

What You Should Know About



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Possession**

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With rampant growth of the occult and Satanism in our societies, and with the exploding popularity of New Age spiritualism, the spirit world is receiving more attention than every before. But is there a spirit world? Are evil spirits real? If so, what are they? Where did they come from? And what about demon possession? Does this phenomenon really exist in our world today?

*Scriptural quotations were taken from
the King James Version except as noted.*

“Now the Spirit speaketh, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to *seducing spirits*, and *doctrines of devils* [demons]; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...” (1 Timothy 4:1-3). So warns your Bible!

But what are “seducing spirits” and “doctrines of demons”? Most psychologists and many theologians believe demons to be mere figments of the imagination, and regard “demon possession” as nothing more than an unscientific way of explaining mental illness. But does the Bible support such views?

Proponents of the “New Age,” on the other hand, believe very much in the existence of a spirit world. New Agers claim to have achieved “enlightenment” and inner peace through contact with “spirit guides” whom they believe to be the “spirits of the dead.” Are these “spirit guides” really the disembodied spirits of human beings? Or are they figments of the imagination? Or, are they something else?

What about this so-called “New Age”—is it really new? And what of the widespread practice of witchcraft, Satanism, necromancy, transcendental meditation, divination, and other forms of the occult? Are these mere “passing fancies”—fads that are not to be taken seriously?

Let’s now turn to the Bible, and see what God has to say about these practices.

Pagan Abominations

In the ancient world, the use of “curious arts” was common. The Egyptian Pharaohs had their sorcerers and magicians (Genesis 41:8,24; Exodus 7:11), as did Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king (Daniel 1:20; 2:2-13; 4:7). The Bible speaks of diviners (Deuteronomy 18:4; 1 Samuel 6:2); of soothsayers (Isaiah 2:6; Daniel 2:27); of those (mediums) with “familiar spirits” (Leviticus 19:31; 1 Samuel 28:7); of wizards (Leviticus 19:31; 1 Samuel 28:3); of enchanters and witches (Exodus 22:18; 2 Chronicles 33:6); of necromancers (Deuteronomy 18:11); of astrologers (Isaiah 47:13; Daniel 1:20). Both the Bible and archaeology confirm that these practices were universal in the ancient world.

When God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, He utterly *condemned* the use of such practices, This is clearly proved by the following scriptures:

Exodus 22:18: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

Leviticus 19:26,31: “...neither shall ye use enchantments, nor observe times.... Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 20:6,27: “And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.... A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

Deuteronomy 18:9-11: “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the

fire [human sacrifice], or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.”

In spite of God’s clear and repeated warnings, the people of Israel, time after time, “went a whoring” after the customs and practices of the heathen. They sought out the soothsayers, the enchanters, the charmers, and the consulters of familiar spirits. They sacrificed to the “gods” of the heathen; took up their abominable customs. They even *burned their children* as human sacrificial offerings to pagan deities (Jeremiah 19:5; 32:35).

Many of the same pagan practices were still occurring in New Testament times. A man named Simon “used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one” (Acts 8:9). In Cyprus, the apostle Paul confronted a sorcerer named Elymas, calling him a “child of the devil” and “enemy of all righteousness” (Acts 13:8-11). In Philippi, Paul cast a demon out of a woman “which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying” (Acts 16:16-18). And in the book of Galatians, witchcraft is included among the “works of the flesh” (5:19-21), showing that the “craft” was practiced at that time.

Clearly, the same old pagan abominations that brought great curses upon ancient Israel were still alive in the time of Christ and the apostles, And they are alive today!

Actually, all the spiritualistic “arts” and “crafts” we hear so much about today are nothing more than modern manifestations of very ancient practices—practices absolutely *condemned* in God’s Word! God calls these things *abominations*, and pronounces the *death sentence* upon those who practice them. Those who practice these things today are as guilty of *sinning against God* as those who practiced them in ancient times. Moreover, they are tampering with spiritual powers that could literally *wreck their lives!*

Spirits of the New Age

In our time, the abominations committed by ancient Israel have emerged in what is called the “New Age movement.” Proponents of New Age practices claim to have achieved “enlightenment” and personal fulfillment through “channeling”—contact and communication with the “spirits of the dead.”

Many book stores now carry *hundreds* of books on the New Age, including “how to” guides on channeling with so-called “spirit guides,” astral projection (“out-of-body” experiences), clairvoyance, transcendental meditation, astrology, use of pyramids, reading Tarot cards, dream interpretation, discovering “past lives,” and achieving altered states of consciousness.

Thousands have read of the much-publicized “spiritual” experiences of actress Shirley MacLain—who describes her spiritualistic journeys in her books, *Out on a Limb* and *Dancing in the Light*—and have attended her seminars on achieving enlightenment through New Age techniques. Doubtless, Ms. MacLain’s “enlightening” experiences have “inspired” many to set out on their own New Age adventures.

Who hasn’t heard of the well-known psychic Jeane Dixon, the crystal ball gazer who claims God as the source of her “gift of prophecy,” or the late Edgar Cayce, the so-called “sleeping prophet”? These and many others have helped pave the way to New Age

“enlightenment” for thousands.

Even professing Christian ministers have gotten in on the act, and have actually advocated spiritualistic techniques. Bishop James Pike, for instance, wrote of his experiences with the spirit world in his book, *The Other Side*. Bishop Pike and medium Arthur Ford contributed to the popularity of spiritualism by going into a trance in a 1967 *televised* event.

Pike’s claim of having made contact with his dead son, Jim, is but one of many such claims. Undoubtedly, reports of such experiences have motivated many to attempt communication with their own deceased loved ones.

Many New Agers *have* made contact with the spirit world—and have paid dearly! To their dismay, the “spirit guides” they encountered were *not* the friendly “angels of light” they expected, but were *evil* spirits—the “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12). Some New Agers have renounced their practice, and now speak out against New Age spiritualism, warning of its danger. Nevertheless, interest in the “spirit world” is widespread—and *growing!*

But New Age mysticism is not the only modern manifestation of *ancient* pagan practice. The grisly sacrificial killings committed in Matamoros, Mexico, in 1989, along with hundreds of reports of ritualistic animal sacrifices, helped to heighten the public’s awareness of the practice of Satanism in the United States and other parts of the world.

The Devil’s Advocates

Tens of thousands of Americans and Europeans are involved in witchcraft and sorcery, and other forms of the occult. Scores of “practical guides” on these “crafts” have been published and sold, and are readily available to almost anyone; witches’ and sorcerers’ conventions are held in open, public facilities; witch covens and occult shops in America and Europe number in the thousands.

Witches and warlocks, with their potions, spells, and rituals, have been with us for years, and have generally been regarded as harmless, though peculiar. But, evidence of widespread Satanic activity—occultism in its most bizarre form—has surfaced in many areas of the United States.

“SATAN LIVES NOW”—a message painted on a blackboard in an abandoned school in New Galilee, Pennsylvania—was one of several signs of the practice of Satanism in the Beaver County area. According to an article appearing on the front page of the *Beaver County Times* (August 6, 1989), “Satanic activity has moved across Beaver County like a shadow on the landscape.”

The article reports that Satanic graffiti had been painted in the hallways, classrooms, and cafeteria of a former New Galilee school, and that “black mass” celebrations had been taking place for years in the New Brighton area. In addition, the bodies of small animals found in Allegheny County and cases of animal mutilation reported by the Humane Society of Western Pennsylvania have led some residents to wonder if the animals had been ritualistically killed.

This was only one of a flurry of newspaper articles on Satanic activity that appeared

across the country in 1989. Dozens of reports on the occurrence of Satanic rituals, animal sacrifices, and Satanic graffiti found on walls, buildings, and overpasses throughout the United States have confirmed the existence of Satanic activity. But most chilling of all are the reports of Satanic-related cases of child sexual abuse, cannibalism, and ritualistic human sacrifice.

The May 17, 1989 edition of *The Register-Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), for instance, reported on the sentencing to death of Jason Wayne Rose, 21, for the May 1987 killing of nineteen-year-old Melissa Ann Meyer in a ritualistic human sacrifice. According to the report, Rose and a seventeen-year-old companion, John Ray Jones, “declared the killing a sacrifice to Ariocho, an occult god of chaos and evil.”

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Then there are the two million reports of missing children and the discovery of thousands of unidentified bodies of children every year, along with the horrifying specter of kidnaping and stories from preschool children of ritualistic sexual abuse by both male and female adults. How many missing children have become the victims of Satanic cults? How many have been murdered in ritualistic *human sacrifices* to the devil?

Most practitioners of the occult do not participate in such heinous crimes. Nevertheless, many occultists are aware that they are dealing with very real forces and powers, even if they do not understand the origin and nature of such forces.

Some Satanists believe in a literal, personal devil, and claim to worship him directly; while others—Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan, for example—believe “Satan” is a metaphor for the forces of nature. The latter, like witches and sorcerers, generally claim to be “nature worshipers” rather than “devil worshipers.”

Regardless which category the occultist prefers, the fact remains: Dabbling in the occult can and does result in demon possession! Some have learned the hard way!

Devil Movies

While not as dangerous as the occult, “devil movies” have caused serious psychiatric problems for some moviegoers. *The Exorcist*, a 1973 film based on William Peter Blatty’s best-selling novel, proved too shocking for some of its viewers. Sleeplessness, hallucinations, nightmares, and fear and suspicion of demon possession were among the problems some experienced after viewing the film. Nevertheless, the film did exceedingly well at the box office.

Blatty himself claims to have made contact with the spirit of his deceased father, and with the spirit of a sixteen-year-old Central European girl named Bats. It happened during a twenty-five-hour Ouija board session, while he was taking a break from writing *The Exorcist*.

Since the screening of *Rosemary’s Baby* in 1968, followed by *The Exorcist* in 1973, a

whole spate of devil movies have been released. These films present some small amount of truth about demons and demon possession, but for the most part are purely fictional—the products of men’s imaginations. For example, demons do sometimes cause the people they possess to curse profusely, exhibit obscene behavior, and spew out vile, filthy language, as in *The Exorcist*. But demons (or the devil) do not impregnate women or female jackals, as in *Rosemary’s Baby* and *The Omen*.

Besides the harmful effects (for some people) of viewing such films, perhaps the greatest danger is the preoccupation with the spirit world some people develop after viewing. An unhealthy curiosity about the spirit world could lead to dabbling with spiritualism, whether occultism or the New Age variety. This could lead to encounters with evil spirits.

But some claim that “evil spirits” are not literal beings, but are “personified” psychiatric problems. What about it? Are Satan and his demonic cohorts real spiritual entities? Or are they mythical creatures fashioned in the imaginative minds of superstitious men?

Demons Are Real

Many people, including theologians from various denominational backgrounds, believe that evil spirits belong to the world of superstition and myth. Satan is nothing more than a “literary device,” a personification of evil; and demons are mental and emotional disorders, such as schizophrenia, paranoia, and psychoneurosis.

The many scriptures attesting to the existence of supernatural evil are either rejected as myth or viewed as allegory. The “devil” of Christ’s temptation (Matthew 4), for example, is nothing more than the human side of Christ’s nature; or, according to one interpretation, is an unnamed *human* “devil,” a representative of Herod, who offers provincial authority to Jesus if He will but do homage to the Roman governor.

According to this thinking, demons, or evil spirits, were conjured by primitive imagination; today we understand them as mental and emotional disorders. Satan is seen as a parabolic—rather than diabolic—character; an emblem of evil; a literary personification. As Wisdom is personified in Scripture (Proverbs 8), so is Evil. As “gods” are conceived in ignorance and superstition, so are demons.

Such reasoning may appeal to some, but if we are honest with the Scriptures; if we accept the Bible as the inspired *Word of God*, then we should be willing to lay aside our personal ideas, and believe what the Bible plainly reveals.

The truth is, all attempts to see demons and the devil as “mere mental diseases” and the “personification of evil” are really attempts to rationalize something that seems irrational. But the Bible is clear: Satan is a literal, personal being; and demons are spiritual *personalities* that *think, reason, speak, and express fear*, and under certain conditions, can enter into and *possess* the mind of a human being!

When Christ confronted a man possessed by a “legion” of demons (Mark 5), the evil spirits exhibited their ability to think, reason, and speak by imploring Christ not to send them out of the country, but into a nearby herd of swine, instead. James says that demons “believe” in God, “and tremble” (James 2:19).

Jesus “cast out many devils [demons]; and suffered [allowed] not the devils to *speak*, because they *knew* Him” (Mark 1:34). In some cases, the demons came out “crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God...” (Luke 4:41)—showing that demons are intelligent beings, with cognitive and communicative abilities.

Demon intelligence was again exhibited when seven Jewish exorcists attempted to cast out an evil spirit in the name of Jesus: “And the evil spirit *answered* and *said*, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?’ 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 that house naked and wounded” (Acts 19:13-16). It was the *evil spirit* that spoke, not the “*man* in whom the evil spirit was”!

Evidently, the difference between mental illness and demon possession was acknowledged during the first century, Matthew speaks of “those which were possessed with devils [demons], *and* those which were lunatick” (Matthew 4:24), apparently recognizing that insanity and demon possession are not necessarily the same.

It is clear, then, that demons are literal beings, not “mental disorders.”

What Are Demons?

Virtually every culture in the history of mankind has believed in the existence of spirits, both good and evil. Such spirits have been called “gods”; have been venerated and feared; have been regarded the spirits of ancestors, of animals, and of the wicked dead.

Throughout the ages, men have attempted to appease the spirits; have sought guidance, protection, “good luck,” and personal power from them; have created rites and rituals to ward off evil spirits.

The Greek word *daimon*, from which we derive “demon,” originally “had a good as well as a bad connotation... Socrates, for example, was thought to have a *daimon* or familiar spirit that warned him when he was about to make a wrong decision” (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*) vol. 7, 1972 edition; article: “DEMON”).

Many tribal cultures believe that evil spirits are the hostile spirits of deceased ancestors, Ancestral worship and various rites of exorcism have emerged from this belief.

Ancient Greeks and Romans believed that evil spirits were the “ghosts,” or “souls,” of the wicked dead, and were to be feared. Such ideas about evil spirits spilled over into Judaism. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, apparently believed that demons “are no other than the spirits of the wicked, which enter into men that are alive, and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them” (*Wars of the Jews*, 7:6:3).

Some, even today, believe that demons are the spirits of the offspring of unions between angels and antediluvian women. This belief is based on a misinterpretation of Genesis 6, where we read of the “sons of God” who married the “daughters of men.” Proponents of this theory say that the “sons of God” were *angels*, since angels are sometimes called “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 38:7), and the “daughters of men” were human beings. However popular, this idea is destroyed by Christ’s assertion that resurrected saints are “equal [like, or as] the *angels*” in that they “neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die

anymore” (Luke 20:35,36).

In today’s world, where “gods” and “spells” have been replaced by science and technology (except among New Agers and occultists), demons are often associated with superstition and myth, and are believed to have been conceived in the imaginations of men who lacked scientific understanding.

But the belief that demons are nonpersonal “mental disorders” contradicts several scriptural passages, as we have seen; and the belief that demons are the “departed souls” of the wicked is based on the false doctrine of the “immortality of the soul.” Therefore, neither belief is correct; neither adequately explains the existence of demons.

The Bible is the *foundation* of knowledge. It does not contain all knowledge, but provides us with the foundational knowledge on how this world came to be, why God created man, and the destiny of humankind. In its pages, we find “bits and pieces” that help fill in the gaps in recorded history and scientific discovery.

The Bible has little to say on the origin of demons, but the little it does say provides us with information sufficient for deriving reasonable conclusions about what demons are and why they exist. One such bit of information is round in Peter’s second epistle: “God spared not the *angels that sinned*, but cast them down to hell [*tartarus*: a place of confinement], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world [the pre-flood period], but saved Noah the eighth...a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly...” (2 Peter 2:4,5). Jude makes a similar statement: “And the *angels which kept not their first estate* [principality], *but left their habitation*, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (verse 6).

Because the word *angels* (Greek: *angelos*) is sometimes used of men, and may be defined as “messengers,” some claim that Peter and Jude were referring to *human* messengers who had committed sin. But if Peter and Jude meant to say men, why didn’t they? In the vast majority of cases, “angels” refers to *spirit* messengers. This is proved by a simple concordant study.

For *either* Peter or Jude to have used the word *angelos* when the subject was “men” is hardly believable. For *both* to have used it is completely out of the question!

Though men are sinners, in this case it was *angels* that sinned and abandoned the purpose for which they had been created. And as sinners, they must be *judged* in the world to come. This is why the “legion” asked, “Art thou [Jesus] come hither to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29).

The apostle Paul writes, “Know ye not that we [the saints] shall *judge angels*?” (1 Corinthians 6:3). Had there been no sinning angels, there would be no need for a judgment of angels.

The Bible speaks of “the devil and his *angels*” (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9). Obviously, the devil’s “angels” are the “angels that sinned.” They were created to be “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14), but became *evil* spirits—they “kept not their first estate, but left their habitation.”

In Revelation 12, the “devil and his angels” are engaged in supernatural warfare with the archangel Michael and his celestial armies: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon [Satan]; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (verses 7-9).

This prophecy has yet to be fulfilled; but, scriptural evidence indicates that this, as many other prophecies, has *dual* meaning, where a *past* occurrence is used to describe a *future* event. This implies that the devil and his angels have *already* been cast out of heaven—and from all indications, it happened long ago, in the pre-Adamic world.

The “angels that sinned,” then, are the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion; whose expulsion from heaven is used in Revelation as a *type*, a representation, of a future event.

The main point is that Satan the devil has *angels*, and the devil’s angels are the evil spirits the Bible calls “demons.” They are the angels that followed Satan in his rebellion. No other explanation for the existence of demons agrees with God’s revealed Word.

Demon Activity

Yes, demons *do* exist! They have been active on this earth for millennia, as we have seen. But what kinds of problems do they cause? Are there different kinds of demons? Are some more aggressive than others? And what about mental illness; how does it differ from demon possession?

Jesus gave His twelve disciples “power and authority over all devils [demons], and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1). Later, He “appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, wither He Himself would come” (Luke 10:1). When the seventy returned from their mission, they said, “Lord, even the devils, [demons] are subject unto us through thy name” (verse 17), Jesus had given them “power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (verse 19), and they had used that power; had cast out demons in His name.

But on one occasion, His disciples were unable to cast out an evil spirit (Mark 9:17,18). After Jesus cast the spirit out, “His disciples asked Him privately, ‘Why could not we cast him out?’” Jesus answered, “This kind come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (verses 28,29), Notice the words “This kind.” This implies that there are different kinds of demons. In this case, the demon appears to have been a particularly stubborn, aggressive kind.

Some demons are more aggressive, hateful, vengeful than others, and different demons affect the people they possess in different ways. The following are some of the ways demons affect their hosts:

Some demons attempt to hurt, harm, or destroy the persons they possess. In the example cited above, the demon often threw the possessed person “into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him” (Mark 9:22). The man possessed by the “legion” (Mark 5) was “always, night

and day... in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones” (verse 5).

Some demons cause physical impairments such as dumbness, deafness, and blindness. “...they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil [demon]. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake...” (Matthew 9:32,33). “Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw” (Matthew 12:22). “He 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).

Some demons exhibit their supernatural powers through “miracles” and oracular messages. The apostle Paul confronted “a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination...which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying” (Acts 16:16). In the end-time, the “spirits of devils” will go forth “working miracles” (Revelation 16:14). The “miracles” of demons often include such phenomena as levitation, telekinesis, mind reading, and automatic writing, Perhaps even greater “wonders” will commonly occur in the end of the present age, when the devil and his angels are cast down to this earth.

Demon possessed persons sometimes display extraordinary physical strength. In the case of the man possessed by the “legion,” “no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him” (Mark 5:4).

Some demons are “foul spirits.” “We read of these in Mark 9:25 and Revelation 18:2. Apparently, they are considered “foul” (or “unclean”) because they cause the people they possess to exhibit immoral, perhaps perverse, behavior, and spew out vile, filthy language and obscenities.

Very often, demons cause the persons they possess to appear insane. This may not be true of every case, but it is certainly true of many. The man with the “legion” and the boy who was thrown “in the fire and in the water” are examples.

In addition to the above facts about demon possession, the Scriptures also reveal that *multiple possession*—when a person is possessed by *several* demons at the same time—occasionally occurs. When Christ cast out the “legion,” the demons went into a herd of swine, and the whole herd—about 2,000—ran into the sea and drowned (Mark 5:13). The number of swine *may* indicate how many demons had possessed the man. In any case, the name “Legion” indicates more than one or two, or even seven, which was the number Jesus had cast out of Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9).

Some present-day cases of “split personality” are probably demonic possessions. Distinguishing between possession and mental illness, however, is often difficult. The rule of thumb is: MOST CASES OF MENTAL ILLNESS ARE NOT CASES OF DEMON POSSESSION! However, where there are marked changes in personality (not the occurrence of despondency, depression, or anxiety), the onset of sudden bouts of violent hostility, or the occurrence of supernatural phenomena in the vicinity of the person in question, then demon possession

is a very real possibility. But be careful about jumping to conclusions, and don't go looking for an exorcist when such cases arise. The psychiatric evaluation of a trained professional is the first course of action one should pursue.

Misconceptions About Demons

Now that we know what demons are, and what they are capable of doing, let's take a look at what they are *not*.

Some people speak of "lust demons," or "jealousy demons," or "pride demons." Such terminology indicates a basic misunderstanding about the nature of demons and the effects of demon possession, and often provides a "scapegoat" for the sinner.

It is certainly true that evil spirits are capable of subjecting men to temptation (Matthew 4:3), and have a leading role in much of this world's wickedness (Ephesians 6:12), but problems involving lust, pride, jealousy, and other components of man's nature, do *not* indicate demon possession. James says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his *own* lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Lust is one of the components of human nature; it resides within us all. To blame one's "lust problems" on a demon is to remove the blame from one's self, where it belongs.

Moreover, it is a mistake to see demons lurking behind every bush, or to assume demon influence or possession every time something strange happens. Most unidentified flying objects, strange noises, and creaking floors are not the result of demonic activity. Most mental and emotional illnesses are not brought on by demons.

By assuming that demons are to blame for our sins—our pride, jealousy, covetousness; our "hot-headed" temper and impatience—we are depriving ourselves of any real success in spiritual growth and development. The drives and emotions involved in problems such as these do not warrant *expulsion*; they call for a firmly established set of *priorities*, for a *disciplined* life, and for *time*.

This is not to say that demons do not exert an influence in the evils of this world. Indeed, they do. But *influence* and *possession* are two entirely different manifestations of demonic activity. In possession, the evil spirit inhabits and takes control of the mind of its victim. In cases of demon influence, however, the spirit is able to put certain thoughts into a person's mind, but does not inhabit and control the mind.

The apostle Paul links "course of this world" with the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). This suggests that the devil—and, by extension, the whole demonic realm—is a major causal factor behind the evils of this world. It also provides an important clue on how to avoid demonic influence: Do not follow the course of this world! Do not become a child of disobedience! Rather, follow Christ! Obey God! "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and *he will flee from you*" (James 4:7).

The devil and his demented cohorts are the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Ephesians 6:12), but they *cannot* rule those who submit to God's rule.

Possession and Exorcism— Ancient and Modern

From the New Testament record, we learn that demon possession was fairly common in the first century. Perhaps this phenomenon was partly due to a considerably widespread fascination with the “black arts”—spiritualism, necromancy, magic, divination, etc. Evidence of this fascination is found in Acts 19, where we find the apostle Paul in the city of Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

In this account, “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 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” (verses 11,12). Then follows the case of the seven Jewish exorcists whose attempt to cast out a demon “by Jesus whom Paul preacheth” failed miserably (verses 13-16).

When the citizens of Ephesus heard of what had happened, “fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used *curious arts* brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it *fifty thousand* pieces of silver” (verses 17-19).

This fascination with the “curious arts” does not account for all cases of demon possession in the ancient world, but it undoubtedly accounts for many such cases. It is a well-known fact that, even in our time, demon possession is far more common among the peoples of lands where the “black arts” are commonly practiced than in the United States and other “Christian” nations. However, evidence of demonic activity—including actual cases of possession—in the United States and other English-speaking countries has increased since the arrival of the New Age movement, and with the spread of occult practices and Satanism.

Demon possession is a very real phenomenon in today’s world; and so is the practice of *exorcism*—rituals, prayers, incantations, and special methods used in the expulsion of evil spirits from possessed persons. This curious “art” was well known among both Jews and pagans in ancient times, Some Jewish rabbis still practice exorcism, as do Hindus and Muslims.

In some pagan exorcisms, the possessed is tortured—based on the belief that the possessing spirit can be afflicted, and thus driven out, by afflicting the body of the possessed. Apparently, and for whatever reason, a certain degree of success has been achieved through the use of such cruel techniques.

The exorcism rites of ancient Jews were apparently borrowed from pagan cultures, Josephus tells of an exorcism wherein the demon was drawn through the nostrils of the possessed person by use of a special method allegedly handed down from Solomon. The rite consisted of a special nose ring and incantations allegedly composed by Solomon. Of course, no such rites appear in the Law of Moses, and are nowhere authorized by Scripture. If the exorcism ritual described by Josephus was indeed composed by Solomon, then it was composed in his latter years, while he was under the influence of his heathen wives.

Many cases of possession and exorcism have been documented in the professing

Christian world, as well. Malachi Martin, Catholic scholar and former Jesuit Professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, recounts five American cases of possession and exorcism in his book *Hostage to the Devil*. Before detailing the events of the five cases, Martin states that the cases are true, and that his accounts are based on extensive interviews with persons directly and indirectly involved, and on tapes made during the exorcisms.

The chapters that follow recount some of the most chilling events imaginable. The aberrant behavior of the possessed, as well as the supernatural phenomena occurring during exorcism, are in some ways similar to the fictional story of Regan, the twelve-year-old demoniac of the film, *The Exorcist*.

According to Martin's research, some of the "physical phenomena frequently associated with possession" include "the inexplicable stench [which permeates the room where the exorcism is performed]; freezing temperatures [in the room, though other parts of the house are warm]; telepathic powers about purely religious and moral matters; a peculiarly unlined or completely smooth or stretched skin, or unusual distortion of the face, or other physical and behavioral transformations; 'possessed gravity' (the possessed person becomes physically immovable, or those around the possessed are weighted down with a suffocating pressure); levitation (the possessed rises and floats off the ground, chair, or bed; there is no physically traceable support); violent smashing of furniture, constant opening and slamming of doors, tearing of fabric in the vicinity of the possessed, without a hand laid on them; and so on" (page 13).

Before the exorcism rites begin, loose objects are removed from the room. "During the exorcism, one form of violence may and most often does cause an object, light or heavy, to move about, rock back and forth, skitter or fly across the room, make much noise, strike the priest or the possessed or the assistants. It is not rare for people to emerge from an exorcism with serious physical wounds" (page 15).

Diocesan authorities usually appoint a junior priest colleague to assist the exorcist and to receive training as an exorcist. His role is to "monitor the words and actions of the exorcist, warn him if he is making a mistake, help him if he weakens physically, and replace him if he dies, collapses, flees, is physically or emotionally battered beyond endurance—and all have happened during exorcisms" (page 15).

Others are also appointed to assist the exorcist in his grueling task. Martin writes, "The exorcist must be as certain as possible beforehand that his assistants will not be weakened or overcome by obscene behavior or by language foul beyond their imagining; they cannot blanch at blood, excrement, urine; they must be able to take awful personal insults and be prepared to have their darkest secrets screeched in public in front of their companions. These are routine happenings during exorcisms" (page 16).

"Even with all the care in the world," Martin states, "there is no way an exorcist can completely prepare his assistants for what lies in store for them. Even though they are not subject to the direct and unremitting attack the priest will undergo, it is not uncommon for assistants to quit—or be carried out—in the middle of an exorcism" (page 16).

According to Martin, exorcisms commonly last 10 or 12 hours, but some continue

for several days, and a few last for *weeks!* “Once begun,” Martin explains, “except on the rarest occasions, there are no time outs, although one or other of the people present may leave the room for a few moments, to take some food, to rest very briefly, or go to the bathroom” (pages 16,17).

Exorcisms are not only stressful for the possessed, but for the exorcism teams as well. In *People of the Lie*, author M. Scott Peck, M.D., discusses the two exorcisms he has personally witnessed. One lasted four days; the other lasted three days, he says, and both were successful. “And even though the outcome was successful,” he writes, “most [members of the exorcism teams] had emotional reactions to contend with in the weeks afterward” (page 189).

Dr. Peck is not certain about which comes first: involvement in the occult or demon possession. But one thing is certain: There is a definite connection between the two. Peck writes, “It seems clear from the literature on possession that the majority of cases have had involvement with the occult...” (page 190).

Both the patients in the exorcisms he witnessed had been involved in the occult. “In one patient the process seemed to begin with involvement in the occult at the age of twelve. In the other the process apparently began at the age of five with something more ghastly than what one would ordinarily consider occult” (pages 190,191).

The lesson is clear: If you value your life, your sanity, your mental and emotional health and well-being, then stay *away from the occult!* Avoid anything that resembles the occult, including New Age spiritualism. Remember, Almighty God utterly *condemns* such things!

And there are other preventative steps you can take.

How to Protect Yourself

The following is a summarization of the things you can do to protect yourself from demonic activity:

(1) As stated above, avoid all forms of the occult and New Age spiritualism. Also be aware of the harmful effects of drugs (cocaine, heroin, etc.) and heavy metal “music.” Most drug addicts and heavy metal fans are not demon possessed, but the connection of drug abuse and heavy metal with the occult, and with aberrant behavior, depression, and suicidal tendencies, cannot be ignored. Ancient mediums used mood-inducing substances and environments to prepare their minds for contact with the spirit world; their modern-day counterparts are still using drugs.

(2) Practice emotional control. Fits of blind rage, uncontrolled anger, and prolonged “temper tantrums” *may* lead to demon possession.

(3) Be aware of the existence of demons and the reality of demon influence and possession, but do not become preoccupied with them, and do not search for evidence of demonic activity. Most strange occurrences are not demonic in origin, and most mental patients are not possessed. Assuming demonic activity where none exists is more harmful than helpful.

(4) Follow the principles of God's Word. God's laws were intended to be beneficial to man, Obedience to them produces happiness, well being, and true peace of mind.

(5) Put your trust in the promises of God's Word, James writes, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will *flee* from you" (James 4:7), Paul says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the *peace* of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Philippians 4:6,7).

Paul's words go hand-in-hand with the promises Jesus gives to those who follow Him. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," He says. "Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations... and, lo, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* [age]" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Think of it; an exorcist of our time spends long grueling hours, which may expand into days and weeks, trying to expel a single demonic spirit. He risks injury and emotional impairment during the ordeal. And when it is over, he may require some weeks in recovering from the incredibly demanding experience, But Jesus, who cast out more demons than any exorcist ever has, did not need long hours to accomplish the task. He required no period of recovery, no therapy, once a demon was cast out. He employed no rituals, no special incantations. A single command—"Come out!"—brought *instant* results, On one occasion, a whole *legion* of demons fled at His command.

What *power!* And that same power provides comfort and assurance to Christ's followers today—for the Christ who with but a single command cast out a multitude of evil spirits is the same Christ who promises, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." To have Him with us, all we need do is follow Him; walk down the path He carved; follow the way of life He proclaimed.

In the Scriptures, both Christ and the path He carved are called "the Way" (John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 24:14), And when it comes to guarding the door of your mind, there's no better way.

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This literature is published by the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. Incorporated in 1978, the CGI has ministers and congregations scattered throughout the United States and Canada. We also have churches in Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia.

The CGI's mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world (Matthew 28:19). We are blessed with four basic tools to accomplish this:

- 1. Personal and local church evangelism.*
- 2. Television and radio broadcasting.*
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