Transcript 114
Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Kind of continuing our series and this overall discussion of what does the Bible say about angels and demons? And today we’re going to be jumping into the demons side of that question. Very, very common questions we receive. Questions run the whole gamut of topics and from people who are just very curious, to people who are terrified, to people who have very unbiblical views, to other people who are really just trying to tell what actually, does the Bible say? ’cause there’s so much out there in pop culture. So many, even though other religions have influenced our beliefs about demons and so forth.

Shea Houdmann

So today we're going to be taking a little bit of a general look at the topic of basically what does the Bible say about demons? And joining me today is Jeff the administrator of bibleref.com and Kevin, the managing editor of Got Questions Ministry. So just so our listeners know this is going to be a series of we're doing so today, we're not really going to be covering super in-depth the question of who or what is Satan. We're not to be talking much about demon possession, and we're not going to talk about much about the sons of God, daughters of men, nepheline question, because each of those are going to be separate episodes. So so Kevin now would you start us off and talk about the origin of demons. What does the Bible say about where the demons came from?

Kevin Stone

Well, I and I think it is important that we go to scripture and we look at what the Bible says because there is so much like you were saying Shea there's just so much information and and the theories out there. We've got the movies of course. The horror movies that deal with the demonic, we've got, the books, we've got the urban legends, and all these stories of that are passed around and we just really need to take a look at the Bible. And what does the Bible say about demons and evil spirits, and where did they come from?

Kevin Stone

Well, Scripture says that all things are created by God and that in the beginning it was very good. So originally it looks like demons were angels. They were angelic creatures of some kind that that were good. They were righteous, they were servants of God. But then something happened, and Peter in second Peter two and verse 4. Talks about the angels that sinned, and so there was some type of a sin that these angels committed, and Peter doesn't specify what that's in was. But it looks like when we start taking a look at Satan that he had the sin of pride and it's so, it's very likely that these demons, you know followed Satan in that sin of pride and then were cast out of heaven. And Jude also talks about this. This is Jude one in verse six talks about the angels that kept not their first estate, so they they had a position that was assigned to them by God and they left that position. They rebelled against that said no I want to go do something else and and so they they sinned against God in that way. Pride was probably involved.

Kevin Stone
And a Revelation gives us a kind of an interesting picture as well. In Revelation 12 and verse four, Satan is pictured as a as a great dragon. And then John sees a vision of this dragon that pulls 1/3 of the stars out of heaven with his tail and cast them to the earth. So a lot of people take from that that 1/3 of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion and were cast out of heaven. So it looks like they came from heaven. Originally they were good angels that fell. So the the demons we we take to be fallen angels. That sinned in some way, and we’re judged by God and have been working against God ever since. And so it looks like that's where the demons come from, biblically.

Jeff Laird

Remembering where they come from is important to our understanding of what they can and cannot do. With you mentioning that demons in so far as we can tell are fallen angels. That means that we're not talking about angels and demons as completely and totally distinct beings when it comes to what they can do and what they cannot do, and what they're like.

Jeff Laird

In other words, the the things that we see in demons should in theory parallel the same things that we see in angels. Now there’s some things in scripture that imply that God is limited demons as compared to angels. We see First Thessalonians Chapter 2 makes some comments about that, so it's not necessarily that demons are dealing with the exact same power set of the same skill set, but on a basic level we would expect them to be fundamentally the same. That means that they're non material. They don't necessarily have some explicit gender. They don't have a specific physical appearance or physical form that they could communicate with people in similar ways to the ways that angels do. Sometimes when we talk about angels and demons, we get wrapped up in those pop culture ideas and we start thinking about things like flowing white robes and white feathery wings and circles over people's heads and harps. And then with demons it's things like pitchforks and bat wings. Or, we think, more of the scary looking monster type creatures. The drooling sort of a thing. And I think we need to remember that demons are just as intelligent as angels, so they use tactics.

Jeff Laird

So when we talk about demons from a biblical standpoint, we're not talking about these these creepy special effects looking monsters that run around to do physical harm to people. We're talking about creatures that can be very tempting, very attractive, very influential in the way that they interact with people. And that they'll pick good tactics, good ways to get to people. They're not ripping persons apart limb from limb. They may be doing something very subtle, like inputting just enough falsehood into our beliefs about who Christ is, who God is, how the world is, to drag people away, because that's what their goal is. Their goal is not just mayhem for the sake of mayhem. The goal that demons have is to interfere with our relationship with Christ.

Jeff Laird

So some of the things that we see in scripture that apply to angels, they apply in the sense of what demons are sort of like. But the vague things that we have don't give us a reason to support those things that we see in movies and comic books and everything else where you see these these monstrous kind of things. If we think of demons that way then we're distracted and we're not thinking of the real dangers that demons and demonic entities would present.
Kevin Stone

When we start looking through scripture, we start seeing some of the things that demons do and there are several things that that are kind of on their To Do List as it were, and then one is they just in general oppose God purposes. So whatever it is that God purposes to do in the world they are trying to work against that to make it difficult to hinder, to throw up roadblocks to what God is doing here in this world. They are opposed to God's will. They are presented in the New Testament as afflicting people. And so, Jesus, you know healed some people who were afflicted by demons, and so it looks like the demons were actually causing physical illnesses sometimes, and we know that you know they're they're out there tempting people as well and just bringing up accusations against them, working on false guilt in peoples lives. The affliction could come in in many different ways, but they they afflict God people.

Kevin Stone

They also want to execute Satan's purposes. Satan has a will. He has a plan and he would like to see that moved forward and we believe that that the demons are working in concert with Satan and and doing his bidding and working to advance Satan's agenda here in this world. They hinder the spiritual life of God's people. That's why now we're given the Armor of God in Ephesians chapter six. We have that shield of faith that God gives us that quenches all of the fiery darts of the wicked one. And praise the Lord for that. That all of Satan's fiery darts and I'll just throw in here the fiery darts of the demons as well. That they're being quenched by faith. The faith that we have in Jesus Christ.

Kevin Stone

But definitely we have opponents spiritual opponents in this world that are trying to hinder our walk with God. Trying to turn us away from the the love of God. Trying to get us out of the word of God and just not being everything that God wants us to be. Like Jeff was saying, the purposes of the demons are probably not to, you know, terrify people and rip us limb from limb, but to simply turn our heads away from the author and finisher of our faith, the one that we should be looking at. And of course, Bible also calls them lying spirits, and so they they deceive they are in the business of spreading lies as well.

Shea Houdmann

But I look at a passage like Second Corinthians 11:14 that says that Satan himself masquerades as an Angel of light, therefore should not surprise us that his servants also masquerade his angels of light. In the context, is referring more to false prophets, but I think this also applies to demons in that as both of you said, the common Hollywood or cultural portrayal of demons, that they're always terrifying ghosts, horrible looking creatures, that doesn't seem to want to be what the Bible describes. The demons are more interested in deceiving us. And what better way to deceive us than to appear as if they're an Angel of light.

Shea Houdmann

Even if you you look at the different examples of false religions that have been started by an Angel supposedly appearing to people, and it's never been like a demon or someone appearing like Satan is typically portrayed in our work. Like no, it's he was almost always Gabriel or some famous powerful Angel who is claimed to have appeared to someone and then as a result a massive deception results. In Islam. That's the order of Islam, even Mormonism. Both of these religions with hundreds of millions of
adherents are started by presumably a demon impersonating an Angel and thereby deceiving the person who became the founder of that religion.

Shea Houdmann

So yeah, I do not doubt that sometimes demons would be very interested in terrifying us if that is what needed to happen in order to draw us away from God. But then most of the time they're far more interested in deception and leading us astray, and as Kevin said, just turning our heads just a little bit, so we're off focus or on a tangent rather than focusing on the things that God wants us to focus on. So demons are incredibly intelligent, just like the angels, and they will do anything to oppose God and use whatever means necessary. And we shouldn't limit ourselves and how we can envision demons doing their work to what's the common cultural portrayal, but that's not exactly how the Bible describes it. Could they do those things, of course, but the Bible seems of focusing the work of demons and Satan more on deception than on and by deception destruction rather than outright destruction on the front end.

Jeff Laird

When you talk about things like Islam, Mormonism, those are good examples I think for us to understand of how spiritual warfare is meant to work where there's a message that does not seem immediately contrary. It's not that the demon is going to somebody and saying, OK, here's what we'll do we'll set-up something that's completely false and completely wrong, and we'll, we'll deceive a lot of people. I mean, the demon is fooling the person that they're speaking to in the 1st place, and the solution or the counter to that is not that these men needed to have some amulet or some prayer or holy water, or a circle of salt, or something else like that.

Jeff Laird

The answer was that they needed to compare the message they were hearing to the word that God had already given. Had that been done in those cases, people would not have accepted those messages. They would not have done those things. They would have recognized that those were not right. Same thing applies when we talk about things like Ouija boards and cursed items and hexes and spells and pentagrams and hexagons. I, I think if you went in your basement with a bunch of friends and drew a pentagram on the floor and chanted something from a book you would be putting yourself in a lot of spiritual risk, but not because there is an actual magical element to that. If you use a Ouija board. Yes, you're you're risking that you're going to put yourself in communication with demons. But that has nothing to do with the the actual physical object itself. It's because of the spiritual state that you're putting yourself in, how open, how accepting, how gullible are you allowing yourself to be?

Jeff Laird

So I think the examples like that are helpful for us to remember that spiritual warfare is spiritual warfare. It isn't voodoo or magic, or you know, a form of strange science or alchemy or something like that. It's about our relationship with God. The way we interact with him and the way we gauge his word. For me it's also interesting to consider the tactical side, as we've been talking about. You know what demons want to make people feel. From a tactical standpoint, a lot of what I think you see in history and culture from the past until today shows smart tactics on the part of demons.
Jeff Laird

If you wanted to disrupt some group or some area, if you could disrupt them and convince them that the people disrupting them didn't even exist. That they were just figments of their imagination. If I was going to do that, it would be very useful for me if the people I was trying to disrupt didn't even think I was real. Because that greatly increases my ability to affect them and to fool people.

Jeff Laird

Now if I was in a condition where they obviously know that they are there or that I'm there, we might as well just be blatant about it and go for the most carnage that we possibly can. I think that's one of the reasons why when we talk about demons, we wouldn't necessarily expect to see overt demonic possession or oppression or influence in cultures and areas where people have a lot of skepticism and doubt about whether demons exist, it's to their advantage to be subtle and work in those ways. But in cultures and places in the world where that's not the case. Where people already have a rooted acceptance that those are real, that's where the demons most effective play is to lean into things like fear and coercion. And so on. And so forth.

Kevin Stone

I really appreciate your emphasis there on the the move that we need to make the move against superstition and the the objects that people often associate with with demons and demonic activity. There's so much superstition that gets mixed into that, and I think that that also bleeds over into some Christian thought where people start thinking, well, I'm protected from the demonic because I have this object. I've got this Talisman. I've got this cross I wear around my neck and therefore demons can't touch me. And of course, you know if you lose the necklace or something, then what? I mean is is it time to panic at that point? But you know, we're not, we're not protected by from demons by objects either. That's just superstition. We are protected in Christ. He is the Savior. He is the Lord. He's the master, not just of us, but of the entire universe.

Kevin Stone

And we see that in his earthly ministry Jesus had a power and authority over the demons. They were no match for him. Roman, I'm sorry this is Matthew chapter eight. We read this that many were who were demon possessed were brought to Christ and he drove them out with a word. All it took was a word from Christ, and the demons had to flee. They were gone. Later on in that same passage there were some demons that Jesus encountered and and they and they were terrified of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they said, what do you want with us Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time. So they they know that there's an appointed time of their demise. They were afraid that Jesus was going to send them to their demise early and they were terrified.

Kevin Stone

Jesus is the authority and that's who we belong to. We belong to Jesus and and we don't have to fear demons as we are in Christ. He is our protector. He's our king and one little word will send the demons fleeing. Colossians 2 and verse 15 says that Jesus has disarmed the powers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them on the cross, triumphing over them. And the victory is won. As we still engage in skirmishes, we still engage in spiritual battle. But Jesus, our King, has led the way to victory.
I like the use of the terminology skirmish when you talk about that because one of the thoughts that's in my mind is that there's dangers and Christians being overly paranoid and terrified about what demons can and cannot do, there's also danger in in the idea of assuming that because I am a Christian, that there is absolutely nothing any demon could do to influence me or to affect me in any way. And that's that's not true. I I can't be possessed by a demon as a Christian because I have the Holy Spirit dwelling in me. A demon can't just take control of me, but they can whisper. They can tempt. They can apply. From the skirmish standpoint it's sort of like what we would refer to as an armored personnel carrier. If you're a soldier who's standing out in the field, you need to worry very much about another individual soldier coming up to you and doing something to you. If you're in the armored personnel carrier, then that other individual soldier's ability to reach you is very limited, but it's not non-existent. He can still do things that will slow you down. That will get you off track that will cause you problems.

So as Christians we need to remember that demons cannot destroy us. They cannot control us. They cannot take us away from Christ, but they are still our enemies. They are still working to do things and that's why we need to have sensitivity. We need to have discernment. We need to have caution in the things that we say or do because our enemy is still out there looking to trip us up and looking to cause us problems.

Kevin Stone
Right.

Shea Houdmann

Like what both of you shared with Jeff and Kevin on this is, reminds me of First John 4:4 where it says greater is he who is in you than he was in the world, and that that to me is the most powerful reminder that is powerful as the demons may be and powerful Satan is possibly the highest of all the angels before he fell, which we'll get into in another episode. Nothing in comparison to the Holy Spirit who's indwelling us.

Shea Houdmann

So yes, we need to be aware of the spiritual conflicts going around us. We need to be aware of the Wiles of the devil and his his demons, but we don't need to fear in the sense of they can't do anything to us that God would not allow and that's that's a tremendously powerful and important reminder. And it's something that a lot of people who ask us questions who are terrified of demons variety really need to focus in on is knowing that the idea of demons, it's scary, and I think it should be scary, but if we are walking with God, if we are focused on him, we are living for him there's nothing that demons can do to us that God is not allowed and that we can trust that he knows what he's doing and that his protection is infinitely greater than any attack the demons could possibly wage against us.

Jeff Laird

Another thing people need to remember, and I'm I'm sure that this would be appropriate for us to explore more in depth in its own podcast, but sometimes we get overly concerned about trying to get
down to details about demons. We want to create this this hierarchy. This taxonomy of them and deliverance ministries for example, we want to assign a specific name, a specific demon to every single malady or every single problem, or every single issue, and that that starts to drag into what Kevin was talking about with the idea of those superstitious things bleeding over. We're trying to systematize something that just doesn't need to be that complicated. So you're right, we need to be concerned. We need to be cautious. We need to be careful, but we don't need to be superstitious and paranoid. God has given us tools. He's given us abilities. We can use those. We don't need to be overly afraid or to try to squeeze answers out of scripture that just aren't there.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely Jeff and well said. I want to think of one other question that we should probably cover this one and it's related to the fact that Satan is not omnipresent. Many Christians think, oh, Satan is attacking me or you mentioned the deliverance ministry. I've heard people like rebuking Satan. And the book of Jude and Michael the Archangel might have something to say about that, but Satan is not omnipresent. But if the verse in Revelation 12, about 1/3 of the stars being sucked from the sky refers to angels becoming demons it does not say how many demons there are, but with Satan and all of his demons, the dark spiritual forces, they're still not omnipresent. They can be like multi present, they can be seemingly ever present, but they're not omnipresent. So not every malady we reflected with is the result of a demon.

Shea Houdmann

Not every thought that pops into our head is the result of a demon. But it leads us to a question I've seen just a few times recently and we have an article on it. I think we just published a video on it, the whole can Satan and or his demons read our minds? And that I think demons can tempt but I don't see anything in scripture that it would indicate that even Satan has the ability to literally implant thoughts in your head, even if he if he did, that would not obviously prevent God from protecting you from that influence, but I think it's more of the demons are until incredibly intelligent beings just like the angels and they have been observing humanity now for thousands of years. I don't know that they need to be able to read our minds to be able to know what we're thinking in a lot of situations, I think that their intelligence and observance of humanity for so long gives them a pretty good idea of what we're probably thinking and what they could tempt us with in that situation.

Shea Houdmann

So this has led to even another, which I think is a very disturbing practice and some view the gift of tongues as sort of like a code language between us and God, so that when we're speaking in this language, the demons can't understand it, and therefore then they can't fight against our prayers and like OK, whether you believe the gift of tongues that's active or not today that is absolutely not what the Bible describes as the gift of tongues. And even if the demons could hear our prayers, that doesn't in any sense prevent God from answering them, even if Satan himself were actively listening to me, praying to God he would not be able to prevent God from answering that prayer or you would not even be able to cause the answer that prayer to be altered or hindered. It's the whole this whole concept of like how powerful Satan, the demons are, a lot of people have a very skewed view of that. A very unbiblical view and just realizing what the Bible actually says is very important in our relationship with God, 'cause it impacts how we live, how we think, why we do the things we do. Demons are real, they're very real.
Several theologians have said, I think, Jeff you hinted at this earlier that one of the biggest deceptions Satan has ever done is deceiving people into thinking doesn’t exist. But at the same time, let’s not go too far the other direction, and thinking that every little thing that we do is related to demons, or to think that we have to take all these extraordinary measures to keep secrets from demons or to keep demons from influencing our thoughts. But those are not things that Scripture tells us to do, so let’s remember what Scripture says about spiritual warfare and focus on that rather than going down all these side paths that really at best are questionable scripturally.

Kevin Stone

Well, I'll just throw in here that we know what that end of the demons is. Scripture tells us that their destiny is the lake of fire one of these days. I mentioned this earlier about this, the demons that were interacting with Jesus and Matthew. They they knew of their coming demise and they were fearful of it. And we read about it there in the in the Book of Revelation as well, where they are going to be cast into the lake of fire. And that's going to go on forever and ever, and so there is an end to the demons work. God will see to that and we praise, we praise the name of our Lord.

Shea Houdmann

Amen, so it's been the Got Questions podcast on what does the Bible say about demons? Just giving like kind of a brief overview. The most common questions we're getting, we receive and a little bit of a foundation for the topics we will be covering in future weeks which include who or what is Satan? What does Bible say about demon possession? And who are the nephelins and so forth? So look forward to those episodes. Jeff and Kevin, thank you for joining me today. I appreciate your insights as well. Got questions? The Bible has answers. And we’ll help you find them.