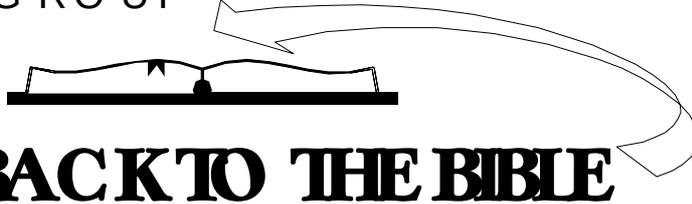


WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

“Demons, demon possession and casting out of demons” study by
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Dear brothers and sisters, pastors and elders,

In our previous study we wrote that we would now look at the positive and negative sides of the casting out of demons. We'll begin this study with a true story. The story has been verified by a number of people in the workgroup, and those concerned are well known in their own church, which they attend every Sunday. We have checked the story with the couple's pastor and out of consideration for them have used pseudo names.

Lesson nr. **1**

How is it possible in this modern world?

Peter and Ina hadn't been married very long. They both had good jobs. They had been brought up in church, but their faith wasn't too important to them. Nevertheless, it looked as if they had everything going for them to make for a happy family life. The only problem was Ina's back, which increasingly bothered her. The doctors and therapists couldn't help her. Finally they consulted a chiropractor, who was also a magnetiser. Amazingly, her back complaints disappeared and seeing that her problems were over the doctor gave the okay for a pregnancy. In the meantime Ina was often very unhappy. She had watched a programme on the television about reincarnation, which greatly stirred up her interest. She also loved to read horror books. She lent those from the public library. Although they regularly attended church on Sundays Ina continued to be depressed and even violent. When she became pregnant the magnetiser predicted a boy and a girl. It turned out to be a girl. Ina who had wanted a boy was angry and sometimes ill-treated the baby.

Peter was really upset and worried about this. He advised her to get rid of her aggression in a different way. Ina did this by hurting herself with a vegetable knife or an iron and so inflicted cuts and burns on her body. She did this under her clothes so that no one would notice it. On the one hand she hated this compulsive behaviour but on the other hand she enjoyed the masochistic feelings. By means of this her aggression subsided but returned just as strongly when the wounds began to heal. Help was sought from the doctor and the regional mental health institute but to no avail. Ina had now stopped going to church. The solution didn't come easily. Due to a number of events and coincidences Ina met the daughter-in-law of a local Pentecostal pastor who introduced her to the pastor and his wife. Here, she found the help she needed. They listened to Ina and Peter's story. It was a really sad story and it was obvious that they were desperate. The pastor explained to them from the Bible that there was hope for them in God. They listened intently and when the pastor asked if he could pray with them, they readily agreed. During the prayer he mentioned the blood of Jesus Christ. Ina who was very uneasy during the prayer began to scream: "stop t, stop it!" She jumped up and attacked the pastor. The pastor then called out, "demon depart to the abyss". He did not have time to call a meeting of elders, or to call the church to pray or to fast for her in the name of Jesus and His work at Calvary". He didn't have any time at all.

It was a reflex action to say: "Be gone in the name of Jesus".

Ina became more violent and tried to physically attack the pastor. He called her husband to

help him and together they tried to get her under control, whilst the pastor was still praying and demanding that the demon should leave Ina. After a while of struggling, spiritually as well as physically, for Ina was still very wild, those present heard a high hissing sound which came out of Ina's mouth and left the room. The relieved pastor relaxed and said "Thankfully he's gone". A strange voice was then heard from Ina's mouth that said, "But I'm still here".

Without any hesitation the pastor said, "You too must go, in the name of Jesus". The answer was "No I won't". The pastor said, "you will go out". A high pitched scream was then heard coming out of Ina's mouth and her body became as stiff as a corps. After she had lain like this for a while she opened her eyes and asked what was going on. The pastor explained from the Bible what had taken place.

The couple were so relieved. The pastor warned them however, that the devil doesn't let his prey get away just like that. It was necessary to fill themselves with the things of God and to be occupied with Him. To do this they had to repent and receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. The next day, Ina phoned the pastor, in a panic. She told him that since she had prayed, she kept seeing a figure standing outside her pleading to be allowed to come in. The figure looked beautiful and had a velvety soft voice, but was bound and couldn't move. The pastor explained that this must be the demon trying to take control again. Only with much prayer, fasting and patience could she be helped. The figure followed her everywhere. It was feminine. It stood in the kitchen, by the sink, and kept pleading to be set free. She

woke up in the night and the bound figure was still there. Through the prayers of the church and by not giving into the requests of this deceiving figure, it disappeared gradually out of Ina's life. They began to attend regularly the Pentecostal church and they put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It became very clear to them that they needed Him for the forgiveness of their sins and that they needed to repent. After a while they were baptised in the church and now with their two children are active members.

Casting out of demons or exorcism in history.

Far back in history, there are accounts of demon possession by one or several demons. One can trace this back in literature, especially that of a religious nature and of course the bible. We'll now look at exorcism per religion. We'll use the both terms, casting out of demons and exorcism, seeing as they have the same meaning. Exorcism is the Greek term that is often used in literature.

- **Judaism** recognised in Sam.16: 14-23, that King Saul was possessed. In the Jewish book, Tobias, which is neither by Jews or Protestants recognised as part of the canon, the wife of Tobias is freed from an evil spirit, circa 200 BC. In the New Testament, we see that the casting out of demons was not unusual for a Jew. When Jesus was accused of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub, He asked in which name their followers cast them out. (Luke 11: 19) In Acts, Luke tells the story of the travelling exorcists (seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest) who without avail, were using the name of Jesus to drive out evil spirits (Acts 19:13-20). The well-known Jewish historian, Flavius Joseph, from the first century AD, also mentioned in his writings several cases of exorcism. In the Middle Ages it was especially German Jews who practised it. The Jewish group who use the Kabbala also practised exorcism during this period. Kabbala is a mysterious Jewish teaching, which tries to explain the Old Testament by means of letters and numbers. We don't know if Jews today still practise exorcism.
- **In Spiritualism** the casting out of evil spirits is also practised. Spiritualism is the belief that it is possible to communicate with the spirits of the dead. With the help of a medium, good spirits are raised, to drive out a demon, which is living in a person.
- **In Animism** exorcism is also practised. Animism is a religion of primitive peoples where objects are worshipped as gods. The witch doctor is believed to act as the mediator between man and the gods. In the case of demon possession it is the witch doctor's task to try to drive away the evil spirit through the use of sorcery.

- **In Roman Catholicism** there has been for centuries special priests set aside for the driving out of evil spirits. There was, up until 1972, a special dedication service for those exorcists. Nowadays, exorcism can only be practised by a priest, who has first been given permission from the Bishop. The Vatican distributed in February of this year a new textbook for Bishops. The Church not only practises the major exorcism but also the minor exorcism, which takes place before baptism. It is believed that before a person is baptised he is a child of the devil. By means of baptism, the person becomes a child of God. Usually, the minor exorcism takes place in the vestibule of the church in the presence of the godfather and godmother .
- **In Orthodox Eastern Churches** the minor exorcism is also practised before baptism.

Casting out of demons in the New Testament times till now.

The Christian history of exorcism begins in the New Testament with the demon-possessed man who came to Jesus. The Lord cast out devils in the same way that He healed the sick. Several times this is described in detail: the two demon-possessed men of the Gadarenes (Matt.8:28-34); a demon-possessed man in Capernaum (Mark 1:23-27); the possessed daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matt.15:21-28); the epileptic boy (Matt.17:14-21); the possessed man who was dumb (Matt.9:32-34) and the possessed man who was blind and dumb (Matt.12:22-30). These events are mentioned in several places in the gospels.

- **The Disciples** also cast out demons when they were sent on ahead of the Lord, two by two; once the twelve and another time the seventy-two, (Luke 10:1-17 and Matt.10:5-40). The apostle Paul cast out a spirit from a slave girl, in Philippi, by which she could predict the future (Acts 16:16-18). In other places in Acts, Paul's name is mentioned in connection with the driving out of demons. The same goes for Philip in Samaria. In the great commission in Mark, Jesus promised the disciples that when the good news was preached signs would follow, one being, the casting out of demons. The question that arises is; what happened after the death of the apostles.
- The writings of the Church fathers** in the first four hundred years didn't pay too much attention to the casting out of demons. We can therefore conclude that there wasn't much interest for it then. The most of their time was taken up with trying to cope and deal with all the heresies which were creeping into the church, such as Gnosticism, Montanism, Sabellianism and Pelagianism. History does record that in the third century the Universal Christian Church appointed exorcists for the task of casting out of demons. The Roman Catholic Church, which grew out of the Universal

Christian Church and acquired the name, Roman Catholic, in the sixth century maintained the function of exorcism. (see above)

- **Protestantism.** Calvin didn't include exorcism in his doctrine but did make known his disapproval of the exorcism in the Roman Catholic Church. The reformer, Luther maintained in the early years only the minor exorcism, preceding baptism. An exception to this was the Lutheran minister Cristoph Blumhardt from Motlingen, Germany. He was very much involved with the casting out of demons in people, through which, the girl, Gottliebin Dittus (1838) became well known. Some people see these events as the beginning of the ministry of casting out of demons, in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Exorcism is still practised in special cases by these groups.

We have now arrived at our present day subject after having looked back over the last 3000 years. What can we learn therefore, from history?

Lessons from history about exorcism.

- Demon-possession is not restricted to a certain age. Down through the centuries there have always been demon-possessed people. The demons change the behaviour of people so much that others can only come to the conclusion that they are possessed. It isn't the possessed person himself that has this conviction but those who observe him from close by. They are therefore taken for help to those who are thought to be able to give it. When it was concluded that King Saul had an evil spirit, David was called in to help him (1Sam.16:23). Relief was found through the playing of the harp. The evil spirit kept coming back however, so David was constantly called in to help. When David had to flee for his life, Saul couldn't be healed anymore. In the end he sought help from a woman who was a medium (1Sam.28:8-20). This was his absolute end. It is far too optimistic to think that the devil can only enter into people in certain ages and times. Demon-possession is terrible for the one possessed and also for his surroundings. Satan is the only one who enjoys it. To suppose that he doesn't do it anymore is far too optimistic. If he has been doing it the last three thousand years then you can be sure that he won't stop now.
- **People are susceptible for evil spirits.** We don't know how the devil manages to enter people and to take over. History doesn't go into this in any detail. Very rarely can a demon-possessed person tell when he became possessed. An exception to this is the members of the Satan Church. They worship satan and deliberately let him enter their lives. The only thing which we can establish is, that most people say that at one time or another in their lives they had had contact with the occult. This doesn't give us an idea of how a demon actually enters but it does warn us to keep far away from occultism. From the creation to the possession of Saul, we know nothing of these matters. Maybe the description of marriage between the sons of

God and people have something to do with this (Gen.6:1-4). We don't know for certain and it's still a mystery how a person becomes possessed. We only know that it is possible for some people and it's been like that for centuries.

- **Help for the demon-possessed.** Although we don't agree with a good number of the religions mentioned above, we must admit that at least they want to give help. We don't believe in the way that they do it, but we do appreciate their attempts. At least they want to help their fellow man. It has been like this during the last three thousand years, where they have tried to drive out demons. During Jesus Christ's time on earth He not only tried it, but also did it with authority and success. He is also the One who teaches us the most about demons. Matters, which the prophets in the Old Testament didn't understand, were made clear in the New Testament. At this point in history, Jesus revealed what actually was happening behind the screens of demon-possession. We'll look into this again later.
- **Not everyone is possessed.** Fortunately, satan doesn't get a chance to enter into everyone. We see this clearly as we look back on history. It is a relatively small group that suffers from the indwelling of demons. In comparison to the rest of the world, they are different to others by their strange behaviour. That's why family and friends brought such people to Jesus to be helped. An exception to this is the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches baptismal ceremony, the "minor exorcism".

The "minor exorcism".

The assumption is that all people, small and great, who don't belong to the above mentioned churches are children of the devil. They base this on the passage in the gospel of John: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44). Jesus is disputing here with the Jews. He explains that when they sin they are doing what the devil wants them to do and thus they are slaves to sin. The Jews protested strongly to this accusation, for according to them, they were children of Abraham, free and certainly not slaves. Jesus didn't say here that they were possessed but made the link between their sin and the devil. If the line of thought of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church is true, then at this moment all those outside those churches are possessed. When you see the terrible things that are happening in the world, you can almost believe it. Jesus however, teaches us differently. It is the sins of man, inspired by the devil that bring these things about. The liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the "minor exorcism" at the baptism says the following: "Go out of them, unclean spirit and make way for the Holy spirit the Paraclete". The Syrian Church (one of the eastern churches) says it like this: "I adjure you, O, evil spirit, by God the Father, the Almighty and by Jesus Christ, His Son and by the Holy spirit, the Paraclete, in His power, that you depart out of the body that you imprison". This is clearly to be understood. As workgroup, we do not agree with the view held in the "minor

exorcism". We really can't believe that you and we are all possessed. We will now turn to the "major exorcism".

In discussion with devils?

The verb, to cast out, has a forceful meaning. It is not a friendly request if the devil would please leave the body of a person. It is much more an order from someone with authority. When casting out devils one has to do with an evil and powerful enemy. Who is this enemy and how did he get his power? The bible gives us the answer. In the Old Testament he is there right from the beginning in the form of a serpent. After this we don't hear too much about him. In the story of Job he comes into the picture again. The prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah prophesy about him and so reveal something of his origins. From these we understand the following: the devil is a fallen angel, who was disobedient to God; he had a high position with God, but fell because he wanted to be as God; in his fall he took about a third of the angels with him; since his fall he has been involved in a huge operation to tempt man to sin against God; he is the great enemy of God and of all mankind.

- **Jesus was the first man** who in no uncertain terms brought to light who satan is. He knew as man and as God's Son who his enemy was. He knew and also proclaimed it that He had come to destroy the works of satan and to set people free. Jesus used strong language to do this, something that we probably wouldn't dare do. We always try to approach things in love, for God is love. Jesus did it differently and said for example the following: he is a liar and the father of lies; he is a murderer; he is an enemy; he is a slanderer (=devil); he is an opposer (=satan). He was very determined therefore, when it came to the casting out of demons. Often the evil spirit took the initiative and with appeasing words said for example: "I know who you are – the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:23). Jesus never entered into discussion with them but cast the evil spirit out.

Paul did the same when he was in Philippi with the slave girl who could predict the future. She kept following him saying: "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved" (Acts 16:17). Instead of being grateful for this publicity, Paul cast out the evil spirit without any further comment.

Paul Lehmann, a missionary in Zaire has published a list of nine names of demons that he expelled from a witch doctor. **Bill Randles**, a Pentecostal pastor, who just like the workgroup is concerned about the present developments, questions in his book, "Making war in the heavenlies"(1994), how people have found out these names. "Is it by having an interview with the one possessed? I can just imagine it, says Bill Randles, one says: "You lying-spirit, tell me the truth".

Comment workgroup and subject for the next study.

We believe that people can be possessed today just as in the past three thousand years. The fallen angel, the devil, hasn't changed. Elders and pastors will need to keep this in account. We will need to be ready for this for it usually comes our way without any warning. The story in the beginning of this letter is such an example. We have purposely kept neutral about the method that should be used in the driving out of demons. Every pastor and/or elder will need to face each situation as it comes. God's guidance is of vital importance. As workgroup, we reject completely conversing with demons. The Bible teaches us to keep far away from contact with the world of darkness. It has nothing to do with us. The world of the occult is not our world. In our next study we will continue further with this subject. The following important topics will be dealt with: "Can a Christian be possessed?" and "Are there territorial demons and should we rebuke them?"

Questions lesson **1**

Is it possible that a person is occupied by a demon in these modern times?

Can this occupied person be freed from this demon?

Did this problem was known in history times?

Which of the Main Religions still deals with casting out of demons?

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