

Can the devil and demons be bound? – Nick Maartens

Introduction

The idea that Satan and demons can be bound is based on what Jesus said in Matt.12:24-29:

“...how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?”

In this parable Jesus explains to the Pharisees that because He is stronger than Satan, He can rob him (Satan) of his “possessions” by driving demons out of those who are under his power. The main point that He wanted to get across was that He was stronger than Satan. It does not contain any prescriptive teaching on how believers are to bind demonic forces. This is confirmed by the fact that nowhere in the teachings of Paul and the other New Testament writers do we find any such teaching concerning the binding of evil spirits.

Background

If Jesus did bind the devil in Matt.12:24-29, who untied him so that he could again, on a later occasion, influence Peter to thwart the purposes of God? (Matt.16:23). He, Satan, was also very free to enter Judas and cause him to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3). Why does Peter and James, instead of instructing believers to just bind the devil, encourage them to resist him by submitting to God? (1 Pet.5:8, James 4:7). Furthermore, why did Jesus not bind the devil when he tried to tempt Him in the desert? (Matt.4). We find the answer in Rev.20:2 where it is written that the devil will only be bound at the beginning of the millennium, when God Himself will do it before throwing him into the Abyss at the end of the age.

When you read the New Testament you will find that instead of binding demons, Jesus always drove them out of possessed people (Matt.9:34, 12:24, Mark 3:15-22, 5:12, 16:9, Luk.4:4...). Furthermore, we are warned that because the demons are not bound, they will come back to the person from whom they were driven, and if they find their former “house” empty, they will bring others with them with worse consequences (Luke 11:24-26).

Believers can be oppressed by demons, but not possessed by them

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him...” (1Pet.5:8, My emphasis).

Christians can unknowingly, through their ignorance, open themselves up to the influence of demons. So for example, they may not realize that some of the philosophies and doctrines that they believe are not Biblical, but occultistic (1 Tim.4:1). Some Christians may be involved in certain activities, which although seeming to be right, are rooted in the

philosophies of heathen religions. So also, by being involved in blatant sin, a Christian can become a vulnerable victim of Satan. By not recognizing the authority of the Word of God in determining doctrine, Christians might be leaving themselves wide open for demonic deception. What is not according to the will of God must be repented of. Each believer has the responsibility to prayerfully consider his own life.

The answer to demonic influence

“Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph.6:11)

Take note, concerning the full armour of God, nothing is said about the binding of evil spirits.

How do you submit to God and how do you resist the devil?

Submitting to God and resisting the devil is not a theoretical thing you do; it is much more practical; it must be reflected in the way that you live. Your submission to God is demonstrated by the way in which you allow the Word of God to shape your thoughts and actions. Many problems that are experienced by Christians could have been prevented if, in the first place, the principles of the teachings of Christ had been obeyed. So for example, irresponsible debt could have been avoided by following Paul’s advice:

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Tim.6:9).

What about Matt.18:18?

“...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The translation of this verse in the Amplified Bible explains itself:

“...whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven.”

When you study the context of Matt.18:18 you will find that it has nothing to do with the binding of demons; it is all about the way in which disputes between brothers in the congregation should be dealt with.

Conclusion

What must be kept in mind is the fact that the deeds of sinful nature (“...*sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like...*”, Gal.5:19-21), must be repented of as sin and be turned away from. Demons can be driven out in the Name of Jesus, but the flesh (sinful nature) must be crucified.

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