

Spiritual Warfare & Deliverance Ministry



Past > **Present** > **Future**



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**And let them
make me a
sanctuary;
that I may dwell
among them.**

– Exodus 25:8

Psalms 77:13



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WHEEL OF PRODUCE

WHITE

- ALLEVIATES CHRONIC INFLAMMATION
- SUPPORTS THYROID FUNCTION

PURPLE

- CONTAINS ANTI-AGING COMPOUNDS
- DECREASES BLOOD PRESSURE

BLUE

- PROTECTS BODY FROM CANCER
- PROMOTES A HEALTHY HEART

GREEN

- IMPROVES COGNITIVE FUNCTION
- SUPPORTS CELLULAR GROWTH & REGENERATION

RED

- SUPPORTS HEART HEALTH
- LOADED WITH ANTIOXIDANTS

ORANGE

- STRENGTHENS IMMUNE SYSTEM
- SUPPORTS VISION

YELLOW

- REGULATES BLOOD PRESSURE
- AIDS IN THE PRODUCTION OF ENERGY



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**Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops...**

Proverbs 3.9



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Spiritual Warfare & Deliverance Ministry



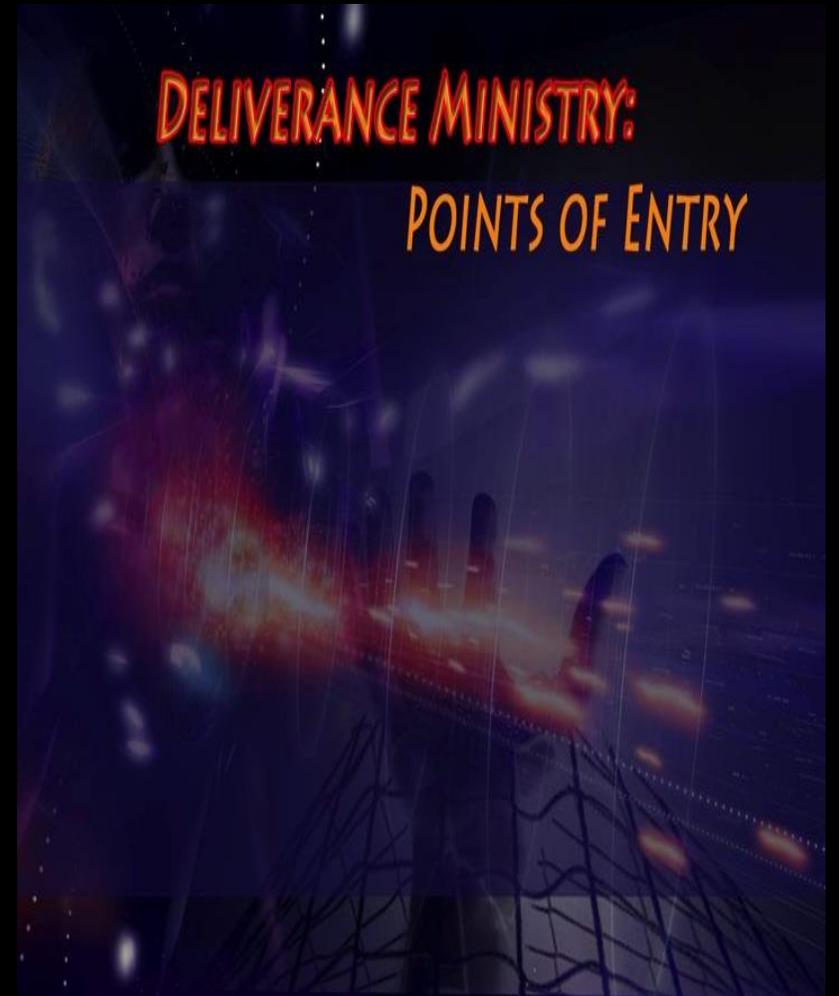
Past > **Present** > **Future**



Introduction - Historical Backgrounds

During the past decade there has developed, particularly among charismatic Christian bodies in various places, a movement that has come to be known as "deliverance ministry" in which evil spirits--believed to control human beings who exhibit bizarre forms of human behaviour--are "exorcised" or "cast out." **Believing that Satan often harasses those whom he does not directly control, some "deliverance ministry" advocates have also developed a companion program of "spiritual warfare" by which a child of God may combat supernatural forces of evil in his or her own life experience.**

It is impossible today to understand adequately phenomena in "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry" without first taking into account the data available to us from the times of the Bible and the subsequent development of the post-New Testament Christian Church. **Since prophecy has been defined by one writer as "history written in advance," it will not be inappropriate to include here a survey of instruction and counsel from Scripture and the pen of Ellen White concerning what the present and future may hold for God's people just before Jesus returns.**

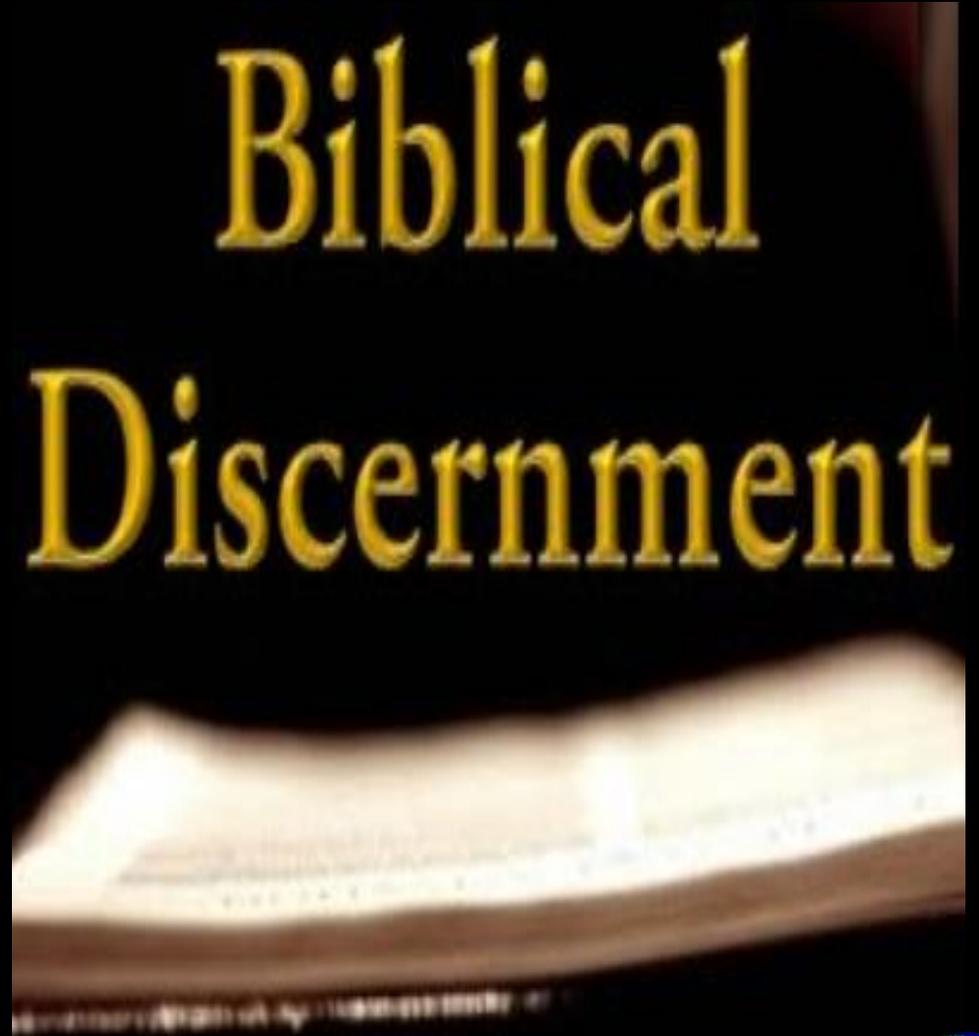


The Bible is very Clear in Revealing

The Word of God (Bible) reveals that behind the scenes of earthly affairs, invisible, supernatural forces of good and evil are engaged in cosmic warfare for the control of every human being (Ephesians 6:12). And the existence of a literal, personal devil, now named Satan, who once was a perfect (and heaven's highest) angel (Ezekiel 28:15). Scripture further declares that Satan experienced a moral fall, took one-third of all the holy angels with him (Revelation 12:4), and at the conclusion of that first war in heaven he was literally, physically, ejected, eventually coming down to planet earth (verses 7-9).

Here he continues yet today, diligently waging warfare against the kingdom of God and all that is good and worthwhile in the universe.

So that today under Satan's immediate, direct control there are multitudes of evil spirits, fallen angels, demons, allied with him in this "great controversy between Christ and Satan."



Satan & his demons defeated at Calvary

It is the inalienable right of every child of God to be free from the control of Satan (though not, of course, from his temptations) through the superior power of Jesus Christ who won a supreme victory over Satan at Calvary. **There, by His personal and once-for-all sacrifice, He earned the right to confer upon His followers not only eternal life in the hereafter, but also freedom from the control of Satan in this present temporal existence.**

A number of Christians believe all of the above doctrinal tenets surrounding the problem of evil in the universe. They claim that they have the power to cast out evil spirits, to drive back the supernatural forces of Satan's kingdom of darkness, and to dispossess him of his human prey. Anything less, they affirm, is a virtual denial of the Christian faith once delivered to the saints.



Some Christians claim power over the Demons

The "deliverance" sessions they conduct are impressive, dramatic, and sensational. They appear to confront Satan and his evil angels in direct combat. They seem to have power to force demons audibly to identify themselves by name, and then they boldly order them to depart the body of their victim by the superior power in the name of Jesus Christ. And the demons seem to obey!

To raise questions at this point is not to prove oneself a skeptic, or to impugn either the sincerity or dedication of the practitioners of "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry. Nor is it a "cop-out" to escape the high risks that necessarily devolve upon anyone who dares to challenge Satan on his home ground.

In the same sermon in which Jesus commanded, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," He also declared that "by their fruits ye shall know them" (see [Matthew 7:1, 16, 20](#)). While no Christian may ever judge the character or motivation of a fellow human being, yet Christ clearly intended to convey the idea that His followers should carefully reason from cause to effect, and from effect to cause, and order their lives accordingly in a prudent fashion.



Dangerous if not according to the Bible

Christianity is not predicated upon the abdication of a human being's reasoning powers. On the contrary, it places a premium upon their correct functioning--but always within the framework of faith and based upon inspired writings.

Christianity, indeed, sanctifies reason and intellect, placing them upon vantage ground, all the while subordinating them to the objective control of the Word of God.

In "deliverance ministry," as it is variously practiced at the present time by many of its enthusiastic advocates, there are a number of features which give cause for serious concern, that raise a danger signal, that sound a warning for caution.

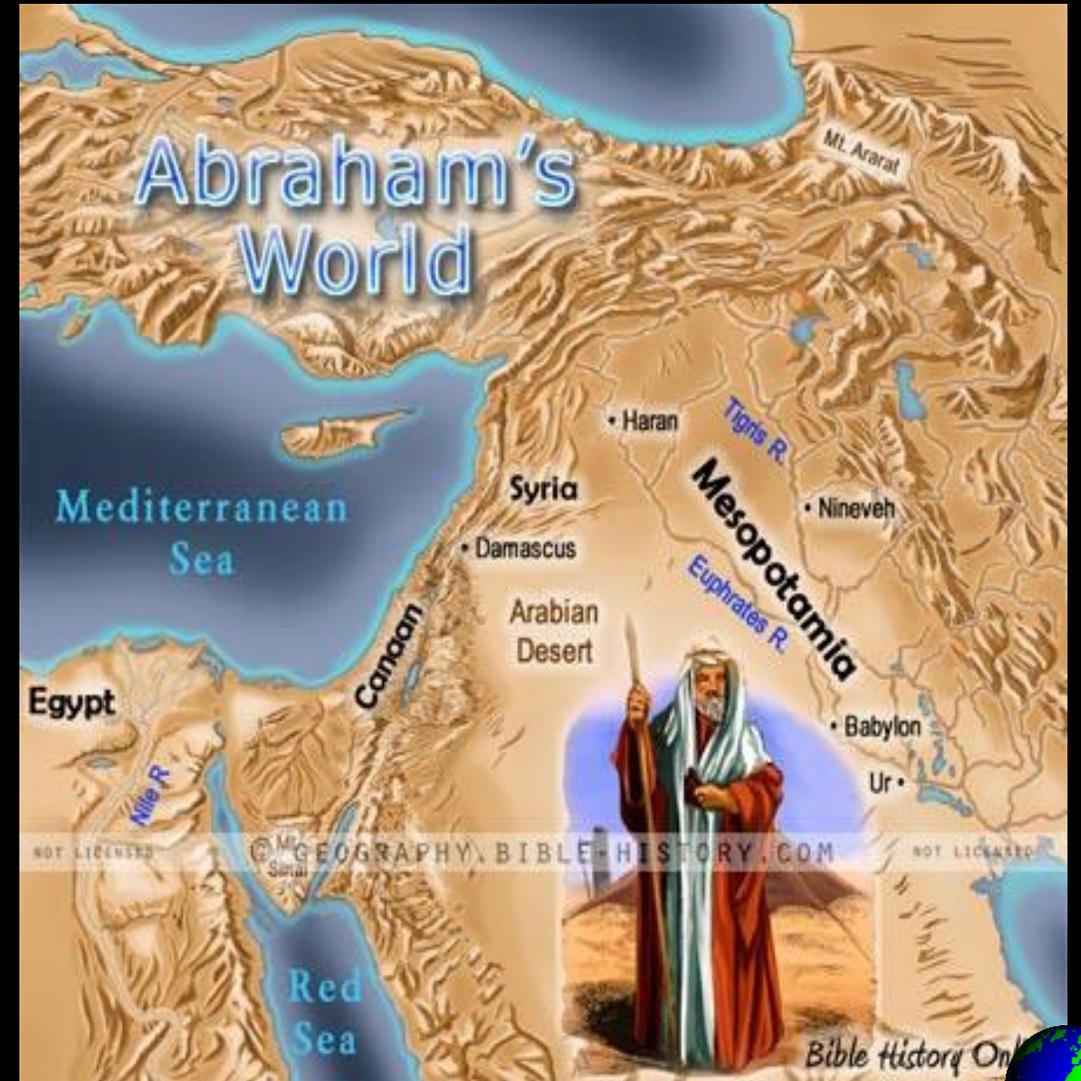
- (a) The philosophy which undergirds the movement.
- (b) The manner in which it is often practiced (interestingly, the methodology is often in a state of flux).



1. The Old and Intertestamentary Periods

The Mesopotamian-Canaanite world out of which the Old Testament emerged was extremely conscious of the existence of malignant spirits, and the Hebrew prophets attested in their writings to this fundamental reality even in their own culture.

On the contrary, however, demonology, while certainly present among the Hebrews, still existed in inchoate form in Old Testament times, at least as far as the inspired record attests. While there are in its pages undeniable evidences of what today we might speak of as demonic possession, there is not one single clear-cut instance of "exorcism" (the expulsion of evil spirits from persons and/or places--an especially well-known phenomenon in Sumero-Akkadian civilizations) being practiced among the Jews of Old Testament times.



Hebrew & Non-Hebrews believed in Demons

A crucial distinction needs to be recognized at this point between the attitude toward the existence of demons by the Jews and that of their non-Hebrew neighbours.

The Babylonians, for example, saw every illness as traceable to the work of demons (some Christians today would concur in this view). The Israelites, however, recognized that although demons indeed might cause illness, not every such manifestation is properly linked to their direct activity.

The typical non-Hebrew dweller in Mesopotamia lived his life constantly in fear and danger of evil spirits. Amulets were widely favoured to ward off such encounters, but the chief recourse for protection was found in the form of ceremonies of incantation, administered by a professional priest/exorcist. In the ceremony (not unlike the practice of some in "deliverance ministry" today) the officiating priest sought to discover which demon or demons were troubling the afflicted, the better to conduct successfully the appropriate required ceremony. The ritual not only utilized certain incantation rites but also employed specific verbal formulae blurred magic, religion, and disease.



Demonology associated with fornication & greed

There is a remarkable--and distressing--similarity between these pagan Sumero-Akkadian rituals and those sometimes employed modern "Christian" practitioners of "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry"--a concern to which we will return again and again.

Although the incantation rituals achieved great popularity in ancient Mesopotamia, there is, by way of stark contrast, a total absence of such rites in the official practices recorded among the Hebrews. **Indeed, their Old Testament Scriptures inveighed heavily against the practice of magic, incantation, and exorcistic liturgies.**

As the demonology of the intertestamental period developed, these evil spirits were frequently identified or associated with dispositions such as fornication or greed, an identification now revived and increasingly witnessed among believers in "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry"-- a cause of growing concern among many.



How good or bad did you sin today?

- The Seven deadly sins are ranked from the most serious to the least.



Apposition to God transforms Demons into Devils

In this milieu it generally came to be accepted that every kind of illness, from insanity down to lesser afflictions, was due to the immediate presence and activity of malevolent spirits. Demons came to be seen as also being capable of possessing places and events as well as people. And thus it was that ritual exorcism, once the exclusive preserve of the pagan dwellers of Mesopotamia and totally unknown in the Judaism of biblical times, now becomes commonplace along the Hebrews.

Partly perhaps because of their contact with Persian influences, the Jews in intertestament times signalled a shift in their perception of reality. Until now, demons had largely been associated with physical evil; now they become attached to ethical evil as well. This ethical opposition to God and His kingdom transforms demons into devils, and places them under the severest censure.

Thus, by the time we reach the Christian era of the first century A.D. we find the marked presence of demonology in the New Testament where Jesus and His disciples are frequently portrayed as in conflict with demonic forces.

- And there is a growing interest with things demonic.



Similarity between Ancient practices and today

To recapitulate, the similarity between the ancient Near Eastern exorcistic rituals and that practiced today by many practitioners of "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry" tends to give pause to the objective Christian observer of the contemporary scene, especially in view of the absence of such rituals from the Old Testament (and, as we will note subsequently, below, basically from the New Testament as well).

The absence of exorcistic ritual from the Old Testament points to the power of Yahweh over all evil. This focus on the salvation of God points us away from excessive preoccupation with the demonic.

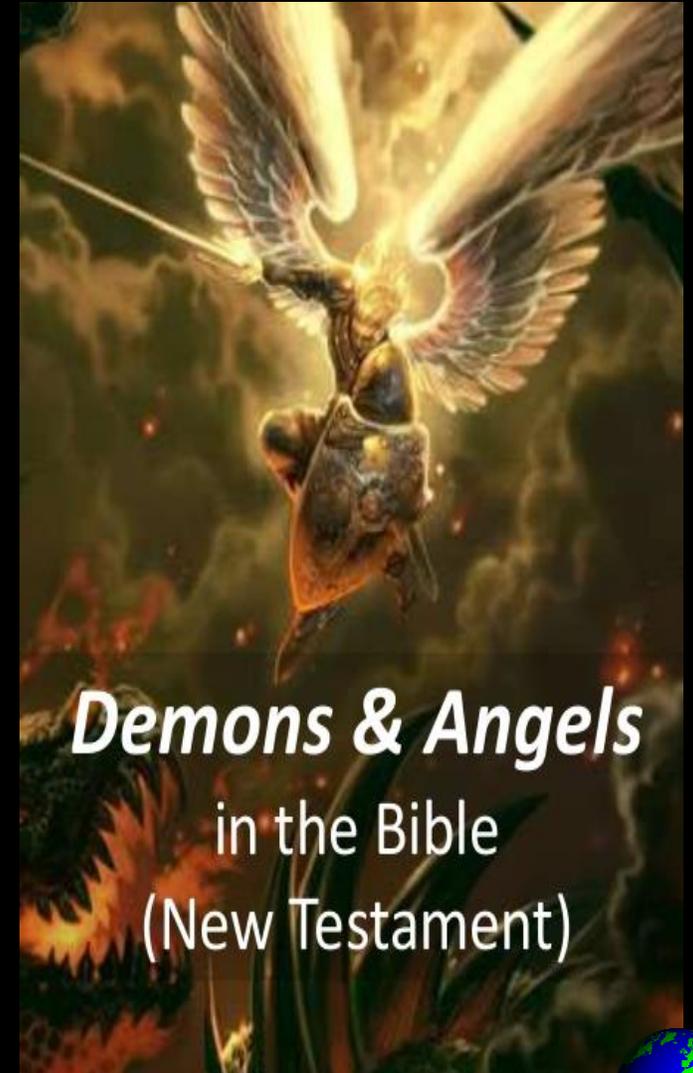
And the relationship between the use of demonic terminology to characterize disease, increasingly popular in certain "deliverance circles today, may merely reflect an over sensitiveness and superstitious conscience. It, unfortunately, goes beyond the biblical data to label uncritically all or most disease as directly caused by Satan.



2. The New Testament Period

The New Testament writings present the perplexing and distressing picture of demonic forces not only impinging upon but ruling over creaturely existence. The influence of these forces is portrayed throughout the New Testament, but specific case examples of demon possession and deliverance of Satan's captives are confined to the [Gospels and Acts](#). (Concern with demonic possession and deliverance is, of course, present elsewhere in the New Testament--see [Colossians & 1 Peter](#)) We will now attempt to summarize the data from these five books.

Although the distinction probably is not significant (since both Satan and his subordinate fallen angels have the same objectives and utilize much the same modus operandi), it may yet be interesting to note that although Satan is viewed as behind and superior to all demonic Forces, except in the case of Judas, in the New Testament Satan himself is never spoken of as "possessing" an individual. Rather, he is pictured as the instigator of moral evil, the one who tempts weakened mortals to sin. Contrarily, demons or spirits are described as the agencies that possess the bodies (physical illness) or minds (mental illness) of people, but not as the powers that tempt persons to sin.



Disease and Demon possession in the NT

There seems to be some evidence that people became possessed because they were especially sinful (Judas is one example to the contrary that quickly comes to mind). While possession and special sinfulness may go hand in hand (Mary Magdalene maybe a good case in point), in terms of the data of the New Testament itself, possession appears to be related specifically to physical and mental illness, rather than to be linked with doing sinful deeds.

With regard to possession and illness, there appears to be no precise demarcation made in the New Testament between demon possession and illness caused by other factors.

Sometimes people are pictured as ill with various diseases without any mention being made of possession; at other times the same diseases are ascribed to possession. **In any case, from the New Testament point of view, while not all illness is due (or even is pictured as being due) to possession, the supernatural power of evil is seen as behind all illness.**

The most notable feature of possession is the substitution of the human self, ego, or personality by an alien spiritual power. **This is seen especially in cases where the demons speak through the vocal chords of the demonized.**



The Characteristics of the Demons

Concerning the characteristics of the demons, the following are especially notable:

1. **The Gospels imply degrees of badness among the evil spirits.**
2. **They also correspondingly portray degrees of demon possession.**
3. **The demons exhibit supernatural knowledge of the identity of Jesus and the fact of their own judgment and destruction.**
4. **The methodology by which the demons are dispossessed of their human prey is spelled out clearly in Scripture: They are expelled by a simple, short, authoritative word of command. Interestingly, Jesus is nowhere in the Gospels called an "exorcist." And when He casts out demons there are never any long, drawn-out, time-consuming exercises. Prayer is mentioned in connection with deliverance from demons only in one instance where the nature of the possession appears to be exceptionally severe.**

Characteristics of Demon Possession⁵

Knowledge of supernatural
Supernatural strength
Going about naked
Unable to hear, speak
Seizures
Blindness
Use of "different" voice
Presence of distinct personalities
Bizarre behavior
Fierce, violent behavior
Unusual behavior/attitudes (e.g., vicious toward self)
Feeling of overpowering evil
Self-report of demonic influence



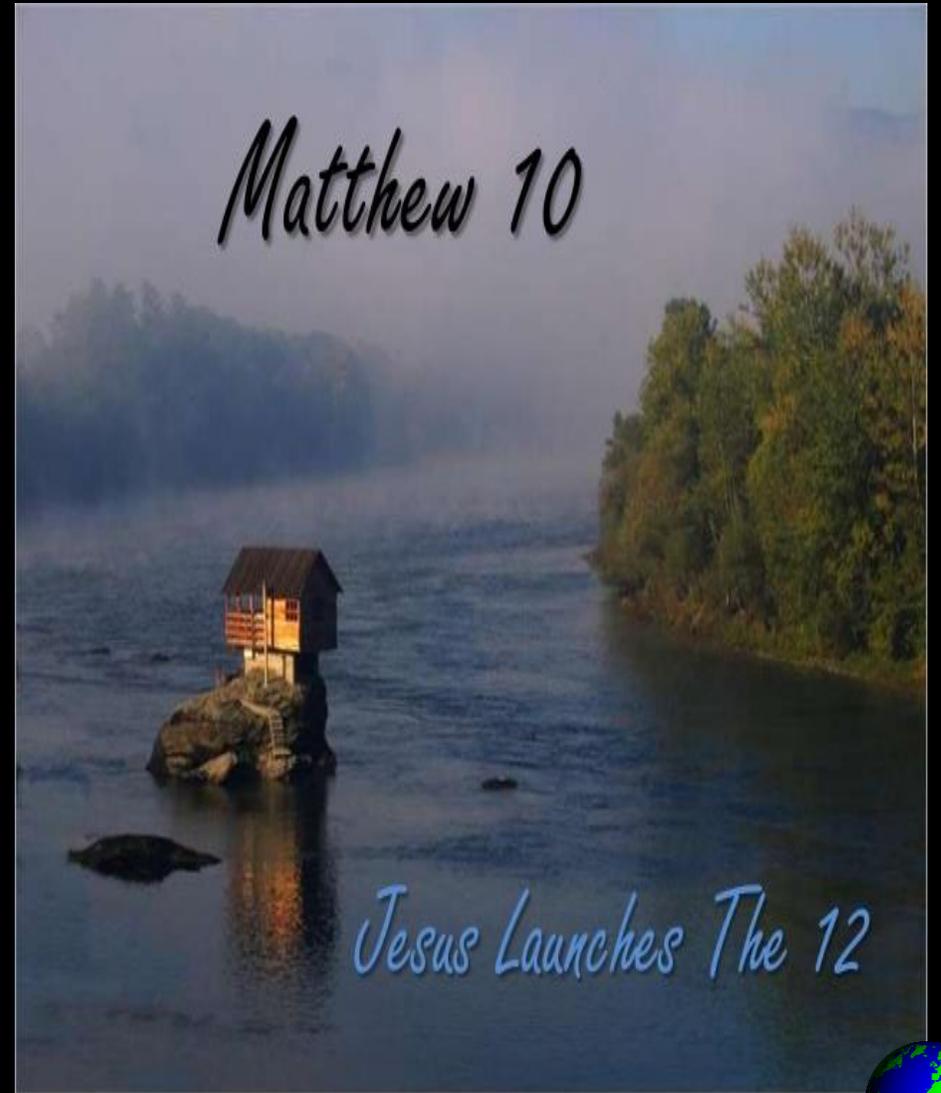
The power given by God to cast out demons

Though the power to cast out demons was indeed conferred on Christ's disciples by the Lord, the New Testament--in terms of the data it supplies--is very reserved about this power being given, as far as including all people at all times.

The act and task of demon-deliverance must be understood in the Scriptures in the overall understanding of the in breaking of the kingdom of God, and the infilling of Christ's Spirit. Here it finds its ultimate significance.

There are two elements common to deliverance from demons in the Gospel and Acts accounts: (a) **the mention of Jesus' name**, and (b) **the exercise of faith**.

Prayer and fasting (mentioned in only one account) are perhaps to be viewed under the broad heading of **the exercise of faith**. Also, certain strange (to us) acts (touching the hem of a garment, praying over handkerchiefs or aprons, standing in Peter's shadow, etc...) probably have more to do ultimately with the exercise of faith in Jesus than with any other factor.



Vacuum left by demons must be filled by Jesus

The casting out of demons was not an end in itself; the vacuum left by the departing devils must be filled by positive good--**God's presence--lest the demons return to an empty place and make it worse than it was before.** And the casting out of demons can only be properly understood in the overall context of the motif of the kingdom of God--and His kingdom in men's hearts.

It appears that the Scriptures are concerned lest potentially sensationalistic phenomena be overly magnified. In the case of "speaking in tongues" it is implicitly permitted, but tightly regulated, and placed last in all of the catalogues of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



**YOU CAN'T WALK
WITH GOD
AND HOLD HANDS
WITH SATAN
AT THE SAME TIME**



3. *The Post-New Testament Period*

The earliest evidence of what might be called a Christian rite of exorcism is found in the middle of the third century (about the year A.D. 250). Here we discover the practice of a ritual conducted in conjunction with baptism. It appeared to signify the change that the baptismal candidate was making, withdrawing his prior allegiance to the realm of Satan and the demons and placing it now with the realm of Christ.

It is important that we do not confuse this kind of "exorcism" with the kind exhibited in cases where demons are believed to have taken possession of individuals and are summarily expelled. During medieval times farfetched tales of wonders of various sorts were widespread and prevalent, but it is not until the last Middle Ages that there is much reliable evidence demonstrating that much attention was given by Christians to what we today speak of as "exorcism." As a matter of fact, it appears that what little efforts at exorcism were made at this time seem more to be devoted to the matter of how to identify witches than anything else.



Exorcism in the 1600's

The formal ritual in conjunction with baptism, mentioned above, was evidently practiced generally throughout the Middle Ages in connection with a somewhat elaborate rite (which rite was condensed in the *Rituale Romanum* of A.D. 1614).

Interestingly, an abbreviated form of this rite was also published in the earliest Lutheran service books. But Calvinists shunned this sort of practice, and the Lutherans themselves generally came to abandon it as well.

Perhaps most striking (and significant) for us today is the evidence from history in the early modern period (about A.D. 1600). Exorcists in England, southwest Germany, and Italy were then gaining some degree of notoriety. The ecclesiastical authorities were usually found to be questioning the procedures and/or validity of the exorcisms that were purportedly being conducted, and ecclesiastical trials of the would-be exorcists were the usual consequence for such sensationalists.



A panel painting of an exorcism, 1512. For more on this painting see Brian Levack's article on Not Even Past, "Exorcism."



Exorcism in Christianity

One especially striking case of the period involved an Italian monk who produced a flurry of excitement by his activity ostensibly in casting out demons. His colleagues and ecclesiastical superiors were amazed and puzzled by his success in view of the very scandalous life he was then living!

A relatively successful exorcism, therefore, is not necessarily evidence that the power of God has truly been at work.

A fact noted at this point in history has also been observed by many in more recent times: Whereas in places where devils had not previously been known to be prevalent prior to the arrival of this monk-exorcist, all manner of them seemed to crop up when he came to town.

Until the fairly recent upsurge of interest in exorcism developed, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant Christian bodies have given much attention to the phenomenon of exorcism, at least in Western Europe and in North America. As recently as 1961 one Catholic authority could declare that exorcism was "rarely necessary in civilized lands; but foreign missionaries are sometimes called on to use it." (Protestants, generally, have tended for the most part to hold the same view.)



4. Today and Tomorrow

Inspiration has told us that the period of Christ's personal ministry among men was the time of greatest activity for the forces of the kingdom of darkness. For ages Satan with his evil angels had been seeking to control the bodies and the souls of men, to bring upon them sin and suffering; then he had charged all this misery upon God. Jesus was revealing to men the character of God. He was breaking Satan's power, and setting his captives free. New life and love and power from heaven were moving upon the hearts of men, and the prince of evil was aroused to contend for the supremacy of his kingdom. Satan summoned all his forces, and at every step contested the work of Christ. - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 257

Then, without a break, the Lord looks down to the closing scenes of this earth's history, and prompts His special messenger to add these words full of significance to us who Live today:



The Pen of Inspiration by EGW

So it will be in the great final conflict of the controversy between righteousness and sin. While new life and light and power are descending from on high upon the disciples of Christ [possibly a reference to the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit prior to the close of human probation], a new life is springing up from beneath, and energizing the agencies of Satan. Intensity is taking possession of every earthly element. With a subtlety gained through centuries of conflict, the prince of evil works under a disguise. - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 257

We are told, further, that it is indeed "important" for us to understand Satan's snares, that we may escape them today. In his "last campaign," Satan will move upon "some deceived souls" to advocate the idea that he does not really exist as a personal entity. - *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:341

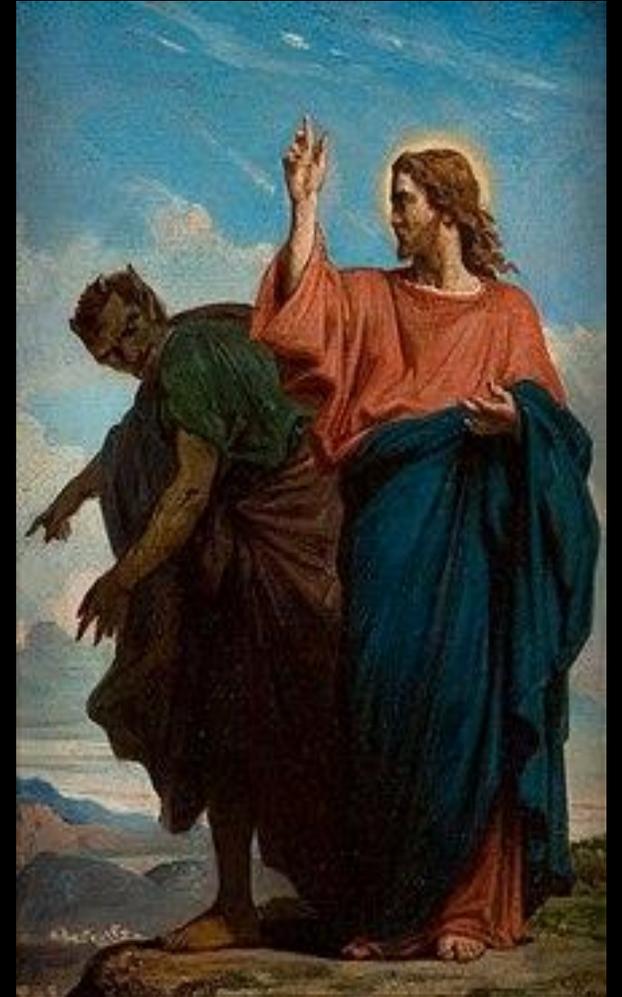


The Devils work personally with humans

Indeed, one of his snares is the "subtle," "mischievous," and "fast-spreading" "error" that "Satan has no existence as a personal being; that the name is used in Scripture merely to represent men's evil thoughts and desires" [*The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, p. 524] --merely a rhetorical device to personify evil. And this prediction, made more than a century ago, is more than amply fulfilled today by modern humanism.

Whatever the popular concept may be today, the testimony of the Bible is that Jesus believed in a personal devil. Immediately upon entering into His earthly ministry, Christ was confronted by such a personage who brought nearly overwhelming temptations to Him. They conversed together (not, however, over the person of a possessed human being!), and this confrontation was real (see *Matthew 4:1-11*).

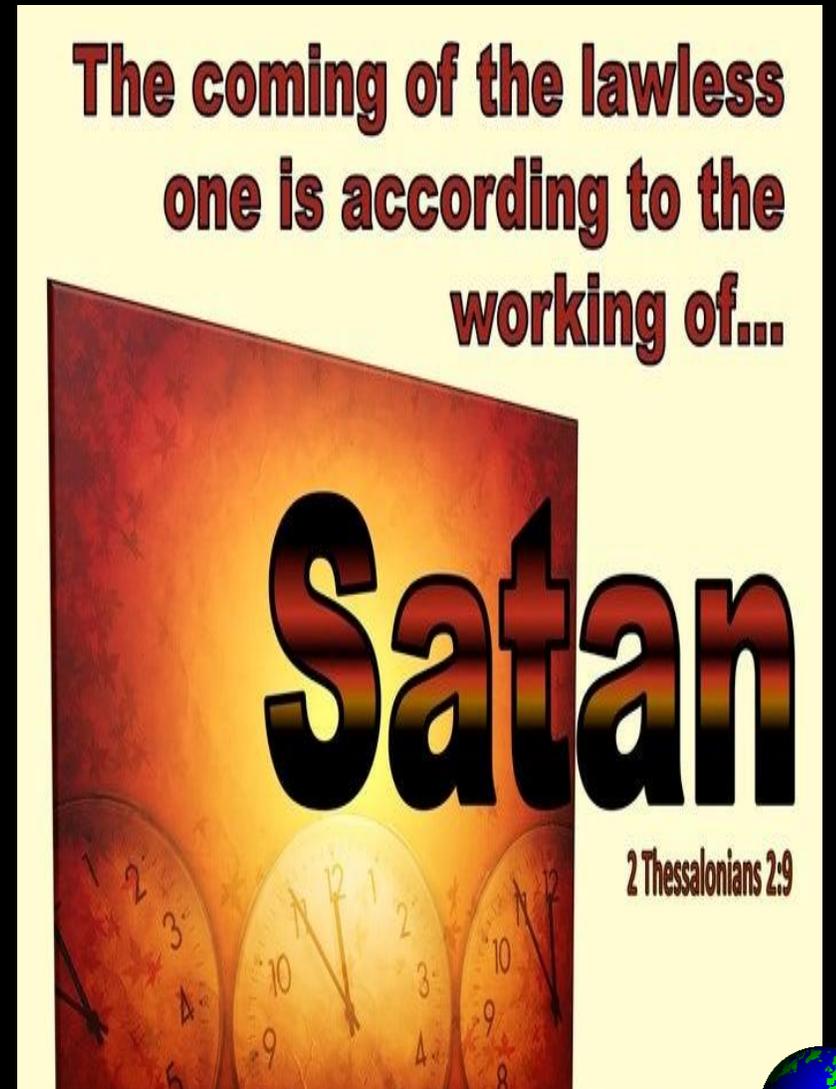
Then, as now, Satan worked "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" in those who "received not the love of the truth" (*2 Thessalonians 2:10*). God permits the wicked, who deliberately choose evil, to "believe a lie" through the "strong delusions" which Satan increasingly will bring as the end of time approaches (*verse 11*).



Satan works with power, signs & lying wonders

And in the very last days, we are told, Satan will work with "all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9); even the "very elect" will be in grave danger of this deception. No less than four times in the end-time prophecy of Matthew 24 does Jesus warn of deception and urge alertness (verses 4, 5, 11, 24). And at the last Satan will work dramatically, especially in performing genuine miraculous manifestations to carry the day (Revelation 13:13, 14; 16:13, 14), ultimately producing that "crowning" deception--the impersonation of the second coming of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:14). [The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, p. 524, 525]

One of the chief deceptions Satan instituted during medieval times was the palming off upon a gullible, unsuspecting public the notion that instead of his being a fallen angel of light, Satan was, instead, a horrible red-skinned creature with animal-like horns; cloven hoofs; wolf-like ears; scaly, fish-like skin; possessed of an animal-like tail with a spike at its tip; who carried a spear-like trident.



Today people laugh at the images of Satan

Today most people (at least in western culture) merely laugh at such a characterization. **And that suits Satan's purposes well--for men seldom fear that at which they can laugh.** Furthermore, they will tend to ignore something that they don't really believe exists. [See 1T 295 and GC 516.]

They didn't laugh at Satan' in medieval times; they feared him. And in many primitive societies today men still greatly fear a literal, personal devil. **And this, too, suits Satan's purposes well; for where he can paralyze with fear, there he can win, too.**

The story of Jesus' casting out a host of demons from the two men of Gadara (Mark 5:1-20) provides five facts about the existence and activity of Satan and his evil angels, evidence that we need today to counterattack his deception that he and his cohorts do not have a personal existence:



Devils – reality, number, power & malignity

1. Their reality: They are real personalities. On this one singular occasion, Jesus entered into a conversation with them (which, incidentally, they initiated).
2. Their number: They declared, in answer to Christ's demand that they identify themselves, "My name is Legion, for we are many" (verse 9). In Christ's day a Roman legion might number somewhere between three and five thousand soldiers.
3. Their organization: Like the Roman legions, "Satan's hosts ... are marshalled in companies, and the single company to which these demons belonged numbered no less than a legion." [GC 514.]
4. Their supernatural power: The madmen broke the chains restraining them; and the swine (into which the demons were subsequently cast) were swept down a cliff to their destruction in the sea below.
5. Their malignity: The bleeding, disfigured bodies and distracted minds of the two Gadarenes well illustrate what Satan will do when given an opportunity to "possess" the bodies and minds of men.



Satan, then, is a real, personal being

- Does that mean that everything that is strange and bizarre in our world today is evidence of the direct operation of Satan and his demons?
- **Should we not battle against these personal attacks by the enemy of all souls?**

Before we can address that question directly, it may prove helpful to make three crucial distinctions, the better to examine their program intelligently and to decide whether it meets the criteria of inspiration, or is weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Also, before any useful assessment of the validity and helpfulness of the program of "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry," as it is generally beginning to be practiced among us, can be made, some basic rules must be formulated. **And the drawing of three basic distinctions will help us toward that goal.**



A - Avoiding an "Either-Or" Mentality

One feature in "deliverance ministry," as it is popularly being practiced today, which disturbs an increasingly large number of observers, is the tendency to view this present life in the starkest of simplistic terms--**to see either a demon or a good angel involved, immediately, in every human decision and activity.**

The informed Christian, we believe, will avoid two equally serious but opposite extremes as he/she relates to baffling phenomena which appear to be of supernatural origin:

1. A "Satan-made-me-do-it" mentality, in which Satan is identified as the immediate cause of every misfortune and every sinful deed; or
 2. A virtual denial of the existence of Satan's "supernatural" operation in our otherwise "natural" world.
- **Either position is unrealistic, and is fraught with peril. Let us note why.**



Avoiding an "Either-Or" Mentality (cont'd)

While ultimately all evil is traceable to Satan, the originator of sin, Satan or his evil angels are not always directly responsible for every deviation from what we have come to understand as "normal" in human experience. Many illnesses, for instance, whether physical or mental, are simply the result of genetic inheritance, or living in a world of sin, or simply the natural consequences of our disobedience to God-given laws of health and well-being.

Having said that, this fact rules out the possibility of direct involvement of evil spirits in influencing human affairs and behaviour. **Indeed, in some circumstances supernatural entities very clearly are involved. There is a devil--as we have already declared--and he "must not be allowed to get the better of us: we know his devices all too well"** (2 Corinthians 2:11).

It also appears that the father of lies in some cases operates supernaturally by simulating "natural" diseases so closely as to render them almost indistinguishable from ordinary diseases. Because of these considerations it behoves each of us to exercise extreme caution and prudence in dealing with cases of alleged demon possession.

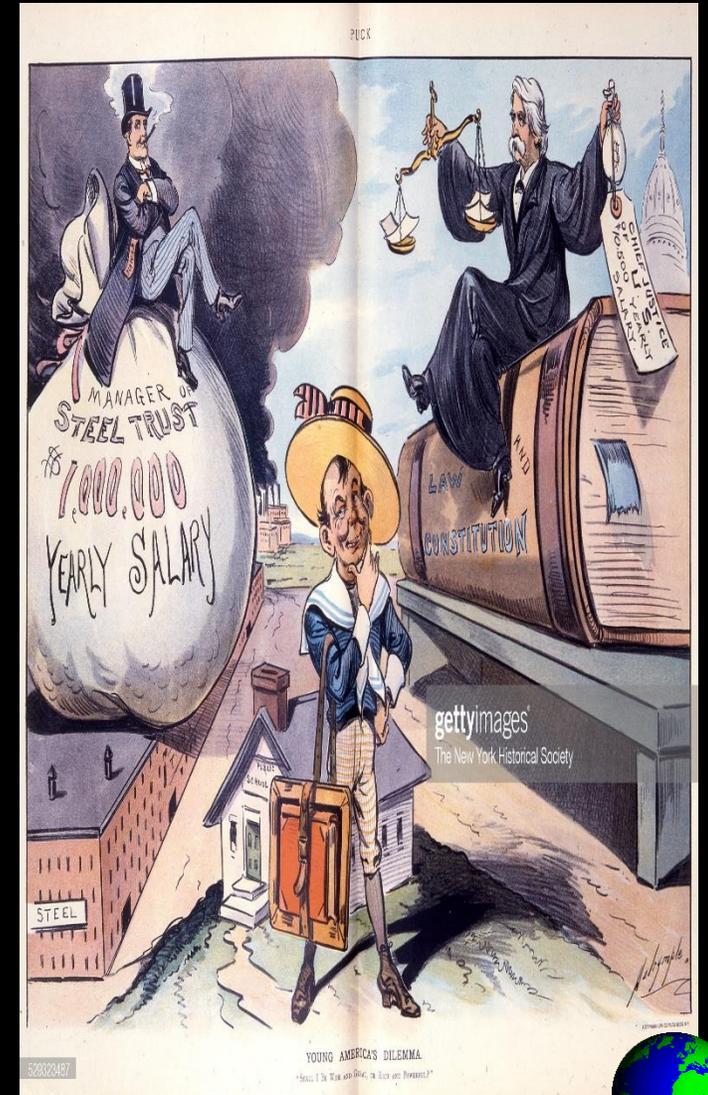


Avoiding an "Either-Or" Mentality (cont'd)

Ultimately this enemy-"world" is a system of social, economic, and religious philosophies and practices expressed through organizations and human personalities. But while Satan is ultimately the father-creator of this "world" complex, it may yet nevertheless operate against a Christian quite apart from the direct intervention of Satan and/or his evil angels at the personal, individual level.

Finally, evil spirits--devils--most certainly do come in person to tempt (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Timothy 4:1) and to make attractive to each of us both sins of commission (1 John 3:4) and sins of omission (James 4:17). They also taunt and torment (Luke 8:29; Matthew 17:15; Mark 1:26). **And they must certainly must be reckoned with.** But the whole point being made here is this: **evil spirits are not always the immediate cause of every human sin.**

Contrarily, while it is dangerous (because it is misleading) to blame Satan as the immediately predisposing cause of every sin that we commit, it is equally dangerous to deny (as do secular humanists and some Christians) that an actual being named Satan causes any sin. **And today there are many who deny any supernatural causation of undesirable behaviour or attitudes.**



B - Harassment Versus Possession

A second crucial distinction that the Christian will wish to make is in the area of situations where Satan and his evil angels are admittedly active. He will wish to differentiate between the external harassment of demons (which is the universal experience of us all) and Satanic possession or control (which is the experience of a comparatively much smaller group of human beings). (By the term "possession" we here wish to designate control of human neurology and physiology--the control of an individual's higher centres, central nervous system, individual organs of the body, etc...).

Every one of us has, at one time or another, been "harassed, tempted, misled" by Satan. But certainly not every one of us has been "possessed"--that is, under the total control of Satan or his angels. For this reason, it is important that those who confront Satan and his angels in any kind of ministry of deliverance determine first (by earnest prayer and heart searching, subjectively, and a careful examination of the victim, objectively) whether the individual seemingly possessed is simply manifesting the symptoms of a natural illness (epilepsy, for example) which might be a form of mere harassment, or whether the individual is in fact subject to direct demonic control.



Harassment Versus Possession (cont'd)

It would be unspeakably cruel (for at least three reasons) to suggest to an emotionally disturbed or sin-laden person, in the absence of clearly coercive evidence, that he/she were "possessed" when, in fact, such a person was not demon-controlled:

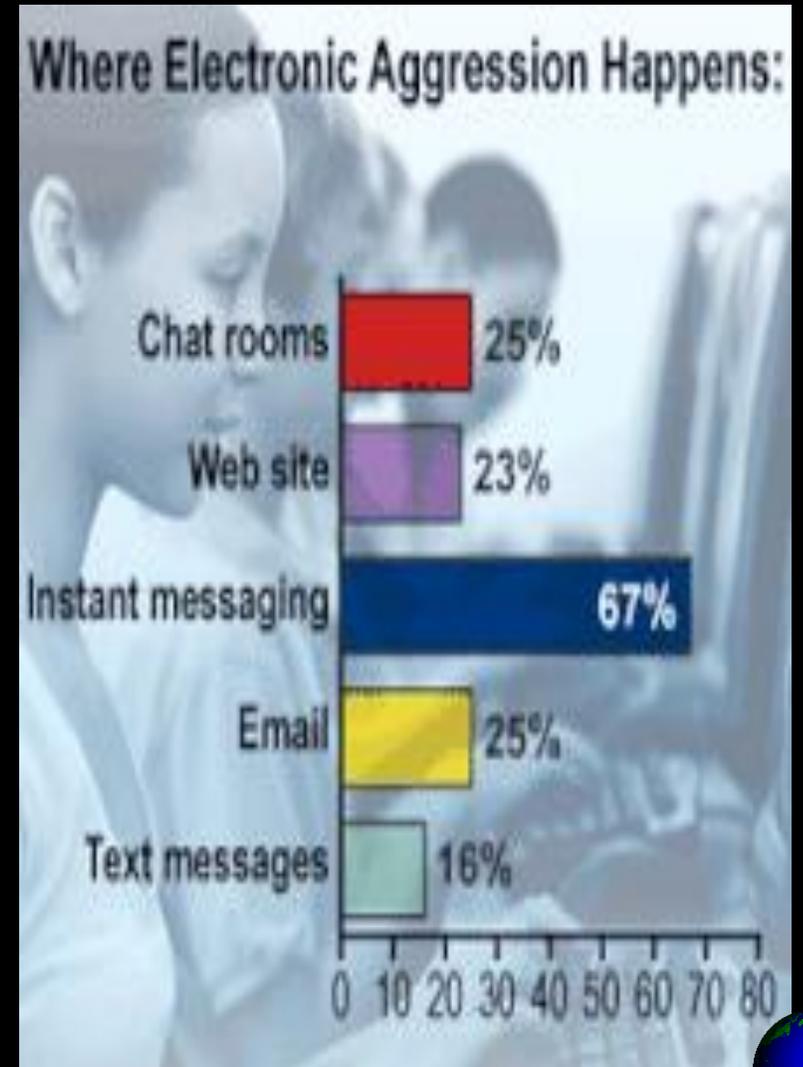
- (1) It would only serve to make the suffering of a sensitive person more keen--and unnecessarily so.
- (2) It could, unintentionally, provide for an unstable person an excuse in evading personal responsibility and accountability for his/her actions and problems (not only thereby reinforcing deviant behaviour but also retarding the chance for recovery).
- (3) It might serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy, actually operating in the form of hypnotic suggestion, weakening the resistance of the individual and making him/her subsequently more susceptible to actual possession!



Harassment Versus Possession (cont'd)

We recognize that often it may be difficult (if not impossible) to determine whether an individual is possessed, or merely the victim of demonic harassment. **But the important thing to remember under all circumstances is that importunate prayer is always appropriate in all situations and at all times.** *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16). Indeed, only two verses earlier James asks: Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him (verses 14, 15).

There is a distinct danger that Christians may make an invalid dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural. **God and Satan are interacting in all that goes on in the world, and with all of the processes that are operating therein.** We must be sensitive to the operation of these powers and recognize that supernatural forces--both good and evil--frequently operate in many subtle, unnoticed ways, not merely in the spectacular.



C. Natural Illness or Supernatural Possession?

Many sincere Christians, unfamiliar with human physiology, are greatly surprised to discover that certain of the more gross, abnormal, bizarre forms of behaviour often superficially associated with "possession" are often also present in certain kinds of mental illness in which demon possession does not to be a factor. We speak of such things as: foaming at the mouth; noisy, obscene, blasphemous utterances in unnatural, altered (and often guttural) vocal registers, or shrill, spine-chilling screams; falling into trancelike states; and violent bodily seizures in which the unfortunate victim may suddenly be thrown to the floor, or violently against walls or furniture. All of these symptoms, sometimes seen in genuine cases of demon possession, are also common responses of victims of various "natural" mental disorders. Thus the ignorance an individual concerning the nature and operation of nature's laws could (and often does) result in that person's seeking to explain these phenomena by means of the spirit world, and thus finding demons where none exist.

Perhaps at this point it is also worth noting the contrary truth: Some individuals who are genuinely "possessed" may exhibit perfectly normal, natural behaviour--and thus are enabled to do Satan's bidding all the more effectively.

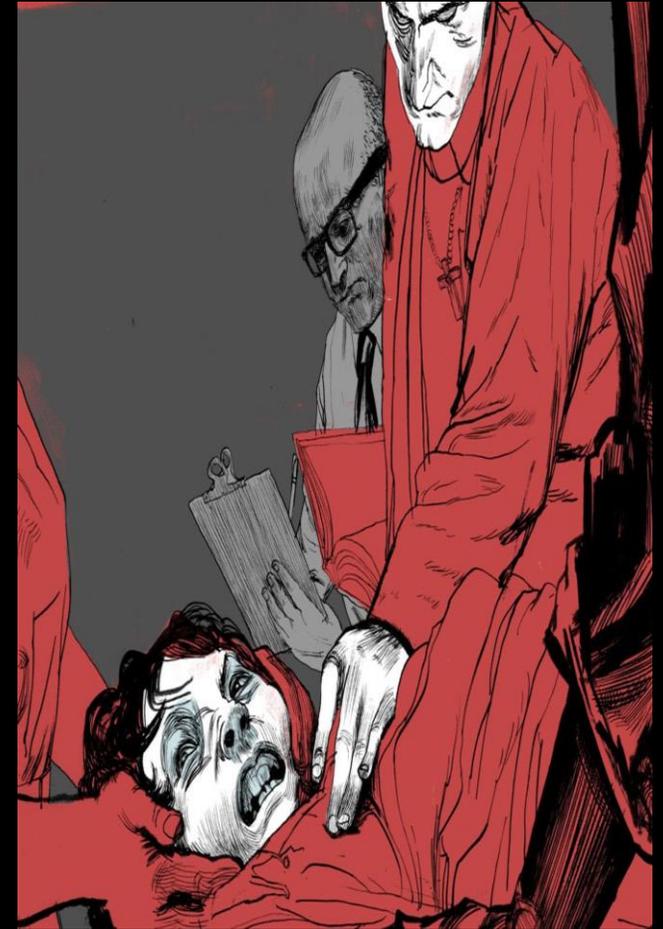


Natural Illness or Supernatural Possession? (cont'd)

Unquestionably some mental illness is a genuine manifestation of direct demonic control of human neurology and physiology.

In actual practice, the tell-tale evidences of supernatural activity in cases where demon possession is suspected:

1. Clairvoyance: The revealing of hidden secrets of private individuals, whether present or not (and often revelations of the secret sins of the one attempting deliverance ministry)-- information probably not known by any other human being.
 2. Levitation: The suspension of persons or objects in mid-air without any natural, physical support.
 3. Apparition: The materializing of ephemeral, spiritualistic, ghost-like beings.
 4. "Tongues-Speaking": The utterance of foreign languages without the individual's prior study of such languages. If, for example, this is seen in a situation also involving gross bodily contortions and other highly repulsive behavioural characteristics, the phenomenon probably is not of God, but of Satan.
- If any of these four factors is present in any given phenomena, there may be a strong presumption in favour of the presence of demon possession.



Natural Illness or Supernatural Possession? (cont'd)

What conclusions may reasonably be inferred for the church today?

1. Obviously not every person who appears to be demon possessed is in fact demon possessed.

2. Not every Christian who names the name of Christ is called upon by God to engage in the work of casting out evil spirits. (This point is interesting, if for no other reason than the fact that many who are engaged in contemporary "deliverance ministry" claim that this power to cast out demons is the God-given birthright of every Christian, whether minister or layman; and the failure to exercise it is a virtual denial of the Christian faith.)

3. While there are situations which may come to our attention in which it is appropriate, through importunate prayer, to call upon divine aid to expel evil spirits, none should presumptuously go out of his/her way in seeking to confront these evil agencies, lest unwittingly they go in their own armour and be defeated by the devil.

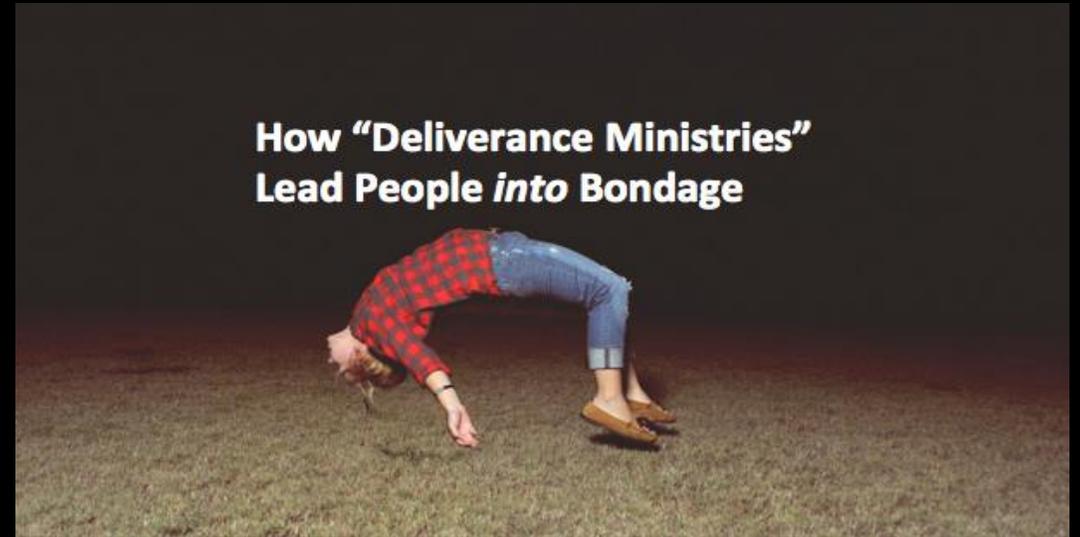
4. To attempt to cast out a demon when none, in fact, is present, is potentially harmful physically, emotionally, and spiritually, to both the "victim" and to the Christian leader, and renders a disservice to the cause of God which actually could retard its progress.



PROBLEMS IN "DELIVERANCE MINISTRY"

While recognizing the existence of genuine cases of demon-possession and the need of relief for the oppressed victims of Satan's control, the committee nevertheless felt unable to endorse "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry" as it is presently being practiced in various circles.

There are problems with some of the philosophical underpinnings of the contemporary "deliverance ministry," with deep concern as some of the practices characteristic of this specialized ministry which is deemed potentially harmful and even dangerous.



Deliverance Ministries:
Scamming You in the Name of Jesus



Refuse to be one of their victims.



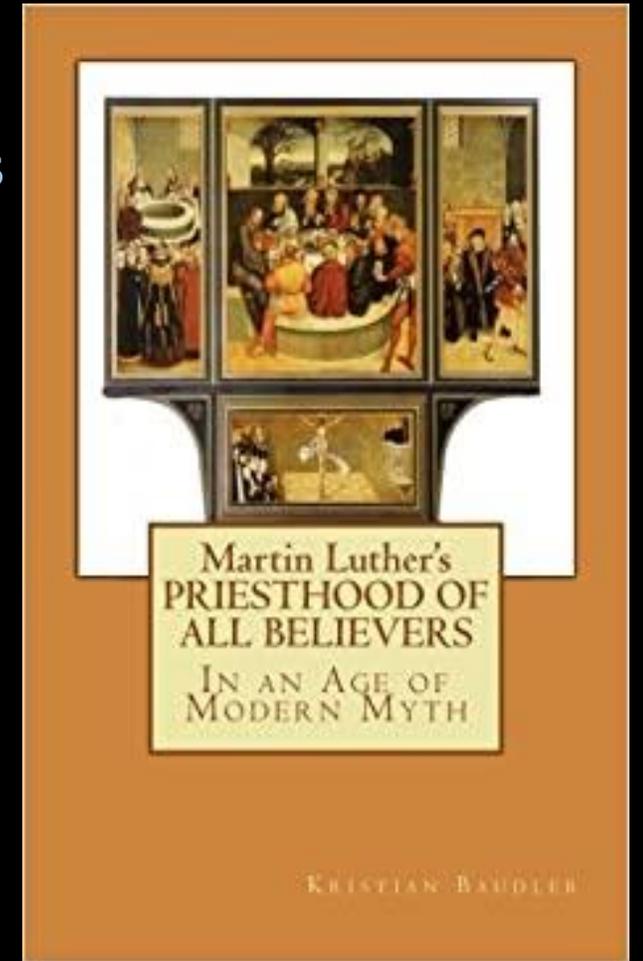
A. Misuse of the Concept of "Priesthood of All Believers" and Importunate Prayer.

Some Christians tend to amplify the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers somewhat as follows: **the father is priest of his household. The believer is priest to the non-believer.** As such, the believer may serve as a latter-day Levitical priest and take a man's "offering" (or the man himself) and present it to the Lord. Thus the "priest" thereby assumes the weight of responsibility for someone else's behaviour and his/her relationship to the Lord.

Tied closely to one's view of the priesthood or all believers is one's view of the nature and purpose of "intercessory prayer."

The "deliverance ministry" adherents see one of the main purposes of intercessory prayer as being a vehicle by means of which the individual Christian may "stand in the place of" the person afflicted (and even possessed) by Satan. Thus, as "priest," he stands as an intermediary between the victim and Christ.

As such, this viewpoint continues, this "priest" may confess (and/or reveal) the sins of another individual in the small prayer group gathered for "deliverance," he/she may claim promises or victories on behalf of the victim. And this "priest" may even take another's sin--or even demons--upon himself/herself, the better to free the victim and enable him/her to deal with them.



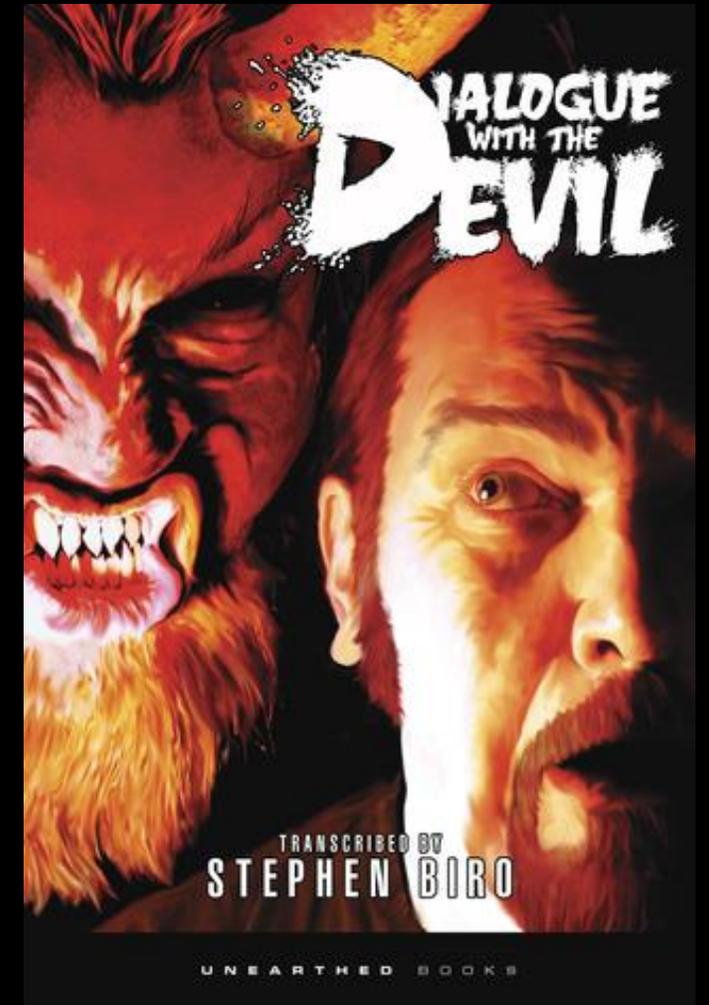
B. Dialogue With the Devil

Probably the chief characteristic running as a common thread through almost all variations of contemporary "deliverance ministry" is the predilection of entering into dialogue with the spirits in which the demons are asked to identify themselves, indicate the days, months, or years of their "possession," and answer other questions of a similar nature, before being dispossessed of their prey in the name of Jesus Christ.

Proponents defend this approach on the precedent found in Scripture in the narrative of Christ's healing of the two demoniacs of Gadara (see [Mark 5:6-13](#) & [Luke 8:28-33](#)), in which Christ demanded of the evil spirits that they identify themselves.

An interesting variation on "dialoguing" is becoming increasingly popular in certain "deliverance" circles: **instead of dialoguing with the devil, those in prayer "dialogue with the Holy Spirit," and ask Him to reveal the nature of the sins of the afflicted which need to be confessed, and the identity of the individual demons which need to be summoned forth.**

"Dialoguing with the Holy Spirit" is as potentially dangerous to those who practice this perverted form as dialoguing with evil spirits.



C. Commanding Demons or Supplicating Christ?

Another characteristic of deliverance sessions, as commonly carried out, is direct confrontation of the demon by demanding--always in Christ's name, of course--that the demons depart.

The example of Christ is sometimes cited as precedent ("Jesus...rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him" [Mark 9:25]), and the further example of Paul is used to buttress the case ("Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" [Acts 16:18]). It has been suggested, however, that in both of the above instances the demon took the initiative, himself initiating the confrontation. Because in other contexts the example offered in Scripture is, rather, that of the Christian believer's appealing to Christ to cast out the demon, instead of addressing the demon directly.

Direct confrontation, and direct address to the "possessing" demon, sometimes is not only undesirable but also pragmatically unproductive.

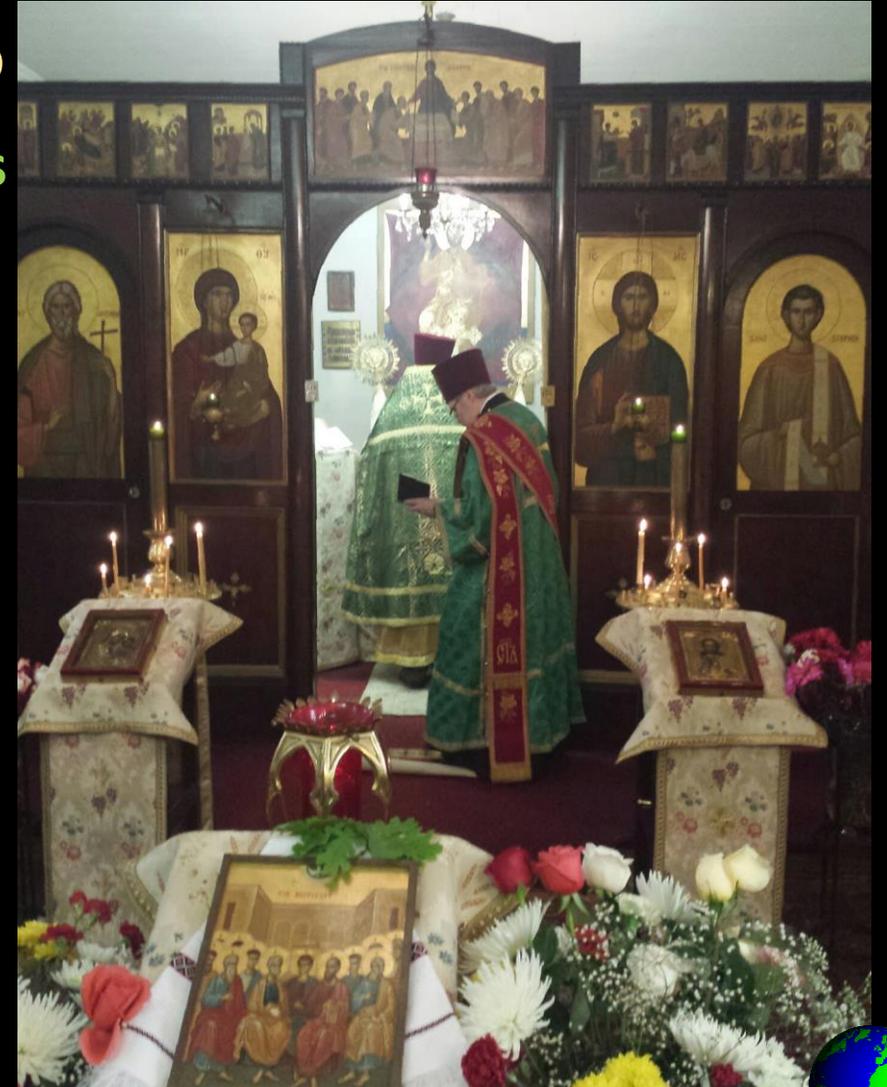


D. A Ritualized Liturgy

Another objectionable feature of the conventional "deliverance" service is the growing tendency to develop a highly ritualized approach in which the preparatory steps are outlined with the victim in advance. During this "briefing" session the "deliverer" speaks in language highly suggestible and in an authoritative manner which bears an extremely close similarity with instructions given by a hypnotist to a client while he is yet conscious.

The growing body of "spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry" literature describes the preparatory service as follows. The leader first prays for guidance, discernment, and protection by the blood of Jesus. He then addresses the "client".

No such "preparations" as these are described in Scripture! On the other hand, most victims of demonic control appear to be highly suggestible, and the form of address by the leader of a "deliverance" session could take the form of hypnotic suggestion, with him in effect making a self-fulfilling prophecy by the instructions he chooses to give.



E. Aiding and Abetting the Enemy

Acknowledging that at times it is difficult to tell whether an harassed individual is or is not demon-possessed, practitioners of "deliverance ministry" often nevertheless proceed with their ministrations on the ground that "if in doubt, try it, since there will be no harm done if the diagnosis of demon-possession was found to be in error."

But this lingering suggestion in the mind of the victim that he or she might be demon-possessed (even though nothing by way of proof subsequently showed up) may work untold havoc in treating such a victim, and there is often an even greater danger from such unconscionable experimentation.

"Deliverance" sessions often last several hours (all-night sessions are not uncommon), and the experience is generally exhausting and emotionally gruelling for all concerned. The net effect is to leave the patient in a state of extreme emotional fatigue. At such times the inhibitory neural pathways are often incapable of functioning normally, while the excitatory pathways are discharging their impulses readily.

This means that the patient's power to resist, to control the thoughts, is wiped out.



F. Oppression vs. Possession

A final area of concern which we have in "deliverance ministry" as it is presently practiced in many circles is the tendency of its proponents to equate "oppression" with "possession."

The word "oppression" (and related forms of the word) is almost entirely an Old Testament word. It is used only twice in the New Testament. (Acts 7:24 & 10:38)

That human beings are "oppressed" by the devil is certainly biblical. That such "oppression" is to be equated with "possession" by a demon is equally unbiblical, for in Isaiah 53:7 we are told that Jesus was "oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Jesus was oppressed, but Jesus certainly was never demon-possessed.

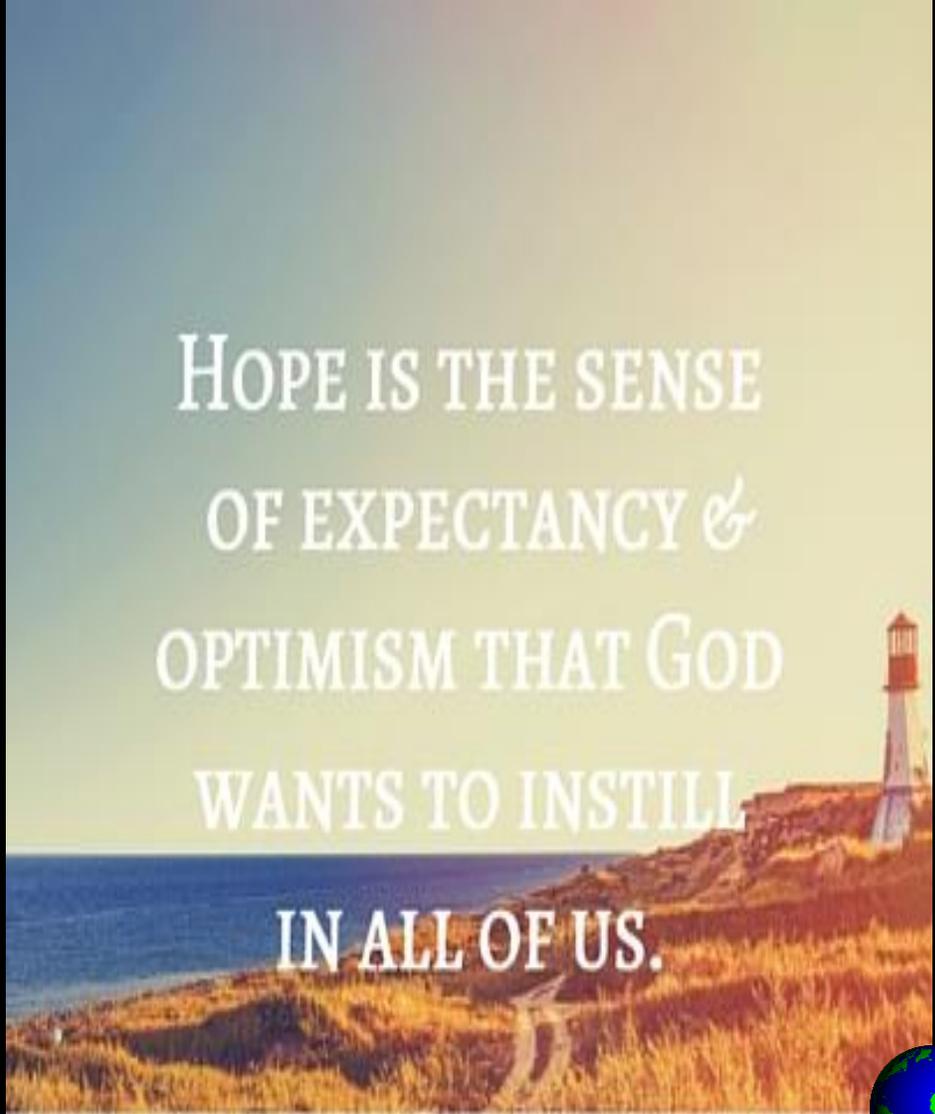
The Bible appears to use the word "oppressed" to describe an acute form of temptation, not possession by an evil spirit. And Christians who are thus "oppressed" by Satan or his evil angels do not need to call an exorcist to come and cast out a demon, for none is there.



Hope in the Face of Hopelessness

With this kind of "deliverance services" in extreme doubt, is there no hope for victims of genuine demon-possession today? **The Lord's commission, "Cast out devils"** (Matthew 10:8), **was given to meet the real situations that do confront God's people.** The methods used, however, will be in contradistinction to the highly ritualized and sensationalized drama of the "deliverance session" which appears to borrow (however unconsciously) substantially from ancient pagan cults of Mesopotamia. **There is, indeed and in fact, hope for genuine deliverance.**

While the Scriptures clearly teach that these malevolent spirits are banded together in an organized power structure for the express purpose of subverting and destroying God's created works, and especially mankind, those same scriptures declare the unwillingness of our God "that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9).



HOPE IS THE SENSE
OF EXPECTANCY &
OPTIMISM THAT GOD
WANTS TO INSTILL
IN ALL OF US.



Instruction in Bible Truth

Before prayer is undertaken, the victim of satanic oppression should first be helped to understand certain rudimentary Christian principles, including:

1. His/her inalienable right as a confessing Christian, to live a life free from control (though not, of course, from temptation and/or harassment) of evil spirits, in harmony with the expressed will of God.
2. The biblical provision and teaching of personal victory over the evil one, through which even the thoughts may be brought into captivity to Christ (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:5).
3. The fact that as long as a person is himself/herself able to confess, repent, and commit his/her life to Christ, such individual is able personally to invoke the Lord's power against the enemy on the basis of Christ's victory over Satan at the cross (John 16:33).
4. The fact that Christ has already won the "great controversy" against Satan by His decisive victory at Calvary, and that He has committed to His followers a redemptive ministry to free the captives of satanic control in and through His holy name.
5. The nature and practice of importunate, "effectual fervent prayer" by the Christian (James 5:16).
6. The need for faith to believe that prayer offered in Jesus' name and for His sake will bring deliverance from Satan's control.

Colossians 1:13-14
For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.



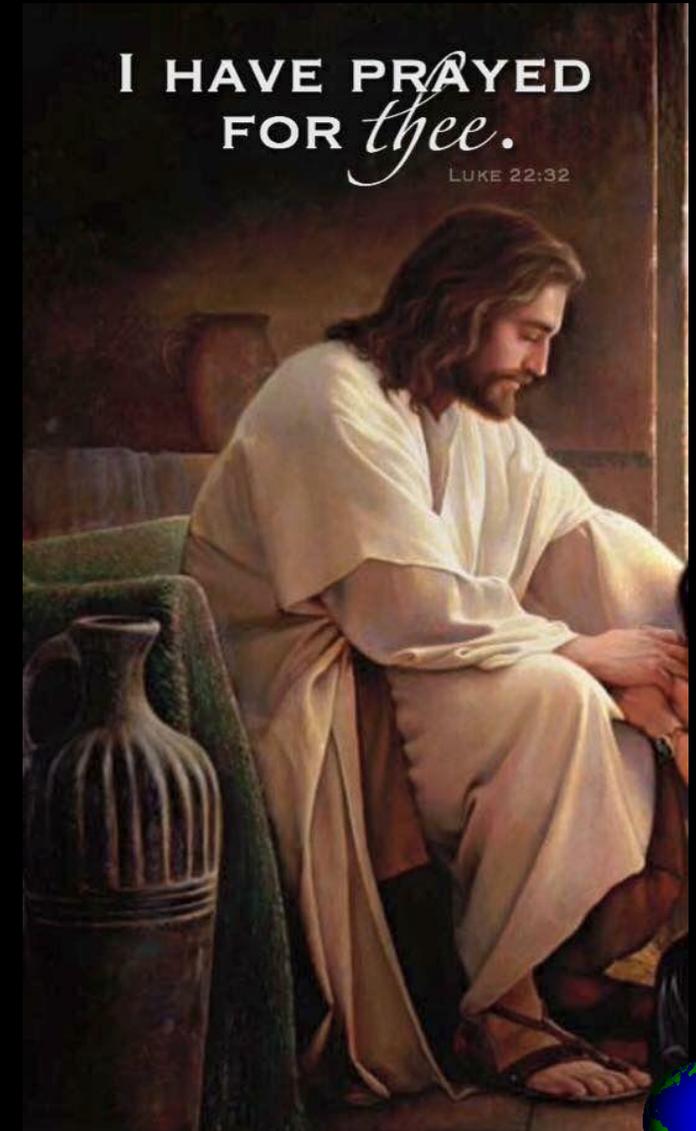
Summary

The essence of the gospel that God now bids His servants declare is the proclamation of individual Christian liberty from the bondage of sin and Satan, here and now, through a bestowal of unmerited eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In "every time of need" Christians are invited--indeed, commanded--by a loving Father in heaven to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help" (Hebrews 4:16).

Standing by the right hand of that throne (Acts 7:56) is an Intercessor who has never lied (Numbers 23:19); and His continual declaration is that "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

We would add only, at this point, that our work today is not the conducting of rituals and ceremonies so common among those of the "deliverance ministry" persuasion which bear a striking resemblance to similar rites in the very heart of paganism in Old Testament times. **Indeed,** "I show you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

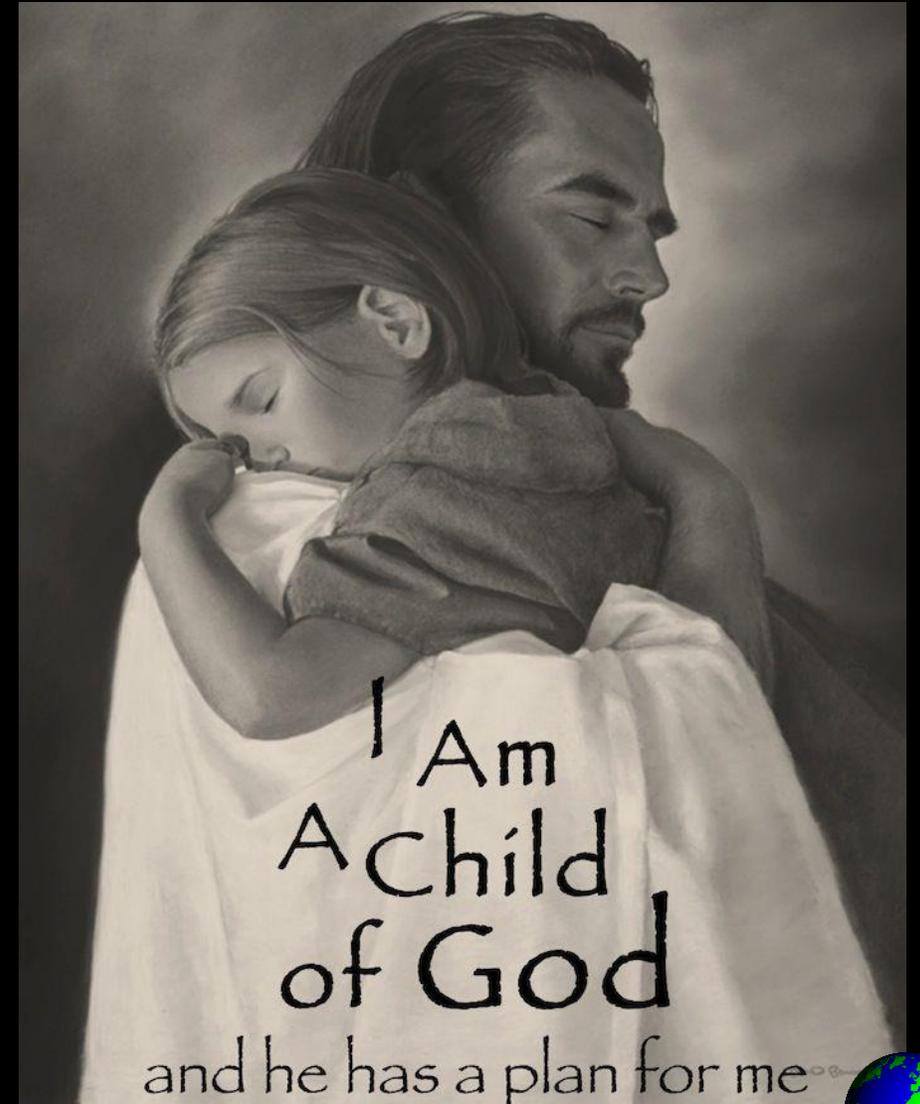


Conclusion

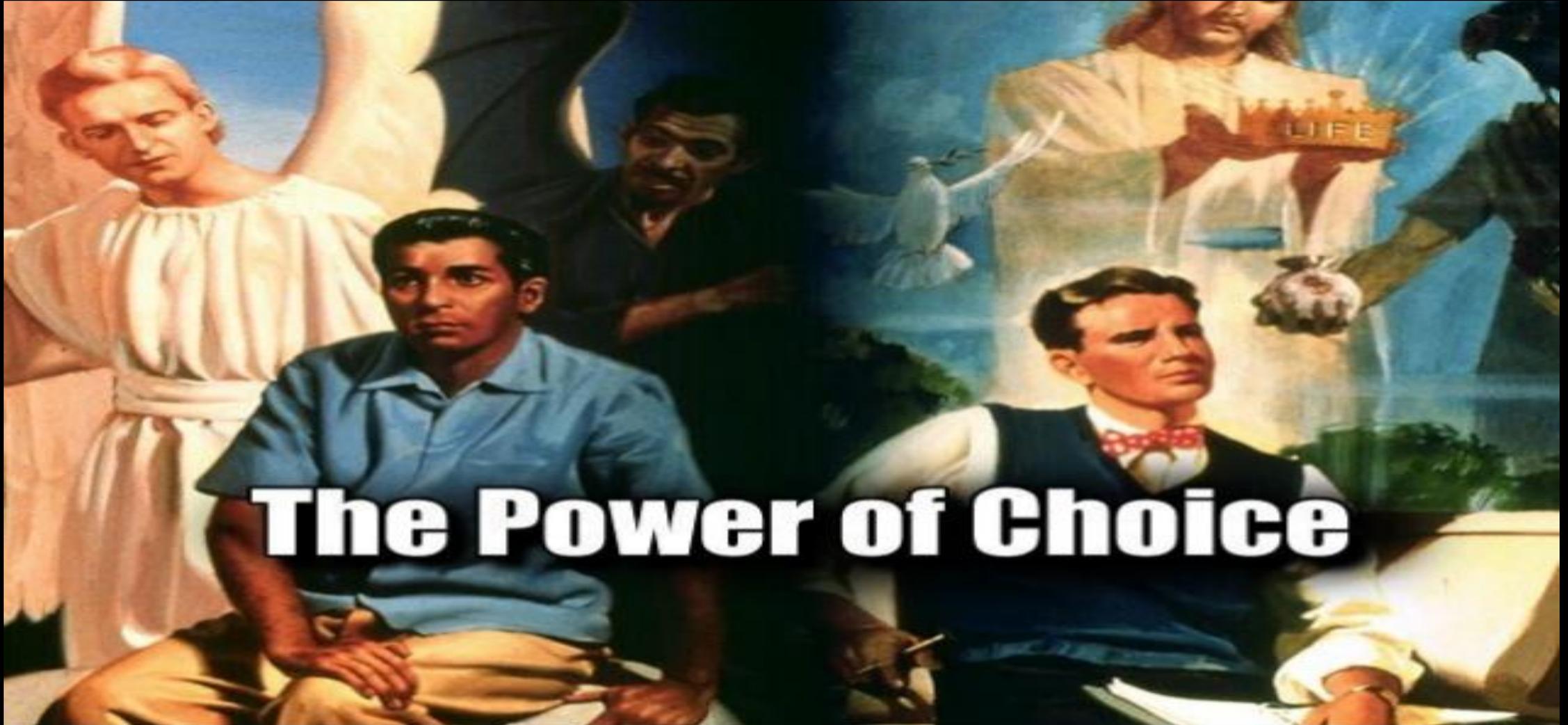
It is neither God's intention nor His plan that the people created in His own likeness should be the plaything of Satan. In love, and by a divine initiative, our heavenly Father has in mercy provided "the weapons of our warfare." They are "not worldly"--human or naturalistic, and certainly not of pagan origin--but they are indeed "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4; see also Ephesians 6:10-18).

Therefore, the individual Christian need not falter, much less fail, if confronted by supernatural demonic forces (Ephesians 4:13). Rather, he/she may fight victoriously "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), in God's strength (Philippians 4:13), and then come off from that battle "in all these things ... more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

- This is the birthright of every "born-again" (baptised) Christian child of God.

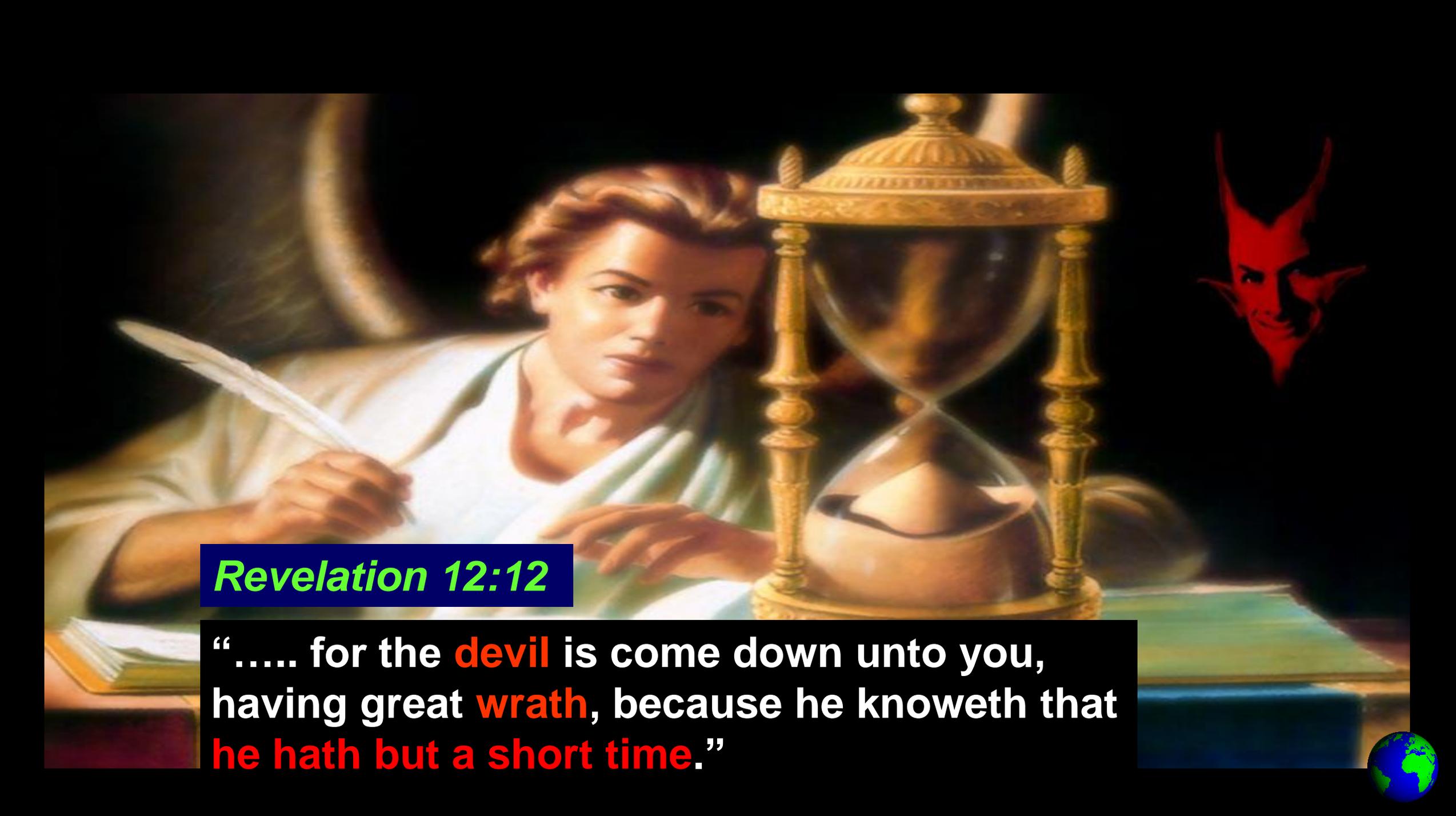


God has given all:



The Power of Choice



An angel with a halo and wings is shown writing in a book with a quill pen. To the right of the angel is a large, ornate golden hourglass. In the background, a red devil's face with horns is visible. The scene is set in a dimly lit room with a book on a desk.

Revelation 12:12

“..... for the **devil** is come down unto you, having great **wrath**, because he knoweth that **he hath but a short time.**”



Enter The Ark of Hope

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

– John 10:16



The Ark of the Covenant



Psalms 77:13

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. –
Revelation 3:20





THE END



ARE YOU READY TO MEET JESUS?