



The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 4: Demonic Assignments in the Old Testament

In our current study of the potential effects of various degrees of demonization, we started with the most severe level that enables demons to take *full control* of a person's mind and behavior on either a consistent or intermittent basis. We then progressed to describe a slightly less intense degree of domination which I labeled demonic "attachment." In this case, demons have a specific legal right to be consistently associated, or "attached," to the person but can only act with the compliance of some part of the person.

Our focus in this issue is on demonic "assignments." This level of demonization is quite distinct from the previous two levels in that it is not based on specific legal grounds given by the afflicted individual. Instead, it occurs by the direction of God, Satan, or another individual and is designed to accomplish a specific, usually short-term, purpose in a person's life. Christians are not immune to such assignments. However, the example of Job indicates that Satanic plots against the godly can seemingly only be executed with God's permission and within explicit bounds set by Him.

Job was an extremely wealthy and prominent man who exhibited exemplary godliness and integrity. When Satan claimed that this was only because of the spiritual protection and abundant blessings God had granted him, God allowed Satan to test his claim. He gave Satan permission to destroy Job's possessions, his children, and eventually his health, but he could not take his life.

When released by God, Satan had the ability to direct the actions of foreigners as well as the forces of nature to destroy Job's livestock, herdsmen, and children and finally to smite his flesh with severe boils (Job 1:1-2:8ff). Through all of these adversities Job's faith in God never wavered. In the end God rewarded Job's endurance through this massive, undeserved attack by giving him double of all he lost (Job 42:10).

We usually think of evil spirits serving the purposes of Satan. However, as seen in Job's case, they are never exempt from the higher authority of God's sovereignty and ultimately answer to Him. In fact, they seemingly appear before Him on a regular basis (Job 1:6; 2 Chron. 18:18) and can be sent on assignments that God initiates to fulfill *His own* will.

Second Chronicles 18 reveals such a scene with God specifically soliciting an evil spirit from among the "hosts of heaven" to entice King Ahab into a fatal battle. The spirit that volunteered for this assignment said that it would cause Ahab's prophets to speak falsely about Ahab's success in the battle. God approved this tactic and commissioned the spirit to do this, bringing the outcome God desired.

Although the purpose is not quite as clear, God also sent an evil spirit to "terrorize" King Saul when the Holy Spirit (and God's favor) departed from him. When it came intermittently upon him, it caused him to rave like a mad man and inspired violent and murderous behavior within him, particularly against David (1 Sam. 16: 14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10).

God also sent an evil spirit to fulfill a curse that Jotham uttered against Abimelech and the Shechemites, who had conspired together to kill all the sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon), proclaiming Abimelech as king over them. Jotham, the only half-brother to escape, retaliated by uttering a curse that Abimelech and the Shechemites would destroy each other. God stood behind Jotham in this and sent an evil spirit to stir up animosity and inspire treacherous actions between them, leading to their destruction (Judges 9).

Thus far we have seen that demons "on assignment" have the ability to affect a person's speech, actions, and health as well as the forces of nature. They can also be commissioned to carry out curses and acts of divine punishment by the order of God. In our next issue we will continue to examine demonic assignments within the context of the New Testament.