

Does the Greek Word DAIMONIZOMAI Mean “Demonized”?

—Dr. Günther H. Juncker (rev. 3/14)

Can the term *daimonizomai* (δαίμονιζομαι) be watered down to mean indwelt or infected or infested or afflicted in such a way that a born-again *Christian* could be “demonized” and in need of having a demon cast out of them? All agree that demons can oppress and harass and tempt Christians. But not all agree that Christians can have demons *inside* them that need to be *cast out* of them in Jesus’ name. What light does the relevant Greek word actually shed on this issue? What do the standard and well-known Greek dictionaries and lexicons have to say about the meaning of this word that occurs 13 times in the NT (Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; John 10:21)? They all define it in exactly the same way:

BAGD	“be possessed by a demon”
<i>EDNT</i> , ed. Balz & Schneider, 1:274	“be possessed by a demon”
LSJ	“to be possessed by a demon”
Louw-Nida, 1:147 (§12.41)	“to be possessed by a demon”
<i>NIDNTT</i> , ed. Brown, 1:453	“be possessed by a demon”
<i>TDNT</i> , ed. Kittel, 2:19	“To be possessed by a demon”
<i>UBS Greek Dictionary</i>	“to be demon possessed”

The unanimity of the major Greek dictionaries and lexicons is not surprising to those who know Greek and are not misled by the English transliteration into assuming a watered down meaning for the term. The word does not mean “indwelt, but not possessed” or “infested, but not possessed” or “afflicted and influenced, but not possessed.” The word means “demon possessed.” Since even those in so-called deliverance ministries rightly admit that a Christian cannot be *possessed* by Satan or a demon, one wonders where in Scripture they find any evidence for casting demons out of Christians—*since in the NT it is only “demon possessed” people who have demons cast out of them!*

This, not coincidentally, agrees with the fact that *there is not a single clear example anywhere in the NT of a Christian either having a demon “in” them or having a demon cast “out” of them.* It also, not coincidentally, agrees with good NT theology regarding the transference of believers from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ and their indwelling (and *possession!*) by the Holy Spirit. Demons can tempt us from without, just as they so tempted Christ, but they cannot be *inside* us and in need of being *cast out* of us since by definition that would mean that we were “demon possessed” ... which is impossible.

For additional information see my faculty web page at <http://faculty.tfc.edu/juncker> and especially the paper there by Elliot Miller.