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Demonized Boy (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg analyzes Mark chapter 9 and Luke 9.37, discussing the story of a demon-possessed boy. He questions if demons confer mental conditions upon people and considers the possibility of demons trying to kill the boy through epilepsy. Gregg notes the limited understanding of data interpretation and suggests it is not always easy to find answers in Scripture. He brings attention to the man's necessary faith to see Jesus fix the situation, emphasizing the importance of spiritual awareness.

Transcript

Today we're going to be looking at Mark chapter 9, and this section of The Life of Christ that we are in, and have been in for the last few sessions is a section which all three of the Synoptic Gospels cover. Of course, John doesn't include any of them, but we have been talking about, for example, Caesarea Philippi, the Mount of Transfiguration, and now the sequel to the Mount of Transfiguration, that is, when Jesus and the disciples descended from the mountains they encountered a man who had brought his son to the disciples. In all likelihood, he had intended to bring his son to Jesus, but Jesus was on the mountain, and the disciples, nine of them, were at the bottom of the mountain.

And the son was demon possessed, but the disciples had been unable to help him, so Jesus had to deal with the situation when he came down from the mountain. All three of the Synoptics record all of these things in sequence. Caesarea Philippi, then about a week later, the Mount of Transfiguration, and then what transpired at the foot of the mountain when Jesus came down.

Beginning in Mark 9, in verse 14, today we're going to take all the verses up through verse 32, and as it becomes appropriate, we'll comment on the parallels, which are in Matthew 17 and Luke 9. Matthew 17 and Luke 9 has the parallels to this. And when he came to the disciples, he saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately when they saw him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to him, greeted him.

And when he asked the scribes, what are you discussing with them? Then one of the

multitude answered and said, Teacher, I brought you my son, who has a mute spirit. And whenever he seizes him, he throws him down, he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to your disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not.

And he answered them and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. Then they brought him to him, and when he saw him, that is, when the boy saw Jesus, or when the demon saw Jesus, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood.

And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said to him, if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. When Jesus saw the people running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to him, you deaf and dumb spirit, I command you to come out of him and enter him no more.

Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, he is dead. And Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast him out? And he said to them, this kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting. We're also going to take verses 30 through 32 after we talk about this, but we'll wait on that. We've read this entire story, now I want to go back and look at some of the details.

Mark's gospel is much fuller than Matthew or Luke's gospel on this particular story. There are major sections of the story that are omitted from Matthew and Luke, but which Mark includes. However, Matthew and Luke do provide some details that Mark omits, and so I'd like to compare them with you.

In verse 14 it says, and when he came to the disciples, now we know that Jesus had three of his disciples with him on the mountain, Peter, James, and John, so these disciples to whom he came were the other nine, whom he had apparently left at the bottom of the mountain, and they didn't know for how long, as it turned out, he had spent the night on the mountain. We know this because Luke's gospel tells us so. In Luke 9.37, after talking about what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration, Luke 9.37 says, now it happened on the next day when they had come down from the mountain.

Jesus encountered this great multitude down here. So Luke gives us that detail that no one else does, that Jesus actually spent the night on the mountain, and when he came down the next day, the disciples were in a dispute with the scribes. Now here Mark alone tells us of this dispute.

The other two gospels simply mention that when Jesus came down from the mountain, this man, the father of the boy who was demon-possessed, came to Jesus with his request. But Mark tells us that the first thing Jesus found when he came down from the mountain, and before the man ever approached Jesus, which he did here in verse 17, instead we are told that he found the scribes disputing with the disciples over something. And then the multitude saw Jesus, and they apparently had been captivated with the dispute that was going on between the scribes and the disciples, but when they saw Jesus, they came running to him to greet him.

They were apparently not that impressed with the disciples, and were eager to see if Jesus could solve this problem. And so Jesus asked the scribes, what are you discussing with them? Now Jesus didn't ask the disciples, what are you discussing with the scribes, but he confronted the scribes. He could see that his disciples were at a loss to handle the argument effectively, and so he drew the argument to himself by confronting those that were locked into dispute with the disciples.

So he just entered into the debate with the scribes, or just positioned himself as the one that would now be interacting with them. So he spoke to the scribes and said, what are you talking to my disciples about? Now, what they were discussing is not told. The scribes' answer to Jesus is not given, nor the disciples' answer, but rather this man whose son was demon possessed answers.

So we can only deduce what the dispute was about. Again, Matthew and Luke don't even mention that there was a dispute between the disciples and the scribes, but just mention the man approaching Jesus at the foot of the mountain with his request. We are not told what the dispute was about, but it seems since this man answered on this up, when Jesus asked the scribes, what are you disputing with my disciples about, and this man came and told the story, it must have been related to that.

Perhaps the inability of the disciples to cast out the demon caused the scribes to begin to ridicule the disciples, or to indicate that maybe there was no real power in Jesus' movement if the disciples couldn't duplicate the same things he did. It's hard to know exactly what the nature was. It does seem, however, that the dispute arose as a result of the disciples being unable to cast out this demon.

Now, the disciples had on previous occasions cast out demons, which is no doubt why they asked him later on, why couldn't we cast it out? They had cast out demons previously, when Jesus had sent out the twelve in Matthew chapter 10, and also when he sent out the seventy. Actually, I think the sending of the seventy was yet to come. I don't

believe that it happened yet, but the sending out of the twelve was a thing of the past, and they had cast out demons and healed the sick and so forth, and yet on this occasion they were unable to.

We'll discuss when we get to the proper place why they could not on this occasion. But apparently it occasioned embarrassment to them, that they found themselves impotent in the face of this case of demon possession. So, when Jesus asked, what were you discussing with them, then one of the multitude answered and said, Teacher, I brought you my son, who has a mute spirit.

Now, by comparing the various Gospels, we can learn more than by reading any one of them, as to what the condition of this child was. For one thing, Luke tells us, which the other Gospels do not, that this was an only child of this man. Now, that doesn't contribute very much to the story, except to the pathos of it, I suppose, that the man didn't have any normal children, and just one that was giving him problems, but the only child he'd been blessed with had this terrible problem.

And they all recognized it was demonic. He says, this boy has a mute spirit. Now, when Jesus addressed the spirit in verse 25, he called it a deaf and dumb spirit, which goes beyond what Jesus had been told about the boy.

He was deaf and he was dumb. The boy had been described as mute, or the spirit was mute. Now, to call a demon a mute spirit, or a deaf and dumb spirit, might suggest the spirit is itself deaf and dumb.

Although we can, it's almost certain that the only way that the man would know that the boy had a mute spirit would be because the boy himself was also mute. However, it seems to me, biblically, likely, you have to read between the lines a little bit, it seems to me that the evil spirits, when they possess a person, confer to that person the spirit's own traits. So that an unclean spirit, when it possesses a person, causes them to live in an unclean manner.

You know, spirits, I think, demonic spirits, in my opinion, are fairly irrational. That's my impression, judging from the way they behave. For example, we know that spirits like to inhabit people.

On the other hand, this spirit, as we'll read later on, actually casts the boy into the fire and into the water, trying to kill him. Obviously, when the spirit's, when their host is dead, they have to leave and find another host, it would appear. And it's a strange phenomenon, that spirits will often do what doesn't appear to be in their best interest.

As a matter of fact, the demons often manifested themselves most in the presence of Jesus, which was the time of their greatest danger for manifestation. You know, demons don't manifest at every moment. At least the demon-possessed people I've known or

read about in the Bible, or even in missionary stories, they're not continuously manifesting, it's just something that happens sporadically or occasionally.

And yet, we read in the Bible almost always, when demon-possessed people are brought to Jesus, or were in his near proximity, then the demons manifested, which seems to me, as I said, to be not in the spirit's best interest. But I think, frankly, I think evil spirits are not all that intelligent. I think they're not all that rational.

I mean, how could they be? How could any being with as much power and spiritual awareness of God and so forth, live in rebellion against God? How could any angel rebel against God, unless that angel was of a very low IQ as angels go, I think. I mean, anyone who thinks they could rebel successfully against God, although they've seen God face to face, and they know his infinite power and glory, I would think them to be somewhat deceived and crazy. And it's interesting that demon-possessed people often act crazy.

Now, not always, though. Some demon-possessed people in the Bible simply were afflicted in some way. Luke chapter 13, I think it is, tells the story of a woman who had a spirit of infirmity.

Jesus said that the devil had bound her. Satan had bound her for 18 years, I believe it was, that she was in that condition. But the only manifestation was that she couldn't stand up straight.

She had a spinal problem, and until the demon was cast out, she was bent over, but then she was able to stand up straight. Not always do demons confer mental conditions upon people. Some spirits do, some don't.

Now, this demonic spirit was a deaf and dumb spirit. Jesus said so himself, you deaf and dumb spirit. Does that mean that particular demon was deaf and dumb? Or does it simply mean that it was so labeled because it conferred that particular handicap on the person? There's much about the demonic realm that we simply are never told about.

And unfortunately, Christians often are more curious about it than is healthy to be. If God told us everything there was to know about them, probably we could deduce it's important for us to know so many things about them. But the things that the Bible is silent about, we can cautiously speculate about, but not with dogmatism.

And probably it'd be unwise for us to demand answers about some of these things, but they're just kind of implications that can be drawn sometimes with some, as I say, caution. My suspicion, I've thought about this a fair amount from the various cases in the Bible, is that the actual mental or whatever other condition the demon himself possesses, when possessing a human being, causes that person to have the same traits. So that I believe this spirit really was mute and deaf, and when this person was possessed by it, the person was therefore rendered mute and deaf.

There's a blind and dumb spirit that was cast out in Matthew chapter 12. And when the blind and dumb spirit was cast out, the blind man saw and the dumb man spoke. Of course, it was the same man, he was blind and dumb, but when the spirit that was blind and dumb was cast out, it relieved this man of that condition.

Not all handicaps, obviously, are to be attributed to demons. Even the Bible doesn't so attribute them all, but some of them are. There were deaf people and lame people and blind people that Jesus healed without any reference or suggestion at all that there was a demon involved.

Yet we do read of blind spirits and dumb spirits, as in this case. One thing we learn from comparing the other Gospels is that this boy had other problems besides being mute and deaf. In fact, if he didn't have other problems, it's probable no one would have suspected that he had a demon at all, since there are people who are for entirely natural reasons blind or deaf or dumb or have these other handicaps.

But there were other behavioral things that tipped off his parents that he was demonized and that he was not just suffering a physical handicap. One thing we learn about him is in Matthew 17, 15, it says that he had an epileptic spirit, or rather, he is an epileptic, is what is translated in Matthew 17, 15. Now, epileptic there is the translator's, it's something of a guess on the part of the translator.

The actual Greek word that is used there in Matthew 17, 15 is moonstruck. And the old English word for moonstruck is a lunatic. Lunar, moon, you know, lunatic, is, you've all heard the word lunatic, but I don't know if you know etymologically, it means stricken by the moon.

And the Greek word for what this boy was in Matthew 17, 15, it was that he was a lunatic, he was moonstruck. And it is the translators who have, in their own thinking, identified this condition as a description of what we would today call epilepsy, and so they translated it there, he is epileptic. And the New King James translators are not the only ones who do so.

Now, actually, it's hard to know exactly what is meant by moonstruck. First of all, in our modern times, we don't generally understand the moon to have this kind of effect on people, although it has been speculated that it might, more than modern science is willing to admit. We, as Christians, we never want to get too close to pagan astrology and make it sound like astrology has any bearings on any reality at all.

Although it seems to me we could reject the pagan implications of astrology and still admit that there are perhaps some senses in which the moon might affect behavior, I don't know. Of course, this man saying, my son is moonstruck, could just reflect the man's own superstitious interpretation of the boy's behavior. It would not necessarily mean that the Bible was affirming that the moon had any effect on him.

But we know the moon does affect tides, of course that's not an emotional thing, but it affects dogs somewhat, they howl at the moon, and it affects werewolves, obviously, or is it vampires, I forget. But there have been many superstitions about the moon affecting even human behavior. I don't know, I don't profess to know whether the moon really has any effect on behavior, though I know that there's enough superstitious things about the moon and witchcraft and things like that that the power of suggestion might even cause people to behave strangely or to kind of lose it at times when the stages of the moon maybe cause them to expect this to happen.

In any case, the Bible does say that this man described his son as moonstruck over in Matthew's Gospel. And whatever was really meant by that, and whether the Bible itself is affirming that the moon had anything to do with it, it seems unlikely. But demons, who knows? The guy had a demon, we know that, even the father knew that.

But whether the demons react to the stages of the moon or not, who can say? I don't think anyone can for sure. But the reason that modern translators have translated it epilepsy is because it was obviously a condition that was marked by occasional fits and seizures. The full description of what happens in verse 18 is, wherever he, the spirit, seizes him, the boy, he throws him down, so the boy would fall on the ground, he'd foam at the mouth like a rabid dog, frothing at the mouth, gnashing his teeth, gnashing the teeth would be like grinding or locking the jaws.

This certainly seems like epilepsy or something like it. It says he becomes rigid. How many of you have seen a grand moral seizure? I have.

It's a scary thing. It's a real spooky thing. I mean, I suppose if you're medically trained it's not as spooky.

Maybe it takes some of the mystique out of it. But to the ordinary layman, seeing a person who's behaving quite normally one moment, and then on the floor totally without control, their muscles and their eyes rolling, it's a scary thing. I'll tell you, the times I've been in the presence of epileptics having seizures, I must confess that if I knew nothing medically about epilepsy, I would assume that was a demon.

In fact, I'm not so sure it wasn't in the cases I've seen. I will say this, I do not believe that all epileptic seizures are caused by demons. And one could get that impression by reading, for example, that this was a case of epilepsy, or at least the symptoms were like that of epilepsy, and yet the Bible clearly indicated this by a demon, and he was cured of the problem upon being delivered from the demon.

Now, even if we do allow that these symptoms were entirely identical to what we call epilepsy, and therefore could conclude that some epileptics might even be demon-possessed, it would be quite wrong to assume that all epileptic conditions are caused by demons. It seems to me it would be wrong thinking, since it would also be wrong to

assume that all blind people, dumb people, and deaf people are demonized, just because the Bible refers to some cases of people who were rendered handicapped in those ways because of a demon. I suspect that epilepsy, like other physical problems, can sometimes be entirely organic in its nature, and at other times, in other cases, demonic in its cause.

We have no question about the cases that we're reading about that this was demonic, because, I mean, everyone, the entire story affirms that. But even if we allow epilepsy as a good translation of lunatic or of moonstruck, that should not lead us to believe that all epileptics are necessarily possessed, though I've never seen a grand mal seizure that did not appear to me, that did not strike me as if the person was possessed, but then I'm a layman, I don't see it often enough. If I saw it all the time, I might be more callous to it or less unnerved by it.

There are a few other things besides what Mark tells us, as far as what this demon did to the boy, besides what we have here in Mark 9.18, in Luke 9.39, well, in Matthew 17.15, we are told this little bit of information, too. Matthew 17.15 says, For he often falls into the fire and often into the water. Now, that is apparently associated with his seizures.

Now, whether the demon within this boy was deliberately trying to throw him into the fire or the water to kill him, or whether the demon was just throwing him into total muscular spasms and he incidentally happened to be near the hearth of the house and intended to fall toward the fire or into water, I don't know. But it's apparently one of the things that stuck out in the father's mind to recall was that this boy had come close to death on many occasions while in the fits that this demon was causing, possibly, maybe deliberately, the demon was trying to kill him. In Luke's gospel, which I mentioned in reference a moment ago, Luke 9.39, in addition to these other things that are said about him, it says, And bruising him, it departs with much difficulty.

So the boy apparently would frequently be bruised when thrown down. Now, one thing I found interesting is when people are, when people experience what is usually referred to as being slain in the spirit, a phenomenon that I am ambivalent about, I believe it can be of God, I believe a lot of times it probably isn't of God, I don't know that it's ever demonic, I think sometimes people go down because the Holy Spirit knocks them down, other times the preacher knocks them down, or they simply fall because of the power of suggestion. But one thing I find interesting, and I'm sure you've all heard this before, maybe you've even experienced it, that when people go down in the spirit, as it's usually said, they often hit things, but they don't get injured.

You ever heard that before? I mean, I've seen people fall and hit the corner of a table with their head, or with their back, or something, and they don't feel it, and they're not bruised later on, or whatever. It seems that there's no harm done them. I don't know what to make of that.

I mean, if the phenomenon is of God, and I'm convinced that it is not always of God, but it may well sometimes be, if it is of God, I suppose I'd explain that in terms of, well, God doesn't want this person to be physically hurt for having had this particular blessing from God, and so God preserves them from getting injured. These demons, however, they don't care about that. It's not the Holy Spirit here, it's the demon throwing the boy down.

He falls down, but he gets bruised falling down. He's been injured many times, almost died sometimes falling into water and fire. So the demons are pretty cruel.

And this boy, obviously, as we've read, had this condition from childhood. We don't know the boy's age at the time that this story takes place. The word child is used in both Matthew and Luke's version.

We don't find the word child to describe the boy here in this version, in Mark, but Matthew and Luke both in our English version call him a child. But I looked that up, and there's more than one word for child in the Greek, and the particular word here does not necessarily mean a little child. It can mean a youth.

So we don't know anything about the age of the boy when this is happening. However, I would point out that Luke 9.39 tells us that the demon would depart with much difficulty. This is what the man was describing the boy's clinical history.

He'd fall down, he'd froth at the mouth, he'd get bruised, he'd fall into the fire and the water sometimes. He'd get rigid, and the demon would leave with much difficulty, Luke 9.39 says. Now, that means, of course, the demon had come and gone numerous occasions before.

Now, usually when a person is considered to be demon-possessed, maybe it's just traditional thinking with me, or maybe it was just a misreading of the Scripture with me when I was younger, but I always pictured it that the demon was resident in the person all the time. It didn't come and go and come and go. But as I began to read missionary stories about demonism, about demon possession and deliverance and so forth, and I've read very many of them now, over 30 different cases I've read of in the mission field of demons being cast out of people.

Many of the missionaries who tell the stories indicate that the person that was the victim that they helped had the demon come and visit them and beat them up and stuff and then go away. So, I don't know if this is a different kind of phenomenon than ordinary demon possession. You know, once again, the Bible is not explicit.

We commonly hear people say, Christians often say this, that, well, a Christian can be oppressed by demons but not possessed by demons. Well, that might be a comforting thing to say, but unfortunately the Bible is never so explicit about those kinds of things. The Bible doesn't talk about a category called being oppressed by demons that is

somehow different than possessed by demons.

And it may be that we're not to be overly simplistic in our understanding of how demons afflict people. It's possible that some people have demons residing in them permanently, and other people, you know, just have occasional visits from demons that beat them up and then go away. The language this father used would indicate that he believed the demon would just come to the boy from time to time, throw him into one of these fits, leave him bruised and sometimes quite nearly killed, and then would go away, only with much difficulty, but would eventually go away.

We're not told how the boy, how the demon was made to go away previous to this, whether the parents prayed or whether they called in Jewish exorcists, because there were such people in that society, Jews, who tried to practice exorcism. But let's just say this boy had a history of these fits, and the way the father understood it, the demon would come and the demon would go. Now, that the father understood it that way does not necessarily mean that is the case.

We only have the words of the father, of the boy here, explaining the situation as he understood it. It's possible that if we understood it as well as Jesus did, we would know that the demon never really went anywhere. It just came and stayed, but sometimes manifested and other times didn't manifest.

And when it wasn't manifesting, then the onlookers assumed the demon was gone. But when the demon was manifesting, they assumed that the boy was visited again by the demon. After all, demons being invisible, a person might come up with any number of theories or interpretations of what's really going on.

Demon possession is still quite mysterious. Even with us having the Scriptures, there's much that we're not told in Scripture. Judy, was your hand up a moment ago? Did you have a question? In the Old Testament, yes.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit also would come and go upon people. Whereas in the New Testament, of course, what's natural is for the Holy Spirit to come and reside permanently in us. Though we do read of people like Caiaphas.

Of course, he was still living under the Old Covenant because Jesus hadn't died yet. But Caiaphas prophesied and so forth, even though he was not a godly person. Just like Saul, when he was chasing David, the Spirit came upon him and he prophesied.

Yeah, I don't know if the demons are analogous to that. Possibly. Adam, Luke 10, 18-20, about Christians and demon possession.

Okay, let's have a look there for a moment. It says, And he said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. The fact that nothing shall anyway hurt you could be, I suppose, interpreted to mean that Christians could never be possessed. It depends on what hurt means, because demons do hurt people, even Christians.

Even Paul was hurt. There was a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, he said, in 2 Corinthians 12. And that hurt.

It was an infirmity, it was a pain, but he wasn't possessed. So I'm not sure exactly how Jesus means nothing shall anyway hurt you. I've always assumed that he means that despite all the trials, even martyrdom, no matter what happens to you, ultimately, nothing can rip you off of your secure relationship with God, and that kind of hurt will never come to you.

But even if that were his meaning, and I'm not sure that we should limit it that way, but even if that were the meaning, that would still be conditional, I would think. Because obviously sin can hurt us, bad choices, apostasy, rebellion against God, those things do happen. And it appears to me that some people who are real Christians occasionally do those things, and that hurts them.

So the way I've always understood that promise that Jesus made to the disciples is assuming that they exercise the authority that Christ has given them over demons and such. Those demons can't hurt them in the sense of really doing them spiritual harm. Demons possibly could hurt them physically.

Like I said, Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, and that was a physical problem in his flesh. But my assumption has been that what Jesus is saying is that because I give you authority over demonic powers, and all the power of the enemy, nothing can really ultimately hurt you spiritually. With the implication that I mean if you are walking in that authority and using that authority.

It seems obvious that a policeman has the authority to stop a bank robber, but if he doesn't know it or doesn't exercise it, then he doesn't have any more power, or he's not likely to stop any robbers any more than the average citizen is. Obviously it's awareness of the fact that he has special authority given to him, and his willingness to exercise it that makes him different than other people in that situation. And I think when Christians are fearful or lack in faith, I mean later on in this chapter, the disciples say, why couldn't we cast the demons out? And he said, because of your lack of faith.

It does seem to me like Christians who do not walk in faith and don't walk in the kind of authority that Jesus has given us, possibly can succumb to a subnormal circumstance that Jesus does not really intend for Christians to be in. And I don't know whether demon possession would be one of those things or not. I know that Christians can be hurt by demons physically, and I don't know really what all demons can do beyond that.

But that verse is certainly worth having in the arsenal of, or in the collection of verses to look at to try to decide that matter. I don't know if that verse by itself, depending on how you interpret it, settles the question once and for all. It might.

It certainly would for some people, I think. Okay, so this demon appeared to come and go. Whether it was really the case, as the father thought, that the demon was coming and going, or whether the demon was really permanently in the boy and would occasionally manifest and occasionally stop manifesting, I don't know.

One thing I would say, and you've probably heard me say it before, is I've come to my own theories. They don't hold canonical authority, obviously, because it's just a theory. It's just an interpretation.

But as a person who has had to minister in many kinds of situations, including to demon-possessed people, I've had to put together the best I know how, biblical data, to try to understand the situations I've had to face and deal with. I'm sure many of you have faced demon-possessed people before, and if you haven't yet, you will. And so I can only tell you what my theories are.

These would be what I'd call educated guesses. They're not total irresponsible guesses. They're based on what data I have available, but they're also based on my limited ability to understand the data or interpret it.

But I have a personal theory that demons probably don't come out... Let's put it this way. That demons are most susceptible to be thrown out of their host at times when they are manifesting. Like I say, this is theory.

You can take it to heart or not, but realize that it's not canonical. The Bible doesn't say this clearly. But I'm basing it on what I read in the Bible, anecdotal material in the Bible.

I don't know of any case in the Bible where Jesus or the apostles cast a demon out of a person at a moment when that demon was not manifesting itself. And it is clear in the Bible that demons, even demon-possessed people, sometimes have fits of manifestation and seasons where there's no apparent manifestation. Times when they seem quite normal, and other times when they're obviously possessed.

And without the demon manifesting, I don't know whether it's possible or whatever to get the demon to come out. As far as we know, the demonized boy was not manifesting when the disciples were trying to cast it out. But it did start manifesting when the boy was brought to Jesus.

Now, against my theory on this, at least against using this particular scripture in support of my theory, one could say, well, Jesus didn't say, when they asked why couldn't we cast it out, Jesus didn't say because it wasn't manifesting. He said it's because of your faith and so forth, prayer and fasting. On the other hand, it could be Jesus' faith and

Jesus' spiritual character and prestige and so forth that caused the demon to manifest into presence.

It seems to me when we read of various cases, when Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum, and there was a man there and the man began to manifest and say, we know who you are, Jesus of Nazareth, what are you doing here? Have you come to torment us before the time? It seemed very common that people who are possessed, while being led to Jesus, when they got close enough to see him or to be in his presence, suddenly the demons would go berserk. And it's possible that the very spiritual authority and faith and stature of Jesus compelled the demons, as it were, to react and to manifest. Whereas the disciples, for their lack of faith, the demons were unimpressed and just kind of stayed put.

Once again, I don't want to give too much time to what is merely a theory of mine, but anyone who has been involved trying to cast demons out of people has probably had occasions of success and occasions of failure. At least I've had both, and most people I've talked to have. And the question arises, just like it did with the disciples, well, why couldn't we cast it out? What is the problem here? And we come up with provisional answers.

We do the best to answer them according to Scripture, but it's not always easy to find Scripture that will answer the question. But one of the parts to the answer that I'm tentatively holding is that I have never been able to cast a demon out of a person when it was not manifesting, but I don't recall a case when I was unable to cast a demon out of a person when it was manifesting. It seems to me like the times the demons were cast out successfully in my presence were times when there was a clear manifestation.

And I remember the times when I went away from the situation saying, I don't know if that demon went out or not, were also times when I came to my, I'm not even sure there was a demon there, because there was no manifestation. You know, people would say, my wife is demon possessed, would you come over and pray for her? So we'd come over, Jim Soderberg and I went and spent a whole night with this man and his wife trying to cast the demons out of his wife, but we never saw her manifest the whole time, nor did we ever see her delivered. And I remember Jim and I talking after spending a whole night doing that one time saying, well do you think she even has a demon? Why do you think it didn't come out? And I would just say, based on my experience, which is limited, and possibly some people who have more experience could debunk my theory in an instant, but it seems like I have a lot more confidence that the demon is going to come out if it's manifesting.

The way I kind of imagine this, and it may be nothing more than my imagination, is that when a demon resides in someone, it seems to be able to submerge itself in the personality sometimes, where it doesn't appear from the outside to be there, but at

other times it seems to emerge, or to come to the surface and affect behavior and stuff, and that's what I would call manifesting. We can see when the boy was brought to Jesus that the demon began to manifest, and the implication is that it was not manifesting previously. Now, in verse 18, after a man describes the symptoms of this boy's condition, he continues in the second half of that verse, So I spoke to your disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not.

And Jesus answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. Now, who is Jesus complaining about? Was he complaining about the disciples' lack of faith? He's complaining about somebody's lack of faith. Now, we know that later on, Jesus told the disciples that they had failed because of their lack of faith.

It doesn't say so in Mark's gospel, but it does in the parallel in Matthew. And so maybe it's their faith that was bugging him. Here this demon-possessed boy had been brought to them, and they tried and failed, and they couldn't help him, and Jesus might have been feeling, man, I'm going to be gone soon, and these people will be left in charge of the whole mission, and they don't even have enough faith yet.

How long am I going to have to put up with this faithlessness on the part of my own disciples? That might have been his thinking. Although he didn't address the statement to his disciples, he actually answered the man. Jesus said to him, O faithless generation.

So he might have been speaking to the man, not to his disciples. We know a little further on here that the man makes it very clear that he personally did not have the full necessary amount of faith to see Jesus fix the situation. He says, Jesus, if you can do anything, could you help us? And Jesus kind of straightens him out on that.

So we know that not only the disciples lacked faith, but even the man didn't have great faith. Of course, he might have had more before the failure of the disciples. He might have come to seek Jesus initially with the faith that Jesus could do something, but after seeing how impotent the disciples were, he might have been wavering a bit.

In any case, Jesus was frustrated. We see Jesus occasionally getting frustrated. There's no sin in this.

Jesus never did sin, so we'd have to assume that this kind of frustration isn't necessarily sinful. And it certainly seems justifiable for Jesus to get frustrated with the faithlessness of his own people, especially after he'd given them so many evidences that should have made them believers. Now, then they brought him to Jesus.

And when he saw him, immediately the Spirit convulsed him. Now, Luke's Gospel says, and while he was still coming, that is, while they were still bringing the boy to Jesus, he didn't even get to Jesus yet, and he began to be thrown into one of these seizures. And

he began to be convulsed, and he fell on the ground and wallowed.

I'm not sure what is meant by wallowed here. We usually think of a pig or something wallowing in the mud. But if there was not mud present, we almost always think of people wallowing in mud.

But wallowing might just mean writhing and rolling around. I'm not really sure what the word means. Apparently he was not lying rigid on the ground, but wallowing or writhing, rolling around, foaming at the mouth.

So, you know, this guy is thrown into a seizure, and he's foaming at the mouth and so forth, and everyone's freaking out and everything. And Jesus doesn't do anything about it. He just interviews the Father.

How long has it been like this? Now, the other Gospels don't mention this interview between Jesus and the Father that's here recorded in verses 21 through 24. They just tell that the boy manifested, and Jesus rebuked the demon, and he came out, and Jesus gave him back to his father. But we have this other little bit of information in verses 21 through 24 that's unique to Mark, to this Gospel.

So Jesus asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And here the boy is having this fit right at that moment. Jesus didn't say, quick, stick a sandal in his mouth so he doesn't bite his tongue or something. Jesus is just talking.

How long has it been like this? Did you fill out the paperwork at the reception desk there? No. Jesus was composed. It's quite obvious.

He was not threatened by the situation at all. And I'm not sure why Jesus asked that question. Jesus sometimes asks questions like this, which after he hears the answer, he doesn't seem to use the information in any way.

I'm thinking, for example, of the man of the tombs. When the demon-possessed man is run up to him and worshipping him and screaming out to him and so forth, Jesus asks the demon its name. What's your name? And the man answers, Legion.

But then Jesus does nothing with the information. He doesn't say, OK, Legion, come out. Some modern deliverance ministries indicate that you should ask the demon its name because it won't come out unless you call it by name.

And yet Jesus never called a demon by name. In fact, he never asked their name except that one time. And then when he got the name, he didn't say anything about it.

Likewise here. How long has he been this way? He gets the information, but there's no evident use for the information. Jesus cast out this demon just like he did other cases where he didn't ask for background information.

Why he asked this is a bit of a mystery, just like why he asked the Legion his name. There is the possibility that he asked the information in both cases, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the disciples or others nearby, that they might come to understand exactly how extreme the situation was before Jesus remedied it. Because if they knew how bad the situation was, it would cause Jesus' remedy of it to look as impressive as it ought to be.

I mean, if people diagnosed the problem as not so big, then the cure doesn't seem so magnificent. Now, the disciples, for example, in the case of Legion, they'd have no way of knowing there were thousands of demons in the guy. They saw a guy who was, you know, wild and so forth.

But if Jesus had not asked the demon its name and it had not said Legion, there are many of us, we and the disciples who wrote the story would perhaps never have known to record it. This guy had lots of demons in him. And the fact that the demon was made to confess this may have been for the sake of the disciples and the record for our sake too.

Go ahead.