

Outline

Demonizing Demons

In the best selling book by Dan Brown and hit movie of the summer, *Angels and Demons*, Tom Hanks plays a religious symbologist who is a skeptic about the ideas of religion and the veracity of a spiritual world where supernatural occurrences happen. Likewise, he draws questions about the Bible and whether or not it is a book simply produced by fallible men manipulating circumstances to prove their faith and justify their existence. The character, Robert Langdon, is not even sure of the existence of God, yet hopes for such a positive idea. Likewise, he is positive about the good that religion does in the world, but horrified by its travesties committed in a prejudiced desire to prove its brand of religion's rightness. I believe Dan Brown, the author of *Angels and Demons* and last year's controversial *The DaVinci Code*, reveals his own skepticism through this character, as well as his own chagrin for religion that operates out of centuries of tradition rather than rational thought and biased belief rather than personal soul searching and honest individual questioning. Dan Brown is not unlike many of us in this.

Here, Here! I am with Dan Brown here. Never be afraid of questions or the skepticism of others. Christians and all religious believers spend way too much time fearing thought that is contrary to their own and berating challenges from those who disagree. I say bring on the questions and the criticisms. Just like good honest competition in the ideal of Capitalism, skepticism only serves to strengthen one's belief system causing us to think through our beliefs rather than just accept worn out and untested hand-me-down traditions that prove to be lifeless in their ability to change, because they are false!

So I love what Dan Brown has done. He has called us to question. He has forced us to consider our thoughts and our beliefs! And that is exactly what we are doing in this series and using his *Angels and Demons* as the springboard to our internal searching. We are not doing it in the same way that he did, for his book is more about questioning the traditions of the Catholic Church, and that is not my goal, for I have a lot of respect for many of the things the Catholic Church is doing and the great impact they have made on the history of the world. Sure, they have gotten it wrong at times and I may disagree with some of their doctrine, but every religious group has gotten it wrong at times and I have been proven wrong in some of my thoughts as well. Ahhhhhhhhh – good fodder for growth!

But we are going with the literal title of the book – *Angels and Demons* – and drawing our minds right into the validity of the spiritual world. Last week we examined the idea of angels, so it is only fitting that we go to the other side today and explore the world of demons. Are there demons in the world or are they merely the stuff of Dante's *Inferno* and fodder for Stephen King or the stuff of horror flicks that I am always much too scared to watch? I mean I even had to change the channel when the commercials for this summer's latest demon offering from Hollywood came on – *Drag Me to Hell*. Scary stuff. Do I have evil inherent within me and can the devil and his demons actually make me do bad things? All of us have thought these thoughts and just as quickly, we have discarded them as only fodder for the insane. Yet in the back of our minds, the question still exists. Are there demons influencing my behavior and that of others in society? Was the killer in the Virginia Tech massacre possessed by demons and how about these seemingly crazed individuals that kill their family or numerous others and then themselves – are these demon-related and influenced? Should I fear that a demon could possess me or influence me? Can a demon drag me to hell? Let's look at what the Bible has to say, and it really deals with the idea of demons and the devil in two parts:

The Devil and Demons Ruled the Old Testament World

When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went

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to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. Genesis 6:1-4 NIV

This passage early in the history of humanity actually refers to fallen angels, demons, powerful enough to rule over men and to live in the physical world of men – even to the point of impregnating women and spawning supernatural spawn. The result was not pretty. These “heroes” did not act like superman or Hercules or such. No, notice the result of man and demon producing:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. Genesis 6:5 NIV

And guess what happens just a few verses later. God finds one man, one family, who have not been influenced for evil – Noah – and the rest is history as God does destroy this evil heritage that had been overtaken by the devil and his dominion of the earth.

The freedom of evil is seen in the first chapter of Job of the Old Testament where Satan himself is seen being allowed to roam freely about the earth and even command humans and the earth itself toward destructive behavior.

The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.” Job1:7 NIV

As we look further into the Bible and even into history, we see further domination by the devil and demons as the Old Testament reveals absolutely hideous cultures and worship of gods that seemed to defy explanation. For example, the worship of gods like Molech and Baal often involved hideous child sacrifice that many researchers attribute to demon influence or even demon physical leadership just like in Genesis 6. God even commanded the Israelites to slaughter entire nations because of such Genesis 6 type of defilement that could not be purified or purged in any other way.

Even in Jesus' day we see demons owning the world in a very real way. The most common miracle for Jesus to perform was exorcism, seemingly to be able to walk only a few feet before being confronted with a demon or with a request to cast a demon out of a child. Jesus himself was confronted very confidently and openly by Satan himself in Matthew 4.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Matthew 4:1-3 NIV

And in that battle of spirits, Jesus stood up to and conquered Satan on this day, doing it by confronting the deceiver with the truth of God's Word:

The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Matthew 4:8-11 NIV

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Notice how cocky Satan seems to be here. We have to ask ourselves, was he just stupid or did he think the world was actually his to give to Jesus. He did not just think it, it was his and he could offer it in the same way that he offered it to Adam and Eve. And the Old Testament even proves that the world was Satan's by all the evil behavior and all the evil demon possession that occurred. He was powerful.

Now the question that I have, why don't we see the number of demon possessions today that seem to be so prevalent in the Bible? As you read the second half of the New Testament, you don't even hear of that many demon possessions. You do hear the caution of evil influence, but not in the same way that you do in the Old Testament and early New Testament. Why? The answer is simple.

Satan became a defeated foe when he lost his last battle with God – at the Cross. He thought he killed Jesus, but he did not plan on Jesus being God and rising from the dead. Jesus did this in fulfillment of God's prediction in Genesis 3:

["I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:15 NIV](#)

Satan and his demonic forces in the freedom of ruling the pre-Cross world bruised the head of God, but because of the Cross, Jesus (God) crushed the head of evil and the devil, no longer allowing them to have the power or free reign of the world. Because of the Cross, God defeated the power that Satan had over mankind. Look what the Bible says was achieved by Christ's death and resurrection:

[Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death. Hebrews 2:14 TM](#)

So what does all that mean for you and me and our fears of evil? It means that we do not even have to give the devil a second thought. He is defeated and cannot possess us or destroy us. He has been in the process of weakening over the last 2000 years and with each new believer in Christ and each new church, the Holy Spirit of God is taking dominion over this world. Look at the evidence of this today. This is the first time in all of human history where Christianity has had world dominance, where churches influence the whole globe. No other time in history has there been such domination of goodness like the worldwide influence of positive non-profits, hospitals for healing, and other positive organizations. Slavery is a banned world-wide for the first time in history and equal rights for all races, sexes, and creeds are fought for in every corner of the globe. I would rather live at this time than any other time in history.

Does that mean there is no evil? Absolutely not! However, we are harassed by a weak foe who cannot harm us like he did Job or the humanity of Noah's day. He must simply convince us to harm ourselves and others. There is a spirit world and there is a battle for our very destruction. However, Satan cannot harm us. We are our own worst enemy.

You have heard me talk often about the "Fleeting Thoughts" in our hearts and spirits. I have encouraged you to listen to those thoughts of encouragement, truth, and conviction of sin as the voice of God in our hearts. I have encouraged every one of us to obey those fleeting thoughts – even when they seem out of character for us. God speaks to us through His Holy Spirit in our hearts and motivates us to

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grow and to minister to others.

However, there is another "Fleeting Thought" that can enter into our spirits. Satan and his demonic forces are spirits and that is how they influence us toward self-destruction and others-destruction. Those fleeting thoughts are always negative and destructive. Those are the fleeting thoughts that cause us to hate ourselves and others. Those are the fleeting thoughts that must not be ignored, but rebuked in the name of Jesus! Satan must obey Jesus, for Jesus is the Ruler of the Universe and Satan has been crushed by Him. However, it does not mean he obeys. He will try to get you and me to give him permission to influence our thinking and our behavior. When negative fleeting thoughts of jealousy, hatred, and depression enter our spirits, we must rebuke them in Jesus' name.

I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Romans 7:21-24 NIV

How do we conquer the influence of Satan's war for our soul?

Admit that we are powerless to conquer evil

Rebuke the negative thought from Satan's whispers in our mind in Jesus' Name

Obey God's voice in our spirit to strengthen our faith

Live out our faith through being an active part of a church, reading the Scriptures consistently, meditating daily on our relationship with God, and serving others to conquer a selfish spirit that is Satan's playground

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