Hi! This is NE series number 004C. The C at the end of the number stands for Comments. So I assume that you have already listened to the NE-DBRP_004 podcast where I read the portions in the NET that we will discuss here, or that you have your digital or paper copy of the NET Bible open, so that you can read the verses and footnotes being discussed. All my podcasts are hosted at dailybiblereading.info.

Main discussion points:
- Opposition to Jesus mounts
- Do evil spirits exist?

Links:
Dr. Neil T. Anderson’s Steps to Freedom in Christ
Buckling the Belt of Truth 7-day Youversion reading plan

I have been afraid that some listeners might be put off by my talking so much in the first three episodes about spiritual beings, those principalities and powers in the unseen world— the heavenly audience, so to speak. I have spoken about them because those beings came up in the readings, and I didn’t want to attempt to sweep them under the carpet (again, so to speak). Many pastors and teachers these days never mention such beings and hope that their listeners don’t bring up that subject. Let’s just find something else to talk about! If you just believe that we all evolved from a blob of protoplasm, then such beings can’t exist. And the same would be true if Luke Skywalker planted life here and then flew off to another galaxy.

Well, please forgive me if you have felt it strange or even uncomfortable to speak about unseen spiritual beings, because I’m going to talk about a related subject that has come up in today’s readings. I promise that I will try to find something different to talk about in episode number 5!

I always find it strange that opposition to Jesus’ ministry starts right away beginning in chapter 2. The situation becomes even worse when, after Jesus appoints those 12 he named as his messengers (apostles/emissaries), and when things were so busy that no one even had time to eat, the experts of the Law from Jerusalem claimed that he was being controlled by Beelzebul, the chief of the demons.

In Greek there are two different ways of talking about evil spirits, and both are used in this passage. One is the term demon (daimonion), and the other is unclean spirit (pneuma akatharton). There is no real difference between these, other than one is the technical name and the second is a descriptive name. Today in English, demons are just made fun of. We might say that a computer or a car has a demon. The word demon brings to mind the gremlin in an airplane in a Daffy the Duck cartoon. The expression ‘unclean spirit’ would refer to their moral defilement. Being controlled by an unclean spirit would cause you to think defiled thoughts and do things that would cause religious defilement. In other words, such a spirit causes people to do evil things. So it is appropriate that in today’s English, both demons and ‘unclean spirits’ are more frequently called ‘evil spirits’.

Right from chapter 1 of Mark, Jesus was casting out demons and not allowing them to speak. We find the same in chapter 3. The demons recognized Jesus as the Son of God. But Jesus did not want
testimonies coming from demons. Then, it is because of Jesus’ power over demons that he is accused of being ‘possessed’ by Beelzebul. The Greek is literally “Beelzebul he has.” This story in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the only time in the Bible that Beelzebul is mentioned, aside from Matthew 10:25, where Jesus talks another time about being called by that name.

Beelzebul in the NT is just the Hellenized pronunciation of Baal-zebub in the Old Testament. Baal means Lord in Ugaritic (which was spoken in Syria and Philistia). The word ‘zebub’ added could be an insulting variant of the god’s name coined by the Jews, because it means ‘Lord of the flies’. There are various stories about what this god did, but in general, this name seems to have just come to be an alternative name for Satan or Lucifer. The devil is the technical term for what he is. And his names are many.

Well the question is, do evil spirits and Satan exist? Most people actually don’t base their answer on what is in the Bible! Whether you believe in evil spirits or not is very much influenced today by how old you are and where you live. If you are American and around my age (and I am 67), then you may think— or certainly know people, who think like this: “Oh, when Jesus cast out demons, that was just what we call mental illness these days.” But if you are a young American or European person who has dabbled in occult practices (such as seances, use of drugs, or just listening to Satanic music), then it is likely that you believe that dark spirits exist. If you are heavily influenced by the teaching of evolution, and follow that to its logical ends, then I would think you would not believe in the existence of spirits— either good or bad types. But many such people do in fact simultaneously hold conflicting beliefs. But if you are from almost anywhere in the developing world where traditional cultural beliefs are strong, then you believe in the existence of demons.

I confronted the bias Americans have against talking about demonic activity and certain aspects of spiritual warfare when I came back to the USA on one of our furloughs. I was excited by what the Lord had recently taught me. The Lord had freed even me, a missionary, from a kind of spiritual harassment. I discovered that this was a topic that was not permitted for discussion in many of our supporting churches.

Indonesia is included as a country that is strongly influenced by traditional cultural beliefs. And even more so because one of the five state sanctioned religions is Hinduism. Hindu deities according to one Google search result total 33 million. By any count, there are a LOT of them, and frequently the same deities have multiple names, just like Satan does. Hindu worship involves idols. In 1Corinthians 10:20, Paul leaves no doubt as to what such deities are and what their idols represent. They are demons.

Because of Indonesia’s cultural beliefs in evil spirits, it is not unusual to see mentions of spirit-caused activities in newspapers that would never be found in Western newspapers. I found this in the the Denpasar, Bali edition of the Jakarta Post. (The Jakarta post is published in various large cities with Jakarta news and local news. And there are Indonesian and English editions.) I quote from an English edition from December of 2003. I will read the entire article:
Denpasar students fall into mass trance

Wahyoe Boediwardhana
The Jakarta Post
Denpasar, Bali

Dozens of students of an elementary school in Bali fell into a trance this week, before they were "exorcised" by local Hindu priests.

Teachers and priests said on Thursday that the school's failure to conduct certain rituals, and make offerings to appease troubled spirits, was to blame for the incident.

School principal Made Jara Atmaja said some 20 students had first fallen into a trance on Monday.

"Curiously, Monday was a purnama (full-moon) day, which is considered a sacred day by the Balinese Hindus. They (the teachers and priests) then held communal prayers and presented offerings at various temples," he said.

On Tuesday, only four students were left in a trance. But, on Wednesday 50 other pupils at the same school in Pedungan area, Denpasar, were reportedly in a similar state.

The victims suddenly cried out and danced, displaying a higher level of skill than usual. Some of them fell shouting to the ground.

"On Thursday, a few students were still affected," Atmaja said.

Strangely, their movements bore a striking resemblance to the choreography of Calonarang, a traditional dance/drama with a supernatural theme.

Teachers and others carried the immobilized students to the school hall.

Assisted by local community members, the teachers hurriedly placed offerings at the school's shrine and prayed before sprinkling holy water on the students.

Afterward, most of the students were quick to regain consciousness.

Atmaja said he believed the mass trance was related to a series of rituals held at the school on Nov. 13 to mark the completion of the shrine's renovation. The Calonarang dance was performed after the rituals.

"Unfortunately, we forgot to conduct a purification ritual prior to the main ritual. This negligence may have caused the mass trance," he said.
Now, if that happened at an elementary school in the USA, what do you think would happen? And do you think the event would make it into newspapers?!

Let me tell you why it WON’T happen in the USA: In places where demons are worshipped and feared, demons come out in the open. Their motive for open activities is to keep people being fearful and to keep people in bondage. In places where demons are not worshipped and believed in (and that is where most of my listeners live), demons are very happy to work behind the screens. I think that they prefer staying behind the scenes to working openly. They are very good at the art of manipulation, and they can get a whole culture to follow their favorite news stories and new ways of thinking.

The older Orya people (who have now all died) told me that in the old days before the Gospel came into that group, demons would sometimes come out on the nights when they performed their all night ritual dances, and demons visibly danced with the people. In a village of 120 people, even by moonlight you would know if stranger appeared and danced along. But as soon as the Gospel came in, the demons stopped appearing at such occasions.

Eliphaz strengthened his argument that Job was not blameless with information gained from a spirit:

Job 4:15 NET Then a [spirit— moving like a] breath of air [passed//passes] by my face; it [made//makes] the hair of my flesh stand up.  
16 It [stood//stands] still[,//].

[NET I stared, but couldn't tell what it was. Then I heard a voice out of the silence.]

Job 4:17 GNT “Can anyone be righteous in the sight of God or be pure before his Creator? [Of course not!]

As I said before, Satan is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44) So evil spirits always seek to trick and deceive. They often mix truth and error, because straight falsehood is too easy for someone to spot. In this case it was a lie that people cannot be pure and righteous in God’s sight, because God himself already said in the first two chapters that Job was completely blameless. (Again, Job did better at being holy than me and you! The author is painting an exaggerated picture as it enhances the point he wants to make.)

The Bible tells us from one end to the other that we humans should never seek information or advice from spirits. Doing this leads to bondage to evil spirits. Remember: Jesus forbid the demons to speak.

I want you to know that if you are a believer in Christ (and this will be borne out by your seeking to live according to everything that Jesus and his apostles wrote for us in the New Testament), then you cannot be possessed, inhabited, or controlled by demons. But you can be harassed by demons. The reason you cannot be possessed by a demon is because you have another possessor dwelling in you. That is the Holy Spirit. If you belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit he gave you is not about to let any evil spirit usurp his place. But what I learned (in the story I alluded to previously) was that habitual disobedience, grieving the Spirit, and quenching the Spirit can establish a legal foothold for a Christian to be harassed by demons.

Here’s the way I read Mark 3:23-27. My translation of this seeks to improve understanding of the text in verses 23 and 27 because some people will stumble on the rhetorical questions and figures of speech. (As always, my translation notes are found in the episode notes for the plain numbered episode. In this case _004.)
3:23 So he called them and spoke to them in parables: “It is not possible that Satan would drive out his own demons.”

Mark 3:24-26 NET If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom will not be able to stand. If a house[hold] is divided against itself, that house[hold] will not be able to stand. And if Satan rises against [his own kingdom and it//himself and] is divided, he is not able to stand and his end has come.

Mark 3:27

PET I’m here as Satan’s enemy and came to snatch away his possessions. No one is so foolhardy as to simply go in and try to steal from a very strong man’s house. First he would need to tie up the strong man, and only then can he go into his house and steal his possessions.

Dear friends, this passage holds keys to victorious living in union with Christ. Jesus has won complete victory over Satan. He has stolen Satan’s possessions and he is not going to give them back. What I mean by Satan’s possessions means you and me. We have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light, the kingdom of God’s Son. (Col. 1:13)

The next three verses are important:

Mark 3:28 I tell you the truth, people will be forgiven for all sins, even all the blasphemies they utter.
29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

30 [He said that] (because [the Law experts were saying//they said], “He has an unclean spirit”).

Here is a comment that I feel is so important that it will be repeated in the episode 5 podcast:

I want to comment briefly about the sin of blaspheming or reviling the Holy Spirit. Some people worry about whether they have done this and committed the unforgivable sin. Note the context here, and especially verse 30 (the last verse). The experts in the Law were saying the Jesus was working by the power of _Satan_. But Jesus was working by the power of the _Holy Spirit_. A person in a frame of mind like that of those Law experts will never repent. It is actually that non-repentance that brings the result of not being forgiven. Jesus’ warning is both stern and loving. It was loving of him to warn his opponents that were mighty close to blaspheming the Holy Spirit by what they were saying about Him. I want you to know this: If you worry about whether in some past time you have blasphemed the Holy Spirit, then you haven’t! If you are the kind of person who feels sorrow for sins already committed and are ready to repent of any new sin you fall into, then you have never blasphemed the Holy Spirit, nor are you likely to ever do so.

Again, I am sorry that topics we discussed today are on some kind of ‘do not discuss’ list in the Western world and developed countries. I didn’t want to sweep such important topics under the carpet. I plan to find other topics to focus on in my next few podcasts. Let’s leave today with some main points to keep in mind:

- Jesus won the ultimate victory over Satan at the cross. We are on the winning side! We are not to fear and have no need to pay attention to demons.
- Jesus came to free us from Satan’s household. The result of this in our lives— according to all of the New Testament and indeed the whole Bible, is that our way of life should become increasingly more holy and less sinful. We are to keep our eyes on Christ and become more and more like him.
- Be patient with yourself, but become concerned if you see no spiritual growth.
- Claim the promise in 1Jn. 1:9, and believe that God still forgives your sins when you confess them. Keep short accounts with God. Don’t let your shame keep you from confessing the same sin again.
- Be concerned if there are areas in your life that seem totally beyond your control. Do ideas for committing one certain sin just keep coming back with obsessive strength? When you confess wanting to sin and try to turn your mind away from it, do those thoughts quickly come back even stronger? If so, listen to my next point:
- If you believe in Christ and are seeking to follow him, evil spirits cannot inhabit or control you. But you may have done something that has opened a foothold in your life to being harassed by an evil spirit. Many people have been helped (as I have) by prayerfully following through Dr. Neil T. Anderson’s Steps to Freedom in Christ. The web site is linked in today’s episode notes. And ideas that have helped me are found in a Youversion 7-day reading plan called Buckling the Belt of Truth. That is also linked in the episode notes.

Dr. Neil T. Anderson’s [Steps to Freedom in Christ](#)
[Youversion 7-day Buckling the Belt of Truth reading plan](#)