

What is this new thing Jesus is talking about? Old wine skins that will break if filled with the new wine? Old garments that will tear if patched with the new cloth? The bridegroom taken from them before entering the waiting bride chamber? New wine skins are needed, a new garment is needed, a warm, receptive welcome for the Bridegroom is needed. The new wine will not be given to those insisting upon using their old skins. Those refusing the new garments offered will be left with their old worn out garments. Those not welcoming the Bridegroom will miss out on the feast. Hard hearted defenders of "the Sabbath" will miss the Lord of the Sabbath, the very Son of Man, God in human form, among them. Something new indeed!

He is a merciful and long suffering God for He does not judge them then and there or even simply walk away from them and leave them in their helpless self righteousness. He enters the synagogue again, another week or so gone by. It is the place where God's word is read and proclaimed and where faithful Jews are found together in worship. Others also frequented there on Sabbath, those in need and those hypocritically displaying their supposed righteousness. A previous time there was a man indwelt by a demon who was delivered from his oppressor. This week there is a man with a withered hand. He was healed immediately upon obeying the Lord's commands, first to stand forth and then to stretch forth his hand. The Lord knew the Pharisees were watching for Him to violate the Sabbath or some of their other rules. He was deeply grieved and rightfully angry at their attitude revealing their hardened hearts. Picture this. He looks around at them, His anger obvious to all, challenges them with that searching question. Hearing no response He heals the man, doing no perceptible physical work, requiring no significant work of the man. Refusing His divinity the Pharisees immediately set about finding co-conspirators to find a way to destroy Jesus. This was in Galilee. They found willing allies in the Herodians, the loyalists to Herod, the proselyted Gentile king appointed by Rome to govern that part of the world. While the Pharisees were of the strictest sect of the Jews, the extremely secular Herodians were their hated enemies, yet in their hatred they sought help from them to destroy Jesus.

Jesus thwarts any intentions they might have had by leaving town and going back to the sea. But a great multitude followed Him. Not only local folks but visitors from afar. Jews from all around Judea including Jerusalem 80 some miles to the south, and Gentile foreigners, people from Idumea, (Edom) 120 miles south and Tyre and Sidon, on the Mediterranean coast 40-50 miles northwest of Galilee. People, when they heard of the great things He was doing, came from near and far to see for themselves. But more than just to see. They came to be healed. A selfish, needy lot they were, pushing and shoving. He requested His disciples have a boat stand by in case they mobbed Him. The Son of Man? Did they

have any clue, any reverence, any gratitude? Surely some individuals did, to varying degrees. But they treated Him more like a great vending machine dispensing healing without money, without cost. Some with true faith received eternal life, but that is not mentioned here. No mention is made here of preaching. The physical healing was indeed genuine and permanent or the people would soon cease coming for it. Only those who like excitement would continue to come. But even though genuine the healing was temporal, having in itself no eternal gain. Are our priorities earthly or godly?

The demonic spirits came out when commanded although Jesus had to keep ordering them to be silent in order to keep them from inferring He was their leader. What about demons? Are they real? Yes, they are spirit beings without physical bodies, fallen from their original created state. Are epilepsy, insanity and mental illnesses different from demon possession? Yes. Scripture distinguishes these conditions and demonic possession, although the behaviors seen are sometimes similar. Insanity is not necessarily demonic possession.

Matthew 4:24 . . . those which were possessed with demons <daimonizomai>, and those which were lunatic <seleniazomai> . . .

The term lunatic ("lunacy," "loony") refers to a person out of their right mind. But how had the demons come to prosper in the land? Under the law of Moses people who practiced witchcraft were to be stoned. Where were the Pharisees and Priests when these folk came around? But Jesus declines to destroy the wizards, witches, demons in His land or their unwilling hosts. He casts out the demons, freeing their victims, even if they had become indwelt because of their own foolishness or intentional vulnerability. While Satan and demons they can deceive, vex and move attacks on believers they can never enter us.

Can people be possessed by demons today on this earth? Yes. Even in so called modern, civilized countries? Yes. With increasing popular interest in the "spirit world" and tolerated witchcraft, demon possession becomes more likely and probably more wide spread. Demon possession is also facilitated by mind altering drugs, including alcohol. "spirits") Those living in the seven year's Tribulation soon to come upon this earth continue in their drugs and sorceries despite the terrible disasters befalling earth.

Revelation 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries (pharmakeia), nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

Mind altering substances and witchcraft are to have no place in Christian circles, 1Corintians 6:10; Galatians 5:20-21; Acts 8:9-24; and 13:6-12. Yet in the end after the Rapture, professing Christendom (Babylon the Great) is left behind on earth, characterized by sorceries <pharmakeia>* Revelation 18:23. **Horror of Horrors!!!**

By Ron Canner, December 6, 2006

* **farmakeia pharmakeia**, far-mak-i'-ah medication ("pharmacy"), i.e. (by extension) magic (literally or figuratively):--sorcery, witchcraft