

Weekly Bible Study Series, Vol. 10, No. 10: 19 April 2009

© I. Chris Imoisili, E-mail: imoisilic@hotmail.com; imoisilic@gmail.com

For past issues and more, visit our Web Site: www.bibleresourcecentre.com

CAN YOU AFFORD DEMONS AS YOUR GUESTS?

Today's Text: Matt. 12: 43-45

Extracts:

[Jesus answered and said to the scribes and Pharisees]:

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it be with this wicked generation” [Matt. 12: 43-45]

In December 2008, Queen Omega (aged 48) moved with an adult son into a US\$400,000 three-bedroom house in an exclusive neighbourhood in Miami, Florida (USA).¹ She introduced herself to the neighbours, signed contracts for water and electricity, and ordered an Internet connection. What she did not tell them, however, was that she had no legal right to be in that home! She was a squatter, encouraged by a civil disobedience advocacy group of local volunteers called “Take Back the Land,” to forcibly occupy homes made vacant through foreclosures. Before moving into the new empty “home,” Omega had slept on a couch in a friend’s home. She planned to tie-dye clothing in the spacious unfurnished living room in her new home and sell it on the Internet. This plush home has gone into foreclosure because the legitimate owner could no longer pay the mortgage. The squatter moved into the vacant home because it was more comfortable than the couch in her friend’s home. How long she remains here depends on how soon the state authorities can get her out.

That story is analogous to the relationship between us and demonic forces also called “unclean spirits” [Matt. 10: 1], or “evil spirits” [Matt. 12: 45]. Like squatters, they cannot wait to occupy “vacant” human bodies, that is, people who do not have the Spirit of God. Just as squatters will stay and take over for as long as they can, demons are also not in a hurry to leave our bodies. In fact, they have come to take over and stay!

What is your preference? Can you afford to entertain demons as your guests? This week’s study will assist you to answer that question.

¹ Story based on John Leland, “NYT: Squatters call foreclosures home,” *The New York Times*, Fri, April 10, 2009; www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30148409

1. Have you ever hosted an unwanted guest?

A guest is somebody who has come to visit you for good (well-wisher) or for bad (such as a thief). Most of us have had the opportunity to host guests. Some come unannounced while some let you know in advance of their coming. Some come to spend just a few minutes while some come to stay for an undetermined length of time. If you look back at the list of your past guests, you may have some idea of those you will not mind to see again and those you may never want to set eyes on ever again. To refresh your memory, let us look at some likely guests that you have had in recent times:

a) *Visitors*

They may be family or friends or professional colleagues or fellow church members who have stopped by to say hello. They do not intend to stay for more than a few minutes and certainly may not want to stay overnight. They may have telephoned to let you know they are coming or may simply have come in unannounced. How would you host such guests?

It depends on your relationship with them. If they are first-time visitors, you can give them the benefit of the doubt. You may receive them quite well, no matter how inconvenient it may seem to you. However, whether you will welcome such-like visitors back depends on the impression they have left with you during that first contact. Nevertheless, God enjoins us to entertain strangers because some people (Abraham and Lot) did and thereby entertained angels [**Heb. 13: 2**]. Even so, if we expect visitors to inconvenience or stress us, I doubt if we would be willing to entertain them each time they come around. We would certainly try to avoid those that are not coming for our good. At any rate, we can afford to act nice for the short duration of their first visit. As soon as they leave, we may shut the door of welcome permanently against them. That is what believers in spirit do to demonic forces when they try to come in by way of tempting them to sin.

b) *Tenants*

Tenants are rent-paying members of your house. That implies a legal relationship based on rights and responsibilities. As long as tenants pay the rent as and when due, they are entitled to some privacy in the use of the space rented. In return, they cannot modify that space without express approval from you, the landlord, and they must leave the space in tenantable state in the event of termination of the tenancy contract.

When we sin, we give demonic forces legal authority to enter. They have the legal right to stay in your body for as long as you have not confessed that sin. Once you repent and ask for God's forgiveness, such demons have been given eviction notice!

c) *Squatters*

Squatters are persons that you have invited (or may have invited themselves) to fill a void in your home. They can be men that widowed or divorced women have brought home to live with them to replace their departed spouses. They can be girlfriends that men have invited to live with them in their apartments, even when they do not have marriage in mind. They can be stranded fellow church members that you have given temporary accommodation pending when they can find a new job.

As long as squatters operate within the bounds of decency that you have set, they can stay and enjoy it. However, some squatters are known to try to take over control of their host's homes. For example, they may smoke and drink alcohol and/or want to tune to X-rated cable television channels. They may be using the home telephone to make fraudulent deals with their external collaborators. They may show disdain for prayers or spiritual matters which your children may begin to imitate. They may steal some valuables from your home that you can hardly detect within a short time. For instance, a squatter once stole and sold my wife's most valuable kitchenware without her knowing it. He carefully took the contents out of their boxes that he left intact. It was only when my wife needed the utensils for a special occasion that she discovered the loss.

You have a clear choice with squatters. If you do not flush them out soon enough, you will lose control of your house to them. Demons fall into this category of guests. They do not want to enter your body as visitors or tenants. The least they want is to be admitted as squatters. Their actual plan is to displace you and take over your house, your body that is supposed to be the temple of the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 6: 19].² They manifest their presence in such ways as:

- Terrible diseases [Mk 1: 34]
- Mind problems, such as insanity [Matt. 17: 14-18; Mk 5: 1-5]
- Spiritual problems in the form of sexual perversion [Gen. 19: 4-8; Rom. 1: 26-27; Rev. 17: 1-6]; fear [1 Jn 4: 18; 2 Tim. 1: 7], a disobedient spirit [2 Tim. 3: 1-9], stubbornness [Ex. 11: 10], and deception [1 Tim. 4: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 14-15].

² For a detailed study of the subject, read "Demon Possession," *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 1 No. 4, 26 August 2000; http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_1/PDFs/Demonpossession.pdf

If you find yourself in poverty [**Prov. 24: 33-34**], or squandering wealth and opportunities [**Lk 15: 11-17**], you could be manifesting demonic control. When you find yourself practising sophisticated idolatry, such as horoscope and palm reading or teaching people to speak in tongues instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to manifest the gift as He deems appropriate [**Acts 2: 2-4; Acts 10: 44-46**], you could be exposing your heart to demonic infection. Can you afford to entertain demons as your guests? From today's study, we can have an idea of how they are scheming to take over our souls.

2. Demons seek to repossess a man's heart

A man who was demon-possessed was brought to Jesus. The man was blind and mute. Jesus healed him and he saw and spoke. However, when the Pharisees, Jewish leaders that were contesting for religious limelight with Jesus, heard of it, they derided Him, saying, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" [**Matt. 12: 22-24**].

As the saying goes, it takes one to know one. How did the Pharisees know about Beelzebub if they did not 'patronize' him? Nevertheless, Jesus was in a much better position to tell them about the spiritual world because He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven [**Lk 10: 18**]. Demonic forces recognize the divinity of Jesus the Christ [**Mk 1: 23-24; Acts 16: 16**] and the ultimate and final judgment He has reserved for them [**Matt. 9: 29-33**]. That was why He had the authority to cast them out from the demon-possessed and also gave authority to His disciples to do likewise [**Matt. 10: 8; Lk 9: 1**].

In today's text, Jesus explains how demonic forces try to repossess the body of a man from whom they had been cast out or expelled. Christ's purpose is to open believers' eyes to the dangers that demons pose for we are not fighting against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of our age and wickedness in high places [**Eph. 6: 12**].

From what Jesus told His disciples, let us note the following:

a) *Demons can only thrive in humans!*

When an unclean spirit or demon goes out of a man, we are told that he goes "through *dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.*" So, he decides to return to where he has been expelled from [**Matt. 12: 43-44**]. That suggests that demons can only thrive in humans.

Recall the story of the mad man that Jesus encountered in the country of the Gadarenes, opposite Galilee. The man was said to have had "demons

for a long time.” He lived in the tombs and when the demons seized him, he broke out of chains and shackles with which the guards tried to hold him down and ran into the wilderness. When Jesus commanded the demons to leave the man, they begged Him not to command them to go into the abyss but to permit them to enter into a herd of swine nearby. He permitted them. They entered the swine and the whole herd ran violently into the lake and drowned [Lk 8: 26-33].

Look at that! When the legion³ of demons was in the man, he did not drown but in the herd of swine, all the pigs died. That confirms that demons are safer inside humans than elsewhere. Can you afford to offer them your body as their sanctuary?

b) *Demons see your body as their home!*

The demon that was cast out of the man in Christ’s illustration said, “I will return to *my house* from which I came” [Matt. 12: 44]. If he is claiming your body as his house, then he is not coming as a visitor or tenant or even as a squatter. He wants to return as the rightful owner! That means war for territorial control. And that demon is going to fight you dirty until he takes over control of all your faculties.

c) *Demons will bring more dangerous reinforcements to take over your home!*

That demon came to the man’s house and found it “empty, swept and put in order.” So, he went and brought in “seven other spirits more wicked than himself,” and the state of the man became worse than before [vv. 44-45].

The man’s heart had been swept clean and put in order but it was empty. A room that is swept but locked up unoccupied easily gets dirty. Dust will gather and cobwebs will build up sooner than later. Some people try to be good by human standards. That is not enough when the demons attack. In other words, that you have confessed your sins is not enough unless you *return* to fellowship with God through Christ.

The demon, we are told, returned with seven demons more wicked than himself. Why seven? Instructively, Jesus cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene before she became His follower [Lk 8: 2]. Seven is a spiritual (divine) number, such as the seven Spirits of God [Rev. 4: 5]. To deceive us, Satan tries to counterfeit what God has or does. If God can muster legions of angels [Matt. 26: 53], there are also legions of evil spirits [Lk 8: 30]. Pharaoh’s magicians used enchantments to turn their sticks into serpents to counterfeit God’s miracle through Moses [Ex. 7: 10-11].

³ In military terms, a legion is made up of 6,000 soldiers.

During the temptation of Jesus, the devil even showed Him a vision of the kingdoms of this world [Lk 4: 5]. So, to successfully take over the body of a backslidden believer, Satan will also use evil spirits to counter each of the seven Spirits of God, as follows:

God's 7 Spirits [Is. 11: 2]

The Spirit of the Lord
 The Spirit of wisdom
 The Spirit of understanding
 The Spirit of counsel
 The Spirit of might
 The Spirit of knowledge
 Fear of the Lord

Satan's demonic counterfeits

Distressing spirit [1 Sam. 16: 14]
 Foolishness [Ps. 14: 1]
 Confusion [2 Chron. 20: 22-23]
 Deceit [2 Cor. 11: 13-15]
 Weakness, fear [2 Tim. 1: 7]
 Ignorance [Hos. 4: 6]
 Despise [Prov. 14: 2]

In deed, believers with such a destructive profile are spiritually disoriented. They become "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power, ... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." [2 Tim. 3: 2-5, 7]. Is there any hope of deliverance for such people?

3. Conclusion: Allow Jesus to restore you!

Happily, unlike God, the devil is neither omnipotent nor omnipresent [Job 1: 7-10]. He only has control over the evil spirits within his view at any particular point in time. Therefore, demonic forces are only able to return and reoccupy your body when your unconfessed sin forces God to allow them to attack you. The only way to remain steady on God's path of righteousness is to allow into your heart the one who has disarmed "principalities and powers" and "made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" [Col. 2: 15].

That person is Jesus the Christ. He is knocking at the door of your heart right now. He is keen to come in and dine with you and you with Him. All that He is asking of you is that you *hear* His voice and *open* the door of your heart for Him [Rev. 3: 20]. The demon-possessed man that was blind and dumb was brought to Jesus and He healed him [Matt. 12: 22]. Are you ready to allow Christ to cast out of you all those demons that you have knowingly or unsuspectingly allowed to take over your body, mind and spirit? If you do, you will regain the peace of mind that looks elusive to you right now. Otherwise, you are on your own!

Can you afford to have demons as your guests?