



Demonology

A study of demonology from Scripture & Historic writings

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Bible terms must be understood in light of the definitions & application of the original audience. Consider the “Talent” parable of Jesus as an example. The word for demon (as used in Bible times) referred to the spirits of the dead. It commonly became a reference for evil spirits. The Bible uses distinct words for Demon, Satan & Angels.

The word “angel” is **unique to Scripture**. There is no record of any pagan author or historian using the word angel, or even referring to any equivalent. Therefore, since the term angel was unknown outside the Jewish community, the term could not have been used to refer to a demon.

In Scripture, angels are **always** angels... fallen or not. An angel would never want to inhabit an actual human body, since this would be a “demotion” for them, according to Hebrews 2:9. There are several extra-biblical writers who confirm that demons are the spirits of the dead. Consider the following:

Alexander Campbell’s 1841 address on demonology before the Popular Lecture Club, Nashville Tennessee provides tremendous insight into the 1st century understanding of demons. This article is also found in the October 1841 Millennial Harbinger. In the address, Campbell makes clear that 1st century culture understood demons to be the **spirits of the dead**, commonly accepted as the spirits of the unrighteous dead.

Ignatius, a disciple of John, offered further insight into the use of the term demon in his telling of the first conversation between Jesus & the Apostle Peter after Jesus’ resurrection. *“Handle me and see, for I am not as disembodied demon.”*

Josephus wrote that *“demons are the spirits of wicked men, who enter into living men and destroy them...”* and *“God enabled Solomon to learn that skill which expels demons... he composed incantations... and he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return; and this method is with us to this day.”*

Philo said *“The souls of dead men are called demons.”*

Lardner, a Church historian, examined the writings of the early Christian leaders and concluded *“Many of the fathers of the first 2 centuries had the notion of demons, or the souls of dead men, having power over living men.”*

The concept of demons as fallen angels was first introduced in the **non-inspired** writings of the Pseudepigrapha, in Enoch 15:8. The influence of this obscure writing carried into the Church of the time, being accepted by virtue of novelty & fascination, and handed down through the ages... even influencing translation.

Although there is considerable evidence in non-inspired writing, it is the **inspired writing of Scripture** which should form our belief. Consider the following:

God's condemnation of divination & mediums, consulting the dead.

- Deuteronomy 18:9-13
- Isaiah 8:19
- Psalm 106:28-37

Abraham, Lazarus & the rich man. (Luke 16:19-31)

- The rich man's **original request** was for Lazarus to be sent from Abraham (who was in Paradise) to him in the place of torment.
- Abraham stated that a **chasm** had been fixed between the two places of the dead, which no one could cross.
- The rich man's 2nd request didn't seem **unusual**.
- His request showed a **knowledge** of both living & dead.
- Abraham didn't deny the **possibility** for Lazarus to return to the living... he simply stated that it would do no good.

Saul consulting with Samuel through the witch of Endor. (1 Samuel 28:1-20)

- Although the practice of consulting mediums was **forbidden**, it was common throughout the area.
- It was commonly understood that mediums **could consult** with the spirits of the dead, but that God's people were not to consult the dead about the living, since they could consult the Living God for answers to their questions.
- Scripture testifies that the witch was **able** to "call up" Samuel from the place of the dead.
- Saul **recognized** Samuel, & actually had **conversation** with him.
- Samuel knew of past, current & future events, displaying an **accurate knowledge** of the living, even though he was dead.

Demons & spirits haven't appeared after Jesus. (Luke 9:29-33)

Moses & Elijah appeared with Jesus, before the Apostles as eye witnesses, on the "Mount of Transfiguration". They were identified by Scripture (John's testimony) and also by Peter in verbal response, with James as an additional witness. **Note:** Moses & Elijah were discussing what was about to happen through Jesus at Jerusalem.

The tombs broke open following Jesus' resurrection. (Matthew 27:52-53)

The saints arose & appeared to many in recognizable forms.

Additional New Testament passages:

- Luke 8:28-31
- Romans 10:7
- Acts 16:16-18
- Acts 19:11-16
- Acts 23:9
- John 13:27
- Hebrews 2:9