are a significant number of demons. The Gerasene demoniac was possessed by so many demons that his name was Legion (the term for a Roman military unit of 6,000) (Mk. 5:9; Lk. 8:30). But nowhere is the number of demons described in a manner comparable to the number of angels (Heb. 12:22 -- "innumerable"; Rev. 5:11 -- "myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands").

B. As with angels, there appears to be some kind of rank or order among demons, but we are given no details about it.

1. Some organization seems implicit in the references to demons as "rulers/principalities" and "authorities/powers" (e.g., Eph. 1:21, 6:12)

2. Satan is the prince or ruler of the demons (Mat. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15) and of the kingdom of the air (Eph. 2:2). Demons are called "his angels" (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 12:7, 9).

C. Miscellaneous information about Satan

1. The Hebrew name "satan" derives from a verb meaning to be or act as an adversary. The Greek word "Satan" is a transliteration of the Hebrew name. The most common Greek word for Satan is "the devil" (*diábolos*), which may have come from a verb meaning to separate. If so, it implies the idea of one who separates humans from God. Other terms used of him include: "accuser" (Rev. 12:10), "tempter" (Mat. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), "Beelzebul" (Mat. 10:25, 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18, 19), "evil one" (Mat. 6:13, 13:19, 38; Jn. 17:15; Eph. 6:16; 1 Jn. 2:13, 3:12, 5:18), "Belial" (2 Cor. 6:15), "enemy/adversary" (1 Pet. 5:8), "deceiver" (Rev. 12:9, 20:3), "great dragon" (Rev. 12:3), "father of lies" (Jn. 8:44), "murderer" (Jn. 8:44), and "Destroyer" (Rev. 9:11).

2. NIV uses "Beelzebub" rather than "Beelzebul," but the latter is the more common and more accurate transliteration of the Greek (Page, 88 n.3). A majority of scholars believe it means "lord of the dwelling," with "dwelling" referring either to the house of demons or the house of a pagan god. Page, 101.

3. John refers to Satan as "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11) and says that the whole world lies in his power (1 Jn. 5:19). What he means is that those opposed to God ("the world") are under Satan's control or influence. That is why Satan is called the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4). He has "blinded the minds of unbelievers" (2 Cor. 4:4) and has trapped others in the web of false doctrine (2 Tim. 2:25-26). Thus, the Jewish opponents of the church are called a "synagogue of Satan" in Rev. 2:9, 3:9.

4. Prior to the crucifixion and resurrection, Satan had some type of access to heaven and continually accused the saints of disobedience (Job 1:9-11; Zech. 3:1). Perhaps he was tolerated in that role because God recognized the justice of these allegations. With the atoning death of Christ, however, God's justice has been satisfied, so Satan's accusations are no longer valid. I believe his expulsion from heaven depicted in Rev. 12:9-10 is a consequence of this.

5. From Paul's comment in 2 Cor. 11:14, we know that Satan has the ability to masquerade as an angel of light. The popular portrayal of him as having red skin, horns, and a pitchfork may have been influenced to some extent by the red, horned dragon of Revelation 12, but it was probably also influenced by cultural perceptions of grotesqueness. The horns indicate some kind of half-human, half-animal monster; the red may be connected with notions of him living in a fiery underworld or with his role as a bloody murderer; and the pitchfork was used to torture his victims in hell.

6. Satan does not live in hell, pictured as a fiery place in the middle of the earth. Hell is the final judgment place of the damned, not a present intermediate state, and Scripture makes clear that Satan is active on this earth. 1 Pet. 5:8 warns that our "enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." His presence in our world is also evident from his description as the "ruler of the domain of the air" (Eph. 2:2) and from the fact his minions are said to be in "the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). By "heavenly realms" Paul no doubt means the "first heaven" or atmosphere rather than the "third heaven" which is the dwelling of God (see, 2 Cor.

12:2). I believe these beings are connected to the air because they are spiritual creatures and thus "airlike."

VII. Activities of Satan and Demons

A. As the name indicates, Satan is the Adversary. He is opposed to all that God wills, which means, among other things, that he is opposed to people living righteously, to people accepting the gospel, and to people remaining faithful to Christ.

1. He tempts people to sin. In fact, he is called "the tempter" in Mat. 4:3 and 1 Thess. 3:5. However God wants you to be and to act, Satan wants the opposite. Thus, in Eph. 2:2 Paul refers to him as "the spirit who is now at work among those who are disobedient." We are not told how he goes about this, but 1 Cor. 7:5 (spouse not meeting sexual obligations) and 2 Cor. 2:11 (reconciling with penitent offender) show that we can do things that will make us more vulnerable to his temptation. As Paul says in Eph. 4:27, we are not to give the devil an opportunity or a foothold.

2. Satan works hard to keep people from accepting the gospel of Christ.

a. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says that the "god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they do not [not "cannot" as in NIV] see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." In other words, he is involved in shaping people's assumptions and perceptions, socializing them into this "worldly age" (Eph. 2:2), so that the gospel sounds foolish or offensive (1 Cor. 1:18). That is how he snatches from some the word that was sown in their hearts, "so that they cannot believe and be saved" (Lk. 8:12). In Acts 13:6-10 the false prophet Elymas tried to dissuade Sergius Paulus from receiving the gospel, and Paul called him "a child of the devil."

b. One of Satan's tools in this regard is the promotion of false religious beliefs.

(1) The false gods that Israel served were in reality demonic forces (Deut. 32:16-17; Ps. 106:35-37), and Paul says of the false religions of the first-century Mediterranean world, "What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons not to God" (1 Cor. 10:20; see also, Rev. 9:20). So I am convinced that Satan is significantly involved in the non-Christian religions of today.

(2) But Satan also works to create false versions of Christianity. Paul says of his opponents in Corinth that they are "masquerading as apostles of Christ," and then adds, "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). In 1 Tim. 4:1-4 Paul says those who are teaching false doctrine are teaching things "taught by demons," what John calls the spirit of antichrist (1 Jn. 4:1-3). In 2 Tim. 2:25-26 Paul describes certain false teachers and/or their adherents as those who have been taken captive by the devil.

(3) False doctrine is a grave matter (Rom. 9:2-3 with 10:1-2; Gal. 1:6-8; Col. 2:18; Rev. 2:14-16), which is precisely why Satan employs it.

3. Satan works hard to cause those who have accepted the gospel to abandon Jesus, not only because God is glorified in their salvation but also because their abandonment of Jesus demeans God's precious gift (Heb. 6:6; 10:26-29).

a. In Eph. 6:10-13 Paul tells the saints to put on the full armor of God so that they may stand against the schemes of the devil, and in 1 Thess. 3:5 he says he feared that the tempter might have tempted them so that their efforts might have been useless.

b. Satan is not only assaulting the church with false doctrines and the lure of sin, but in 1 Thess. 2:18 we read that he thwarted Paul's returning to the church in Thessalonica, no doubt an attempt to deprive the young Christians there of Paul's encouragement.

c. Satan is at work in the division of the church (1 Jn. 3:7-15; Eph. 4:25-27), which discourages people.

d. Satan is at work in the persecution of the church (Rev. 2:9-10, 12:17; Jn. 8:44, 15:18-19 with 1 Jn. 5:19; 1 Pet. 5:8-9), which frightens people.

B. Demons obviously can take possession of people, but there are a number of questions about this.

1. Compared to the rest of the Bible and to modern western society, demons took possession of people with astonishing frequency during Jesus' ministry. Garrett (p. 31) offers several possible explanations for this:

First, demon activity may have been more common when Jesus was on earth because of the spiritual conflict surrounding the incarnation. Second, perhaps demon possession is still common but we do not recognize it as easily as Jesus did. Third, Jesus happened to come during a time that was politically, socially, and religiously unstable when people embraced strange new types of spirituality. Thus, demon possession was more common. On the third view, demonic activity waxes and wanes in different times and different places in proportion to the behavior of the society. Personally, I think there is truth in all three explanations.

2. But whatever the overall level of demon activity, I do not believe a Christian who is faithfully abiding in Christ can be demon possessed in the sense of being indwelt by a demon. Paul says in Rom. 8:9 that the Christian is controlled by the indwelling Spirit of God. Our body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19), and there simply is no agreement between the temple of God and idols (2 Cor. 6:16). There are no examples in Scripture of a faithful Christian being indwelt by a demon.

3. This is not to say that Christians are immune to demonic *influences*. The issue is one of the nature and degree of that demonic influence.

C. Demons have apparently worked miracles in the past.

1. Pharaoh's magicians, whose names (Jannes and Jambres) were preserved in Jewish literature and acknowledged by Paul (2 Tim. 3:8), opposed Moses (Ex. 7:11-12, 22, 8:7) with wonders of their own.

2. I am of the belief that the wonder-working powers of demons have been seriously curtailed and will not be restored until the end of this age. This is how I understand Satan being chained in Rev. 20:1-3. I understand it that way because the purpose of the chaining is to prevent him from "deceiving the nations" and the means by which he will ultimately deceive the nations into gathering against God is the exercise of miraculous power. At the end, demons will perform fantastic miracles that will deceive many people (Mat. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 13:13-14, 16:14, 19:20).

3. I don't know what level of wonder-working power demons presently possess, but it is short of what I would label "nation-gathering miracles."

VIII. Fate of Satan and Demons

A. The devil stands under condemnation (1 Tim. 3:6). In the end, God will cast him and his angels into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10; Mat. 25:41).

B. My understanding is that before this judgment takes place, a powerful, worldwide, and violently antichristian empire will arise, ruled by the one identified in Revelation 13 and 17 as "the beast." This is the one called Antichrist in 1 Jn. 2:18 and the "man of lawlessness" (and "lawless one") in 2 Thess. 2:1-10.¹ Though he is Satan-inspired, he is not Satan incarnate. The two clearly are distinguished (Rev. 13:2, 20:10).

IX. Spiritual Warfare

A. The Christian response to Satan is to "resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9). Jas. 4:7 says that if you do this, "he will flee from you."

B. I believe the most explicit passage on how to resist is Eph. 6:10-18. You can see my thoughts on that text in the online notes on Ephesians.

C. Of course, it goes without saying that we should absolutely avoid any occultic practices such as contacting spirits or dead people and exploring such things as psychic powers, mystical

¹ This is not to be confused with premillennialism, the view that Christ's return will be followed by a 1,000 year reign on Earth.

experiences (e.g., soul travel), and fortune telling. We likewise should avoid the objects connected with these things, such as tarot cards, crystal balls, ouija boards, love potions, charms, and occult symbols (e.g., 666, pentagrams, and upside-down question mark with a cross [a Satanic symbol]).