

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

(I) The Disciples of John (1-7)

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Some Disciples

-Possibly in the same stage of Christian knowledge as Apollos. (Acts 18:24-28)

-Where they taught by Apollos?

Is baptism included in believing?

-Mark 16:16
-Acts 2:37,38
-Acts 8:35,36
-Acts 9:1-17; 22:1-16

Luke returns to the activities Paul after his brief turn to Apollos in 18:24-28

¹And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found **some disciples**.

²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³And he said, "Into what then were you **baptized?**" They said, "Into **John's baptism.**"

Mat 3:4-11; Mar 1:4-8;

⁴And Paul said, "*John baptized with the baptism of repentance*, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."

⁵On hearing this, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**.

⁶And when Paul had *laid his hands on them*, the **Holy Spirit came on them**, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

⁷There were about *twelve men* in all.

⁸And he entered the synagogue and for **three months** spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

⁹But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

¹⁰This continued for **two years**, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

What does it mean to "Believe?"

-Matt 22:34-40
-John 3:16
-Acts 4:12
-Acts 13:38-39
-Rom 13:8-10
-James 2:14-26

Literally - "We did not even hear whether the Holy Ghost was (given)"

-Matt 3:11
-Luke 3:16
-John 1:29-34; 7:37-39

The **saving** presence of the Spirit is evident in baptism

-Acts 2:38
-Rom 8:9

The **charismatic** presence of the Spirit is evident in the laying on of the Apostle's hands

-Acts 8:12-17
-1Co 12:1-11

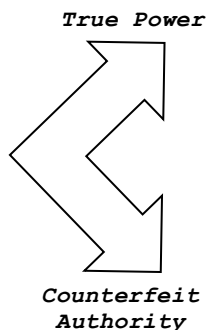
(II) The Declaration of the Gospel (8-10)

It was Paul's custom to visit the Synagogue when going to a new city

*Salamis (13:5)
*Antioch (13:14)
*Thessalonica (17:1)
*Berea (17:10)
*Athens (17:16-17)
*Corinth (18:4)
*Ephesus (18:19)

Resistance from the Jews

*Antioch (13:45)
*Thessalonica (17:5)
*Berea (17:13)
*Athens (17:16-17)
*Corinth (18:6)



¹¹And **God was doing** extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,

¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had **touch**ed his **skin** were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

Luke 8:40-48
Acts 5:12-16

¹³Then some of the **itinerant Jewish exorcists** undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims."

¹⁴Seven sons of a **Jewish high priest** named Sceva were doing this.

Possibly a self-designation title

James 2:19

¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, "**Jesus I know**, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"

¹⁶And the man in whom was the evil spirit **leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them**, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Mark 5:1-13

¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. **And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.**

Ephesus was known for sorcery, but these individuals recognized the **True Power**

¹⁸Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and **divulging their practices.**

¹⁹And a number of those **who had practiced magic arts** brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Likely a Drachma:
\$10,000 today

²⁰So the word of the Lord continued to increase and **prevail mightily.**

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Apollos

Acts 18:24–28 (ESV)

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Believe in Jesus

Matthew 22:34-40 (ESV)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 4:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 13:38-39 (ESV)

³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything ³⁹ from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

James 2:14-26 (ESV)

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"— and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Baptism's Role in Belief

Mark 16:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:37-38 (ESV)

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:35-37 (ESV)

³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷

Acts 9:1-19 (ESV)

¹ But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him,

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

Acts 22:1-16 (ESV)

¹ "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." ² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶ "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸ And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. ¹² "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

John the Baptist / Holy Spirit

Matthew 3:11 (ESV)

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

John 1:29–34 (ESV)

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

John 7:37–39 (ESV)

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John’s Baptism

Matthew 3:4–11 (ESV)

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Mark 1:4–8 (ESV)

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Holy Spirit – Saving / Charismatic

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Romans 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Acts 8:12–17 (ESV)

¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Paul’s Visit to Synagogues

Acts 13:5 (ESV)

⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

Acts 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Acts 17:1 (ESV)

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Acts 17:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Acts 17:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 18:4 (ESV)

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

Resistance from the Jews

Acts 13:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Acts 17:5 (ESV)

⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

Acts 17:13 (ESV)

¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

Acts 17:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 18:6 (ESV)

⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

Miracles of Paul

Paul strikes Bar-Jesus/Elymas blind	Acts 13:6–11
Paul and Barnabas perform signs and wonders in Phrygian Iconium	Acts 14:3
Paul heals a man lame from birth	Acts 14:8–10
Paul and Barnabas recount the miracles performed amongst non-Jews	Acts 15:12
Paul casts out a spirit of divination	Acts 16:16–18

1

¹ Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Mark 16:20 (ESV)

²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]

Romans 15:18–19 (ESV)

¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;

2 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)

¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

Hebrews 2:1–4 (ESV)

¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Touched His Skin / Handkerchiefs

Luke 8:40–48 (ESV)

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, ⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. ⁴³ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Acts 5:12–16 (ESV)

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Evil Spirits

Mark 5:1–13 (ESV)

¹ They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” ⁸ For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” ⁹ And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

James 2:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

Demon Possession, the Bible, and Superstition

by Wayne Jackson, M.A.

Q.

How does one respond to the charge that the New Testament endorses superstition by its occasional references to demon possession?

A.

Demon possession was a real, historical phenomenon of the first century. Spirit entities, known as demons [the KJV “devils” is an incorrect translation], did inhabit and afflict human bodies during that age.

The question of demon origin is not spelled out in the Scriptures, though several theories have been proposed by Bible scholars—some of which may be dismissed out of hand. A few writers have suggested that demons were the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race of men who lived upon the Earth in an alleged “gap period” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. There is, however, no evidence of any such gap period. Furthermore, Adam is clearly identified as the “first man” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Others speculate that demons resulted from the cohabitation of angels with antediluvian women (based upon a misunderstanding of Genesis 6:1-4), even though Christ plainly taught that angels are sexless beings incapable of such unions (Matthew 22:30).

The two more plausible views surmise that: (a) demons may have been the spirits of wicked dead men whom God, in harmony with His divine purpose, permitted to leave the Hadean realm to indwell some people (see, for example, Alexander Campbell, “Demonology,” *Popular Lectures and Addresses*); or (b) demons may have been fallen angels who were allowed to escape their confinement (Jude 6) for a similar purpose (see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*). Regardless of their origin, the existence of demons is recognized within the pages of the New Testament.

In regard to their nature, demons are portrayed as spirits (Matthew 8:16), and thus did not possess a corporeal existence (Luke 24:39). In regard to their character, demons are portrayed as unclean spirits that were evil, and under the immediate control of Satan (Matthew 12:24,43,45). Demons also were intelligent beings (Mark 1:24), and could exercise both volition and locomotion whenever permitted (Matthew 12:44-45). Demon possession of human bodies frequently resulted in physical and/or mental illness (although such ailments clearly were distinguished from the demon itself (see Matthew 4:24). Dumbness (Matthew 9:32), blindness (Matthew 12:22), and supernatural strength (Mark 5:4; Acts 19:16) sometimes were characteristic of demoniacs.

The New Testament supplies no reason as to exactly why demons entered particular individuals, but makes clear that they inhabited men (Matthew 9:32), women (Luke 8:2), and children (Mark 7:30). Apparently, demon possession was permitted temporarily by God in order that the authority of Christ might be made manifest. As the Lord revealed control over nature (Mark 4:41), disease (Mark 2:12), material things (John 2:9), and even death (John 11:44), so also did He demonstrate power over the spirit realm (Luke 11:20). In fact, the authority of Jesus over evil spirits amazed His contemporaries, who exclaimed: “What is this? a new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27). Christ’s

Study of Ephesians – Acts 19:1-20
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring & Summer 2013

disciples, by His authority, also could expel demons (Luke 10:17), except on one occasion when hindered by their weak faith (cf. Mark 9:28 and Matthew 17:20).

With the termination of the supernatural era of the early church, demon possession, and the corresponding gift of expulsion ceased. Satan's supernatural power was bound (Matthew 12:29). Certainly, the devil exerts great influence today. However, just as God no longer works miraculously, but influences men through His Word and providence, so also, Satan wields his power indirectly and non-miraculously through various media. Modern cases of supposed demon possession are doubtless the results of psychosomatic problems, hysteria, self-induced hypnosis, delusion, and such like. They have natural, though perhaps not always well-understood, causes. When the Bible discusses demon possession, it is always from a specific, historical vantage point. As such, it does not endorse myth or superstition.²

² Jackson, Wayne, "Demon Possession, the Bible, and Superstition," 1983, Apologetics Press (Montgomery, AL), <http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1154>