

# AN INQUIRY INTO THE IDENTITY AND MEANING OF THE DEVIL AND DEMONS

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## Introduction

The interrelationship between the Devil, demons, diseases, illnesses, possession, exorcisms, and the problem of evil is a controversial and intriguing issue. Both Jewish and Christian scholars have long discussed the fine details of such matters. Pastoral counselors, psychologists, and social scientists have made several attempts at integrating and explaining mental and physical health with the psychic, physiological, and spiritual dimensions of the subject.

Such scholarly and professional interest pale in comparison to the attention this topic has received at the popular level within various Christian circles, in particular charismatic/Pentecostal believers, the Christadelphian denomination, and some within the Church of God General Conference. Various extremes can be found within the literature, preaching, and adherents of these sects of Christianity. Some feel that satanic attacks and demon possession is a very real and active threat in today's spiritual world. Others say that there is no such thing as a literal devil and that the demons are merely personifications of illnesses, diseases, or some other explanation. Still others allow for multiple perspectives to be believed within a congregation. And even some, within a group holding various views, consider the topic forbidden and taboo from inquiry or public discourse.

I must admit that I am both perplexed and troubled at the current state of affairs. Three aspects are most disconcerting. First, the insistence of those who hold to extreme perspectives, at either end of the spectrum, that anyone who reads the evidence otherwise are confused, lost, or otherwise spiritually blind. Second, the seemingly absurd arguments given by some whom, to me, ignore the specific details concerning the Devil and demons within the biblical accounts of Scripture. Third, the divorcing of these discussions from the abundance of instances where Jews wrote on the subject in the contemporary literature seems to be missing in almost every discussion. These texts determined how the biblical authors worked and dialogued in the matrix of thought and beliefs concerning the Devil and demons. Therefore, the following study seeks to be an exegetical and interpretive journey to discover what the New Testament authors most likely meant (and wanted to convey to their readers) about *the Devil* (ὁ διάβολος/ὁ σατανᾶς) and demons.<sup>1</sup>

The general approach of this study is informed by James D.G. Dunn's *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*<sup>2</sup> and John Christopher Thomas' *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of*

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<sup>1</sup> All scholars and authorities agree that there are times when the devil or satan are used in a lesser sense, such as when David is called *satan* in 1 Sam 29:4 (for a fuller discussion, see Victor P. Hamilton, 'Satan,' *ABD* 5:986. What this essay is concerned with is the how to best understand *the Satan, the Devil, and the demons.*

<sup>2</sup> London: SCM Press, 1977 (third ed. 2006).

*Illness in New Testament Thought*.<sup>3</sup> Like Dunn's work, this study seeks to listen to a diversity of voices before attempting to come to a conclusion of the subject. Similar to Thomas' work, this study attempts to offer an in-depth examination of the ways in which texts attempt to express their understanding of our test subjects.

My methodological approach employed in this investigation will be to first look at the Devil by itself, as distinct from the later topic of the demons. The Hebrew Bible will be mined for relevant texts. Then the New Testament authors will be allowed to speak their voices on the Devil. The demons will be examined afterwards from both testaments. The study will turn to the various Jewish writers within the Second Temple period in order to gain the relevant and necessary *Sitz-im-Leben*. Afterwards the study will turn to overcoming various objections to the evidence found in this investigation. Then I will draw some concluding observations and thoughts.

### **The Devil in the Hebrew Bible**

The Hebrew *satan* is used thirty one times in the MT, seventeen of them with the definite article. In each of the instances where the definite article is not used, *satan* seems to denote a general adversary or opponent, either human or divine.<sup>4</sup> Yet when *the Satan* is spoken of with the definite article, the data shifts significantly to indicate an external accuser. Fifteen of these usages are in the first two chapters of Job while the remaining two are in Zechariah chapter three.

In Job, the Satan is described as coming before the LORD in the same manner that the angels do (1:6). David Clines argues that the phrase "among them" (Heb. *tavek*) regularly denotes membership of the group in question.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that the Satan is a member of the divine counsel, and the sons of God here are almost certainly angelic messengers.<sup>6</sup> The Satan has a regular dialogue with the LORD and discusses his activity of roaming on the earth (1:7). God gives the Satan authority to tempt Job in 2:6. The next verse describes that Job was smote with

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<sup>3</sup> Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> These texts are Num 22:22-23 (angel); 1 Sam 29:4 (David); 2 Sam 19:23 (the sons of Zeruah); 1 Kgs 5:4 (unspecific adversary); 1 Kgs 11:14 (Hadad the Edomite); 1 Kgs 11:23, 25 (Rezon the son of Eliada); 1 Chr 21:1 (perhaps an exception to this list, as the chronicler uses *satan* instead of the anger of the LORD which 2 Sam 24 uses); Psa 71:13 (unspecified accusers); Psa 109:6, 29 (paralleled to a wicked man/men). The LXX does not translate any of these passages with *o satan* or *o diabolos*. Yet where the definite article is used, in the Job and Zechariah passages, the LXX always used the definite article with *satan* and *diabolos*.

<sup>5</sup> David J.A. Clines, *Job 1-20, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1989) 19. He cites Gen 23:10, 40:20; and 2 Kgs 4:13 where the same preposition is paired with the verb *tavek*.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that Ron Abel in his *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) offers the possibility that the sons of God in Job 38:7 are angels, but argues against the same interpretation of the sons of God in Job 1-2 (pgs. 166-167). He fails to take seriously the same Hebrew *b'ne haelohim* is used in both the introductory chapters of Job as well as 38:7. The LXX translates all occurrences of *b'ne haelohim* in Job as ἄγγελοι. It is quite revealing that Abel later goes on to argue that "an attempt need not be made to identify the adversary." (p. 168).

boils by the Satan. It seems that the first two chapters of Job describe the dialogues between God and a supernatural angelic adversary who is responsible for Job's plight.

In the third chapter of the prophet Zechariah, the Satan introduced as standing at the right side of Joshua the priest while in the presence of the angel of the LORD (3:1). He is ready and willing to accuse. Yet the Satan receives rebuke from the LORD in 3:2. Upon further reflection, this scene is very similar to Job chs. 1-2 in that they both portray the Satan as an accuser of a human servant of God, both stories portray God talking to the figure called Satan, and the presence of angels.<sup>7</sup> In commenting on this passage, Ralph Smith states that there can be no doubt that the scene is that of the heavenly council.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the few pertinent examples of *satan* used with the definite article, one comes away thinking that this adversary is a real figure who communicates to God, is associated somehow with the angelic hosts of heaven, and functions as the accuser *par excellence*. It is appropriate now to move onto the New Testament evidence which speaks of *the Devil*.

### **The Devil in the New Testament**

-Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1-13

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

These three accounts of the same episode offer a lot about the nature of the Devil, his temptations, and the power he holds. First of all, the Devil approaches Jesus in the same manner that the angels approach Jesus later on in the passage.<sup>9</sup> Both individuals have an open dialogue back and forth about the temptations that are taking place. Satan is able to supernaturally transport Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. He reveals that all of the kingdoms of the world have been given to him and he can give them to whomever he wishes. The divine passive used here (Luke 4:6) denotes that God is the giver of these kingdoms to the Devil. Jesus does not dispute these claims of ownership of the kingdoms as false nor does he quote a passage from the Hebrew Bible to counter this claim as he does with the temptations. The Devil also demands worship from Jesus.

The result of reading these accounts reveals that Jesus was tempted by an external, powerful being.

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<sup>7</sup> Angels are most likely the recipients of the command in 3:4.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word, 1984) 199.

<sup>9</sup> Ron Abel is forced to ignore the plain meaning of προσελθών in the narrative and argues instead that "Satan is only a personification of the pull of the desires of Jesus". Ron Abel, *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 173.

Matthew 9:34; 12:24-29

*But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."*

*But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."*

The only way that the Pharisees could explain how the miracles and exorcisms of Jesus, which were legitimately occurring in their sight, was to attribute the empowerment to Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.<sup>10</sup> *Beelzebul* is most likely a combination of the Hebrew *ba'al* (lord/master) and *zebul* (residence/abode). This figure is not to be confused with Ba'al zebub, the Philistine god of the flies in 2 Kings 1:2.<sup>11</sup> In the minds of the Pharisees, the ruler of the demons was the only alternative of empowerment to God's involvement in this exorcism. Jesus responds that this logic does not make any sense, primarily because if Satan (Jesus' identification of Beelzebul) were to exorcise Satan, his kingdom cannot stand. Therefore, Jesus does not dispute the assertion that the demons have a ruler prince nor his power over them, which are a part of Satan's ruling dominion. In fact, Jesus states implicitly that Satan is a potential empowering figure and that demonic activity is attributed to him.

-Matthew 13:38-39

*And the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.*

This parable given by Jesus needs to first be interpreted based on its designated name given in Matthew 13:36: *the parable of the tares*. It is specifically given to explain the nature of the tares. Jesus explains who they are, where they came from, what they are doing, what will happen to them, and when this will occur. The tares are the sons of 'the evil one' (τοῦ πονηροῦ), which is a proper name according to W.D. Davies and D. Allison.<sup>12</sup> This figure is identified as both 'the enemy as well as 'the Devil'.

Since the parable notes that there are only two types of people in the world, the sons of the kingdom as sowed by the Son of Man and the sons of the evil one as sowed by the Devil, this parable seeks to give insight as to why there is so much opposition and lack of response to Jesus' kingdom ministry. The primary culprit is the Devil who sows those who have not responded with faith and understanding to the message of the kingdom that Jesus is preaching.

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that the *Testament of Solomon* calls Beelzebul was formerly "the highest-ranking angel in heaven" (6:1-2).

<sup>11</sup> Some NT mss. have assimilated this figure into the Matt 10:25.

<sup>12</sup> W.D. Davies, D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, International Critical Commentary* vol. II (London: T&T Clark, 1991) 428.

-2 Corinthians 11:13-14

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

Paul is discussing with the Corinthians about their common opponents. He first discusses how the pseudo-apostles are currently disguising (μετασχηματιζόμενοι) themselves as apostles of Christ. He then moves the argument forward by saying that it is no wonder that these deceptions are occurring, *for* the Satan disguises (same verb) as an angel of light. The logic of Paul's argument is that since there is a black and white contrast concerning the deception of the fake apostles/Christ's apostles then Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light from an angel of darkness.<sup>13</sup> Paul here seems to be drawing upon what other Jews were saying about the masquerading powers of Satan to change into a bright angel, such as what is found in *Life of Adam and Eve*<sup>14</sup> and the *Apocalypse of Moses*.<sup>15</sup> The *Testament of Job* also speaks of the transforming ability of the Devil.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore Paul's argument strongly suggests that Satan is a fallen angel capable and powerful enough to disguise himself deceptively.

-2 Thessalonians 2:9

*The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,*

Paul speaks of the Man of Lawlessness whose coming (parousia) will commence prior to the Day of the Lord. Yet this figure's parousia will be according to the working and empowering of the Satan, and will be visible in all power and signs and false wonders. Paul wants his readers to know that this figure will have a pseudo-parousia and will be gifted by Satan to do supernatural works. Ben Witherington helpfully points out that the text is not suggesting that the signs and wonders are not real; rather the legitimacy of their works is what is misleading about them.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, Satan is presented here as a figure that has the ability to grant power, miracles, and wonders to human individuals as well as energizing a pseudo-parousia.

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<sup>13</sup> Ron Abel twists the Greek here, which uses a singular verb for Satan, and writes instead that "The Satan of this passage is not a rebel angel but *rebel Jewish adversaries* who were undermining the apostle Paul's influence in the Corinthian ecclesia." *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 177, emphasis mine.

<sup>14</sup> *Life of Adam and Eve* 9:1.

<sup>15</sup> *Apoc. Moses* 17:1-2.

<sup>16</sup> *Test. Job* 6:4 has Satan disguising himself as a beggar and then in bread seller in 23:1.

<sup>17</sup> Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 223-4.

-James 4:7

*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

In a similar way to the temptation stories of Jesus and the Devil, James states that resisting this figure will result in his fleeing. The Greek preposition ἀφ' denotes that this departing of the Devil will be away from the tempted individual. This is not an internal struggle, but rather one coming from an external tempter who subsequently retreats *away from* the victim.

-1 John 3:8

*The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*

This passage reveals that the Devil is an individual who has committed sins from the beginning. People who go on with their lives sinning are derived in some special way from this figure. Therefore, this being is one who is morally responsible to the point to where he is held accountable for his sins. Both the one practicing and the Devil are active participants in the sinning. He is also noted as existing in the beginning, although the author does not elaborate further as to the nature of timing.

-1 John 5:19

*The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

This is another passage that ascribes power and influence to an individual. This person is called the evil one (τῷ πονηρῷ). The entire *kosmos* is currently held in the sphere of the evil one's power. This is hardly someone that refers to a human adversary or to internal struggles with sin. For John, this is a very real and pertinent threat that he and his community know and recognize.

-Jude 1:9

*But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

The archangel Michael disputed and argued with the Devil concerning the body of Moses in this passage. He also rebuked him with the authority of God. This is certainly not the talk of an internal struggle of an archangel.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nor is it, as Rob Abel argues, an argument with "disaffected priests debarred from priestly office" in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts*

-Revelation 2:10

*Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days.*

In this passage, John is warning the believers in Smyrna that the Devil is about to put them into prison. This means that this Devil (ὁ διάβολος) has the power, influence, and ability to cast believers into various places which will result in temptation and persecution.

-Revelation 12:9

*And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

John reveals much information about our subject. The Devil is called Satan and is equated with the serpent of old (presumably the serpent of Genesis chapter three).<sup>19</sup> This figure is currently deceiving the whole world with his influence, power, and authority. He also has a group of rebel angels at his disposal.

After surveying and assessing the pertinent evidence, many points can confidently be presented as conclusion. First of all, it is difficult to explain away the multiple statements that Satan the Devil is a conscious, external tempter. He has been given a lot of power and authority and bestows this upon whomever he wishes. He disguises himself as an angel of light, is linked with the serpent of old, and can enter into the heart of his victims in order to oppose the will of God. Although some texts, all of which are without the definite article, speak of a general accuser in a secondary sense, the primary way that Satan (the Devil) is spoken of seems to refer to a literal, external being who is opposed to the will of God and his children.

Now that the pertinent evidence concerning Satan has been examined, it is now appropriate to move on to analyzing the nature and definition of demons in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

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(Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 181-182. He has to do make the most nonsensical interpretation by claiming that the body of Moses was actually Joshua the High Priest!

<sup>19</sup> Ron Abel spends three pages attempting to show, unsuccessfully, that this passage does not mean what most take it to mean, but fails to give his readers an affirmative answer on what it does mean! He also fails to take seriously the connection of the serpent with Satan and the activity of this figure as deceiving the world. His entire argument tries to steer readers away from concluding that Satan is a fallen angel, which is not the aim of our investigation. *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 182-184.

## **Demons in the Biblical Tradition**

Examining the nature of demons, at least within the Hebrew Bible, is not quite as simple as searching for the word and reading the passage. There are quite a few ways in which various demonic entities are described in Hebrew.

1. To start, many of the demons are referred to be name *shed* or the plural *shedim*. These instances are as follows:

-Deuteronomy 32:17

*They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread.*

Demons here are paired synonymously with false gods who were sacrificed to. They were considered objects of worship and therefore a legitimate threat to the Israelite community.

-Psalm 106:37-38

*They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood.*

Demons again are equated with the false idols of the nations, this time directly in the Hebrew text. Since offering a sacrifice is considered an act of worship, the psalmist is feeling remorse for this disobedient act of prostration on behalf of Israel.

2. In the Hebrew Bible one finds the goat-demons<sup>20</sup> in four occurrences, coming from the Hebrew *sairim*.

-Leviticus 17:7

*They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.*

The *sairim* here are depicted as prohibited objects of worship for the children of Israel.

-2 Chronicles 11:15

*He set up priests of his own for the high places, for the goat-demons and for the calves which he had made.*

King Jeroboam installed priests and built high places towards both the *sairim* and the calves.

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<sup>20</sup> NRSV translation.



-Isaiah 13:21

*But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and goat-demons will frolic there.*

-Isaiah 34:14

*The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, the goat-demons also will cry to its kind; yes, the Lilith will settle there and will find herself a resting place.*

In the Isaiah passages the *sairim* are spoken together with the ostriches, howling creatures, and wild animals as a part of apocalyptic texts located in the desert. Some even think that the Lilith figure here is another name for a desert-dwelling female demon.

3. Leviticus 16 speaks of *azazel*, a Hebrew word that has divided readers as to its meaning. Four times it is mentioned as a goat-demon that lived in the wilderness in reference to the Day of Atonement.<sup>21</sup> It is unlikely that the meaning of *azazel* here refers to what many translations call a “scapegoat”, a guess based on the assumption that the name derives from *ez* (“goat”) and *azav* (“go away”). The problem with this interpretation is that in Lev. 16:8 the goat is said to be for *azazel*. In 16:10 the goat is sent but it goes to *azazel* in 16:26. One of the more telling aspects is that 16:8 places “for Yahweh” and “for *azazel*” in parallel, suggesting that there is best understood as an actual divine being opposed to God.

4. Sometimes the translators of the LXX interpreted the idols as ‘demons.’

-Psalm 96:5 MT (95:5 LXX)

*For all the gods of the people are idols (LXX δαιμόνια).*

This text shows that there were some who understood the false gods (idols) as demons.<sup>22</sup>

Now that all the various ways that the demons are spoken of in the Hebrew Bible, it is now appropriate to move right into the New Testament evidence.

-Matthew 4:24

*The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.*

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<sup>21</sup> Lev 16:8, 10 (twice), 26.

<sup>22</sup> This also occurs in LXX Lev 17:7; 2 Chr. 11:15; Isa 13:21, 34:14, 65:3.

In a narrative summary statement about the healing that Jesus performed those who are possessed by demons are spoken of as distinct of those with illnesses, diseases, and the paralyzed.

-Matthew 8:28-34

*When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way...*

Jesus comes over into this Gentile territory and comes into contact with two unclean, demon possessed males. Their possession gave them seemingly super-human strength which made it to where no one was physically able to pass along that road. Before Jesus even utters a word, they cry out to him by acknowledging him as the Son of God, a rather shocking piece of information for unlearned Gentiles, who never met Jesus before, to utter!<sup>23</sup> They know of the future time of judgment and ask if Jesus was here to torment them prior to that time. The demons continually entreated Jesus so that if he was to cast them out to send them into the herd of swine. Jesus agrees and exorcises the demons with a command. They come out of the two men and immediately into the pigs, which subsequently perish in the nearby water.

-Mark 1:34

*And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.*

Jesus did not allow the demons, who had just been cast out of the victims, to talk because they recognized his identity. Mark is clear to differentiate the demons from the many of whom he healed. Jesus was rebuking the demons, not the people.

-Luke 4:40-41

*While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.*

Luke is very precise in his depiction of this episode. He makes a distinction between the people that Jesus healed (αὐτούς) and the demons which he verbally rebuked (αὐτὰ). The crowds are masculine in Greek while the demons are neuter. This avoids any possibility of confusing the

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<sup>23</sup> Davies and Allison call this "supernatural knowledge", W.D. Davies, D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, International Critical Commentary* vol. II (London: T&T Clark, 1991) 81.

object of Jesus' rebukes. He was clearly addressing the demons who spoke to him, not the victims of the demonizing.

-Luke 8:29

*For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.*

This passage provides two important pieces of data for our inquiry. First of all, it alerts us to the fact that demons are sometimes equated to unclean spirits. Secondly, this demon gave empowering strength to its victim. If this man were merely sick with an illness, how does it explain his supernatural strength?

-1 Corinthians 10:20-21

*No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

In Corinth, Paul was attempting to settle a dispute as to whether or not eating food that was sacrificed to pagan gods was acceptable Christian behavior. Surely some of the adherents felt that since the idols were just worthless images, there was no harm in eating the meat. Others felt that this was a compromise to the uniqueness of Christian worship. Paul responds in similar manner to Deut. 32:17 that these idols are really demons which should not be interacted with. The Apostle Paul saw the participating in meals sacrificed to demons as a real threat to the Christian community and therefore forbade this form of religious fellowship.

-Ephesians 6:12

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

The author of Ephesians defines the nature of the opposition that believers will struggle against. Although the powers and world forces have been mentioned already in the epistle, the *κοσμοκράτορας* are mentioned here. This term is not mentioned anywhere else in the NT or in the LXX. It is doubtful that the author of Ephesians coined this term because it shows up in non-Jewish and non-Christian sources. It appears a few times in the magical papyri.<sup>24</sup> It is used to

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<sup>24</sup> The earliest of these papyri date to the second century CE, but these occurrences reflect earlier usages than the date of the documents.

describe the spirits called up to help the conjurer. For example, one of the magical papyri mentions Nephotes making a recipe to the Egyptian king Psammetichos so that he can conjure up a god to answer his requests.<sup>25</sup> This god is called the *kosmokrator*. It is used to describe the deities Helios,<sup>26</sup> Ra,<sup>27</sup> and Hermes.<sup>28</sup> The phrase also shows up in an inscription found in a bathhouse in Rome which reads, “One Zeus, Sarapis, Helios, world-power, unconquerable.”<sup>29</sup>

The Jewish *Testament of Solomon* mentions the *kosmokrators* as parallel to the *stoicheia*.<sup>30</sup> This passage goes in to associate these *kosmokrators* with thirty-six demonic rulers of the heavenly sphere.<sup>31</sup> This text demonstrates the interchangeability with these “world powers” and the *stoicheia*, a phrase used elsewhere in Paul.<sup>32</sup>

In light of this evidence, the term in Ephesians begins to take form. There is not one *kosmokrator* but many (the term is plural). These are not beneficial spirits but rather evil, being modified with τοῦ σκότους τούτου. The pagan deities are not lifeless or imaginary and therefore harmless. They are powerful agents, dwelling in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), which need to be resisted with the full armor of God. They will eventually be summed up in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

-James 2:19

*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*

James identifies the demons as conscious entities that can believe important truths, understanding them, and shudder at the reality of those truths.<sup>34</sup> They are posed in this passage as a contrast to Christians who merely believe truth without having the corresponding works which are appropriate. This assertion by James should not be surprising since the Synoptics regularly have demons professing truths about Jesus which he subsequently tried to hush.

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<sup>25</sup> PGM IV.166.

<sup>26</sup> PGM III. 35.

<sup>27</sup> PGM IV.1599; 2198.

<sup>28</sup> PGM V.400.

<sup>29</sup> *Eis Zeus, Sarapis, Helios, kosmokrator, aneikitos.*

<sup>30</sup> “I commanded another demon to appear before me. There came seven spirits (*pneumata*) bound up together hand and foot... When I, Solomon, saw them, I was amazed and asked them, “Who are you?” They replied, “We are the elemental beings (*stoicheia*), rulers of this world of darkness (*kosmokratoras toras tou skotous*). –*T. Sol.* 8:1-2.

<sup>31</sup> *T. Sol.* 18:3.

<sup>32</sup> Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Eph 1:10.

<sup>34</sup> The attempt by Ron Abel, *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 178, to reduce these demons to illnesses makes the argument by James incoherent, since he is continually giving examples of how faith without works does not constitute legitimate faith. Understanding the demons as supernatural, conscious entities opposed to the will of God makes for a much more likely acceptable interpretation in light of the argument of James.

When all of the pertinent evidence is surveyed, assessed, and evaluated, some rather obvious conclusions can be drawn. The Bible sometimes speaks of demons as the reality of the pagan idols which receive worship. These beings inhabit victims, both human and animal. They speak distinct from the voice of their victims. They have supernatural understandings of truth about the identity of God, Jesus, and the judgment to come. They talk to Jesus and Jesus talks back to them. They fear the coming judgment as well as the reality of the oneness of God. They are ruled by Beelzebul, who is called both the ruler of the demons as well as Satan. While it is obvious that the side effects of demon-possession include various ailments and illnesses, the evidence of both testaments seems to indicate quite strongly that these demons are not to be confused with the side effects they bring. They are conscious, threatening, supernatural beings which are at odds with the will of God.

### **Devil/Demons in Jewish Literature**

One of most neglected collection of texts within the theological discourse about the identity of the Devil and the demons is the Jewish literature found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, Pseudopigrapha, and Rabbinic sources. The purpose of examining this body of literature is to look at all the relevant texts which create the context of meaning for our inquiry interests. Almost always, in discussions about the identity of the Devil and demons, are these texts ignored. Since the texts of the Bible were not written in a vacuum, it is actually necessary to look at this body of literature in detail to more confidently ascertain the definitions our study seeks.

#### **1. Qumran Literature.**

The Qumran literature uses *satan* in only three places.<sup>35</sup> Of greater interest is the proper name given to this figure: Belial. This word is also used in the Hebrew Bible 27 times to denote a “worthless person.”<sup>36</sup> Sometimes Belial is used with the alternative rendering Beliar, which Paul uses in 2 Cor. 6:15. This figure is identified as the spirit of darkness,<sup>37</sup> the one who exercises dominion over the world,<sup>38</sup> and the one who casts his nets of fornication, wealth, and pollution of the sanctuary.<sup>39</sup> He is the figure who, along with the spirits of his lot, rebelled against God and turned aside from the commandments in order to do evil instead.<sup>40</sup> In the War Scroll, Belial is labeled as an angel who is accompanied with the angels of destruction:

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<sup>35</sup> 1QSb 1:8; 1QH 4:6; 45:3.

<sup>36</sup> Six times in 1 Samuel, four times in 2 Samuel, three times in the Psalms, three times in Proverbs, twice in Deuteronomy, twice in Judges, twice in 1 Kings, twice in Nahum, once in 2 Chronicles, and once in Job.

<sup>37</sup> 1QM 13:12.

<sup>38</sup> 1QS 1:18, 24; 2:5, 19; 1QM 14:9.

<sup>39</sup> CD 4:17-18.

<sup>40</sup> 11Q13 2:12.

You created Belial for the pit, an angel of enmity, his dominion is in darkness, his counsel is for evil and wickedness. All the spirits of his lot, angels of destruction, walk in the laws of darkness.<sup>41</sup>

The members of the Qumran community of Jews who failed to remain faithful to their covenant stipulations were under threat of being turned over to destruction at the hand of Belial.<sup>42</sup> This spirit of Belial is a threat that the members of the community have to be ever watchful for.<sup>43</sup> As regular blessings are to be offered unto God, counter curses are to be spoken against Belial.<sup>44</sup> The armies of the Qumran community will fight the end-time decisive battle against Belial, his armies, the sons of darkness, and the king of Kittim.<sup>45</sup> Belial will be devoured with fire at the time of judgment.<sup>46</sup>

The ruler of the demons is designated in ways other than Belial at times. The angel Mastema is the one who retreats from the Jew who turns to the law of Moses.<sup>47</sup> Curses are called down upon a figure called Melki-resha who plans are full of guilty inclinations.<sup>48</sup> In the noncanonical psalm 11Q Ps<sup>a</sup> there is a plea for deliverance in which the author asks God to “let not Satan rule over me, nor an unclean spirit, neither let pain nor the evil inclination take possession of my bones.”<sup>49</sup> Demons are mentioned a few times in these psalms, once in connection with the “prince of enmity” who is identified as Belial “who rules over the abyss of darkness.”<sup>50</sup> A rebuke of Belial is given in one of these psalms which speaks of him as having a face of futility and the horns of a wretch.<sup>51</sup>

4Q510 is a hymn against the demons which lists it along with the spirits of the ravaging angels, Liliths, owls, jackals, and the bastard spirits.<sup>52</sup> These spirits are highly likely to refer to the offspring of the Watchers and the beautiful daughters of men described in Gen. 6. The Aramaic incantation 4Q560 incantation describes a midwife attempting to rebuke both a male wasting-demon and a female wasting-demon entering into the child in her care.<sup>53</sup> She speaks to the two of them and admonishes them from disturbing the child any longer. Although there is some dispute over how the first verse of this passage is to be reconstructed, many think that Beelzebul is the leader of these demons.

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<sup>41</sup> 1QM 13:11-12.

<sup>42</sup> CD 8:1-2.

<sup>43</sup> CD 12:2-3.

<sup>44</sup> 1QM 13:1-2, 4.

<sup>45</sup> 1QM 15:2-3; 16:11; 18:1-3.

<sup>46</sup> 11Q13 3:7.

<sup>47</sup> CD 14:6.

<sup>48</sup> 4Q280 1:2.

<sup>49</sup> 11Q Ps<sup>a</sup> 19:15-16.

<sup>50</sup> 11QPsAp<sup>a</sup> 1:4-6.

<sup>51</sup> 11QPsAp<sup>a</sup> 4:5-7.

<sup>52</sup> 4Q510 1:5-6.

<sup>53</sup> 4Q560 1:2-4.

## 2. Tobit

Tobit comes into conflict with a wicked demon named Asmodeus. He is the one responsible for the deaths of Sarah's seven husbands.<sup>54</sup> When Tobit marries Sarah, she is set free from Asmodeus' destructive behavior.<sup>55</sup> Raphael, an angel sent from God, helps the couple overcome the demon. The demon shows feelings as it is said to love Sarah.<sup>56</sup> Asmodeus is cast out by the aroma of a burnt liver and heart of a fish, where he subsequently runs away to the remotest parts of Egypt. Raphael the angel immediately binds the demon after it exits Sarah's body.<sup>57</sup>

## 3. Wisdom of Solomon

The Greek *diabolos* occurs only once in the Book of Wisdom. At the conclusion of the second chapter the author contrasts the creation of humans by God for incorruption and the bringing of death into the world through the envy of the Devil.<sup>58</sup> The dissimilarity of the two intentions for humans, one being on the part of God and the other on the part of the Devil, seems to indicate that the Devil is responsible for death. Of note for our study is that the Devil is described as having the emotion of envy.

## 4. Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees speaks quite regularly of the Devil and demons. In the tenth chapter we see that demons were responsible for leading astray the descendants of Noah after the flood. Not only were the demons drawing them away from God, they were also binding the victims and slaying them.<sup>59</sup> Their origin is attributed to the mating of the angelic Watchers with the daughters of men that is recounted in Gen. 6. These angels are called the fathers of these spirits.<sup>60</sup> Noah prays to God that he would imprison these spirits and hold them in the place of condemnation. The chief of these spirits is a figure called Mastema. He comes forward and beseeches God to allow a tenth of them to remain before him and be subject to Satan (an apparent alternative name for Mastema) on the earth.<sup>61</sup> He is also the one who comes before God and incited the temptation of Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, very similar to the episodes in the first two chapters of Job.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Tobit 3:8.

<sup>55</sup> Tobit 3:17.

<sup>56</sup> Tobit 6:15.

<sup>57</sup> Tobit 8:3.

<sup>58</sup> Wisdom 2:23-24.

<sup>59</sup> *Jub.* 10:2-3.

<sup>60</sup> *Jub.* 10:5.

<sup>61</sup> *Jub.* 10:7-12.

<sup>62</sup> *Jub.* 17:16-17.

## 5. 1 Enoch

Like Jubilees, 1 Enoch attributes the origin of fallen spirits to the incident of the angelic Watchers cohabiting with the daughters of men.<sup>63</sup> Their judgment has been slated for the day of consummation, which is located at the end of the age.<sup>64</sup> Satan is often spoken of with the alternative name Azazel. Azazel is the being who is responsible for teaching men how to make weapons of war.<sup>65</sup> He is attributed with teaching all unrighteousness and revealing the secrets of heaven to mankind.<sup>66</sup> The angel Raphael is commanded to bind Azazel hand and foot, and to cast him into the darkness of the desert.<sup>67</sup> Enoch has conversations with Azazel, condemning him for his sins.<sup>68</sup> Azazel is spoken of on multiple occasions as having a host (of angels) in his possession.<sup>69</sup> He is called an angel and listed with the dozens of other angels who are prepared for judgment.<sup>70</sup>

## 6. 2 Enoch

This document speaks occasionally but openly about Satan. In one of the visions given to Enoch the giant Grigori are introduced. They are said to have rejected the Lord of light along with their prince Satanail.<sup>71</sup> The twenty-ninth chapter puts into the mouth of God a commentary on his original creation. He speaks about creating Adam and placing him in the garden of Eden. The devil is spoken of as understanding the plans and will of God. Then he is described in vivid details:

The devil is the evil spirit of the lower places, as a fugitive he made Sotona from the heavens as his name was Satanail, thus he became different from the angels, but his nature did not change his intelligence as far as his understanding of righteous and sinful things.<sup>72</sup>

It seems that 'Satanail', an alternative way of speaking of the devil, is the intelligent, conscious ruler of disobedient beings. He was present during the life of Adam prior to the fall described at the end of Gen. 3.

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<sup>63</sup> 1 Enoch 16:1.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Enoch 16:2.

<sup>65</sup> 1 Enoch 8:1.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Enoch 9:6-7.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Enoch 10:4-5.

<sup>68</sup> 1 Enoch 13:1-3.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Enoch 54:4-5; 55:4.

<sup>70</sup> 1 Enoch 69:1-3. Interestingly enough, he is listed as both the tenth angel as well as the twenty-first.

<sup>71</sup> 2 Enoch 18:1-3.

<sup>72</sup> 2 Enoch 29:4



## 7. Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs

This document uses the terms ‘satan’ and ‘the devil’ rather sparingly. Yet there are 29 occurrences of Beliar. This figure is spoken of as the enemy of God that sins will bring one near to.<sup>73</sup> The children of Jacob are told to choose between the precepts of God or the works of Beliar.<sup>74</sup> They are warned that in the last days their descendants will turn from God and cleave unto Beliar.<sup>75</sup> Various spirits are attributed to him.<sup>76</sup> Those who turn away from God are said to be ruled by Beliar, showing his power and dominion.<sup>77</sup> On the day of judgment, when the righteous will have access to the tree of life, Beliar will be bound by God.<sup>78</sup> Afterwards he will be cast into the fire where he will no longer be able to deceive the children of Israel.<sup>79</sup>

## 8. Apocalypse of Abraham

This text does not speak of the Devil, Satan, or demons. Rather the figure opposed to God is Azazel. He first shows up in chapter thirteen in dialogue with Abraham.<sup>80</sup> The angel reveals Azazel to have his lot on earth because he chose this as his dwelling place (in contrast to heaven).<sup>81</sup> In him is the spirit of lies but God has not permitted that the righteous are to be within his power. He is called “the tempter” and the one who deceives.<sup>82</sup> Azazel is spoken of by God as a figure that offers acts of worship.<sup>83</sup> He is labeled as a crafty worm (snake?), perhaps alluding to the serpent in Gen. 3.<sup>84</sup>

## 9. Martyrdom of Isaiah<sup>85</sup>

The second chapter describes the ascension of Manasseh to the throne after the death of Hezekiah. It is said of him that he failed to serve God in the manner that his father demonstrated but rather turned and served Satan, his angels, and his powers.<sup>86</sup> The author gives two other names, Beliar and Matanbachus, for Satan, and calls him “the angel of

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<sup>73</sup> *Test. Simeon* 5:3; *Test. Dan* 4:7.

<sup>74</sup> *Test. Levi* 19:1-2; *Test. Naphtali* 2:6; 3:1-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Test. Issachar* 6:1.

<sup>76</sup> *Test. Issachar* 7:7; *Test. Dan* 1:7; *Test. Joseph* 7:4; *Test. Benjamin* 6:1.

<sup>77</sup> *Test. Asher* 1:8; *Test. Benjamin* 3:1.

<sup>78</sup> *Test. Levi* 18:10-12; *Test. Dan*. 5:10.

<sup>79</sup> *Test. Judah* 26:3.

<sup>80</sup> *Apoc. Abr.* 13:6-14.

<sup>81</sup> *Apoc. Abr.* 13:14.

<sup>82</sup> *Apoc. Abr.* 13:12-13.

<sup>83</sup> *Apoc. Abr.* 29:5-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Apoc. Abr.* 31:6.

<sup>85</sup> Even though this document is a composite text coming from different authors writing in different centuries, the initial chapters are universally agreed to be from the second century BCE.

<sup>86</sup> *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:2-3.

lawlessness” and “the ruler of this world.”<sup>87</sup> This angel is then described as delighting in Jerusalem because of Manasseh’s devotion to him. Satan therefore made the king strong in apostasy and in the lawlessness of the nation.<sup>88</sup> Satan worship commenced and brought forth the prophet Isaiah to bring rebuke.<sup>89</sup>

## 10. Life of Adam and Eve

This document describes an expansion of the beginning chapters of Genesis. It is rather striking how forward the author is in regards to the Devil and his relationship to the serpent that tempted Adam and Eve. In the fifteenth chapter Eve begins to recount the story of “the enemy” deceived her and her husband.<sup>90</sup> The Devil told the serpent to come towards him, and the serpent complied. The Devil turns the serpent, which originally was loyal to the Lord, against Adam. The serpent is to be the vessel through which the Devil will speak to Adam.<sup>91</sup> The serpent complies and ends up tricking Eve into eating the forbidden fruit with the Devil talking through his mouth.<sup>92</sup> Eve goes on and even states that the Devil spoke through her when she tempted Adam with the fruit!<sup>93</sup>

It would seem that the Jewish writers and theologians who discussed the Devil and/or the demons believed them to be very real and potent threats to the people of God. Satan (or one of his other names) is often called an angel who disobeyed God and leads the rebellion against him. The demons inhabit their victims, are able to communicate effectively, understand doctrine, and are sentenced to judgment. Of special interest to this particular study is that *every Jewish author that mentions the Devil or demons speaks of them as external spiritual beings*. Their theologies, although showing only minor trends, are in their basic understanding of who Satan is and what the demons are in agreement with the authors of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. If we are to list all of the documents that provide this contextual evidence, we would have these eighteen witnesses: The Rule of the Community (1QS), The War Scroll (1QM), The Damascus Document (CD), 4QBlessings<sup>f</sup>, 4QSongs of the Sage<sup>a</sup>, 4QAgainst Demons, 11QPsalms<sup>a</sup>, 11QApocryphal Psalms<sup>a</sup>, 11QMechizedec, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Apocalypse of Abraham, the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and Life of Adam and Eve.

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<sup>87</sup> *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:4.

<sup>88</sup> *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:5

<sup>89</sup> *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:7-8.

<sup>90</sup> *Life of Adam and Eve* 15:1-3.

<sup>91</sup> *Life of Adam and Eve* 16:1-5.

<sup>92</sup> *Life of Adam and Eve* 17:4.

<sup>93</sup> *Life of Adam and Eve* 21:3.

## Overcoming Objections

It is now appropriate, after citing the evidence in favor of a literal external Devil and conscious demons in the biblical records as well as the relevant Jewish literature, to give attention to some commonly proposed objections.

### 1. “The Devil is to be understood as a human opponent/adversary.”

It is certainly true that *satan* and *diabolos* can be attributed to humans.<sup>94</sup> It is however demonstrable that the Hebrew Bible reserves *satan* with the definite article to denote an external accuser, as seen in Job 1-2 and Zech 3. Every instance where *ha satan* occurs indicates one who is not human but rather in all likelihood a powerful angel.

Another point that needs careful consideration is that the Devil is often spoken of having power and dominion over the kingdoms of the world,<sup>95</sup> statements which would be nonsensical if attributed to a human adversary.

One should remember that twice in Revelation the Devil is equated with the serpent of old.<sup>96</sup> As the evidence in the relevant Jewish literature of the time indicated, this was a commonly held belief by many of John the Seer’s contemporaries.

### 2. “The Devil is internal human nature/sin.”

Since the Devil incites opposition to God, it seems appropriate that he is linked among the categories of sin and unrighteousness. However, there is too much evidence to ignore which indicates that the Devil is an external, conscious figure. He approaches God in Job, stands at the right hand of Joshua in Zechariah, approaches Jesus in Matthew and Luke, and is said to flee from anyone who resists him in James. He has authority, power, and influence over the kingdoms of the world in various texts. He has the ability to empower others to do miraculous deeds, wonders, and signs.

One might argue that the Devil is an outward personification of sin. This is one of the primary responses of Duncan Heaster, a leading Christadelphian apologist. He writes that personifications occur in Proverbs and in various chapters of Romans.<sup>97</sup> This, he suggests, is the best way to understand the instances when the Devil are described as a person. The problem with this is that we can expect personifications in Wisdom literature, such as Proverbs. Paul indeed elaborates metaphorically about sin in Romans (but he also poetically speaks of “righteousness” in the very next breath). Yet in narrative passages, such as the introductory chapters of Job, Matthew 4, and Luke 4, the genre requires a straightforward reading. One is not supposed to read narrative the same way one reads poetry in Wisdom literature. He does

<sup>94</sup> 1 Kgs 5:18; 11:14; 11:23; Psa 109:6; Matt 16:23; 1 Tim 3:11; Titus 2:3.

<sup>95</sup> Matt 13:37-38; Luke 4:6; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 John 5:19.

<sup>96</sup> Rev 12:9; 20:2.

<sup>97</sup> Duncan Heaster, *Bible Basics* (Xlibris Corp, 2001) 179. He cites Prov. 9:1; 20:1; Rom. 6:23; and various passages out of Romans 5-7.

not offer any comment on the various ways that the Devil is clearly understood as a real, external figure in the variety of Jewish literature which creates the context for the writers of the Bible. The literary conventions created by genre require, primarily, a literal reading in narrative passages.

3. “The demons are to be understood as illnesses/sicknesses.”

It is obviously true that the demons are often presented as causing the illnesses of their victims, although the Gospel of Mark makes this the exception to the rule.<sup>98</sup> This should not give cause to equate the demons with the demonized. First of all, Jesus addresses the demons as distinct entities from their victims in Luke 4:41. This indicates that the demons are not illnesses but rather refutable beings that Jesus spoke to and identified as such.

Secondly, the demons often have supernatural and miraculous knowledge of doctrines such as the identity of God, Jesus, and of the eschatological judgment which do not make sense if these insights are attributed to the demonized victims (see Matthew 8:28-29; Mark 1:23-26; Luke 8:30-31; James 2:19). In the case of the Geresene demoniac, this victim was a Gentile and recognized Jesus as the son of the Most High and the future judge immediately. How did a Gentile come to know this information apart from the knowledge of the inhabiting evil spirit’s knowledge?

Thirdly, there is no occurrence of demon-possession among the followers of Christ in the New Testament. Every single instance where a demon occupies its victim indicates one who has yet to turn to the Lord. On the other hand, converted believers often struggled with sickness and illnesses. We have indications that even influential figures in the churches such as Paul,<sup>99</sup> Epaphroditus,<sup>100</sup> Timothy,<sup>101</sup> and Trophimus got sick.<sup>102</sup>

Fourthly, exorcism is regarded by modern experts to in fact be a legitimate experience. W.D. Davies and Dale Allison argue that, “exorcism, even if foreign, and perhaps even distasteful, to many, *does take place*, no matter what explanation one may give to it.”<sup>103</sup> They cite a physician with a M.D. who has gone on record as a first-hand witness to an exorcism and claimed that his findings are not explainable in conventional medical terms.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, an argument that claims that the exorcising of demons in the ancient world was an immature way to talk about diseases and illnesses is no longer convincing according to many experts.

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<sup>98</sup> When one looks at the ten specific healing stories in Mark’s Gospel (1:29-32, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:21-43; 6:54-56; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 9:14-19; and 10:46-52) only once is an illness attributed to demonic possession (9:14-19).

<sup>99</sup> Gal 4:13-15; 2 Cor 12:7-10.

<sup>100</sup> Phil 2:25-30.

<sup>101</sup> 1 Tim 5:23.

<sup>102</sup> 2 Tim 4:20.

<sup>103</sup> W.D. Davies, D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, International Critical Commentary* vol. II (London: T&T Clark, 1991) 78, emphasis mine.

<sup>104</sup> M.S. Peck, *People of the Lie* (New York) pp. 182-4.

Fifthly, demon-possession is often argued to be understood as a way of speaking of illnesses in the ancient world and that modern medicine deals with these illnesses adequately. The problem with this view is that the ancient world did have medicine and herbal ways of dealing with sicknesses. Physicians did exist in these times, as the evidence of the frequency of the Greek *ιατρος* indicates.<sup>105</sup> There were times that even physicians were unable to deal with certain ailments, as in the modern world.

It should also be noted that illnesses are given by various sources throughout the biblical accounts, thus weakening the position that all demons are illnesses. The source of infirmities is attributed to the following:

- a. *God* (Lev 26:16; Num 12:9-10; 2 Kgs 5:27; 2 Chr 21:14-15; Psa 38; Luke 1:18-20; John 5:1-16; 9:1-34; Acts 5:1-11; 9:8-18; 12:21-23; 13:4-12; 1 Cor 11:27-34; James 5:14-18).
- b. *The Devil and/or demons* (Matt 4:23-25; 9:32-34; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 4:38-41; 7:21-23; 11:14; Acts 5:12-16; 10:38; 2 Cor 12:7-10).
- c. *Naturally or neutrally caused illnesses* (Luke 13:1-3, 4-5; Acts 8:4-8; Phil 2:25-30; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20).

Therefore, the assertion that all illnesses are caused by demons cannot stand on the basis of how God can inflict humans and how illnesses are often unattributed to a particular giver.

## Conclusions

In light of the textual evidence, the lexical definitions of words, the support of commentators, and the context of the Jewish literature, it is now appropriate to put our finger in the air and assess where the wind is blowing. I feel that the proper conclusions can be summarized as follows:

1. The Devil/Satan is a supernatural figure, believed by many to be an angel, who accuses and tempts humanity from doing the will of God. He goes by many names, such as Belial, Beliar, Azazel, Beelzebul, Satanail, Matanbachus, and maybe others.<sup>106</sup> He works personally and through the agency of his demons, over which he is their prince/ruler. He is in control of the kingdoms of the world and has been given this authority by God. He currently is deceiving the nations through his lies. He has the ability to empower humans to do wonders and miracles. He has control of the elements and forces of nature. Often times he is spoken of with groups of people associated with him, such as children of the Devil, sons of Belial, sons of the evil one, etc. In light of all of these attestations, God, in his providence, allows for this figure to maintain his position and authority for the time being.

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<sup>105</sup> In the LXX: 2 Chr 16:12; Tob 2:10; Psa 87:11; Ode 5:14; Pro 14:30; Job 13:4; Sir 10:10; 38:1, 3, 12, 15; Isa 26:14; Jer 8:22. In the NT: Matt 9:12; Mark 2:17; 5:26; Luke 4:23; 5:31; 8:43; Col 4:14.

<sup>106</sup> Melki-resha and Mastema.

2. There are occasional instances where humans or other figures are called an ‘accuser’ or a ‘slanderer’. These occurrences cannot be ignored, but neither can they be used as the controlling category through which the rest of the instances where *satan* and *diabolos* occur, especially when they are used with the definite article. There is a significant difference between a *satan* and *the Satan*, being that figure that the rest of the Jewish people know about. All instances of the lexical use of these terms must be taken seriously.
3. The demons are supernatural creatures that are capable of inciting idolatrous worship, possessing human beings and swine, causing illnesses, and oppressing their victims. They are far more common in the Hebrew Bible than most tend to notice. Like the Devil, they are given various names/designations. They are known as the *sairim*, *azazel*, Lilith, the *shedim*, and *daimonia*. In one instance we have talk of both male and female demons. Some are actually named. They are able to talk, converse, understand theology, recognize the identity of Jesus, know who God is, and fear the judgment to come. Their ruler is Beelzebul. They are distinct personalities from the victims whom they possess. The demons are considered an extension of the kingdom of Satan, acting as his agents and emissaries.
4. The evidence of the Jewish literature, being the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha, show beyond the shadow of a doubt that the belief in an external Devil and his demons was widely held and expounded. In just the documents surveyed, all of which overlap with the writings of the Bible and thus are a part of the same matrix of thought as the biblical authors, spoke of the Devil and/or demons as real supernatural threats. In many instances, there is in fact a noticeable relation to what the biblical authors wrote as dependent upon what the Jewish literature was saying at the time.<sup>107</sup> Eighteen sources were cited as correlating the theology shared by the biblical authors. What is important for subsequent discussions on the meaning of the Devil and/or the demons must take seriously the lexical and descriptive evidence found in the Jewish sources of the time of the writing of the biblical books. The abundance of voices on the subject cannot be ignored or dismissed if one seeks to be faithful to the evidence available.
5. The survey on the source of infirmities, diseases, sicknesses, and even death, revealed that the demons are not always involved in such affairs. Often times they are, although our earliest Gospel record only attributes 10% of illnesses healed by Jesus to demonic activity. More commonly is God the source of these afflictions, given as punishment for disobedience or for other reasons. It was also indicated that often the source is unidentified. The Devil is also occasionally the source, but probably should be grouped

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<sup>107</sup> Such as Matthew’s Parable of the Tares with the Qumran literature, Paul’s description of Belial in 2 Cor 6:14-15; Jude’s dependence on 1 Enoch (and perhaps others) in 1:9, and most authorities on Revelation admit the author’s dependence upon multiple Jewish traditions/sources.

together with the demons based upon the Beelzebul discourses in the Synoptic records. Therefore, it must be admitted that illnesses and demons cannot be interchangeable concepts if one wants to be faithful to the evidence.