



# WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE

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## Matthew 17

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



**Learn the Bible at Home**

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Matthew 17.

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### Topics.

- The mountain of transfiguration.
- Why do the scribes say Elijah must first come.
- Jesus heals an epileptic boy.
- Who do kings of the earth take taxes from?

**The previous chapter:** the previous chapter speaks about the sign of Jonah the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Peter confesses the Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God and Jesus told him upon this rock he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Jesus calls Peter Satan and tells him whatever he binds on earth shall be bound in heaven and talked about denying self and taking up the cross, losing our life and saving it and about the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### MATTHEW 17:1-5

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#### Moses and Elijah on the Mountain of Transfiguration.

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- **Matthew 17:1-5:** <sup>1</sup>And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured (changed) before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup>And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>5</sup>He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

In verse nine Jesus tells Peter James and John not to tell anyone of this vision, showing us that seeing Moses, Elijah and Jesus glorified was some type of vision.

**Visions:** can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind). A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision. This vision on the Mount of Transfiguration appears to be some form of hologram since Peter James and John all saw it. Nevertheless, I feel to limit the wondrous events that took place on this mountain entirely to a vision is a little too simplistic for such a majestic event, so I am willing to let mystery prevail and accept that some parts of it were in vision form while other parts may have been very real.

**Jesus Peter James and John come down the Mountain.**

- **Matthew 17:6-9:** When the disciples heard this (God's voice), they fell on their faces and were terrified. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." <sup>8</sup>And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. <sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "*Tell no one the vision*, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Some use the fact Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus to support the theory that all the Old Testament prophets and saints are in heaven, but this event is describe by Jesus as a vision and like John's vision of unfulfilled events in the book of Revelation, cannot be taken as a statement of the actual survival of Moses and Elijah or used to support the idea all Old Testament saints are in heaven. This is reading far more into the vision than it is saying, especially since the writer to the Hebrews thinks of all the Old Testament heroes of faith, including Moses and the prophets, as having died, without receiving the promised reward (Heb. 11:13) and says others refused to accept release for torture so that they might *rise again to a better life* (Heb. 11:35). Adding to these statements the author of Hebrews then goes on to say, that the saints of the Old Testament will not be made perfect without us (Heb. 11:39-40). It can hardly be that Moses and Elijah had been resurrected to immortality in advance of Jesus who is the firstfruits from the dead, the Scripture teaches that those in Christ will all be made alive, but each in their own order, Christ being the first and then everyone who belongs to him when he returns (1 Cor. 15:20-23). For more information see the titles:

- Death (What happens when we Die) in Death.
- Resurrection.
- Both titles are found (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead:**

(v9) one of the reasons Jesus may have told Peter, James and John not to tell anyone of the vision may have been because if the crowds started talking about it the anger and hatred of the Pharisees would have been even more aroused against him and his disciples and it was not yet the right time for that to happen.

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**MATTHEW 17:10-13**

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**Why do the Scribes say Elijah must first Come?**

- **Matthew 17:10-13:** And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>11</sup>He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. <sup>12</sup>But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup>Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

This does not mean that John the Baptist was Elijah, but that John and Elijah had the same spirit in that both John and Elijah were passionate for God and also called by God to restore all things and call the people to repentance. The scribes did not recognise John, means they did not recognise him as a prophet of God, but treated him with disdain, scorn and contempt. John suffered at the hands of the religious leaders and at the hands of the worldly leaders (Herod beheaded him). Jesus words, "The Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands," means he will suffer in the same way as John suffered at the hands of the religious leaders and the hands of the secular rulers.

**Jesus Heals an Epileptic Boy.**

- Matthew 17:14-21: And when they (Jesus Peter, James and John) came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, <sup>15</sup>said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. <sup>16</sup>And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." <sup>18</sup>And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. <sup>19</sup>Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" <sup>20</sup>He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." <sup>21</sup>Howbeit this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting

**NOTICE:** even though the man knew Jesus had the power to heal his son, he did not know if he would so he humbly asks the Lord to deliver his son from his epilepsy (he does not demand or claim his son's healing as some religious leaders teach today).

**The demon came out and the boy was healed:** the boy was an epileptic and being such had epileptic fits and seizures, during the New Testament age people believed any sickness (even blindness and deafness) they did not understand was the result of evil inferior gods called demons possessing the person so it is only natural the father thought his son's illness was caused by demon entities possessing his child. But they had a wrong understanding of sicknesses especially since we know today that a person with this kind of illness can take medication that will allow them to live a normal life. It is hardly likely the demons if they existed in the form that we think of them today could be simply subdued and controlled by chemical drugs you buy over the counter for a few dollars. For further information on Demons see the title:

- Demons, Devils and Sickness (at the end of this chapter).

**Faith and a grain of mustard seed:** figuratively the word mountain can mean to expiate or take away sin, to cause to doubt and keep the mind in suspense. At the time Jesus said to his disciples, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." They were standing at the foot of the Mountain of Transfiguration.

**These are difficult verses to interpret, the following are various thoughts:**

1. The man with the sick child tells Jesus that he had brought his son to some of Jesus disciples (the twelve apostles) and even though Jesus had previously given the twelve apostles miraculous powers and authority over demons and sickness and they had gone out and healed many (Mark 6:7-14) for some reason their faith was not great enough to heal this man's child. So the disciples went to Jesus privately to ask him why they were unable to heal the boy, thus because Jesus is specifically talking to his twelve apostles many reason that what Jesus is saying only applies to the twelve who certainly did go out and do many great signs and wonders (Matt. 10:1) (Mark 3:13-15) (Luke 9:1).
2. The mountain to the father of the boy was the boy's sickness, during this era the people believed that sicknesses they didn't understand was the result of the sick person being demon possessed and therefore would naturally draw the conclusion that they were under the condemnation of God. No-one in the Bible actually moved a literal mountain by faith, so perhaps the mountain Jesus has in mind is the mountain of sin in the world and in a person's individual life which is

impossible to overcome on their own. Maybe Jesus is speaking figuratively and the mountain he has in mind is the mountain of sin which leads to death and eternal destruction whereas faith (in Christ) removes this mountain.

3. Because it is not recorded in the Bible that anyone actually moved a literal mountain by their faith, not even Christ himself it is most likely the Lord is teaching the apostles that something that would be equally difficult and as seemingly impossible as moving mountains can be done if they have faith and whatever the mountain is, it is required to be removed to add to the good of mankind, the glory of God and to Christ's Kingdom. Most likely the correct interpretation is a combination of all three listed.

**This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting:** Isaiah in the Old Testament told Israel the fast God delights in is for them to:

- Stop going their own way and seeking their own pleasure.
- Help those who are oppressed and share their food with those who are hungry.
- Bring the homeless into their own homes and give clothing to the poor.
- Stop speaking idly and acting wickedly.

The LORD told Israel when they fast in this way then He will hear their prayer, guide them continually and satisfy their desire in difficult times (Isaiah 58:6-14) perhaps the prayer and fasting Jesus has in mind carries the idea of being in a right relationship with God and spending time in communion with him.

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## **MATTHEW 17:22-23**

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### **The Son of Man will Rise on the Third Day.**

- **Matthew 17:22-23:** As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, <sup>23</sup>and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

In the book of Matthew Jesus said:

- For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40) referring to (Jonah 1:17).

Within Christianity there is confusion over the three days and three nights, so the following scenario is a brief overview of that period of time. Three days and three nights is a proper Jewish Bible idiom for saying, "the third day" it does not need to mean three full days. In this context it simply means, Christ will rise on the third day. The following lists the scenario of events leading up to this third day. Jesus was in the tomb late Friday afternoon (14<sup>th</sup>), but before sunset, because the Jewish High Sabbath began on Saturday (15<sup>th</sup>) at sunset. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women (Salome) went to the tomb with Joseph late Friday afternoon but before sunset on Friday (14<sup>th</sup>) (Passover Day), so the woman saw where the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb (Luke 24:10) (Mark 16:6).

Then Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James and the other women (Salome) went home to prepare spices for the body of Jesus. Then sometime early Sunday morning the woman went back to the tomb to put the spices they had prepared on Jesus body. Mary Magdalene was first to get to the tomb. Jesus was in the tomb after sunset Friday (Passover Day) (14<sup>th</sup>) all day Saturday (the Jewish High Sabbath) (15<sup>th</sup>) until

sometime Sunday morning (the first day of the week) (16<sup>th</sup>) giving the three days (i.e. part of Friday all day Saturday part of Sunday morning) which fulfils the Jewish idiom three days and three nights, meaning on the third day Christ will rise.

**Ponder for a moment:** these verses shine a spotlight on the truth that all the while Jesus was showing compassion to all who came to him he was not only fully aware that he was going to be killed, but since he knew the Scriptures fully would have also aware that his death would be brutal and cruel (Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22). For further detail see:

- Three Days and Three Nights in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## MATTHEW 17:24-27

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### Who do Kings of the Earth take Taxes From?

- **Matthew 17:24-27:** When they (Jesus and the disciples) came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" <sup>25</sup>He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" <sup>26</sup>And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. <sup>27</sup>However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

The tax collectors ask Peter if Jesus pays tax, Peter's replies by telling them he does. Jesus then asks Peter if the secular kings of this world take taxes from their own children or from others in the world and Peter correctly answers, from others in the world. Jesus then points out that the king's own sons are free from paying any taxes because their father is the king. Then Jesus immediately tells Peter that he will pay the Roman taxes so as not to cause any offence. Jesus is indirectly using this story to show Peter that even though Jesus is the Son of God and his Father is the ultimate King not only over planet earth, but the entire universe Jesus as his Son is actually free from paying taxes, but so as not to cause any offences he chooses to pay the Roman tax that is due, but not because he has to, but so as not to cause strife with the Roman government and its laws.

**There is a great principle Jesus is teaching his followers in this story:** even though you may be free from having to do something, if not doing it is going to cause strife and contention and arouse anger and hostility you are better to simply do it.

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## DEMONS, DEVILS AND SICKNESS

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The English word demon and demons are not found in the entire King James Bible. In the New Testament of the King James Bible the translators have unfortunately translated both (diabolos) and (daimion) as devil or devils which gives a completely wrong understanding of the Greek words diabolos (devil) and daimion (demon). This has over the years led to a misunderstanding of the difference between devils and demons. Most well recognized and globally accepted modern Bibles have translated demons (daimion) and devils (diabolos) correctly. The word demons (daimion) was believed to be an inferior deity or god and primarily relates to sickness whereas devils (diabolos) means a false accuser or slander and primarily relates to people's behavior and not sickness.



The Jews believed demons to be an inferior evil god or deity that held possession of those with severe sickness either bodily or mentally those that were mentally sick were believed to be possessed by an evil inferior god called daimon. They believed that the demons (daimonions) so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves and that people possessed with demons were forced by the demons to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them, and the only cure was by the expulsion of the demons. The fact that the Pharisees and scribes and certain Jews believed John the Baptist and Jesus were possessed by demons (Jn. 7:20) (Jn. 8:48-49) (Jn. 10:19-20) (Matt. 11:18) clearly shows us that just because the religious leaders of Jesus era believed mental illness, deafness, blindness and sickness they didn't understand were a result of demons does not mean it is a true fact.

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## **THE BIBLICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SICKNESS AND DEMONS**

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In most instances when people had an illness that does not control the person, it is referred to in biblical writings as a sickness, but when a sickness (mental illness) controls a person to do things they do not want to do (have fits etc.), they are referred to as having demons or an unclean spirit. Sickness commonly related to illnesses the people understood, while demons primarily relate to severe illnesses and diseases, either bodily or mentally the people did not understand. Just because people believe something does not mean it is true if the Bible were being written today it would contain words like bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia epilepsy, melancholy, loss of speech etc., which in the New Testament are referred to as unclean spirits, demons or caused by demons as are paralysis, blindness and deafness and any other sickness the people did not understand.

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## **ONE SUPER EVIL GOD IN CONTROL OF MILLIONS OF LESSER EVIL GODS**

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Any force in a human that controls a person to do things they cannot control themselves, things that affects their behavior and mental well-being, voices or words in the mind and severe diseases, either bodily or mentally, (such as schizophrenia paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy, insanity and seizures etc., plus speeches that entice people against the things of God and God Himself are all commonly called demons in the New Testament. But the Bible does not present a picture of one super evil god (slightly less in power than God) being in control of millions of lesser evil gods. This is a modern-day misunderstanding of the language of the Bible. Demons are not evil people as Hollywood portrays demon possessed people in their movies. People in the Bible that had demons were morally good people and, in some case, only children who were sadly afflicted with severe diseases, either bodily or mentally such as paralysis, blindness, deafness and loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy and insanity, etc. In the opinion of the Jews demons had entered their bodies, and so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves. The people of Jesus age believed the possessed were driven to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them; and their only cure was thought to require the expulsion of the demon.

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## **THE ORIGIN OF DEMONS**

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A demon is believed to be a supernatural being, spirit, or force capable of influencing human lives, usually by evil means. Demons have played a role in the traditions of most religions. The practice of expelling demons (exorcism) that possess people or places has been carried out by many

religions. The belief in evil spirits and their ability to influence the lives of people dates from prehistoric times. Many early people believed that spirits occupied all elements of nature. Evil spirits or demons were spirits that brought harm to living people. Societies that believed in demons sought to influence the actions of both good and bad spirits through worship and sacrifices. Some ancient societies, including those in Egypt and Babylonia (now Iraq), believed that such spirits were responsible for the functions of the body and that demons caused specific illnesses. The word demon originated from an ancient Greek term, daimon, which referred to beings whose special powers placed them between people and the gods. These beings had the ability either to improve people's lives or carry out the punishment of the gods. Basic Christian ideas about demons originated from references to evil beings or unclean spirits in the Old Testament. By the middle ages, Christian theology had developed an elaborate hierarchy of angels, who were associated with God, and fallen angels, or demons, who were led by Satan. Satan himself was considered the original fallen angel. Islam also developed a complex system of demons. Muslim writings describe a group of evil beings, called jinn, who cause destruction and preside over places where evil activities take place. The original jinn was called Iblis, who was cast out by Allah for refusing to worship Adam, the first man.

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## **MODERN DAY MISUNDERSTANDING OF DEMONS**

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Demons can be seen as any controlling power or force in people that is destructive to their well-being, science says, anorexia and such like are mental problems and not physical, doctors call anorexia a destructive mental power or force whereas the Bible calls it, demons meaning, something that is destructive to a humans well-being. Today's generations primary understanding of demons comes from Hollywood and not New Testament or spiritual thinking because of this to think of someone having a demon is highly offensive as it implies, they are either extremely evil or extremely morally bankrupt which not one of the persons who are said to have demons in the Bible were. It is not the Bible that is wrong, but the modern-day misunderstanding of the terminology and language of the Bible because modern generations have been influenced by a wrong understanding of the language used during the time of Jesus and the apostles.

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## **SOME SIMILAR BIBLICAL STORIES**

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### **A WOMAN AND HER DAUGHTER**

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A Greek Syrophenician woman asked Jesus to cast forth the demon (daimon) (meaning an inferior deity or god) out of her daughter, Jesus said the demon is gone out of her daughter and when she went to her house, she found her daughter healed. This is a woman's young daughter, a child. The child would not be evil or morally bankrupt, this was not an inferior evil god or deity possessing the child as the Jews believed but a mental disorder or disease (Mark 7:23-30).

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### **A MAN AND HIS CHILD**

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A man tells Jesus that a spirit takes his child, and the son cries out during his epileptic fits and the boy suffers bodily harm. This is a man loved his son, the child would certainly not be evil or morally bankrupt, the spirit, is not an evil god possessing the child as the Jews believed, but a mental disorder, illness or disease (Luke 9:37-41).

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### **A LUNATIC**

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A man came to Jesus and asked him to have mercy on his son telling Jesus that his son is lunatic (meaning affected by the moon), and often has very bad fits that sometimes seriously harm the boy (Matt. 17:14-18). The Jews believed evil inferior gods caused mental disorders and the Greeks believed the moon could cause bodily seizures or fits. Today we know the moon does not cause illness, but understand that the child had epilepsy or a similar disease and was having a fit, the Greeks and the Jews knew nothing of epilepsy or the like so they simply referred to illnesses and sicknesses they did not understand as being the result of the moon or the sick person being possessed by inferior evil gods. The Jews mistaken understanding of demons was the same as the Greeks wrong belief about the moon.

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## **THERE ARE MANY SO-CALLED GODS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH**

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The Bible teaches that there is only one real God and creator of all that exists and His name is I AM the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, yet the apostle Paul says there are many so-called gods in heaven and on earth (1 Cor. 8:5). Immediately after making this statement Paul says, nevertheless not everyone possesses this knowledge. Meaning the knowledge that there are many gods, neither do they understand how and why (1 Cor. 8:7). Pagans believed in various gods, often referred to as "the god." These false but very real illusionary gods are created by a very strong belief in "the god" in the imagination of the mind. The New Testament calls these gods demons (daimonion), but that does not mean real inferior false gods actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the person believing in false gods and demons they are very real entities this is most likely why Jesus did not try to explain the medical terms as we know them today. Jesus rather than go into lengthy detail to explain in detail the medical causes of sickness simply used the common language of his era and manifested God's power over all other gods people believed in by supernaturally healing people. Once a person saw and experience the healing power of God why would they continue to believe in their false inferior gods who had no power? When Jesus gave this same healing power to his apostles to heal physical sickness and spiritual or mental disorders of the mind it was not solely so they could deliver people from their sickness, but to prove to the people that they were teaching the words of the only true God and the only way to eternal salvation. Thus the apostles and Jesus ministry was not to teach medical science, but to connect people separated from God to God.

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## **DEMONS (ILLUSIONARY GODS AND THE MIND)**

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Demons as evil spiritual gods only exist in the mind of those who believe in them, they are an image of the mind created by imagination through a false belief in them. This false image in the mind will affect a person's emotions and feelings accordingly because the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between a real image of the mind and a false one. The imaginary but real images of the mind create real emotions and feelings of fear through the human nervous system and these feelings in turn reinforce and convince those that believe in demons or monsters that real evil gods do exist.

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## **NOT EVERYTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE**

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Perhaps everything regarding demons is not quite as black and white as I have explained, even the best doctors and scientist in the world today still don't fully understand the cause of many of these illness, but one thing that is very clear and is black and white is that those in the Bible

who were said to be possessed by demons were not evil wicked people in fact some were children and others humbly fell at the Lords feet and wanted to follow him added to this God through the Lord Jesus Christ showed them great compassion and mercy.

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**For further information see the titles:**

- Devils.
- Demons.
- Unclean spirits.

Both titles are in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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