

Exorcism: True or False? Part 2

Scripture: Acts 19:11-20

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Turn your Bibles to Acts 19. Verses 8 to 20 is our text for the continuation of what we began two weeks ago. And the Holy Spirit certainly is right on time. And the subject we are talking about is "Exorcism: True or False."

As we come to chapter 19 of Acts, the reason we're kind of featuring the area of exorcism is because in the middle of this passage we find the word "exorcist" in verse 13, where it appears for the only time in the New Testament. And so kind of taking that as our lead thought, using that as a basis of introduction, we have talked a little bit about exorcism. Now, it's also important for us to make some statements about it because today, in Christian circles there is a very obvious preoccupation with demons and quote-unquote "Christian exorcism." Now, we have done studies in the past trying to cover the subject of demons, and Christians, and the whole area of demon possession, and all of that; and so what I'm going to say this morning will be a continuation of what we said two weeks ago but may not include everything on the subject.

Now, in Ephesians 2:2, as a point of introduction, we find the characterization of every man since the fall and before conversion. Paul says, "You walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience."

The prince of the power of the air is Satan. He is called the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience. From the time of the fall, all men have become Satan's tools. They're born into the world operating, functioning in response to satanic impulse. Man is a slave, then, to Satan and his demons. Like the ship is at the command of the pilot who turns and directs it as he wills, so is the life of a man driven by the will of Satan.

Now, Satan rules men usually two ways, and these are very general. There may be others, but these are just two general thoughts. First of all, he rules men by virtue of their understanding. "The natural man understandeth not the things of God." So the natural man, the man without Christ, without God, is left with only the information which is available to him apart from God. And that really makes up all of the information that Satan uses and can use, even though some of it is God's proof. And so Satan rules the understanding. In fact, it says in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not." Satan blinds the mind. That is, he rules the understanding.

The second thing that Satan dominates in the unregenerate man is the will. He rules the understanding and the will. Though he cannot make the will act, he can certainly force it. Though he cannot make you do something, he can certainly draw you into that by temptation. John 8:44, "Jesus said to the Pharisees, "The lusts of your father, you will do." And their father, of course, was the devil. Satan then dominates men by controlling the information that they have and by controlling the will that they exercise.

Now, this is the predicament of every man. And it is precisely at this point that Jesus Christ comes with power to free men. Jesus came into the world according to 1 John 3:8, "For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." And in Hebrews 2:14, again it says that Christ came to destroy the devil himself. His works and his person.

Now, as we saw in our last study, Jesus from the very beginning is set against Satan; and we can know victory over Satan only insofar as we yield to the strength that is His strength. Ephesians 6, Paul says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Our only strength is in Christ, and Christ came to give us victory over the enemy.

Now, when Jesus arrived in this world in His ministry, He first of all began by showing His power over Satan from the very start. Even at His birth, right? Satan tried to eliminate Him at His birth and couldn't do it. But the first thing that happened to Jesus after His baptism, which was the point of inauguration into His ministry, the first that happened - immediately after His baptism, He was led into the wilderness. Not by Satan but by Whom? The Spirit of God. Why? Because at the very beginning of His ministry, it was gonna be made known that He had victory over Satan. Satan tempted Him three times and lost out every time. And Jesus began with establishing victory over Satan, and He went all through His life the same way.

When He came to the cross, it looked like Satan was the winner, but he wasn't. He took the blow to his head at the cross. And the cross, according to Colossians 2, was that great victory whereby principalities and powers were made subject to Christ. And 1 Peter 3: 18 and 22 says the same thing. He brought angels and authorities into subjection to Him at the cross. So from the beginning of His ministry to the end of His ministry, He exhibited victory over Satan. Now, this victory was seen not only in the beginning and the end of His ministry, but all through it as He dealt with Satan in terms of authority. He cast out demons all the way along, didn't He, as we saw last time?

And He even gave that power to His disciples. On occasion, they also in His name and by His power cast out demons. In the book of Acts, as the early church began, we see it as we've studied through that the apostles again had the power to cast out demons. They had victory over Satan. Now, the purpose of this was of course in apostolic era to confirm the Word of God. That people might know the Word of God was authentic, God attended it with the miracles such as casting out demons.

Now, let me add to this in continuing just a review with some new insights thrown in. The power then of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing that can overrule Satan. Satan is the prince of this world. He dominates it because he dominates men's understanding and he dominates men's will. The only thing that can overrule Satan is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no human magic, there's no sorcery, there's no power, there's no exorcism, there's no ritual, there is no ceremony, there is no formula that can extract Satan, that can overrule Satan's power. Not even the Name of Jesus used as a gimmick will work, and we'll see that in this passage.

Now, last time I tried to make several strong points. Let me just make very clear this fact. The New Testament accounts of the casting out of demons revealed this: It is always a matter of authority, never of ritual. All cases of the expulsion of demons in the New Testament were on the basis of authoritative statements rather than ritual. You say what do I mean. I mean rather than all long, drawn-out sessions of trying to get that demon out with uses of formulas or whatever else, it was simply the statement of Christ, "Out!" And the demons were gone. Now, that was authority, not ritual. Never a formula, never an exorcism, always a word of authority.

Matthew 8:16, "Of Christ it was said, 'He cast out spirits with a word.'"

Now, you say, "Well, John, what about Matthew 17:21, where it says that, 'these come out not by fasting and prayer.'" All right, let's take that. That in the first place was before the cross. So it could be that Matthew 17:21 was the typical pattern for the release of demons during the Old Testament age, that it was a matter like anything else, like healing or any trouble that anybody had; when this thing came about, the believing people in the Old Testament age were to pray and fast and beseech God to act in behalf of the individual.

Let me give you another insight. Matthew 17:21 doesn't appear in the best manuscripts. And as I said, even if you want to include Matthew 17:21 it seems to be an Old Testament pattern rather than a New Testament pattern. It does seem best to at least accept the principal of Matthew 17:21, even if we can't accept its conclusion in the text. The reason it seems best to accept the principal is because in Mark 9:29, the Scripture says in the comparative passage, "This kind can come forth but by nothing but by prayer." So it seems as though the Old Testament pattern, the pattern up to the time of Christ, was that demons could be cast out by God answering the prayers of faithful saints.

Nowhere in all of the New Testament, beloved, nowhere - especially of course in the epistles. The epistles give everything we need really for the Christian life - nowhere in the New Testament is there any exorcism of demons from a non-Christian or a Christian. No.

You say, "Well, John, in Jesus' day, how did a non-Christian get rid of demons?" Well, we saw sometimes where Christ just walked up and cast 'em out, right? You say, "Well, what about other

non-Christians, if they had demons, how could they get rid of - how could they get rid of demons? People who didn't believe, they could get rid of demons by believing. You say, "Well, in this age, then, how do non-Christians get rid of demons?" Well, I think there's only one way; that's to come to Jesus Christ. You see, if you want to really get technical about it, you say, "Well, what about all the unsaved people in the world? Are they all demon possessed?" Well, at the risk of making a blanket statement, let me say this. They're certainly all under the control of Satan. Right? The question of demon possession is just a technicality. Hell is gonna be the same for the unregenerate man no matter what kind of relationship he had to demons, particularly or non-particularly in this age.

But the question is this: If you take a non-Christian individual today, what does the Bible say about getting rid of his demons? Nothing. But I'll tell you one thing, if he comes to Jesus Christ, repents of his sin, confesses Christ as his savior, Christ'll clean his life out. Do you believe that?

You say, "Well, what about the Christian, John? Can a Christian be a partner with a demon?" Yeah, according to 1 Corinthians 10. That's really being duped by Satan for a Christian to go that far. But what happened in Corinth was some of the Christians were coming to the fellowship of the table of the Lord, and then they go out and go back to their pagan religion. And when they go back to their pagan religion, Paul says, "You're fellowshiping with demons!" 1 Corinthians 10:20, listen. "I say the things which the Gentiles sacrifice. They sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I would not that you should have fellowship with demons."

They were actually having a partnership with demons! He says, "You can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You can't be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of demons."

But what about this bunch? Now, they've got this problem right now. They're fellowshiping with demons and they're Christians; what's gonna happen to them? Let me show you the solution.

1 Corinthians 11:27. "Wherefore, —" and you remember they had violated the Lord's Table - "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." In other words, some of these people were fellowshiping with demons and then coming to the Lord's Table! Now, you say, "What are you gonna do? Are we gonna get a big group of people and get rid of all their demons and have a big, Christian exorcism? How we gonna help these people?" Watch this. Verse 28. "Let a man examine -" what's the next word - "himself. And so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Verse 31. "For if we would judge -" what's the next word? - "ourselves, we should not be judged."

Beloved, listen to this. This is the point I've been trying to make in this message and the message before. You take care of your own life before God in the area of holiness, and demons have no way that they can bother you. That's the point! We don't need to run around and have the demon of fingernail biting and post nasal drip cast out of us. We don't need to be preoccupied with all kinds of

long, drawn-out sessions of the Christian exorcism using the Name of Jesus like a formula. Beloved, I just believe this: That the Bible says here's a case of people who are having fellowship with demons and Paul simply says, "You examine yourself, and you enact judgment in your own heart. You bring about confession and repentance in your own life, and man, you're acceptable."

Listen, and I'm not - at the risk of making too many points, let me make one point - and I don't want it to go any further than this one point. This: I don't need you as other Christians to take care of my own holiness. Do you understand what I'm saying? That, I can take care of myself. That's between God and me. Now, I may need you to rebuke my sin, but it's up to me to be honest enough to confess and repent of it. That's between me and God.

And I don't care whether - I asked somebody this last time. I said, "What is worse, to tell a white lie or to be infested with seven devils?" "Oh, seven devils!" I said, "Why is it worse?" Well, he wasn't too sure. I'm not so sure it makes any difference; it's all sin. So how do you get rid of the problem that you get with telling a lie? Simply confess it, turn from it, repent from it. How do you get rid of the same problem with seven devils? Same thing: Submit to the Holy Spirit, confess your sin, repent, and allow the Spirit of God to cleanse your life, and off you go. The same thing.

So don't ever get the idea that if all these devils get to you, you're gonna be stuck and you're gonna have to have some great big eight-hour sweat session to get rid of 'em. That's something you can take care of in your own life. Let a man examine himself. These people were fellowshiping with demons, but they had the resources within them to have victory over Satan.

John's statement, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." You have Him in completeness in you. You have all things pertaining to life in God when you're complete in Him. Well, for a non-Christian in this age to get rid of a demon, he has to come to Jesus Christ. For a Christian to get rid of problems with demons, all he has to do is confess and submit to the Word and the Spirit. That's all. Our victory depends on personal commitment to the principles of holiness.

We had this illustrated to us when we were working with this one girl who had all these devils that were speaking, and all this thing was going on, and the phenomenon was very unusual; and I tried to cast those demons out. "Get out!" You know? "Name of the Word!" They didn't go. Some of the other guys on the staff tried, and they couldn't do it either, which made me feel better. But none of us could get 'em out.

Let me give you a simple statement. All of the efforts to cast out demons are useless if that person doesn't confess and repent of sin. Okay? Listen to this, then. If the person confesses and repents of sin, all of the efforts to cast out demons are unnecessary. So if you want to be real clear about it, it's never a question of casting out the demons. It's a question of repenting of the sins. If the person involved repents of the sin that allowed Satan to get a grip on them, then you don't need somebody

there doing all this other stuff. If they won't repent of the sin, then it doesn't matter what you do! You stand there 'til you're blue in the face trying to cast out demons; but if that person's harboring prolonged sin in their life, those demons have a place. Well, that's all we're trying to say.

Today, many Christians have become so preoccupied with Satan and so preoccupied with demons, and now Christians are having these new deliverance ministries that are growing up where you can go and get delivered. One guy had to pay \$3,500.00 to get delivered. Found out he didn't get delivered at all; he got bilked.

Listen, do you believe Christ has all authority over demons and He lives in you? You have the resources; believe me, you do. Believe me. And Jesus even said in Matthew 12 that He cast out demons by the Holy Spirit, and He lives in you. The only issue in the Christian's life is the issue of yieldedness to the holiness of God and yieldedness to the Spirit that eliminates Satan's power. So you don't need to go somewhere and have a great, bit, long, drawn-out thing.

And you say, "Well, you mean that we should never have Christians come around and pray?" Yeah, well, maybe that's all right, but maybe they ought to be really talking about sin, not demons. Maybe we need to rebuking sin; maybe we need to be getting people to deal with sin.

I think so many times this whole thing of demons is a big copout. "Well, the demon made me do it, the demon made me do it." Satan. You're not dealing with your own sin. You're not dealing with the issue of your nature. Your old sin nature. Confession, repentance, submission to the Word, submission to the Spirit removes the power of Satan.

Let me illustrate this. Turn to Ephesians 6. Verse 12. "It's clear that we're going to struggle with demons as Christians for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

All right, it's very clear then that we're gonna be struggling against demons, right? That's clear; it's exactly what it says in that verse. Now, if a Christian's gonna struggle with demons, where's he gonna get the victory? Is he gonna have to have 24 Christians come and go through all kinds of Christian exorcism? What's gonna happen?

Listen, verse 13. "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand an evil day. Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth." Verse 15. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

Can you handle Satan? You sure can when you get the armor on, right? You see, here's a case of Christians struggling with demons. And what's the solution? The solution isn't your friends coming to

help you; the solution is you. Right? Putting on the righteousness.

The last thing, verse 17, taking the Word. Faith. All of these things, which are available to every Christian, are the resource which gives victory over Satan. It's all ours, beloved.

Just another thought on this. Of all of the ministries of the body, of all of the responsibilities that we have toward one another, there is no statement or command to go around and cast demons out of each other! It says love one another, teach one another, edify one another, admonish one another, nurture one another, comfort one another, build up one another, reprove one another, rebuke one another, and so forth and so forth and so forth; but it doesn't say cast demons out of one another.

That's - beloved, I can comfort you and so forth and so on, but you don't need me to take care of Satan in your life. I can't do that, 'cause I can't be holy for you. You got it? That's your problem! Now, I can rebuke your sin, and I can give you wise counsel about your sin, and I can admonish you about your sin, but I can't be holy for you. And if you're gonna deal with Satan, that's yours to do! And if I do all the exorcism in the world in the Name of Jesus Christ and there's still harbored in your life, it's unnecessary - I mean, it's ineffective - and if there's no sin in your life, then it's unnecessary. If you have confessed and repented and submitted to the Truth of God, you're clean.

Oh, you don't have anything to fear. No. You have all victory over Satan. Well, that's a whole lot of introduction.

Go back to 19. I hope you got what I was shooting at; I'm concerned when we get all out of balance on this. So many people are so worried about the negative, they've forgotten the positive. The apostle Paul said, "I just want to do this. I want to know Him." I want to know Him.

Well, Acts 19. Paul's on his third missionary journey, he comes to Ephesus. Ephesus is the heart of the Roman province of Asia Minor, great city, location of the temple of Diana, or Artemis, temple where there was sorcery, exorcism, magicians, orgies; the whole bit was there in Ephesus. Paul comes into town, got some tools with him. Tools to make tents, tools to fix up leather, but most of all, the greatest tool he had was the Word of God. And the key to understanding verses 8 to 20 is in verse 20. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." Don't you love that?

You know the greatest thing we have to overpower Satan? Right here, isn't it? David said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that -" what? - "I might not sin against Thee." The Word! You are clean through the Word, right? You are clean through the Word. Saturated with it.

Well, Paul comes into Ephesus, and he's got the Word of God. Of course, it wasn't written down then; God poured it through him, but he had the Word. And when the Word prevails, there were mighty things going on, believe me.

Let's look at the Word of God and its influence on Ephesus. It's proclamation, it's confirmation, it's competition, it's conviction, it's domination. First of all in reviewing, it's proclamation. The first thing, the Word arrived and was proclaimed, verse 8. "He went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God." If you compare Acts 28:30 and 31, you'll see the things concerning the Kingdom of God are the things concerning Jesus Christ as well. So he spoke about God's rule and God's Kingdom and especially as it related to Jesus Christ. So Paul comes to the synagogue again, as was his pattern, and he preaches Christ. Verse 9. Interesting that it went on for three months, which is unusually long. The Jews usually got upset long before that, but these folks were somewhat tolerant.

But verse 9, "When some were hardened, — " finally, some of them hardened - "and believed not but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them." So after three months, they started blasting Christianity in front of the whole town, speaking evil of that way, those who had been hardened along the way. Instead of believing, instead of being softened, the longer Paul preached, the harder they got. And so finally, they blew the lid off; "and he departed from them and separated the disciples' disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

And some old manuscripts we have tell us that he taught there from 11:00 in the morning 'til 4:00 in the afternoon. Five hours of teaching. And in the 20th chapter, he says he's taught 'em night and day; so he must have come back at night. So he'd work in the morning, teach all afternoon, go back to work at 4:00; when he finished work at night, he'd go back to teach. In chapter 20 again, it says he went from house to house, so he probably spent the days in the school of Tyrannus and late at night in houses, teaching.

Teaching, teaching. Proclaiming, proclaiming, proclaiming. He was not only the apologist in verse 8, he was the pastor teacher. He was going to those that needed to be disciplined.

Verse 10, "and this continued for the space of two years;" and the result, evangelism. "All they who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." The Word just spread like a grass fire. Tremendous. So proclamation.

Along with its proclamation was its confirmation, and this is where I would begin today. Verse 11. "When God moved into an area, He not only preached the Word but He confirmed the Word with miracles." This was a standard feature of apostolic preaching; we've seen it many times. Whenever the message was delivered, it was accredited by miracles. I mean, how you gonna believe it if there's not something to go along with it? Now, today, we believe a man's message 'cause he squares with this Book, right? We say about a guy, "He violates Scripture!" But in those days, there was no written New Testament; the only way to validate somebody was to see some kind of supernatural work. And so God confirmed the work of the apostles through miracles.

In Mark 16:20, just to read you one of many verses which could be read, "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following." So God was in the business of confirming the Word through miracles. Now, this occurred in Hebrews 2, 3 and 4; it also occurred in 2 Corinthians 12:12 where he talks about the signs of an apostle. Notice verse 11; let's see what happened. First was the proclamation, then the confirmation; and "God wrought special miracles." Who did the miracles? God did. By the hands of Paul; He needed a human instrument. Paul would preach, and miracles would occur.

You say, "Why did God do this?" Well, He did this to convince unbelievers and those with weak faith of the authenticity of Paul's message. Now, notice interesting that it says He did it by the hands of Paul. Now, the people, of course, would see Paul and not really see God doing the work, especially those on the surface. And so they got the idea that this Paul was some kind of super character. And verse 12 says a very interesting thing. "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." And here's where you get this whole idea of healing cloths or handkerchiefs. But let me just back up and give you what this is saying. The people in Ephesus were very, very superstitious. And when they saw these miracles going on, coming out of Paul, they assumed the power was Paul's. And so the word "handkerchief" means "sweat cloth." Those people who work, artisans or anybody in the crafts or anybody who did manual labor in those days, carried about these cloths with which they would wipe their brow and sometimes tie around their head. Well, they got Paul's old, dirty, crummy sweat cloths! And they attached so much healing power to Paul, they figured if they get ahold of those sweat cloths, that that could work the same thing for them. And you know what? In spite of their superstition, God went ahead and did His miracles! Because God was in the business of confirming the Word, and He never let their superstitions violate what He was gonna do.

Remember the woman in Mark 5 who said, "If I can just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, I'll be healed." And she did, and she was. Why? God was going to do what He was going to do. And the same thing occurred in Acts 5 where the people in Jerusalem said, "If we can just get the sick under the shadow of Peter, they'll be well." And so these people had superstitions, but it didn't stop God from doing the miracles. And so they got Paul's old sweat cloths, and they got his aprons - he used some kind of apron that he wore when he did his work - and they put confidence in these. But whatever the superstition, God went about with the miracles in order to confirm the Word that Paul was preaching.

Now, beloved, the reason for miracles here is the same reason in the Gospel records, to confirm the Word. When Jesus did a miracle, why did He do that miracle? Did He do that miracle just to show off? Did He do that miracle just to make somebody well? No. I'll show you why; Acts 2:22. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs." God wanted people to believe in Jesus, and so God did miracles through Him.

That's the point. Supernatural.

Well, what happened as a result of these miracles? Well, look, it says in the middle of verse 12, "the diseases departed from them. They were physical healings." It's so ridiculous today for healers to offer - you can send for some healer's handkerchief and put it on your head and all that. That's such a perversion of a terrible superstition. In Ephesus, ridiculous. Here, the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them. Luke makes a distinction between physical disease, physical illness. Incidentally, the diseases departing is a medical term for an illness being removed. And it's an unusual medical term, but Luke, being a physician, would know it. And he makes a distinction between a disease and an evil spirit. I think that's significant. Not all illness is caused by demons. Luke makes that very clear.

So "God wrought special miracles, wonders and signs," and convinced the people, already swept up in magic, that the real wonders could be done in the Name of Jesus Christ. Boy, they must have thought that this Name of Jesus Christ was something else! And they did.

Let's look thirdly at the competition. We see a proclamation and the confirmation, now the competition. You know you're not gonna see this happen in the Name of Jesus without Satan moving in, right? Has to; always do. So here he comes. And oh, it's really good to see what happens to him. The people are seeing the Name of Jesus, it's so potent, demons are being cast out, diseases are being healed, and it's fantastic. Well, all of a sudden some local exorcists think they've got a new gimmick. Verse 13. "Certain of the vagabond Jews -" itinerant, traveling Jews- "exorcists took upon them to call over them who had evil spirits the Name of the Lord Jesus, saying 'we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth!'" They thought they had a new gimmick. They had never seen anything like the power of this formula. They'd been using all kinds of gobbledygook and sorcery and so forth; and now they got this idea the Name of Jesus, and they thought, "Man, we have really got something! This magician Paul has pulled some stuff off that we've never even seen." So they were gonna jump on the bandwagon. Well, there's always people around like that. All these people around that take Christianity and make it something marketable.

Back in Acts 8, Simon saw the miracles that Phillip did and he wanted to buy it with money, didn't he? Wanted to buy the Holy Spirit, add to his bag of tricks. Peter says, "Your money perish with you." So here you have these guys, and they think, "Well, this is great. We'll get in on this and use it. Notice the word "exorcists." This is the only word occurs. It literally means, "those who expel demons by using sacred names." It's the conjuring up of demons out of somebody by the use of sacred formulas, using the names of gods. And the Jewish exorcists would do it in the Name of Jehovah God. You say, "Were these legitimate Jewish exorcists?" No, of course not. They were phonies. They were - they may have believed they were doing it in the Name of God, but they weren't. Satan doesn't cast himself out, right? So they weren't really casting out demons, but Satan may have given them the idea that they were so they'd keep perpetuating this stupidity, this error.

And we know this is what's going on today in the name of the Roman Catholic Church, in the name of so many other things historically, exorcisms have been done, but they haven't been valid. In the first place, there's no need for them, right? As I've told you before, if there's confession and repentance, they're unnecessary. If there's no confession and no repentance, they're ineffective. And so that we have all that exorcism in the history of the Roman Church and we have exorcisms going on in the occult things today and they had them then, it was Jewish exorcists tried to do it, none of it ever was legitimate.

Jesus mentioned it. It must have been somewhat common when He said in Matthew chapter 12, verse 27. He says, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out?" And there he made inference to the fact that it was pretty common among the Jews to do this. So they had these vagabond exorcists going around with all their bag of tricks. And it was interesting; I think I told you last time that since the Name of God was an unmentionable name that the other people in the world must have thought they had some secret formula and a name that couldn't be mentioned. We've found some interesting writings that have come out of that part of history that indicate that some other people tried to figure out what the name of Jehovah was so that they could use it as a magical formula. No Jew would mention the name of Yahweh.

But anyway, these were fakes; but they had thought in their own minds perhaps that they were legitimate. Satan wanted them to think that. In the Book of Tobit, for example - this is to give you an example of Jewish exorcism - in the Book of Tobit, the heart and liver of a miraculously caught fish are burned in the ashes of incense, and the resulting smell and smoke are supposed to drive away the demons. Josephus, who was a very intelligent person, a noted Jewish historian, told of a cure in which a demon was drawn through the nostrils of a demoniac by the use of magic root supposedly prescribed by Solomon. And there are other rabbinical writers who reflect the same fanciful magic superstitions.

Now, it may have been true that in the Old Testament time, demons were expelled through prayer, fasting, if Matthew 17:21 is true and if it is belonging in the manuscript. It may be true, and I'm sure God did answer prayer and demons were cast out in the Old Testament. But this formula kind of thing was for unto God's Truth then and still is today.

Now, let me go a step further. No apostle after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ ever was hassled in exorcising demons. It was always a matter of authority. And that was apostolic authority, and as I've said before, we don't feel that today we have that authority. But today, we have a different kind of authority. I don't need to worry - I can't do much about demons in you, but every man can about himself. That's the issue. The apostolic day was confirming the Word; that was different. Today, every Christian has the resources to take care of his own problem. But I don't think we can walk up to unbelievers and cast demons out. If an unbeliever comes to Jesus Christ, He alone can cleanse. By

faith.

Well, let's go to verse 13 and see what happens. "We adjure by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." The word "adjure" means exercise. Incidentally, a note on verse 13. They obviously were admitting they didn't know this Jesus; they just said the one that Paul preaches. They were riding on his coattails. Verse 14, "There were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, who did so." This guy Sceva must have been something. He had seven sons that went around casting out demons. Supposedly. And says he was the chief of the priests. You mean chief priest? Well, it's highly unlikely. He may have belonged to the high priestly family. But most likely he just gave himself that title. He just probably gave himself the title as a matter of prestige in his magical rites.

But look what happened. And it wasn't all seven of them, as we shall see in a moment, but the ones who did come to this particular guy, said, "We adjure by Jesus whom Paul preaches -" in verse 15 - "The evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you?'" I like that. "What do you guys think you're doing?" That's good. Their little magical effort blew up.

Interesting notes here, the evil spirit answered and said. Of course, evil spirits can speak with a human voice. In Isaiah 8:19, it says that there are mediums and wizards and demons that chirp and mutter. And the word there has to do with ventriloquism. They actually can speak with a human voice, and that's very, very common. And so the evil spirit spoke through the man in a voice that probably did not sound like the man's own voice but somewhat distorted, and said, "Jesus I know." You say, "Did the demons know Jesus?" Of course. Demons were all created at one time, and they were created originally as what? As angels. And they spent the whole occupation of their existence praising God; they knew Him well. They spent all of eternity past from the time of their creation with Him. Up until the fall, and once they fell, you can believe they knew who He was, too; they didn't lose that knowledge. This demon says, "Jesus I know," he wasn't kidding. And the word "know" that he uses means personal knowledge. He knew Jesus.

In Mark 1:23, "there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out 'Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us?'" They even know that they're gonna get it. And he said this, "I know Thee who Thou art the Holy One of God." They know Jesus. "Jesus I know," he said. In other words, if it was Jesus casting them out, they'd move. And then I like this: "And Paul I know." And here's a different word for "know," a lower degree. They didn't know Paul nearly as well as they knew Jesus, but the word was out among the demons, believe me. "Paul's a hot item, boys, watch it."

You know, I ran into that situation where the demons were in this person and they knew me, which was interesting. You really don't think about that, but all of a sudden you recognize there's a whole group of spirits in another world that know you. And that, first of all was kind a shocking thing, and secondly it was kind of exciting. I mean, I'm glad to know I made that much of an effect on their world

so that they know me. I'm sure they're listening right now. Doesn't bother me a bit.

And anyway, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" I like that. This demon felt no compulsion of power to obey. They may have used Jesus' name, but there wasn't any power in it. And what happened was amazing. Verse 16. "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and bleeding."

Early streakers. But it was no lark, believe me.

"The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them," sprang violently on them, "and overcame them." And "overcame," the word means to completely - completely - dominate. And the old manuscript also includes the word "both" here, which indicates there were probably only two of the seven there. "And overcame them both and prevailed against them." The demon was powerful, strong. And they fled out of the house naked and bleeding. Wounded.

And you know, this must have been a shock to them. Do you know what they were used to? They were used to perfect cooperation. Why? Because they were working for Satan all along; Satan would always want to just make them think that they could do this. See? Satan would make it look like they had such great success casting out demons. See? Why? 'Cause that just perpetuates the error. You understand that? If Satan can pull the wool over somebody's eyes and make them think that when he exists in error, he really exists in truth, they thought they were doing it in the Name of God. I'm sure all along. And Satan kept them thinking that and kept them trapped in the system. Counterfeit.

And so here, they have been so successful, all of a sudden this happens, and I imagine they couldn't figure out what went wrong! What's going on? When they had cast out demons before, they must have had a measure of success or they wouldn't have been professional at this. You say, "Did they really cast out demons before?" No, Satan gave them the illusion that they did. But boy, they didn't have any illusions this time. It was reality.

You say, "Well, John, I have a question." Well, it's the same one I have; I know what it is. If Satan is behind this whole thing, how come the demon didn't cooperate? Right? I mean, if Satan's going to really mess up Paul's ministry, you know what this demon should have done? He should have gone out, right? And everybody in town would have said, "Oh, they can do it, too." And all of a sudden, Christianity would have fallen into the same old pattern as all exorcism. It would have been just another gimmick, right? And Paul would have left town, and they would have all attached to this guy.

Remember the girl that followed Paul around saying, "these are the servants of the Most High God to show us the way of salvation," saying the truth. And Paul says, "Get out." Why? Because Paul does not want liars speaking truth because then people attach to liars and then they finally lead them away

from the truth.

And so this demon didn't cooperate. Now, there're several possibilities. You say, "Why didn't the demon cooperate?" Well, I don't - I just have to speculate a little bit; it doesn't say. But I thought of several reasons. One, there was no satanic plot. These were just a bunch of guys acting independently of Satan. No, I can't believe that. Even though I thought of it, I don't believe it. You say why. Because these were Satan's agents, and they want to disrupt Paul's work. There had to be a plot. You say, "Well, why didn't the demon cooperate?" Well, somebody else might say, "Well, here's another possibility. Maybe they forgot to tell this demon to cooperate. Maybe they made the plot without including him." No. So maybe you might say, "No, he was a stubborn demon." No. You know why I don't think he went out? I don't think he went out because I think Christ controlled it. I think the Lord Jesus Christ messed up the whole plan by not letting that demon leave.

Luke 10:17 said, "Even the demons are subject to His Name." 1 Peter 3:22, "Angels and authorities are subject unto Him." He controlled that demon. Those guys wanted that demon to leave, Satan wanted that demon to leave, all the demons wanted that demon to leave, Christ said no, and he didn't leave. Why? Fouled up the plan.

Be careful, beloved, Satan has really deluded an awful lot of people in this whole area of exorcism. And Satan didn't work this time. That demon didn't leave, and those people ran out of there panicked. Boy, some people have had the idea like these exorcists that they've really done the job, really been casting out devils. Jesus said this. "Many shall say to Me in that last day, 'Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name?'" Matthew 7:22, "'Lord, have we not cast out demons in Thy Name? Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in Thy Name?' And I will say unto them, 'Depart from Me ye that work iniquity. I never'" - what? "'knew you.'"

No. Well, competition. Satan brought the competition; Christ overruled. So we see the proclamation, confirmation, competition, quickly look at the conviction.

Boy, the results of this were great. Verse 17. "And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks swelling at Ephesus, and fear or awe fell on them all, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." You know what they said, "Boy, the Name of the Lord Jesus, don't mess with that name! Don't use that name with a trifle! Don't use it in vain! Don't play around with that name!" Even the unsaved began to recognize something stupendous about the Name of Jesus. That's exactly what God wanted. What a name! The Name at which every knee should bow. Well, the Name of Jesus was magnified and people saw with awe and with a sense of terror that that name was not to be trifled with. Beloved, that is true. Every time I hear somebody take the name of Jesus in vain, I just kind of cringe. That's not a name to trifle with. And those people saw that.

And verse 18 says, "Many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds." It's a perfect participle, the word "believed," and it could mean those who had already believed and had already been Christians but had never given up their magic, or it could mean those who were then saved and then came and confessed. Either possibility. But anyway, these people who believed came, confessed, and showed their deeds. A most interesting phrase. "Showed their deeds" means they came and revealed their spells. According to magic theory, the only good spell is the one that's secret, and once you divulge the secret, the spell's no good. So everybody came and told all the secrets. They were giving up all their magic. Giving it up. The whole satanic game was over. They saw the truth of the power of Jesus; and they saw that magic didn't work, and in comparison to His name it was absolutely impotent. And revivals started sitting. The Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and when the Name of the Lord Jesus is magnified, people will believe. You hear that? It's right. His Name was magnified in verse 17, and people believed and confessed, and their lives were transformed.

And they show you the character that transformation has got right down to practical things. Verse 19. "Many of those also who used magical arts brought their books together and burned them before all." They had a public burning. You say, "Was that a big deal?" They counted the price of them and found that 50,000 pieces of silver, all their parchments - the word "books" there, all their magical arts, all the gimmicks and formulas and all the paraphernalia, they burned. All the scrolls, all the secret formulas, they burned them. And the interesting thing, the word "burned" is imperfect. They kept on burning. I don't know how long the bonfire lasted. But they kept burning. You say, "How much is 50,000 pieces of silver?" With inflation and all of that, I couldn't begin to tell you. Drachmas. But maybe somewhere between 25,000 and 50,000 would be a start.

Well, the Word was proclaimed, confirmed, competed with; it was victorious and Satan lost out; and then conviction came through the Word. Lastly, the words "domination," verse 20. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." Beloved, you know this. In your life, where the Word of God dominates, there's victory. You know that in this church, as long as the Word of God dominates, there'll be victory. That's the pattern. That's the pattern. The church established with the Word, the individual established with the Word is clean and victorious over the enemy.

Well, I just can't read verse 20 without having thrills when I see the Word of God prevail. Satan in all of his foe - in all His power, I should say - amassed as for against the Word cannot prevail. Cannot prevail.

Beloved, I hope and pray that you're saturated by the Word, that you may know victory, the victory that comes only when you are. Let's pray.

Father, we're thankful again this morning for the Word of God. We recognize how rich we are because we have it. We thank You for what we've learned again this morning in this time of study,

and we're so thankful for the example we see as the apostle Paul, so tireless, so fearless, so bold. Father, we know that we cannot be as he, an apostle. We cannot go through the things that he did in the miraculous sense, but God, thank You that the same power that was spent through him is in us. And Father, we recognize that Satan is a defeated foe and because that Thou art in us, we have power to overcome him at every point.

Lord God, save us from exaggerations, and save us from overemphasis on wrong things, and save us from being plagued by the negatives and help us to be lost in the positive knowledge of being Thy Son. We give You the praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

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