

## Lock and Load

It should go without saying that our theology should be based on what the Bible says, not contemporary novels. The Bible teaches the reality of spiritual battle (Jude 1:9). But the Bible also says that, after the final judgment, demons will be consigned forever to the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). Since demons (and angels) do not “die” or suffer physical wounds, what is the point of doing spiritual battle?

**First**, we need to remember that not all battles are “to the death.” The point of angels battling demons is not to kill them but to ruin their plans and further God’s plans.

**Second**, there will be a time when Satan and his demons will experience what the Bible calls “the second death,” which is the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

The reality of spiritual warfare affects every believer. It is of utmost importance to recognize this warfare that is taking place and be prepared for it. God has given us all that is necessary to stand firm against the devil’s schemes and has commanded us to put on the full spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10–18).

## WHAT DOES SATAN AND THE DEMONS LOOK LIKE

Darkness and light are metaphors for evil and good. If anyone sees an angel of light, it will automatically seem to be a good being, for the correlation of evil with darkness, and of good with light, is a powerful archetype in human history.

So, when 2 Corinthians 11:14 tells us that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light," it means that Satan capitalizes on our love of the light in order to deceive. He wants us to think that he is good, truthful, loving, and powerful – all the things that God is.

Satan presents sin to us as something pleasing and beautiful to be desired, and he presents false teaching as enlightening and life-changing. Millions follow his deceptions simply because they do not know God's truth. Isaiah 8:20-22 describes the darkness that results from ignoring the Word.

Darkness is a result of attempting to find truth without the Word of God. Sadly, as Isaiah says, when people do not have the "dawn," they wander in darkness and often become angry at God, refusing to come to Him for help. This is why Satan's masquerade as an angel of light is so effective. It turns white to black and black to white and gets us believing that God is the liar, that God is the source of darkness. Then, in our distress, we focus our hatred towards the only One who can save us.

## **POSSESSION AND OPPRESSION**

First, we know from the Bible that demons can and do possess those who do not belong to Christ, and Scripture gives some examples of people being possessed by demons.

“In some of these passages, the demon possession causes physical ailments (inability to speak, epileptic symptoms, blindness, etc. [Matthew 9:32-33, Mark 9:17-18]); in other cases the demon causes the individual to do evil (Judas is the main example); in Acts 16:16-18, the spirit apparently gave a slave girl some ability to know things beyond her own learning (a spirit of divination); in the case of the demoniac of the Gadarenes who was possessed by a multitude of demons, he had superhuman strength, cut himself, went around naked, and lived among the tombstones (Mark 5:1-17). King Saul, after rebelling against the LORD, was troubled by an evil spirit (1 Samuel 16:14-15; 18:10-11; 19:9-10) with the apparent effect of a melancholy mood and an increased desire and readiness to kill David (God’s next anointed king of Israel).

Second, we should be greatly encouraged to know that it is **impossible** for a Christian to be possessed by a demon. The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who comes to reside in our hearts when we give our lives to Christ (2 Corinthians 1:22).<sup>1</sup>

However, while Christians cannot be possessed by a demon, this is not to be confused with being influenced by one.

Demonic oppression is when a demon is temporarily victorious over a Christian, successfully tempting a Christian to sin and hindering his ability to serve God with a strong testimony. If a Christian continues to allow demonic oppression in his/her life, the oppression can increase to the point

that the demon has a very strong influence over the Christian's thoughts, behavior, and spirituality. Christians who allow continuing sin open themselves up for greater and greater oppression.

### **Getting Ready To Rumble!**

For the Christian, the power for victory over and freedom from demonic oppression is always available. John declares, "The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9) is always available to overcome demonic oppression.

In the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." It is clear that "our warfare" as Christians is spiritual.

The spiritual battle is quite personal for each Christian. The devil is like a "roaring lion" seeking to devour, and we must remain vigilant against him (1 Peter 5:8). The enemy of our souls has "flaming arrows" that can only be extinguished by the shield of faith as handled by a believer equipped with the full armor of God (see Ephesians 6:10–17). Jesus told us to "watch and pray" so as not to fall into temptation (Mark 14:38).

According to 2 Corinthians 10:4–5, there are spiritual fortresses in this world, made of the "speculations" and "lofty things."

THE only offensive weapon we possess—is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

The hearts of those who hear and accept the true, full message of the gospel as given by the apostles are “sprinkled clean” and “washed with pure water.” What is this water? It is the Word of God that strengthens us as we fight (Ephesians 5:26; John 7:38).

Lastly, a word to the wise: some people develop an unhealthy fascination with the occult and demonic activity. This is ill advised to say the least. If we pursue God with our lives and we are clothing ourselves with His armor and relying upon His strength (not our own) (Ephesians 6:10-18), we have nothing to fear from the evil ones, for God rules over all! When we are in Christ, and He in us, we have nothing to fear from the evil one because “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).