

# WHAT DOES THE DEVIL HAVE TO DO WITH SICKNESS

The Bible is full of accounts where God has supernaturally healed sickness and disease. In some cases it is very clear what caused the illness, yet in others, we have little information to go on. The question I want to answer is, "What does the devil have to do with sickness?" However, in order to answer this one question, we need to ask (and get answers to) many other questions. For instance... Can evil spirits cause physical disease or mental illness? The Bible indicates that Jesus cast demons out of people, so do demons still possess people today? Do illnesses such as schizophrenia, epilepsy, or bipolar disorder have only natural causes? If not, how would a medical doctor, psychologist, or pastor know if there may be a supernatural cause behind these disorders? While I'm certainly not advocating exorcisms for those who are deaf or blind, these are legitimate questions that need to be answered.

In some cases, the Bible clearly indicates that sickness is caused by evil spiritual forces: ***"And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up."*** Another translation says, ***"And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all"*** (Luke 13:11). Medical doctors treating this woman today would not even consider that the sickness had a spiritual or demonic cause. And that's understandable as no medical doctors today have the same spiritual discernment Jesus had. In another biblical reference, Luke describes Jesus as ***"healing all who were oppressed by the devil"*** (Acts 10:38). Are we to believe that those evil spirits who caused illnesses in the first century have taken a long sabbatical, and therefore, no longer engage in such behaviour in the 21st century?

The Bible, in other passages, appears to differentiate those who are sick from those afflicted by evil spirits: ***“Who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were all healed.”*** (Luke 6:18). ***“Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness”*** (Matthew 10:1). ***“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”*** (Matthew 10:8). While making this distinction, it still remains possible that evil spirits were the original cause of the sickness, because the Bible does not explicitly state how those afflicted people became sick. Or, perhaps, demons are able to cause some illnesses, but many others have natural causes.

Though the Bible clearly mentions demons numerous times, many by Jesus Himself, how many of us really believe that demons can cause mental and physical problems? This can be a major dilemma for us! Can we claim to believe the Bible is true, yet believe that illnesses today have natural causes alone - such as genetic mutations and environmental factors. In citing Sigmund Freud, Psychologist Gary Collins noted, “What people in the past centuries called demon possession in the present day are called neuroses” (anxiety disorders or psychoses). Much of the common thought now is that we have advanced in our understanding of physical and mental illness beyond that of backward, ignorant people living in the first century. And following that line of reasoning, we make the assumption that Jesus, in order to help the unsophisticated, ignorant masses understand, blamed sickness on “demons”, though He surely knew that the origins were from physical and natural causes. Of course, the problem this reasoning creates is that it makes the Son of God to be a liar, or at best, a pretender. Some have even suggested the possibility that Jesus himself did not know whether these afflictions had been caused by demons and merely fed people’s superstitions.

If Jesus didn't know the cause of sickness, it creates a huge problem for believing anything else He said. What if He was incorrect about other matters He spoke of? But this simply doesn't stack up! Jesus displayed complete **authority** over sickness and disease, and even historians agree that He was a miracle worker! And, why would demons be in submission to someone who didn't know what he was talking about! Why would they flee from His presence or call Him Lord? Why would they beg Him to drive them out and sent them into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:31)? Let me tell you why... Because Jesus knew what was behind every sickness and every disease! ***“And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight”*** (Luke 7:21). ***“And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities - Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons”*** (Luke 8:2).

Even today volumes could be filled with eyewitness accounts of unmistakable demonic influences and the casting out of evil spirits. For instance, Dr McAll who served as a Consultant Psychiatrist and as a missionary surgeon in China, made this observation: “Devil possession was not uncommon, though the diagnosis could sometimes have been in question. The only treatment offered to those possessed was death by stoning, unless the case occurred within reach of a Christian community, in which case the villagers would send for the extraordinarily fearless Bible women who would lay hands on the victim, pray and release him.” Dr. McAll related several case studies, including one of a woman in her twenties who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic. She had not spoken for two years, was violent, and had been ineffectively treated with medicines and electric shock therapy. At one point, when demonic possession was mentioned in her hearing, she spoke for the first time in the name of the possessing spirit and asked to see a priest. She was delivered and for the past seven years has lived a normal life. The evidence concerning demons is compelling.

According to the Bible, when someone has a sickness or affliction, it is usually caused by one of three things:

1. As a result of the fallen earth we live in:

***“Rabbi,” His disciples asked Him, “Why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. (John 9:2, 3 NLT)***

2. As a result of sin in the victim’s life:

***Some people brought to Him a paralysed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralysed man, “Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven.” “So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralysed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” (Matthew 9:2, 6 NLT)***

3. As a result of evil spirits:

***“That evening after sunset, many sick and demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus, and the whole town gathered at the door to watch. So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and He cast out many demons.” (Mark 1:32-34 NLT)*** Today, doctors look at someone with a medical problem and they order tests to find out what is physically causing the problem. Once they find what is physically causing the problem they assume it is also the source of the problem. However, many times it is not the true source of the problem. The source may be evil spirits.

What the tests reveal may only be the after effect which was brought on by an unseen enemy that does not show up on any medical tests. But, because a sickness shows up in test and an evil spirit doesn't, even Christians are fooled into believing that it is simply a medical problem and not an affliction from the demonic world. The pharmaceutical companies are rejoicing all the way to the bank and the demonic world is laughing at its accomplishments. Often drugs are like a bandaid trying to keep the problem under control without ever curing it. Almost everywhere we look in modern society someone is on some sort of daily prescription - with no end in sight. Many people are slaves to drugs for life.

When examining Jesus's ministry during His last three years on this earth, I find it amazing how many of His miracles and healings involved casting out evil spirits. The Bible leads us to believe that the majority of the time when Jesus dealt with people who had mental problems, evil spirits were cast out. That is probably why Jesus's words, before His ascension, declared, ***“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues”*** (Mark 16:17 NKJV). Please don't misunderstand me. Not all problems need to have evil demonic spirits cast out. That is where the “gift of discerning the spirits” is needed. Discernment is a vital part of any healing ministry. Discernment is necessary to find the true source of the problem, and then how to deal with it properly.

For instance, a person may be deaf, and this could be caused by a physical disorder or it could be a spirit of infirmity. Likewise, mental problems may be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain or they may be brought on by oppressive spirits. We need the mind of Christ to discern what it is and pray accordingly. Most often, when there is demon activity in or around a person, they have either been meddling in some satanic activity, or they have invited the devil in.

The key to delivering people from the devil's grasp, and setting them free, is first to discern correctly what is behind the symptoms and then to take authority in the Name of Jesus. But we need mature 'anointed' men and women of God to have a successful healing ministry. I know of some ailments that may be caused by unforgiveness (like arthritis), and others that are caused by dabbling in the occult. Often, it's only when you lay your hands on a person that God releases the information to you (through the "gift of the word of knowledge"). Remember, the spirit realm is not visible to us, therefore, God grants us discernment or knowledge concerning what is going on around us.

Smith Wigglesworth, who performed countless healing miracles, said of himself, "I have a body in perfect condition and have nothing to ask for, and I am sixty-five." My prayer is this, "Father, make me physically, spiritually, and mentally sound. Give me discernment and power. Help me as I minister to those around me. May people be healed and set free from the chains of affliction. May demons flee at the sound of the Name of Jesus. Use me as an instrument to bring victory into people's lives. **In Jesus name I pray. Amen.**"

What a prayer! What a Man! "Use me to bring victory into people's lives."  
In Jesus Name - Amen!