

## "Demons" in Scripture

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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This study examines the subject of demons in Scripture. The approach will be roughly "chronological," according to the following outline:

- Introduction
- I. Demons in the Old Testament Scriptures
- II. Demons in the ministry of the Christ
  - A. The temptation of the Christ
  - B. The Christ's teachings on demons
    - Judas' betrayal
  - C. Exorcisms by the Christ [and his disciples]
    - Accusations about Jesus' exorcisms and his claims
- III. Demons in the first century church
  - A. Teachings in *Acts* and the epistles
  - B. Teachings in *Revelation*

Demons, like God's angels, are created ontological beings in Scripture, and in fact, are actually "angels" [Mt 25.41; Rev 12.7–9 *cf.* 2Cor 12.7]. There is general agreement demons are angels who fell away from God by their own volition only to suffer permanent separation from God forever [2Pet 2.4; Jude 6].

However, this understanding of what demons are is not universal. Some have held that "demons are the spirits of the wicked dead."<sup>2</sup> Some early writers<sup>3</sup> seem to express this view, *e.g.*, the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, writing of the Jewish wars:

"Yet, after all this pains in getting, it is only valuable on account of one virtue it hath, that if it be only brought to sick persons, it quickly drives away *those called demons, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive,*<sup>4</sup> and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them." [War 7.6.3.185, emphasis mine]

However, Josephus also seems to make a distinction between *evil spirits* and *demons*:

"...do no mischief to a man who, in the first place, hath done us the greatest kindness of preserving thee; for when *an evil spirit and demons had seized upon thee, he cast them out,* and procured rest to thy soul from their incursions..." [Ant. 6.11.2.211, emphasis mine].

Philo, the first century Jewish writer, is also called upon to support this view, however, I know of no clear passage that supports this appeal. In fact, Philo uses the terms "angel" and "demon" interchangeably:

"Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels [in reference to Gen 6.2, SS]; and they are souls hovering in the air. [On the Giants 2.6] Now philosophers in general are wont to call these demons, but the sacred scripture calls them angels, using a name more in accordance with nature." [On Dreams 1.22.141]

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<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations used throughout this study include: GNT, Greek New Testament; HMT, Hebrew Masoretic Text; LXX, Greek Septuagint; and the standard English translations: NASB, NIV, NIV11, RSV, NRSV, KJV, NKJV, ASV, NAB, JB, NEB.

<sup>2</sup>Victor Knowles, *Angels and Demons: Agents of God & Satan...A Biblical Study*, College Press, Joplin Missouri, 1994, p. 189. Knowles offers various arguments in support of this view, but none of them are convincing [189–205]. He also makes a distinction between "fallen angels" and "demons" and makes the strange assertion that demons, unlike angels, are *not* created beings [202]. However, if demons are the spirits of wicked dead men, they must be part of the created order.

<sup>3</sup>Including Pagan, Jewish, and early Christian writers.

<sup>4</sup>The Greek [ταῦτα δὲ πονηρῶν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων πνεύματα τοῖς ζῶσιν εισδύμενα] can be translated "those called demons, these are spirits of wicked *men* entering the living," which is not as vague as the Whiston translation: "spirits of *the wicked*."

The second century Christian author, Justin Martyr, did appear to suggest the spirits of dead are what possessed at least *some* that were called "demoniacs":

"...let these persuade you that even after death souls are in a state of sensation; and those who are seized and cast about by the spirits of the dead, whom all call demoniacs or madmen" [First Apology 13]

If his reference is to the spirits of the wicked dead, as is presumably the case, he elsewhere makes a distinction between them and demons:

"And now we, who believe on our Lord Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we exorcise all demons and evil spirits, have them subjected to us." [Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew 76]

This view has gained relatively little acceptance, nevertheless, it is generally agreed that Israel's view of demons—as well as Satan—grew increasingly complex through the centuries, until it was most fully developed by the time of Christ. This seems apparent by the infrequent references to demons in the Hebrew Scriptures and the frequent occurrences in the first century Greek Scriptures.

As stated above, "angels" were part of the created order. There is no evidence they preexisted creation. The only evidence of preexistence is for the Godhead [Gen 1.1, 26–27; Jn 1.1–18; Col 2.8–9], to whom is attributed the creation of *all* things "both in the heavens and on earth, visible and *invisible*..." which would include angels by implication [Col 1.15–17]. Ps 148.1–5 calls for all those in the heavens—including "his angels" [מַלְאָכָיו]—to "Praise the Lord [יהוה]...For He commanded and they were *created* [נִבְרָאוּ]." Some have suggested angels were present *while* the world was being created, thus, their creation preceded that of the world, based on Job 38.4–7. However, there are problems with this view. (1) Stars are also mentioned as present and they were created on the 4<sup>th</sup> day [Gen 1.16]. There is no need to suppose a strict chronology of any sort here, particularly as the language is poetic. (2) The Hebrew text of Job 38.7 does not refer to "angels" [מַלְאָכָיו] as in the NIV, but rather "sons of God" [בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים] as in the NASB [and most other translations]. Nevertheless, based on Job 1.6; 2.1 [the only other occurrences of the phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים in Job] and Gen 6.2 [מַלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם], later Jewish tradition saw these as *fallen* angels [1En 6.1ff; Philo, On the Giants 6; Jub 4.15; 5.1f; T. Reub 5.6; Josephus, Ant 1.73]. Likewise, the LXX translated them as οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ in Job 1.6; 2.1 and πάντες ἄγγελοι μου ["all my angels"] in Job 38.7.<sup>5</sup>

The phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים ["sons of God"] and the English phrase "*host* of heaven" ["starry *host*"]—generally the single Hebrew term צְבָא ["army"]—especially in Ps 148.2 [where it may be parallel to מַלְאָכָיו], both at least include "angels," if not exclusively, when one considers no other supernatural heavenly beings are ever described with any detail [as angels].<sup>6</sup> If "*host* of heaven" are angels, Neh 9.6 offers another passage referencing the creation of "angels."

The terminology associated with "*fallen* angels" [demons] is more extensive than that associated with the "*good* angels." Although the relevant terms are dealt with below, particularly as they first appear, a brief summary is helpful here.

Both the Hebrew [mal'āk] and Greek [ἄγγελος] terms translated "angel," essentially denote functions ["messenger"], and can refer equally to human or "angelic" beings. Likewise, some of the relevant terms associated with "the world forces of this darkness...the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" [Eph 6.10] also deal essentially with functions [e.g., "devil" (διάβολος) means "slanderer," Satan (שָׂטָן, σατανᾶς) means "adversary" or "accuser"].

There are only two key terms associated with demons and Satan in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>7</sup> The term for "demon" is רָשָׁע [šēd] and occurs only two times [Dt 32.17; Ps 106.37].<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>However, in Gen 6.2 the LXX has οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>6</sup>However, see the discussion on [Cherubim and Seraphim](#) in my "[Angels](#)" in *Scripture*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>7</sup>Although it should be noted, there is no direct connection made in the Hebrew Scriptures between demons and Satan.

<sup>8</sup>Some see a second class of "demons" in רָשָׁע [šēd] found in Lev 17.7; 2Chron 11.15; Is 13.21; 34.14, translated variously as "goat demons [idols]," "hairy goats," "shaggy goats," or "satyrs." Also, "the night monster [creature]" [לִילִית, "Lilith" (לִילִית, ly), screech owl] of Is 34.14 and "the scapegoat" [אֲזָזֵל, 'aza'zel, "Azazel"] of Lev 16.8, 10, 26 are viewed by some as specific individual demons, in the latter case "'Azazel' has been understood to refer to the goat itself or to a place in the wilderness, most interpreters see Azazel as the name of a particular wilderness demon to whom the goat is dedicated (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* [1971] 5: 1524)." Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "DEMONS," *AYBD*, 2:139. McLean also references other highly speculative "demons" from Scripture.

The Greek term for "demon" [δαίμόνιον] occurs 7 times in the LXX [Scriptures], including the two where שָׂטָן occurs. The Hebrew term for "Satan" is שָׂטָן and it occurs in reference to "Satan" 19 times [Zech 3.1–2; 1Chron 21.1; Job 1.6–9, 12; 2.1–4, 6–7], and with one exception [1Chron 21.1], it is articular. In those same passages, the LXX translates שָׂטָן with διάβολος ["devil"], also usually with the article. The related phrase "evil spirit" [רוּחַ רָעִים]<sup>9</sup> occurs six times, which the LXX translates πνεῦμα πονηρὸν [Judg 9.23; 1Sam 16.14–16, 23; 19.9].

The references in the Greek New Testament are much more abundant. Nevertheless, the primary terms are the same as found in the LXX. The term for "demon" is δαίμόνιον, and it [along with relevant cognates δαιμονίζομαι, δαιμονιώδης, δαίμων] occurs 69 times. The term for "Satan" [σατανᾶς] occurs 33 times, and it is generally articular. The term for "devil" [διάβολος] occurs 37 times, and it too is generally articular. The phrase "evil spirit(s)" [πνεῦμα πονηρὸν], or some similar idea, occurs 8 times [Mt 12.45; Lk 7.21; 8.2; 11.26; Acts 19.12–13, 15–16]. The more frequent phrase "unclean spirit(s)" [ἀκάθαρτον πνεῦμα] occurs ca. 23 times [cf. Zech 13.2 for the only occurrence in the LXX; אֲרָמְסֵי הַרוּחַ in Hebrew].

## I. Demons in the Old Testament Scriptures

Evil is present from the very beginning of the human experience in Gen 3.<sup>10</sup> Serpents [שָׁחָדָי (nachash),<sup>11</sup> ὄφις] were among the lowliest of God's creatures.<sup>12</sup> Their creeping, slinking movement upon the ground puts them at the farthest point from the pure animals that could be offered in sacrifice. Satan as a serpent—or at least *using* the serpent as an instrument for evil<sup>13</sup>—effectively opens the grand scheme of God's redemption by provoking the fall of humanity [Gen 3], but he finds himself in utter defeat by the end of God's revealed scheme of redemption [Rev 20].

From this episode, we learn that Satan is very חָרֵף [3.1, ἄριμος, crafty, shrewd, sensible, Gr. φρόνιμος (wise) cf. Mt 10.16].<sup>14</sup> He also, especially in contrast to other creatures, has knowledge of divine issues, and he is capable of communicating them [through speech] to the humans.

The narrative clearly demonstrates his evil intent in attempting [successfully] to get the humans to fall into sin. He is, from the beginning of the reader's encounter with him, a murderer and a liar [Gen 3.4 cf. Jn 8.44].<sup>15</sup> However, exactly *when* he chose evil himself is unclear. As part of God's creation, initially he was "good" [1.31].

For his part in the fall of humanity, he is not only relegated to the lowliest of all creatures,<sup>16</sup> but is promised ultimate destruction by the woman's "seed," after what appears to be a prolonged conflict between her seed and his [3.14–15 cf. Rev 12].

The word "demon" appears in only two Old Testament passages, Dt 32.15–17 and Ps 106.35–38. Dt 32.17 is the first of the rare occurrences of שָׂטָן [shed] for "demons" [as also in Ps

<sup>9</sup>Also רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעִים ["evil spirit from God] and רִיחַ יְהוָה רָעִים ["evil spirit from Yahweh"].

<sup>10</sup>Although there is no direct mention of Satan, the devil, or demons in Gen 3, other passages suggest the serpent was Satan [Rev 12.9; 20.2 cf. 2Cor 11.3, 14]. Nevertheless, Satan does not appear in a *supernatural* form, but a *natural* form, as do angels, yet always in human form and nothing comparable to the lowly snake. Satan's servants are sometimes referred to as serpent-like creatures [Mt 3.7; 12.34; 23.33].

<sup>11</sup>The verb form means "to practice divination" [Gen 30.27; 44.5, 15; Lev 19.26; Nun 21.6–9; Dt 18.10; *et al.*]; in *Daniel* alone the noun means "bronze," which is likely due to Aramaic influence [2.32, 35, 39, 45; 4.15, 23; 5.4, 23; 7.19 cf. Moses' "bronze serpent" (נֶחֱשֶׁת נְחָשִׁית, *nechoshet nechash*) in Num 21.4–9], but the general use of the noun means "serpent" [Gen 49.17; Ex 4.3; 7.15; *et al.*].

<sup>12</sup>Satan is not a dualistic counterpart to Yahweh.

<sup>13</sup>The serpent of Gen 3 may be Paul's allusion in Rom 16.20 ["The God of peace will soon *crush* (συντρίβω) Satan under your feet"]. The Hebrew word in Gen 3.15 [שָׁחָדָי] translated "crush" or "bruise" is also in Job 9.17, translated in the LXX as ἐκτρίβω, the same root used by Paul. The only other occurrence of the Hebrew is in Ps 139.11, but translated differently by the LXX [καταπατέω, to trample on, oppress]. Paul's reference is likely to the fall of Jerusalem and Judaism in AD70 thereby bringing an end to Judaizing doctrinal problems and the Jewish persecution plaguing the church.

<sup>14</sup>There is a definite word play here, for the word for "naked" in 2.25 is עָרְוָה [ἑρῶ, a plural of the same adjective].

<sup>15</sup>Jesus' declaration that Satan "was a *murderer* from the beginning" may be a reference to the fact that Satan brought death into the world and seeks to deprive humanity of life [Rom 5.12; Heb 2.14]. In contrast, Jesus is the one who brought life into the world in both the creation and the recreation [Jn 1.1–4; Col 1.15–17; Jn 3.15; 8.12; 10.10, *etc.*].

<sup>16</sup>Once *craftier* than all the creatures, he now is *curse*d, crawling on his belly below them [characteristic of *unclean* animals, Lev 11.42], eating dust, which is characteristic of an enemy's humiliation [Ps 72.9; Is 49.23; Mic 7.17].

106.37].<sup>17</sup> The LXX translates δαϊμόνιον in these same two passages as well as a few other passages [Ps 91.6; 96.5; Is 13.21; 34.14; 65.3] not reflected in the HMT. Dt 32.17 and Ps 106.37 are discussing the abominable practice of Israel in child sacrifice to the "gods" ["idols"] of the foreign nations. Deuteronomy effectively equates the demons [דִּמּוֹן, *aššēdīm*] to the "gods" [עֲלֵה־אֱלֹהִים] of the foreign nations, the Psalm equates them to their "idols" [עֲבָבִים, *ʿabbê*].

In 1Cor 10.14–22 Paul commands his readers, φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας ["flee from idolatry"] in the context of their participation in "the Lord's table" [21, τραπέζης κυρίου *cf.* Mal 1.7], which amounted to a sharing of the sacrifice of Christ. He recalled the participation of Israelites [τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα] in their eating of part of their sacrifices [1Cor 9.13; Lev 7.15; 8.31; Dt 12.17–18] as κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ["partners in the alter"], thus making them "a part of the sacrificial system and worship of God."<sup>18</sup> The pagans<sup>19</sup> likewise offered up sacrifices to their "gods"—idols, which of course were no gods; idols are nothing.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, participation in their cultic rituals made them a part of the worship of demons, the true reality behind their idols. When Israel so participated, they too worshipped demons and rejected Yahweh [Dt 32.17].

Whether Jewish, Christian, or Pagan, the material sacrifices and elements of the ritual are, in and of themselves, nothing.<sup>21</sup> However, the realities behind each, God or demons, was the issue. Any association of Paul's readers—and certainly Israelites before them—with pagan worship put them in the position of worshipping demons, consciously or not.

It is safe to say, the Israelites and Christians did not view themselves as sacrificing to demons—whatever their understanding may have been of such creatures.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Moses, the Psalmist, and Paul viewed sacrificing to other "gods" ["idols"] as sacrificing to demons, and even though the "gods" and "idols" were not real, the force of evil behind them was very real.

Job 1.1–12; 2.1–7, along with Zech 3.1–5, offer the most revealing and intriguing Old Testament passages about satanic [demonic] activity. The Heb. term for "Satan" [שָׂטָן] occurs 33 times in the HMT generally meaning "accuser (in a legal sense), adversary," often as *human* accusers or adversaries [Num 22.22, 32; 1Sam 29.4; 2Sam 19.22 (23HMT); 1Kings 5.4 (18HMT); 11.14, 23, 25; Ps 38.20 (21); 71.13; 109.4, 6, 20, 29]. The remaining occurrences refer to *Satan* [Zech 3.1–2; Job 1.6–9, 12; 2.1–4, 6–7; 1Chron 21.1.<sup>23</sup> In each of these passages the LXX translated שָׂטָן with διάβολος, as well as in Ps 109.6 (108.6LXX); Esther 7.4; 8.1 where a *human* adversary is intended].<sup>24</sup>

"Sons of God" [in the HMT] may be heavenly beings neither human nor divine, but their rank appears to be "superhuman." The phrase "sons of" in Hebrew referred to members of a group belonging or adhering to, or in some way participating in the nature of, their "father" [e.g., "sons of the prophets," (2Kings 2.3–7); "sons of light" (Jn 12.36)]. These heavenly beings may be paralleled in Job 38.7 with "the morning stars," identified with the "host of heaven" in 1 Kings 22.19 and called simply "gods" in Ps 82.1, 6 [*cf.* Gen 6.2, 4; Dan 3.25]. The same figures are also known as "messengers, angels" or the "servants" of God [Job 4.18]. Later Jewish and Christian writings understood these as "angels" [*cf.* Job 1.6; 2.1, οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, in the LXX].

If they are angels—a likely possibility—they may be called "sons of God" in contrast to their fellow angel, "the accuser" [שָׂטָן], who is clearly stated as being "among them" or "in their

<sup>17</sup>Generally, the word means "destruction, violence, ruin" [Is 13.6; 16.4; 60.18; Jer 6.7; Ezek 45.9; Hos 7.3; Joel 1.15; *et al.*], or "[female] breasts" [Gen 49.25; Is 28.9; 66.11; Ezek 16.7; Hos 2.2; Joel 2.16; *et al.*].

<sup>18</sup>W. Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians* (EBC 10; ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), n.p.

<sup>19</sup>The word "Gentiles" [ἔθνος] is not in the text; it is only implied, but see 1Cor 1,23; 5.1.

<sup>20</sup>See Is 44.12–20; 45.20–25; 46.1–11.

<sup>21</sup>The fruit of the vine and the bread are not literally the blood and body of Christ, any more than the animal sacrifices of Israel were anything other than natural animals or the idols of the pagans were anything other than hand-made sculptures.

<sup>22</sup>The lack of reference to demons in the OT suggests the Israelites had very little understanding. Although there is an increase in the occurrence of δαϊμόνιον and δαίμων in the LXX [18 hits, including later apocryphal material] meaning "demon," "devil," or "evil spirit," this appears to be a later development. See, for example, Tobias 3.8, 17; 6.8, 15–17; 8.3; Ode 2.17; Baruch 4.7, 35. At the same time, worshipping or sacrificing to the foreign "gods" or "idols" was perceived as sacrificing to "demons." "For all the gods of the heathen are *devils*" [δαϊμόνιον, Heb. "idols"] [Ps 96.5(95.5LXX)]; "they offer sacrifices in gardens, and burn incense on bricks to *devils* [δαϊμόνιον], which exist not" [Heb. omits all following "burning incense on bricks"] [Is 65.3]; "you provoked him that made you by sacrificing unto *devils* and not to God" [Baruch 4.7].

<sup>23</sup>In each of these occurrences, save 1Chron 21.1, שָׂטָן is articular, which could be read simply as "the accuser."

<sup>24</sup>Σατανᾶς occurs only one time in LXX at Sir 21.27 in reference to a human *adversary*; likewise σαταν occurs only one time in LXX at 1K 11.14 also as a human *adversary*.

midst."<sup>25</sup> If so, all the heavenly creatures—holy and evil—are in the presence of God, and at least "the accuser" interacts with God.<sup>26</sup>

Although this accuser ends up accusing Job of a superficial faith based on his blessings, he does not come forth as a prosecutor—his normal role, especially in later development—accusing Job *per se*. God brings up Job, and offers him as an example of righteousness to which Satan responds with an accusation and challenge—"the accuser" becomes Job's accuser [Job 16.9], and indirectly, God's accuser. In addition, Satan gives the impression he has been roaming about perhaps looking for an opportunity to "accuse," which is also implied in God's offering of Job, suggesting correspondence to the Satan of 1Pet 5.8. Whatever the case, it must be recognized that "the accuser" does nothing without God's *approval* and *authorization*. God is in total control throughout the story. In this sense, "the accuser" is not perceived as God's accuser, or even his enemy directly, but only through Job. In effect, he is working for God in this whole narrative.<sup>27</sup> In 2.1ff he returns "to present himself before the LORD" apparently for the purpose of giving a report on his mission assigned in 1.6ff.<sup>28</sup>

In Zech 3.1–5, as always, save in 1Chron 21.1, שָׂטָן is articular, "the accuser." For the first time "the accuser" is directly defined in his most basic role: "the accuser [שָׂטָן] standing at his [Joshua's] right side to *accuse* [שָׂטָן] him [Joshua]." Even in Yahweh's rebuke of "the accuser," he addresses him with the article: "Yahweh rebuke you, the accuser!" Again, rather than a *personal name*, "the accuser" appears as a *title*, with specific reference to his *function*. It is not until the second century BC that this character takes the sense of a personal devilish opponent of God.

As in the case with Job, Satan appears before God as an accuser. Yahweh speaks directly to Satan. At least one other angel, possibly more [3.4], is also present, as is Zechariah himself [3.5]. In a quasi-legal scene, the accuser is positioned at the accused right side: "Appoint a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand" [Ps 109.6]. "Joshua" represents Israel, the people of God, whom Satan always opposes [Job 1–2; Rev 12.10]. His accusations have and will fall, frustrating his efforts to have God reject his people.

In 1Chron 21.1–8 [*cf.* 2Sam 24.1ff] the anarthrous שָׂטָן, perhaps for the only time in the OT, could be a proper name, although it is doubtful it had developed as such by this time. Nevertheless, "the accuser" goes beyond accusing God's people to "moving, inciting, misleading, persuading" [שָׂטָן] them to do something displeasing to their God.<sup>29</sup> This is the same word used in Job 2.3 when God charged Satan: "you *incited* me against him [Job] to ruin him without cause." More specifically, it is the word used in the parallel passage 2Sam 24.1, which states God himself, "*incited* David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'" Perhaps it was the Chronicler's piety that prohibited him from attributing directly to God persuasion [of David] to do evil, motivating him to insert the role of Satan. However, such would not be necessary, as is clear from Joab's comments that the responsibility rested with David's free will choice. Not only so, there are similarities with the Job account of Satan, with God's authorization [and only so], attempting to incite Job to curse God, although without success. In David's case, Satan was successful in his mission, but only in-so-much as he carried out "the anger of the LORD...against Israel" [2Sam 24.1], which was based on her previous sins, not the numbering *per se*.<sup>30</sup>

The Psalmist in 78.49 writes of "a band of *destroying* angels," [lit. "evil, bad" (רָעָה) translated "evil" (πονηρός) in LXX (77.49)]. This is a reference to God's judgment on Egypt in preparation of his deliverance of Israel before the exodus. In particular, this is in reference to the death of the firstborn [78.49–51 *cf.* Ex 12.13, 23; 2Sam 24.16]. Thus, most English translations

<sup>25</sup>It is possible "the accuser" is still numbered among "the sons of God" at this point. In Job 2.1 he is not only represented as "among the sons of God," but as also there "to present himself before the LORD" as do "the sons of God" [*cf.* 1.6]. The articular noun [שָׂטָן, as throughout Job] most likely defines the angel's *function*, rather than presenting a *proper name*, which does not occur until the second century BC. Although the NT idea of Satan is likely rooted in this story, the same developed idea of Satan is likely not present in the story. Nevertheless, "the accuser" can likely be none other than the one eventually identified as "Satan."

<sup>26</sup>This may simply be a rhetorical device to carry the story along. On any given day when the heavenly creatures presented themselves to God, God may have inquired of one of them.

<sup>27</sup>A close OT analogy is in 1Kings 22.19–23, with a contrasting purpose and result.

<sup>28</sup>That he continued to "roam about" may have been an effort to find others to bring down having failed to do so with Job.

<sup>29</sup>For the word "incite, etc." see also Josh 15.18; Judg 1.14; 2Chron 18.2.

<sup>30</sup>The numbering of Israel, though sinful in this case, was not unlawful *per se* [*cf.* Ex 30.11–16].

have "*destroying* angels" rather than "*evil* angels" [as in the KJV],<sup>31</sup> taking "evil" as a metaphor for "destruction, disaster" [cf. Is 47.11; Jer 4.6]. This is, therefore, not likely a reference to "demons."

There is hardly enough information in the Old Testament to suggest a development of Hebrew "demonology" *per se*. The passages concerning ⲓⲡⲩⲛⲁ ["the accuser"], while reflecting a strong possibility of Satanic recognition, are likewise neither frequent enough nor developed enough to reflect a clear Hebrew concept. Certainly, by the first century AD Christian documents, a "demonology" [including Satan] had developed

## II. Demons in the ministry of the Christ

### A. The temptation of the Christ

The accounts of Jesus' temptation are in Mt 4.1–11; Mk 1.12–13; Lk 4.1–13. By the first century, "the devil" [ὁ διάβολος, lit. "the slanderer"],<sup>32</sup> "the Satan" [ὁ σατανᾶς, lit. "the accuser"],<sup>33</sup> had acquired a distinct individual personality. In his temptation, Jesus addressed ὁ διάβολος by name, σατανᾶ [anarthrously, as expected in the *vocative*, Mt 4.10 cf. the metaphorical use in Mt 16.23; Mk 8.33].<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Satan is presented in his primary role as "the tempter" [n. ὁ πειράζων, v. πειράζω, Mt 4.1, 3; Mk 1.13; Lk 4.2, 13; 1Cor 7.5; 1Thess 3.5], which *Matthew* favors over ὁ διάβολος as in *Luke* for the temptation pericopes.<sup>35</sup>

The narrative of Jesus' temptation presents Satan as having true ontology; he is not a mere undefined impersonal "force." In some form, he presented himself to Jesus enabling direct communication as between two people. The encounter is reminiscent of encounters between [good] angels, appearing as humans, and humans through out Israel's history. However, nothing is recorded of the actual form Satan took, but it is not above reason to assume he took a human form. Nevertheless, there was no effort on Satan's part to disguise himself, and Jesus did not doubt who he was.

Regardless of his form, Satan was, and is, not an *omniscient* being, like God. Satan is bound by the space-time continuum, as is any other created being. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume the temptation of every human, or even most of them, is the handiwork of Satan himself. More than likely, the subjects behind the temptations of most individuals are Satan's demons. The GNT, particularly the gospel accounts, may highlight this reality by the encounters of individuals with demons, and not Satan himself. In Jesus' case, however, it would likely take, at least in the mind of Satan, a confrontation by the leader of the demons, to succeed against the Son of God. Of course, his confrontation fails. This will also be the case when Jesus confronts, or is confronted by, demons; Jesus is always victorious.

It is clear Satan is familiar with Scripture, although he misinterprets it—no doubt intentionally—to suit his purpose [Mt 4.4–6; Lk 4.9–11].

As in the case of Job, Satan cannot penetrate the faith of Jesus, even though he attacks him when he is most vulnerable [Mt 4.2–3; Lk 4.2–3].<sup>36</sup> He can tempt, but he cannot force the object of his attack to fall. It appears Satan had some kind of control over Jesus in his weakened state—"the devil *took him* into the holy city; and he *had him stand* on the pinnacles of the temple"

<sup>31</sup>NKJV has "angels of destruction."

<sup>32</sup>The term διάβολος occurs 37 times in the GNT. Outside of the temptation of Jesus pericopes in the Synoptics, it occurs only in Mt 13.39; 25.41; Lk 8.12, and only on the lips of Jesus. In *John* it occurs only three times, twice on the lips of Jesus [6.70; 8.44] and once in John's narrative [13.2]. Luke uses it again twice in Acts 10.38; 13.10. Paul uses the term eight times, six of which are in the Pastorals, two in *Ephesians*. The remaining thirteen uses distribute throughout the general epistles and *Revelation*.

<sup>33</sup>The term σατανᾶς occurs 36 times in the GNT. Again, as with διάβολος in the Synoptics, it generally occurs on the lips of Jesus [Mt 12.26; 16.23; Mk 3.23, 36; 4.15; Lk 10.18; 11.18; *et al.*]. Mark, who never uses διάβολος, uses σατανᾶς the most, six times. John uses it only in 13.27. The remainder distribute throughout the epistles, occurring most frequently in *Revelation*, eight times.

<sup>34</sup>Generally, σατανᾶς is \*articular and so understood in the traditional sense, "the adversary."

<sup>35</sup>These are the only passages in the GNT where Satan is directly associated with his role as "the tempter." The book of *Job* presents "the accuser" [ⲓⲡⲩⲛⲁ] effectively in this role, even though the words are not used [Job 1–2]. The reader might infer from the many other references to temptation that Satan, or at least his "angels" [Mt 25.41], are the forces behind the temptations. Nevertheless, James indicates that the ultimate cause of succumbing to temptations, regardless of the subject behind them, is the selfish desire of the one tempted [Jam 1.12–15].

<sup>36</sup>Both Luke and Mark indicate the devil was tempting Jesus all during his fasting of forty days, but the Synoptics all make it clear he took advantage of Jesus' weakened state following the fast. It was in this weakened state all of the recorded challenges are given to Jesus.

[Mt 4.5; Lk 4.5]. However, the Holy Spirit led Jesus<sup>37</sup> into the arena of confrontation, even as he was sovereignly active throughout his life and ministry [Mt 4.1; Lk 4.1; Mk 1.12].<sup>38</sup> God is very much in control as in Job's case, allowing Satan to work only within the parameters he [God] determines.<sup>39</sup>

Satan's statement, "If you are the Son of God" [Mt 4.3, 6; Lk 4.3, 9] is likely not an expression of his own doubt in Jesus' divine sonship.<sup>40</sup> The context suggests otherwise—Satan is attempting to get Jesus to fail precisely because he is the Son of God. He was not trying to get Jesus to doubt who he was, but rather he was trying to get him to reflect on what it meant to be the Son of God—it meant being able to exercise powers rightly his, sacrificed for the purpose of his ministry, to satisfy his needs. It may be better to understand "if" as "since," from Satan's perspective.

The extent of Satan's power and influence in this world is not to be denied; his claim in Mt 4.8–9; Lk 4.5–7 was likely valid. Wherever evil exists, Satan's influence exists, and evil exists throughout the fabric of humanity [Jn 12.31; 14.30; 16.11; Eph 2.1–3]. In this sense, all of humanity is indebted to Satan. By offering Jesus the kingdoms of this world, Satan knows acceptance of such an offer amounts to worship of him. This is not a call to "satanic worship" *per se*, as thought of in modern culture, but it is nevertheless the same in essence. Idolatry has never been limited to bowing down before hand crafted statues, or adhering to theologies that incorporate other gods,<sup>41</sup> but rather in placing anything before the one true God of creation, which includes rejecting his word manifested in sin of every sort [1Sam 15.23; Col 3.5].

When Satan finishes his unsuccessful attempts at getting Jesus to sin, Matthew writes only that, "the devil left him" [4.11]. However, Luke adds "he left him *until an opportune time*" [4.13]. The most "opportune time" for Satan will be the passion of Christ when he heightened his activity against Jesus and no doubt tasted victory with certainty [Lk 22.3, 31, 53].

## B. The Christ's teachings on demons

In the parable of the sower [Mt 13.18–23; Mk 4.13–20; Lk 8.11–15],<sup>42</sup> Jesus attributed the failure of the word of God to take root in some people because "the birds came and ate them [*i.e.*, the seeds, meaning the word] up" [Mt 13.4; Mk 4.4; Lk 8.5<sup>43</sup>]. The metaphor of birds eating the seeds is fitting. In his explanation of the parable, Jesus revealed the metaphor of "birds" meant "the evil one" [ὁ πονηρός, Mt 13.19],<sup>44</sup> "Satan" [ὁ σατανᾶς, Mk 4.15], and "the devil" [ὁ διάβολος, Lk 8.12]—the explanation of Satan removing the word of God from some people's lives is also fitting.

How Satan was able to take the word away, and whether or not he could have accomplished it without the subject's willingness is not clear. In the two following cases, Jesus provides a bit more explanation as to why the word did not remain in the subject. In the second case, it did not take root, and was only temporarily received until persecution arose, because of the word [Mt 13.21; Mk 4.17; Lk 8.13]. In the third case, it was choked out by the desires and worries of this world [Mt 13.22; Mk 4.18–19; Lk 8.14]. In the first case, the explanation is less specific: the subject "does not understand it" [*i.e.*, the word of God]. Jesus' previous explanation for misunderstanding is rooted in the subject's unwillingness [dullness of heart, deafened ears, closed eyes] to understand [Mt 13.10–15; Mk 4.10–25; Lk 8.9–10]. Satan is also likely behind the persecution in the second case and the materialism of the third case—he takes every opportunity available. The parable demonstrates one of his most fundamental objectives is foiling the word of

<sup>37</sup>"Luke prefers ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, 'in the Spirit,' to Matthew's ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος, 'by the Spirit.' (ἐν + dative can be equivalent to ὑπὸ + accusative but not after a passive verb: ἐν here could be 'by means of' but not 'by.'" Nolland, John, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 35A, Luke 1–9:20, p. 178.

<sup>38</sup>Similarly, God led the Israelites into the wilderness for testing [Dt 8.2].

<sup>39</sup>1Cor 10.13 suggests God continues to determine the parameters of allowable temptation. However, as Jam 1.12–15 also demonstrates, temptation is only effective as far as the one being tempted allows it.

<sup>40</sup>It is unlikely Satan did not have knowledge of Jesus' divine sonship even his fellow demons, his own subjects [Mt 9.34; 12.24], possessed [Mk 1.4].

<sup>41</sup>Distinctions between "gods" and "idols" lack any significance. They both stand in direct contrast to the one God of Israel [Lev 19.4; 1Chron 16.26; Ps 96.5; Is 42.17]. In Judaism, to worship "idols" or "gods" was, in effect, the worship of demons [Dt 32.15–17; Ps 106.35–38].

<sup>42</sup>Mk 4.13 suggests understanding the parable of the sower is the key to understanding all the parables: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?'"

<sup>43</sup>Luke adds, "the birds *of the air* [lit. of the heaven]."

<sup>44</sup>For ὁ πονηρός used as reference to the devil, see also Mt 5.37; 6.13; 13.38; Jn 17.15; Eph 6.16; 2Thess 3.3; 1Jn 2.13–14; 5.18–19.

God in people's lives, but Satan must work together with the subject—*i.e.*, the subject must be willing—to accomplish his goals.<sup>45</sup>

Only *Matthew* has the parable of the tares [a weed resembling wheat; NIV, "weeds"; 13.24–30, 36–39]. In Jesus' private explanation of the parable to his disciples, he refers to the "tares" in the field as οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ ["the sons of the evil one"], who is "the devil."<sup>46</sup>

The picture is clearly one of judgment.<sup>47</sup> It is also clear, those who are the products of the labors of "the devil"<sup>48</sup> [his "sons"] will be destroyed by God, while those who are the products of the labors of "the Son of Man," οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ["the sons of the kingdom"], will be victorious.

At least one objective of the devil is to infiltrate evil among the good with the intention of destroying the good. He was well aware of the potential danger of mixing "tares" and "wheat" [Mt 13.24–30]:<sup>49</sup>

"The fields were normally weeded in the spring, but if the weeds were discovered too late—as here—one would risk uprooting the wheat with them; the master does not want to risk his wheat. Once they were fully grown, however, harvesters could cut the wheat just below the head, leaving the shorter tares to be cut separately."<sup>50</sup>

"The roots of darnel [weedy rye grass with poisonous seeds, which look very much like wheat in early stages – SS] are stronger and deeper than those of wheat, so that the removal of one would often result in the uprooting of the other."<sup>51</sup>

God will ultimately and completely thwart the objectives of the devil. Nevertheless, the devil will at least attempt to influence humanity until the harvest, for God will not permit a premature gathering [13.28–29]. Whatever a premature gathering actually represents, it would destroy many of the saints who are struggling against the influence of "the sons of the devil." Once again however, the passage depicts the sovereignty of God and the limitations of Satan.

The confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is "the Christ, the son of the living God" [Mt 16.16]<sup>52</sup> is a watershed in each of the synoptics. Only Matthew and Mark have the follow up rebuke of the Lord by Peter when Jesus prophesied of his coming passion [Mt 16.21–23; Mk 8.31–33]. Jesus' response to Peter's rebuke in both accounts is essentially the same: ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ["Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's," Mt 16.23; Mk 8.33].<sup>53</sup>

By opposing Jesus' passion, Peter is taking a position identical to Satan's, a position essentially inspired by Satan, a position diametrically opposed to the will of God. Jesus' response here is very similar to that in his temptation by the devil, ὑπάγε, σατανᾶ ["Go away Satan," Mt 4.10]. By adding "behind me," he says essentially, "Get out of my way Peter, with that attitude you have become an obstacle to me."<sup>54</sup> This may also be understood as a call to Peter to get back in

<sup>45</sup>Through out the parable, it is not the impotence of the word, but rather the opposition of Satan and the willingness of the subject [bad, a opposed to good, soil] that bring the failure of the word to produce fruit—"that they may not believe and be saved" [Lk 8.12].

<sup>46</sup>Kinship terminology is also used of those who follow "the enemy" of God in Jn 8.44; Acts 13.10; 1Jn 3.10, but it is far less frequent as for those who follow God.

<sup>47</sup>Whether it is the judgment on Jerusalem [AD 70, *cf.* Mt 8.11–12] or the final judgment at the end time is not germane to this study. Thus, "the field," which is "the world" [ὁ κόσμος, 13.38] might be understood as "the world" of Israel before its fall or the entire world at the end of time. Regardless, it is likely not the church as traditionally understood; among many other arguments, it cannot be said the true church of God has "sons of the evil one" within it. That "the world" is the church is heavily influenced by the misconceived idea the "God's [Jesus'] kingdom" and the church are equivalent.

<sup>48</sup>Referred to as "an enemy man" [ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος] in the parable [13.28]; *i.e.*, "the enemy" [ὁ ἐχθρὸς] in 13.39.

<sup>49</sup>Satan, no doubt, understood the principle, "Bad company corrupts good morals"—a popular proverb by the first century—as did the Greek playwrights [possibly Menander, cited here by Paul] and the Jewish wisdom teachers [1Cor 15.33 *cf.* Pr 13.20; 14.7; 28.7]. The more "tares" he could sow, the more destructive influence his kingdom could produce.

<sup>50</sup>Keener, Craig S., *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Matthew 13:24–30, "The Story of Wheat and Tares."

<sup>51</sup>Hagner, Donald A., *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33A, Matthew 1–13, p. 384.

<sup>52</sup>Mk 8.29 abbreviates to "the Christ" while Lk 9.20 also abbreviates to "the Christ of God."

<sup>53</sup>Matthew adds, "You are a stumbling block to me; for..."

<sup>54</sup>The "foundation rock" has become a "stumbling stone."

his rightful position "behind" Jesus, *i.e.*, "follow me." Both Satan and Peter suggested Jesus could have his kingdom without a cross.

Lk 22.28–34 [and parallels Mt 26.31–35; Mk 14.27–31] raises some interesting questions. However, there are a couple technical points some translations obfuscate. The word ἐξαίτεω variously translated "demanded permission" [NASB], "demanded" [RSV, NRSV], "asked" [NIV, NKJV, ASV], and "desired" [KJV], occurs only here in the Greek Bible. The root meaning [αἰτέω] is "ask." The prefix ἐκ does not alter that basic meaning; it might include the idea of "desire," but likely, it would not extend to the idea of "demand." Essentially, Satan is asking *permission*, demanding nothing.

A second technical detail is the fact that "you" is plural [ὁμοῦς] in Lk 22.31. The likely reference is all the apostles, not just Peter, as might be implied in the NASB, NIV, RSV, KJV, and NKJV. The NIV11, NRSV have "all of you," which reflects the plural. The influence of the following verse [21.32] where Jesus uses the singular pronoun [σοῦ] and continues to address Peter alone, no doubt justifies the singular implication in 22.31.<sup>55</sup>

Satan has sought permission to effectively tempt all the apostles to fall—to reveal their lack of integrity and devotion to God. By "sifting" the apostles, Satan likely hopes to filter out some of them as unfaithful. This is likely similar to Job's situation where Satan is, as always, subservient to the power and will of God. Jesus turns his focus on Peter whom he prays for, but still anticipates his fall [21.34]. Nevertheless, he also looks to Peter to repent and strengthen his brothers, who will also suffer Satan's attacks as he requested.

In Jn 8.34–47, Jesus draws a strong contrast—either one is a child of God or a child of the devil. This contrast is characteristic of all Scripture, although the language varies the principle remains.<sup>56</sup> This is the ultimate insult to Jews, who believed they had a special unique relationship to God. Nevertheless, Jesus indicts them for their desire to seek his death.

Jesus defines the character of the devil in terms of two of the most heinous sins: murder and lying, which Jesus says is according to the devil's very nature. Whenever the devil speaks, even if his words are a simple statement of fact, there is duplicity in those words. That Satan was a murderer and liar "from the beginning" [ἀπ' ἀρχῆς] goes back to the Garden of Eden when Satan lied in order to bring sin into the fabric of humanity and cause its fall resulting in death [Gen 3].<sup>57</sup>

In a context of warning against frivolous oath taking, Jesus said, "let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of the evil one [ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ]" [Mt 5.37].<sup>58</sup> In other words, the disciple's words should always be truthful, without deception, so there is no need to swear by oath, which often suggests unless the oath is taken one's words cannot always be trusted.<sup>59</sup> Regardless, this points once again to Satan's character as a liar; he is behind all falsehood and every attempt to deceive. He can never be trusted to be truthful.

In 1Jn 3.4–12, John picks up on Jesus' words and thoughts from Jn 8.34–47. The phrases built on ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ["from the beginning"] link the two sections together—ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἀμαρτάνει [1Jn 3.8, "the devil sins (present indicative) from the beginning"] with Jn 8.44, ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ["That one was (imperfect indicative) a murderer from the beginning"].<sup>60</sup> Without specific reference to the sins of murder<sup>61</sup> and lying, in the epistle, John defines the character of the devil in general terms: "he *sins* from the beginning," the present

<sup>55</sup>Of course, in English, there is no distinction between the singular and plural "you."

<sup>56</sup>See among the many Scriptures Mt 13.38; Eph 2.1–3; 1Jn 3.3–10.

<sup>57</sup>Although John [1Jn 3.12] presents Satan as behind the murder of Able, this is likely not Jesus' reference.

<sup>58</sup>Although ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ can be translated simply "of evil" [cf. Mt 12.35; Lk 6.45], Matthew's use favors "of the evil one," *viz.* Satan [cf. Mt 6.13; 13.19, 38]. See also Jn 17.15.

<sup>59</sup>This does not mean Scripture absolutely forbids oath taking. God took oaths [Lk 1.73; Acts 2.27–31; Heb 6.17].

<sup>60</sup>John uses the phrase ἀπ' ἀρχῆς in three ways: (1) in reference to a ministry [1Jn 2.7, 24; 3.11; 2Jn 5–6; Jn 15.27], (2) in reference to the creation [1Jn 1.1; 2.13–14 cf. Jn 1.1 (ἐν ἀρχῇ)], and (3) in reference to fallen creation [1Jn 3.8; Jn 8.44].

<sup>61</sup>Although John does recall the murder of Abel by his brother Cain as an example set over against "love one another," as the substance of the message the readers heard "from the beginning" of the gospel ministry among them [3.11–12]. Cain's murderous act demonstrated he "was of the evil one," *i.e.*, "of the devil" [3.8], "of the children of the devil" [3.10].

tense denoting what he *does* and ἀπ' ἀρχῆς denoting what he has *always done*—his character is in essence sinful.<sup>62</sup>

John writes [1Jn 3.8] "the one doing [present participle] the sin [ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν<sup>63</sup>] is of the devil." In 3.10b he conversely defines "the children of the devil" as "everyone *not* doing [present participle] righteousness" [πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην], cf. 3.7 "the one doing [present participle] the righteousness" [ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην].<sup>64</sup> In Jn 8.34 Jesus says "the one doing the sin [ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν] is a slave of the sin." The present tenses are generally taken to mean on going *practices* of sin, not just isolated incidents. The difficulty with this view is defining or demonstrating what qualifies as *isolated* sins as opposed to *practiced* sins. What is the number of acceptable *isolated* sins before it passes into the unacceptable category of *practiced* sin?<sup>65</sup>

In contrast to the devil who "sins from the beginning" and produces children who have joined him in his rebellion against God, "[the Son of God] appeared in order to take away sins" [3.5, ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ; cf. 1Jn 1.7; 2.2; 4.10]. Sins are "the *works* of the devil" [cf. Jn 8.41] that Christ destroyed by his appearance; "the Son of God appeared for this [purpose], in order to destroy<sup>66</sup> the works of the devil" [3.8, ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου].<sup>67</sup> Jesus in turn produces children for God. The contrast between Satan and the Son of God is clear: one purposes to *work* sin, the other purposes to *destroy* sin.

In Acts 26.15–18, Paul cites words of the resurrected Lord he received as he traveled to Damascus to persecute the saints [cf. Acts 9.1–19; 22.1–16].<sup>68</sup> In the Lord's commission to Saul, he directs him to preach to the Gentiles "so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me" [26.18]. Jesus equates darkness and Satan's kingdom where there is neither forgiveness nor an inheritance [cf. Col 1.13–14]. The kingdom of darkness is where evil is practiced [Jn 3.19] and war is waged against God's saints [Eph 6.11–12], because Satan rules there [Eph 2.1–3]. Even as much as the Christ has a mission to deliver people from the kingdom of darkness, the devil is equally on a mission to retain people in his domain.

In the risen Lord's letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, he makes a direct reference to Satan in four of them [Rev 2.8–29; 3.7–13].<sup>69</sup> Two are references to "Jews" who belong to "the synagogue of Satan" [2.9; 3.9], one is a reference to where "Satan's throne" is, "where Satan dwells" [2.13], another is to heretical teachings referred to as "the deep things of Satan" [2.24], and a warning: "the devil is about to cast some of you into prison" [2.10].

Who are "those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" [2.9; 3.9]? They existed in both the cities of Smyrna and Philadelphia. It is likely these harsh words are spoken in reference to Jews who have rejected their Messiah and are now opposing [persecuting] those who have chosen to follow him—even "about to cast some into prison." As Paul wrote "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" [Rom 9.6], Jesus can also reject the claims of the Jews as rightful heirs of Abraham. By calling themselves "Jews" they lie, and therefore are children

<sup>62</sup>The imperfect tense in Jn 8.44 ["that one *was*"] describing the devil as "a murderer from the beginning" has the same effect, reflecting the consequence of following him [at any time in history] as death [Gen 3; Rom 5; *etc.*].

<sup>63</sup>The articular singular goes back to 3.4 where John defines "*the* sin" as "*the* lawlessness" [ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία]. John may be viewing the sin as the Satanic-led *rebellion* against God and his law [which incorporates any sin] that was and always is exemplified in all Satan's works. For this sense of the articular singular "the lawlessness" see Mt 7.23; 13.41; 24.12; Rm 6.19; 2Th 2.3, 7, and for the articular singular "the sin" see Jn 1.29; 8.21, 34; 9.41b. This rebellion [ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία] may explain "sin [rebellion against God and his law] unto death" set over against "sin not unto death" even though "all unrighteousness is sin" [1Jn 5.16–17 cf. 1Jn 1.5–2.2].

<sup>64</sup>John more practically defines "righteousness" as love for one's brother [3.10].

<sup>65</sup>In Jn 5.14; 8.11 Jesus commanded certain individuals to "sin [present tense] no more." Is he only demanding a cessation of the "practiced sin," or is he demanding even the cessation of "isolated sins"? No doubt, he means the latter. Would he ever condone even *one* sin?

<sup>66</sup>Λύω generally carries the idea of "loose" or "untie" [Mt 21.2; Mk 1.7; Lk 13.15]. In John's material is also carries the idea of "destroying" [Jn 2.19 cf. 2Pet 3.10–11] and the related idea of "breaking" [Jn 5.18; 7.23; 10.35]. In Rev 1.5 John uses the idea of "loosing" in relation to sins, "[Jesus] *released* us from our sins by His blood." Elsewhere the GNT uses λύω to teach that through Jesus' death and resurrection God "*ended* the agony of death" [Acts 2.24] and "*broke down* the barrier of the dividing wall" of hostility between Jews and Gentiles [Eph 2.14].

<sup>67</sup>1Jn 3.5 and 3.8 are directly parallel.

<sup>68</sup>Paul gives more detail in his defense before Agrippa than he had previously.

<sup>69</sup>Churches in Smyrna [2.9–10], Pergamum [2.13], Thyatira [2.24], and Philadelphia [3.9].

of the devil [Jn 8.44]. Thus, Jesus likely calls them "the synagogue of Satan" as those belonging to Satan to distinguish them from "the assembly [church] of God [1Cor 1.2] or "the assemblies [churches] of Christ" [Rom 16.16].<sup>70</sup> Clearly, a primary activity of the devil is persecuting the Lord's church, a major theme throughout *Revelation*.

To the church in Pergamum Jesus wrote, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is...where Satan dwells" [2.13]. The reference to "the throne of Satan" some connect with actual sites in Pergamum.<sup>71</sup> It is also associated with figurative notions related to persecution of the saints, exemplified by the death of Antipas. The city was a center for Greco-Roman religion [worship of pagan gods and it was full of idols] and so a place of danger for opposing religions. Satan's throne is set in contrast to the throne of God presented throughout *Revelation* as glorious, authoritative, and victorious. On two other occasions, representations of Satan's throne are pictured as the seat of persecution against the saints [13.2], and as judged from the throne of God [16.10]. Although each of these is representative of the entire Roman authority—the imperial cult—and the throne in Pergamum is localized, the thought is the same: Satan's throne represents imperial persecution against the saints. That Satan is referred to as dwelling in Pergamum is either a way to express the strong presence of evil in the city, or possibly a real presence of someone representing Satan. The former idea is more likely, but either way the point is the same—the saints had to endure a strong presence of evil in Pergamum.

To the church in Thyatira, the Lord refers to "the deep things of Satan," which some saints were holding to [2.13]. Apparently, the teachings of Jezebel<sup>72</sup> were nearly the same as those of the Nicolaitans in Pergamum [2.20 with 2.14]. They may have been practicing some form of "Satanism"<sup>73</sup> [idolatry], which had similarities to later second-century forms of Gnosticism.<sup>74</sup> As sarcasm, mocking the heretics, Jesus refers to the teachings as "the deep things of Satan" only to set them over against "the deep, or secret, things of God" [1Cor 2.10; Rom 11.33; Dt 29.29; Amos 3.7].<sup>75</sup> The heretics may have believed their teachings were "the deep things of God" that only they understood. Yet another possibility is that the followers of Jezebel [and even the Nicolaitans in Pergamum] argued that in order to truly know the enemy [Satan] you must enter his world and learn the real nature of sin by experiencing it, and then being fully prepared to appreciate and accept grace. Whatever the specifics, it is clear Jesus views Satan as the source of heresy.

- **Judas' Betrayal**

Each of the gospel accounts covers the betrayal of Jesus by one of his apostles, Judas, and Satan's role in that betrayal [Lk 22.3–6 *cf.* Mt 26.14–16; Mk 14.10–11; Jn 6.70–71; 13.1–2, 21–30].

"Satan *entered into* Judas [Lk 22.3]," though not without Judas' faith failing [Lk 22.31–32 *cf.* Mt 26.14–16; Mk 14.10–11].<sup>76</sup> John comments that "the devil...*put into* the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him" [Jn 13.2],<sup>77</sup> and that "After the morsel, Satan then *entered into him*" [Jn 13.27].<sup>78</sup> Jesus, earlier in his ministry, had called Judas "a devil" [διάβολος]

<sup>70</sup>To call them "the assembly [church] of Satan" would be almost unimaginable. See, however, "synagogue of the Lord" [Num 16.3; 20.4; 27.17; 31.16] and the "synagogue of Israel" [Num 16.9], which in no way could describe these Jews.

<sup>71</sup>(1) *The temple of Augustus and Roma* built, perhaps at the foot of the acropolis of Pergamon, by permission of Augustus in 29 BC (its site has never been located). (2) *The Great Altar [= throne] of Zeus Soter* ["savior"] constructed during the reign of Eumenes II (197–59 BC). (3) *The judge's bench or tribunal* (βήμα) where the proconsul sat to judge. (4) *The temple of Asklepios Soter*, a cult linked with the symbol of the serpent, which Christians associated with Satan. See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 52A; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 182–183.

<sup>72</sup>Wife of Ahab of the Northern Kingdom Israel. She promoted worship of Canaanite fertility deities, supporting 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the goddess Asherah at her royal table [1Kings 18.19]. The name Jezebel is likely symbolic in Rev 2.20, although it may refer to an actual heretic. Both Jezebel and the teacher in *Revelation* led followers to immorality [*cf.* 2Kings 9.22].

<sup>73</sup>Not in the sense of actual "Satanic worship" in modern terms.

<sup>74</sup>Mystery cults of the first-century emphasized deep secrets that only initiates had accessed.

<sup>75</sup>Not unlike referring to "the synagogue of Satan" [2.9; 3.9] and "the throne of Satan" [2.13] as set over against "the synagogue of the Lord" [see *fn.* 51] and "the throne of the Lord" [Ps 45.6; 103.19; *et al.*; and *esp.* Rev 7.10–11, 15; 12.5; 19.4; 22.1, 3].

<sup>76</sup>See notes on Lk 22.38–34 above, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup>Similarly, Peter asked Ananias, "Why has Satan *filled* your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" [Acts 5.3].

<sup>78</sup>The "entering in" of Satan is unusual and is likely not to be confused with demon possession. The sense here has more to do with putting of thoughts into a person and there are no outward manifestations [convulsions, *etc.*] commonly associated with demon possession.

because of his betrayal, although he did not identify him as such at that time [Jn 6.70–71]. This points to the likelihood that Satan could not have "entered" Judas unless he was willing.<sup>79</sup> Without a doubt however, Satan was behind the passion of the Christ, and certainly found "an opportune time" to tempt him once again [Lk 4.13]. Judas was more than a willing participant and useful tool in Satan's plan.

### C. Exorcisms by the Christ [and his disciples]

On a few occasions, Jesus' exorcisms are merely mentioned as one of a number of activities in his ministry.<sup>80</sup> Mt 4.23–25 records that Jesus' ministry in Galilee included "healing every kind of *disease* [νόσος] and every kind of *sickness* [μαλακία]" [cf. Mt 9.35; 10.1]. People were brought to him who were "ill" [κακῶς] and "those suffering with various *diseases* [νόσος] and *pains* [βάσanos, torment cf. Lk 16.23, 28]." Those possessing the various diseases, sicknesses, illnesses, and pains are called "demoniacs [δαιμονίζομαι, those possessed by demons], epileptics [σεληνιαζομαι, to be moonstruck, given to epileptic seizures], paralytics [παραλυτικός, paralytics]." The demon-possessed are distinguished from epileptics and paralytics, but in Mt 17.14–18, demon-possession is characterized by epilepsy. Nevertheless, demon-possession was categorized as a disease or sickness, illness or torment, and it, like epilepsy and paralysis was "healed" [θεραπεύω, Eng. therapeutic, therapy, chemotherapy, etc.] by Jesus. The most common term for "curing" the demon-possessed is ἐκβάλλω ["cast out," Lk 13.32].<sup>81</sup>

In Lk 6.17–19 those "with unclean [ἀκάθαρτος] spirits [πνεῦμα]" are "healed" [θεραπεύω] by Jesus and are distinguished from those who came to Jesus to be "healed [ιάομαι] of their *diseases* [νόσος]" [see also Lk 7.21]. "Unclean spirit" is synonymous with "demon" [Mk 7.24–26, 29–30; Lk 4.33; 9.42; Rev 16.13–14].<sup>82</sup>

The language of Peter in Acts 10.38–39 is different than that found in the synoptics concerning this activity in Jesus' ministry, but it adds to the nature of demon-possession: "healing [ιάομαι] all who were *oppressed* [καταδυναστεύω] by the devil [διάβολος]."<sup>83</sup> In effect, he calls demon-possession "[demon]-oppression," used only here and in Jas 2.6 in the GNT. It is used over 30 times in the LXX where it generally means "to exercise power over" [overcome, even violently (Dt 24.7); conquer (2Sam 8.11); enslave (Neh 5.5)]. Although the idea is essentially the same, Peter's description is perhaps stronger.

The textual and contextual difficulties with the Synoptic parallels in Mt 8.28–34, Mk 5.1–20, and Lk 8.26–39 are beyond the scope of this study. However, the stories are too similar to suggest separate events. The name of the village the demoniac(s) were from presents the first problem. Was it Gadara, Gerasa, or even Gergesa as some MSS suggest? The problem is confounded by the facts that all three villages existed at the time of writing,<sup>84</sup> and all three readings are found in the MS tradition behind each of the three Synoptic occurrences. Geography favors Gadara, because it was only five miles SE of the Sea of Galilee, while Gerasa was over thirty miles SE.

The second problem is that Matthew mentions two demoniacs while Mark and Luke mention only one.<sup>85</sup> Did Mark [and Luke] simply omit one or did Matthew add one? Either way, there is no effect upon the narrative relative to the study of demon possession.

Each of the writers initially describes the phenomenon slightly differently. Matthew calls the men "demon-possessed" [δαιμονίζομαι, 8.33; as do the other writers eventually (Mk 5.15–16, 18 and Lk 8.36)]. Lk 8.27 similarly has ἔχων δαιμόνια ["having demons"], but Mk 5.2 has ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ ["with an unclean spirit," note singular].

Their living quarters were "tombs" because the demons had so empowered them giving them also such a violent and threatening nature they could not cohabit with others. Tombs were

<sup>79</sup>Matthew suggests greed was a motive [26.14–16; Mk 14.10–11], and John reveals Judas was a thief [Jn 12.1–6].

<sup>80</sup>Mk 1.39 sums up Jesus' activity in the synagogues of Galilee [Mk 1.21–28, 32–34] as "preaching and casting out [ἐκβάλλω] the demons."

<sup>81</sup>It is used in reference to "casting out demons" over 20 times in the Synoptics. It is not used as such elsewhere in the LXX or GNT.

<sup>82</sup>Lk 4.33 has the unparalleled πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου ["spirit of an unclean demon"].

<sup>83</sup>Mt 15.22, 28 refers to a girl "possessed by a demon" [δαιμονίζομαι] as "healed" [ιάομαι]; cf. the parallel in Mk 7.25–26, 30 where the same girl "has an evil spirit" that is eventually cast out.

<sup>84</sup>In other words, it is likely not simply spelling errors by copyists.

<sup>85</sup>Elsewhere Matthew also has two where Mark has one [Mt 9.27 with Mk 8.22–23; Mt 20.30 with Mk 10.46; Mt 21.1–11 with Mk 11.1–10; Lk 19.28–40]. These are commonly called "Matthean doublets."

not only ritually or ceremonially unclean places<sup>86</sup>—the haunts of evil spirits, but demon possession was directly related to what graveyards represent, death and the powers of evil. Mark adds the demoniac went about the tombs and mountains constantly screaming and gashing himself with stones [self destructive], graphically describing the terrible state of his mind and his unimaginable agony. Luke adds the demoniac went about naked and he was "driven by the demon into the desert"—the demon was clearly in control of the man.<sup>87</sup> The populace would view him as mad.<sup>88</sup>

The encounter of the demoniac(s) with Jesus provokes the same response from the demons in each of the Synoptics. Two factors suggest the demons possessed knowledge, not "supernatural" but at least "unnatural," which they could only have obtained from access to the spiritual realm. First, according to Mark and Luke when the demoniac greeted Jesus he "bowed down [προσκυνέω] before him" [Mk 5.6], "fell down [προσπίπτω] before him" [Lk 6.28].<sup>89</sup> Προσκυνέω is the term generally understood to convey the English idea of "worship" [see Jn 4.20–24 where it is used 10 times clearly in this sense, of 61 occurrences in GNT]. The root [προσκυν-] is also found 208 times in the LXX.<sup>90</sup> The fundamental idea is *to bow down to the ground* ["prostrate"]. It is often used with idioms such as "inclining the face to the ground," "falling down," "bending the knee," and other such ideas that convey an actual posture of humility of an inferior to a superior.<sup>91</sup> It can be paid to other humans as "homage" [Gen 43.28] and it remains "homage" when presented to God, but the nature of this action is intensified into what we call "worship" [Gen 24.48; Ex 4.31; 34.8, 14; Ps 29.2]. It is the ultimate human expression of reverent love, ardent devotion, and total adoration—evolving from the idea of kissing the ground [as earth god] to blowing kisses to the gods. The action always suggests some kind of personal relationship between an inferior subservient to a superior, the former always dependent on the latter for something. Of course, when this personal relationship involves the true *believer* and God, only then is the subservience complete and the idea of "worship" appropriate.

The term used by Luke [προσπίπτω] literally means "fall down before," but always is short of the idea of "worship."<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the term generally carries the idea of supplication and subservience of an inferior to a superior [Mk 5.33; 7.25; Lk 5.8; 8.47; Acts 16.29]. Mark, in making a general statement about Jesus' ministry, suggests that demons ["unclean spirits"] falling down [προσπίπτω] before Jesus was a regular experience [Mk 3.11].

The second factor suggesting the demons possessed some kind of special knowledge about Jesus amounts to what is a confession coupled with their humble posture. Both Mark [5.7] and Luke [8.28] have Jesus addressed as "Jesus, Son of the Most High God," Matthew [8.29] has simply "Son of God" [cf. Mt 3.17; 4.3, 6].<sup>93</sup> Following the resurrection of Jesus, his disciples finally understood the confession that Jesus is "the Son of God" included his deity [Jn 20.26–31 cf. Rom 1.4]; however, this was likely not the understanding before his resurrection, at least from a human

<sup>86</sup>Cf. Is 65.4–6 and note the eating of swine meat in the tombs and compare the nearby swine that occur later in the Synoptic stories.

<sup>87</sup>Mk 5.15 implies the same.

<sup>88</sup>See Mt 8.28; Mk 1.1–5; Lk 8.26–27, 29.

<sup>89</sup>The demoniac—demons, who was previously out of control and uncontrollable, is totally subdued and submissive before Jesus. Matthew makes no mention of this action.

<sup>90</sup>Προσκυν- is not the only Greek root that refers to "worship." There are at least 3 other roots [σεβ-, λατρ-, λειτουργ-] along with some idioms ['bend the knee,' 'fall down and worship,' 'incline the face to the ground'] that may include "worship." The most basic root, however, is προσκυν-.

<sup>91</sup>The demons question, "What business do we have with each other?" is "A formulaic question (cf. 5:7// Matt 8:29; Luke 8:28 and John 2:4) with an OT background (eg, 2 Sam 16:10; 19:23; 1 Kgs 17:18; 2 Kgs 3:13; Judg 11:12; 2 Chron 35:21; Bächli, TZ 33 [1977] 69–80), it is almost always posed by an inferior or by one in an inferior position to a superior. Thus, the question has the defensive function of placing the one questioned in the position of responsibility for what follows and thereby creates an irreconcilable distance between the two parties (Bächli, TZ 33 [1977] 79–80). The question betrays the unclean spirit's recognition of his own status, particularly in the light of Jesus' authority." Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34A, p. 57.

<sup>92</sup>The cognate πίπτω might include the idea of "worship" when the word προσκυνέω is conjoined in the sentence [Mt 2.11; 4.9; 1Cor 14.25; Rev 4.10; 7.11; 11.16; 19.4, 10 (note the action is rejected by the angel cf. 22.8–9)] or the context strongly suggests it [Mt 26.39; Rev 5.8, 14]. However, this combination of πίπτω and προσκυνέω should *not* be understood as "worship" of Jesus *before* his resurrection, for he was not viewed as deity until following his glorification [see above]. In the LXX, προσπίπτω is conjoined with προσκυνέω in Ps 95.6 [94.6LXX]; 1Esdras 9.47 in reference to the Lord, and in Judith 14.7 in a strictly human context: "he fell [προσπίπτω] at Judith's feet, and revered [προσλυνέω] her."

<sup>93</sup>In the LXX, the title, "the Most High God," generally occurs on the lips of Gentiles or in a Gentile context [Gen 14.18–20; Num 24.16; Dan 3.26; see also Acts 16.16–21]. This may point to the gentile setting of these events, or simply the Gentile character of *Luke* itself [cf. 1.32, 35, 76; 6.35].

standpoint [Mt 16.13–23 *cf.* Jn 11.20–29].<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, in a general description of incidents in Jesus' ministry Luke also writes of exercised demons confessing, "You are *the Son of God.*" To this Luke adds, "rebuking them, he [Jesus] would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be *the Christ*" [Lk 4.41 *cf.* Mk 1.34; 3.11–12].<sup>95</sup> Was it because the demons did in fact know that this title referenced Jesus' deity? Is this why he would not allow them to tell others; or, was it because their understanding was as clouded as the disciples', whom he also forbade to tell others [Mt 16.20]? In other words, was it because they actually did know who he was and the people were not ready to hear it, or because they did not know the full extent of what the name revealed and might only confuse the people more?

Another issue causes some difficulty. Exactly who was the subject of προσκυνέω [προσπίπτω]? Was it the demon-possessed man or the demon[s]? Although Matthew writes nothing of the demoniacs falling down, he does suggest the two demoniacs first addressed Jesus as "Son of God" [8.28–29], while the demons requested that Jesus send them into the pigs [8.31–32]. However, if the demons spoke through the men, as is suggested more clearly by Mark and Luke, their "torment before *the time*" might refer more naturally to their final judgment [2Pet 2.4; Jude 4; Rev 20.10] rather than any such time for the demoniacs.<sup>96</sup> Mark and Luke make it clear the confession and conversation was between the demon and Jesus [Mk 5.8; Lk 8.30–31].<sup>97</sup> If demons were behind all the actions of the man [men], προσκυνέω could not be "worship," for demons may have known who Jesus was—even as deity, but they would never "worship" him, *i.e.*, express reverent love, ardent devotion, and total adoration as creatures to the Creator. If the demoniac(s) acted independently of the demons [which is highly unlikely], there is little doubt they knew nothing of Jesus' deity. Therefore, whether it was the demoniacs or the demons, it was likely only "homage" being paid to Jesus by inferiors to a superior.<sup>98</sup>

Mk 5.9–10 and Lk 8.30–31 extend the conversation between Jesus and the demon [omitted in *Matthew*]. Jesus asks the demon his name, who replies "Legion, for we are many"<sup>99</sup> [Mk 5.9]; Lk 8.30 adds his own commentary for the latter part of the demon's statement, "for many demons had entered him."<sup>100</sup>

The immediate antecedent to Jesus' question, "What is your name?" in both Mark and Luke is the demon [unclean spirit]. However, it could also contextually refer to the demoniac. Seeking the name is in direct contrast to the demon's [or demoniac's] immediate knowledge of Jesus' name and identity. Does this imply Jesus was at some intellectual disadvantage? No, for from the beginning of the encounter Jesus had a distinct advantage over the demons, and certainly the demoniac. Perhaps he was addressing the demoniac to give him opportunity to express independence from the demons, which he was unable to do. It is probable Jesus was addressing the demons<sup>101</sup> to force them to reveal their hand by identifying themselves to all present; this

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<sup>94</sup>Peter indicated he did not understand by his actions that followed his confession. Likewise, Jesus' warning to all the disciples not to proclaim the confession and his rebuke of Peter's insolence were clear indicators they did not understand. Martha, by her rather pedestrian response to her own confession, also showed she probably did not understand.

The walking on water miracles and the stilling of storm in Mt 14.22–33 [*cf.* Mk 4.35–41] are somewhat problematic for this view. In 14.33 the NAB, JB, NEB have "homage." NIV, NASB, RSV, NRSV have "worship." Because προσκυνέω is connected to the confession "truly you are the Son of God" in a context demonstrating Jesus' control over nature, the disciples may have *suspected* his deity, but probably were fearful to entertain the thought, even to themselves.

<sup>95</sup>Note the equation of the title "the Christ" with the title "the Son of God" [Mt 26.63; Jn 11.27; 20.31]. Earlier in Mk 1.24–25, in a similar confrontation between Jesus and a demoniac, a demon refers to Jesus as "the holy one of God." See discussion below.

<sup>96</sup>The demons saw Jesus as coming before—too soon for them—the appointed time of judgment. However, they probably failed to realize that the kingdom of God was already present in the person of the Christ—"if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" [Mt 12.28].

<sup>97</sup>Of course, the man was the one who physically prostrated himself, but only as the demon controlled him.

<sup>98</sup>Nevertheless, the NKJV, KJV, RSV, and ASV translate προσκυνέω as "worship" in Mk 5.6. The Amplified Version has, "he ran and fell on his knees before Him in *homage*," and the NAB has, "he ran up and *prostrated* himself before him."

<sup>99</sup>A Roman legion consisted of about six thousand men. Mk 5.15 suggests "Legion" is not actually a name [which is not attested elsewhere], but rather a collective noun [τὸν λεγιῶνα] representing the number of demons.

<sup>100</sup>Multiple-possession is also referred to in the case of Mary Magdalene who had seven demons—presumably simultaneously [Lk 8.2]. The number "seven" may be symbolic to represent the completeness of the possession, but it nonetheless is literal also.

<sup>101</sup>This is the only occurrence of Jesus engaging in a dialogue with demons, save his dialogue with Satan [Mt 4.1–11; Lk 4.1–13].

might make them at least appear more vulnerable. Either way, Jesus did not personally need information [the name] to verify his superiority; it was clear from the beginning. However, identifying the enemy as a "legion" of demons highlighted their inferiority to the *one* "Jesus, Son of the Most High God."

Their inferiority is underscored by the demons "imploring"<sup>102</sup> Jesus not to "send them out of the country" [Mk 5.10], or as in Lk 8.31, "*command* them to go into the abyss"; see also the demons "imploring" Jesus in this context [Mt 8.31, 34; Mk 5.10, 12, 17–18; Lk 8.31–32]. Luke adds the demons were "imploring him not to *command* [ἐπιτάσσω, Mk 1.27; 9.25; Lk 4.36] them to go away into the abyss." The demons were fully conscious of Jesus' absolute authority over them.

In *Mark* the demons begged not to be sent out of "the country [region]," which likely meant they did not want to be displaced from "the tombs" [5.2; Mt 8.28], a favorite haunt of evil spirits, but as *Luke* suggests, they knew it meant much more than simple displacement. *Luke* adds they believed such a departure would likely end up in "the abyss" [τὴν ἄβυσσον, 8.31]. "The abyss" originally referred to "the deep" or "the depths" of the oceans or the earth, "the underworld" [Gen 1.2; 7.11; Job 38.16; Ps 71.20 (= *Sheol*) cf. Rom 10.7]. By the first century, it was viewed as a place of torment for sinners and fallen angels either as a place of containment for evil spirits<sup>103</sup> until final judgment [Rev 9.1–2, 11; 11.7; 17.8; 20.1, 3 cf. Jude 6; 2Pet 2.4] or as a place of final judgment itself.<sup>104</sup> It was clearly a place of torment, which the demons hoped to avoid [Mt 8.29; Mk 5.7; Lk 8.28].

It was in light of the destination the demons hoped to avoid they pleaded with<sup>105</sup> Jesus to send them into the *herd* of the pigs that they may enter into the pigs *themselves* [Mt 8.30–31; Mk 5.11–12; Lk 8.32].<sup>106</sup> Again, the demons admit total submission to Jesus.<sup>107</sup> Certain obvious questions are raised by the demons' request, Jesus' grant of the request, and the fate of the demons upon the drowning of the pigs.

The very presence of the pigs and their herdsmen suggests a Gentile territory; pigs were unclean to the Jews [Lev 11.7; Dt 14.8].<sup>108</sup> It is likely the demons presumed the pigs would not present to the Jewish Jesus an offensive destination. There is nothing similar in Scripture to compare this with,<sup>109</sup> but with the certainty of being cast out, the demons chose the least offensive form of body to be sent into. The preference of demons was apparently to inhabit some bodily form, especially humans [see on Mt 12.43–45 below]. In this case, they would not expect Jesus to cast them out from one human to another; pigs were, in their minds, a far better option than "the abyss" [Lk 8.31].

<sup>102</sup>Παρακαλέω has the sense of "strongly urge" or "pray earnestly for" as in a state of deep need [Mt 8.5–6; 14.36], even to the point of "begging" [Mt 18.29, 32; Mk 1.40; 5.23; Lk 7.4; 8.41]. See also in this same pericope Mt 8.33; Mk 5.17.

<sup>103</sup>Although the containment was neither absolute nor permanent as *Revelation* indicates.

<sup>104</sup>Jubilees 5.5 "But Noah found grace before the eyes of the Lord. 6 And against the angels whom He had sent upon the earth, He was exceedingly wroth, and He gave commandment to root them out of all their dominion, and He bade us to bind them in *the depths* of the earth, and behold they are bound in the midst of them, and are (kept) separate."

1 Enoch 10.12–14 "And when their sons have slain one another, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, till the day of their judgment and of their consummation, till the judgment that is for ever and ever is consummated. In those days they shall be led off to *the abyss of fire*: and to the torment and the prison in which they shall be confined for ever. And whosoever shall be condemned and destroyed will from thenceforth be bound together with them to the end of all generations."

<sup>105</sup>Παρακαλέω, see *fn.* 102 above.

<sup>106</sup>Jesus cast the demons into the pigs but only in the sense he gave them *permission* to enter them on their own.

<sup>107</sup>It seems they were resigned to the fact Jesus was going to cast them out—εἰ ἐκβάλλεις ἡμᾶς [Mt 8.31, "since (not 'if') you cast us out"].

<sup>108</sup>There is no way of knowing whether or not the demoniacs were Jews.

<sup>109</sup>Some might suggest allowing the demons to enter the pigs was evidence that the demons had actually left the demoniacs. However, that was self-evident by the demoniac's transformed state. *Josephus* [Ant 8.48–49] mentions an example of exorcism where "evidence" was provided, but the similarities are slim:

"...when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man; and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly..."

Why Jesus granted their request is uncertain, but he may have thought to demonstrate that even "unclean" pigs would not tolerate inhabitation by demons, and so the pigs self-destruct [Mt 8.32; Mk 5.13; Lk 8.33].<sup>110</sup>

There is an over concern of modern western minds about Jesus' apparent disregard for another's property—2,000 dead pigs would be devastating to however many owners. Also, cruelty to animals sensitivities might be offended in our culture, but less so in this context of history.<sup>111</sup> In the first place, Jesus *permitted* this action; he did not directly cause the death of the pigs. God permits much suffering and death in this world peppered by sin and its consequences, suffering even more sadly experienced by humans. Sensitivity towards pigs and animals is commendable—and they are cared for by God also, but humans are of much more value [Mt 6.25–33], having been created in the image of God, unlike animals [Gen 1.26–27; 9.6; Jas 3.9]. This truth is also revealed in this event—the pigs are inflicted in favor of the demoniacs. Second, for the creature to call into question the actions of the Creator—who could call back to life the pigs at will, if he so chose—is a bit presumptuous [*cf.* Job 40.1ff]. In the third place, such questions about the "morality" of the story miss the obvious theme of "clean" over against "unclean." The man is cleansed of the "unclean spirits" [Mk 5.2, 8, 13; Lk 8.29] as the land [symbolically] is cleansed of the "unclean" pigs, perhaps even as the Gentiles themselves would be cleansed in the Messiah's kingdom [Acts 10.28].

The reaction of the herdsmen is expected. Matthew gives a very abbreviated account, recording only that the herdsmen "fled" and went to town to report what had happened, provoking the people of the city to come to Jesus and "implore" him to leave their region.<sup>112</sup>

The reaction of the people in the city is unexpected. Although implied in Matthew, Mark and Luke add detail explaining why they reacted as they did. Both authors reveal how the people saw the demoniac "clothed and in his right mind," a complete reversal of his previous state—a state the people were completely impotent in the presence of, and repulsed by. Nevertheless, they were not joyful for what Jesus had accomplished, but only "frightened" [φοβέω, Mk 5.15; Lk 8.35]. *Fear* was a typical response to the powers Christ exhibited in his ministry [Mt 9.8; 14.26–27; Mk 4.41; 5.49–51; Lk 5.26; 8.25; Jn 16.19–20]. Jesus' demonstration of his power over evil, even a "legion" of demons, might have suggested to the people they were in the presence of the "holy," although something far short of what that might actually mean. Thus, their desire to have him leave their region was built on the fear that something, not only more powerful than the demons—and so, much more powerful than themselves, who had *no* control over the demons, but one who was not from their place ["leave our place"], rather one from another place [otherworldly].<sup>113</sup> When Peter came to a similar realization, he responded similarly [Lk 5.8]. In contrast to the people of the city [the majority], only the healed demoniac [the extreme minority] wanted to continue in Jesus' presence,<sup>114</sup> as only those healed—saved<sup>115</sup>—by Jesus, likewise want to follow him.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup>The Synoptics are in complete agreement that the herd was the subject of the action of rushing into the lake [ἔωρμησεν ἡ ἀγέλη, "the herd rushed" aorist active indicative third person singular]. It was neither Jesus nor the demons that made them do so. Grammatically, the better subjects of "they died" [ἀπέθανον] are the pigs, not the demons [Mt 8.32]; Luke has "was drowned" [8.33, ἀπεπνίγη, singular, *i.e.*, the herd]; Mark has "they were drowned" [5.13, ἐπνίγοντο, plural, *i.e.*, "about two thousand of them" of the herd]. What would it mean that the demons died? They are evil *spirits* who will live until the judgment.

<sup>111</sup>From a Jewish perspective especially, unclean pigs would be a most appropriate residence for unclean spirits. Inevitably, discussions on this story inappropriately move from exegesis to theology to theodicy to humanism.

<sup>112</sup>Mt 8.34 and Mk 5.17 have "implored" [παρακαλέω], while Lk 8.37 mollifies their request to "asked" [ἔρωτάω], but immediately describes their state of mind as "gripped with fear."

<sup>113</sup>This is not to suggest that their fear was reverential. It may have been the case that because these Gentiles did not have the Scriptural theological context in which to root their understanding [for Jews miracle workers like Moses, Elijah, Elisha were favorably viewed as prophets], their fear was grounded in a more pedestrian idea than a sense of the "holy." They may have simply perceived Jesus as a strange and perhaps even treacherous wonder-worker, magician, or sorcerer who would be a threat to their region. After all, Jesus had already depleted part of their food supply and they wanted to cut their losses.

<sup>114</sup>He likewise "implored" [παρακαλέω] Jesus, but "to be with him" [ἵνα μετ' αὐτοῦ ᾦ], the same phrase used when Jesus called the twelve [3.14, ἵνα ὄσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ], perhaps suggesting the healed demoniac's desire to be included as one of Jesus' apostles. Thus, Jesus' denial is less severe than if the man only wanted to be a follower. Nevertheless, Jesus desired to use the man in continuing his mission, especially among these Gentiles ["your people," Mk 5.19], which apparently was successful [Mk 5.20]. Jesus told the cleansed leper in Mk 1.44 *not* to tell of his healing. However, the demoniac was in Gentile country where there would be little danger the people would circulate misconceived Messianic ideas, as with Jews in the synagogues of Galilee [Mk 1.40–45].

The exorcisms of Mk 1.21–28, 32–34 [*pars.* Lk 4.31–37, 40–41] have some obvious similarities with the exorcism in Mt 8.28–34 [*pars.*], yet other characteristics of Jesus' exorcisms are also mentioned. In the first place, Jesus was working among Jews in the synagogues in Mk 1, whereas in Mk 5<sup>117</sup> he was working among Gentiles, which effects his instructions following the exorcisms.<sup>118</sup> Also, among the Jews, nothing is mentioned concerning the destination of the demon once he was exercised, and there is more of a response by the Jews to the *teaching authority* of Jesus in so much as even the demons were subject to it [Mk 1.27; Lk 4.36].<sup>119</sup>

The verbal exchange between Jesus and the demon is quite similar to that which would also take place among the Gentiles. In both cases, the demon recognizes and addresses him as "Jesus" [they know his *personal* name] and, more significantly, as "the Holy One of God" [Mk 1.24; Lk 4.34 *cf.* "Son of the most high God" in Mk 5.7; Lk 8.28 *cf.* Mk 3.11–12].<sup>120</sup> In the synagogue, the conversation is abbreviated and ends more abruptly, with the demon simply cast out at Jesus' command. There is far less drama associated with this event, but the results are clearly the same—removal of the demon and full restoration to health for the demoniac.<sup>121</sup>

In a summary statement following this exorcism among the Jews in the synagogue [Mk 5.32–34; Lk 4.40–41], both Mark and Luke show as a result of this incident the people were bringing many demoniacs for exorcism, which Jesus accomplished. Luke adds as a reiteration of the earlier episode, the demons were coming out declaring, "You are the Son of God" [4.41 *cf.* Mk 1.24; Lk 4.34]. As Jesus had commanded the demons in the synagogue to "Be quiet," so here he silences the demons "because they knew him to be the Messiah" [Lk 4.41].<sup>122</sup>

Matthew has a parallel summary statement without including the synagogue exorcism [Mt 8.16–17]. However, he includes exorcisms among other healings as a fulfillment of the prophecy by Isaiah [53.4]: "He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." Matthew reflects on the full meaning of Christ's work at Calvary—it affected not only *spiritual* healing, but *physical* healing as well! Not only was delivery from sin made possible at the cross, so was delivery from sickness; Jesus brings complete healing—the whole man. Sickness is, however, a precursor to death. When God promised through Isaiah that his servant—the Messiah—would take away sins and sicknesses, he was pointing not only to the *cross* of Jesus, but to his resurrection and that of his disciples. The working out of Isaiah's promise was first realized in the ministry of Jesus, which in itself anticipated the completing of the promise in the resurrection on the last day—the complete healing of soul and body.

In the same way, Jesus is the promised healer with power over the demons—citizens of the kingdom of darkness, the realm of sin. He has power to undo the result of the sin realm, the curse–corruption consequence of sin—sickness and death. A key exorcism—at least rhetorically—follows in Mt 8.28–34 [see above]. As with the healing of diseases anticipating the resurrection on the last day for the saints, the exorcisms may well anticipate the final victory over Satan and his angels on the last day [Mt 25.41].

As in the exorcism recorded in Mt 8.28–34 [Mk 5.1–20; Lk 8.26–39], in Mt 15.21–28 [Mk 7.24–30] Jesus is in Gentile territory; in this case, he is clearly confronted by a Gentile [Mk

<sup>115</sup>Lk 8.36 described the healing process of the demoniac as being "saved" [σώζω] rather than using one of the common words for *healing* [θεραπεύω, ἰάομαι], particularly in Luke with 24 occurrences of the common words. However, Luke does use σώζω in the sense of healing diseases, but never of exorcisms [8.48, 50; 17.19; 18.42].

<sup>116</sup>The people of the city who had been "frightened" by Jesus' powerful miraculous works, and essentially wanted no part of him, were "amazed" [θαυμάζω] by the healed demoniac's witness. The evidence of witness over that of miracle is a clear biblical theme [Jn 20.29].

<sup>117</sup>Chronologically later.

<sup>118</sup>See *fn.* 114.

<sup>119</sup>The emphasis in this pericope is the authoritative teaching of Jesus. Exorcisms were generally accompanied by magical formulas and rituals, but Jesus simply commands, "Be quiet...Come out." Thus, the Jews were astonished by the power of his word *per se* [τίς ὁ λόγος οὗτος, "What is this *word*?" Lk 4.36], while the Gentiles [Mk 5; Lk 8] were frightened by his miraculous power *per se*.

<sup>120</sup>See above on the implications of these confessions.

<sup>121</sup>Mk 1.26 describes the exorcism: "*Throwing him into convulsions*, the unclean spirit *cried out with a loud voice* and came out of him." Lk 4.35 less dramatically states: "when the demon had *thrown him down* in the midst of the people, he came out of him *without doing him any harm*." Luke emphasizes in the end, no harm was done to the demoniac. This corresponds to the condition of the demoniac in Mk 5; Lk 8 who was found "clothed and in his right mind" following his possession and exorcism.

<sup>122</sup>Mark writes simply, "because they knew who he was" [1.34]. See *fn.* 94 and discussion above.

7.26].<sup>123</sup> His encounter with the woman making the request on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter<sup>124</sup> emphasizes Jesus' primary role in preaching to the Jews [cf. Mt 10.5–6], but at the same time, the primary role of faith—without regard to nationalism—in receiving the blessing of God. The woman heard of his power [in healing and casting out demons] and knew he was a Jew, addressing him as "Son of David," which had Messianic overtones she must have understood to some degree. Matthew writes that she "began to bow down before him" [προκυνέω], Mark records only that "she fell at his feet" [προσπίπτω], which suggests only a position of humility of an inferior to a superior. There is no sense of "worship" in the text.<sup>125</sup>

A unique aspect of this exorcism is that Jesus healed the daughter without even being in her presence. He simply stated to the mother, "it shall be done for you as you wish" [Mt 15.28 cf. 8.13], while Mark leaves no future element in Jesus' words, "the demon has gone out of your daughter" [7.29]. Matthew simply states, "her daughter was healed from that hour"; Mark states that when the mother arrived home "she found the child lying on the couch, the demon having come out."

There are some similarities between the exorcism in Mt 17.14–21 [Mk 9.14–29; Lk 9.37–45] and the one preceding it in Mt 15. Jesus is still in Gentile territory, perhaps somewhere between Caesarea Philippi [Mt 16.13] and Capernaum [Mt 17.24] north of the Sea of Galilee. Also, a parent comes asking help for their child—although in this case, the man's son is present. The demoniac is described in various ways. According to Matthew, the father says, "he is a lunatic [σεληνιαζομαι, to be moonstruck; here and Mt 4.24 only] and is very ill [πάσχω]; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water" [17.15]—a serious lack of motor control repeatedly putting the boy's life in danger. He adds, "your disciples<sup>126</sup>...could not cure [θεραπυέω] him."<sup>127</sup> It is not until Jesus performs the exorcism that the reader knows a demon caused the condition [17.18]. In Mark's account, the father describes the son as "having a spirit<sup>128</sup> mute [ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον]; and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out" [9.17b–18]. The father also adds the disciples could not "cast it out" [ἐκβάλλω]. He further describes the condition as having occurred since the son's childhood and "It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him" [9.22]. Luke's description is very similar to Mark's only Luke adds to the words of the father: "only with difficulty does it [the spirit] leave him, mauling him as it leaves" [9.39]. This suggests that before the spirit's exorcism by Jesus, it had left and reentered the son; however, there is no way of knowing by what means—presumably by the will of the demon—or how often this may have occurred.<sup>129</sup>

Both Mark and Luke record that immediately preceding Jesus' exorcism and during it, the spirit was exhibiting the symptoms previously described by the father.<sup>130</sup> Only Mark records the words of Jesus during the exorcism: "You deaf [κωφός] and mute [ἄλαλος] spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again" [9.25]. Jesus introduces the term κωφός, which primarily means "blunt or dull." It sometimes refers to the inability to speak [Mt 9.32–33; 12.22; Lk 1.22; 11.14], but also to the inability to hear [Mt 11.5; Mk 7.37 (where the same contrast is used with ἄλαλος)].<sup>131</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Mark refers to her as Ἑλληνίς, Ῥωροφονικίσσα τῆς γένει, "a Greek of the Syrophenician race." Luke does not cover this incident.

<sup>124</sup>Mt 15.22 uses the word θυγάτηρ, but Mk 7.25 uses the diminutive form θυγάτηριον suggesting the girl is young. However, the word does not demand it; it can be simply an endearing term, and there is profane literature where it refers to a girl of marrying age, which might be any time past puberty in that culture. The only other use of the diminutive form in the GNT or LXX is in Mk 5.23. Mk 7.30, however, adds the diminutive παιδίον to describe the girl, a term which nearly always refers to a small child below the age of puberty, particularly in the synoptics [Mt 2.8–14; 18.2–5; Mk 5.39–41; Lk 1.59]. If it is the case, as it seems to be, this demon-possessed victim was just a small child, it seems clear demons were no respecters of age or accountability, and certainly the demoniac cannot be held responsible for his or her condition.

<sup>125</sup>See comments above on Mt 8.28–34 [pars.].

<sup>126</sup>Presumably, the nine who had not accompanied Jesus to his transfiguration [Mt 17.1ff].

<sup>127</sup>This brings Jesus' own power and authority into question [Mt 10.1, 8].

<sup>128</sup>"Unclean" [ἀκάθαρτος] [9.25].

<sup>129</sup>The father's reference may be to the occurrence of seizures only, rather than the demon actually leaving and reentering; in other words, his observation may have been strictly phenomenological. There is no direct evidence of the demon leaving this man's son, taking up residence elsewhere, and returning to the son. Thus, the demon may have been present in the son continually, manifesting itself only as it willed.

<sup>130</sup>The violent reaction of the demon to Jesus' presence is similar to other violent reactions, sometimes verbal, other demons had when they encountered Jesus [Mk 1.23–26, 34; 3.11–12; 5.6–13].

<sup>131</sup>There is no mention of the son's "deafness" elsewhere in any of the accounts.

The purpose of each of these periscopes is to contrast the inability of the disciples to cast out demons with Jesus' never failing ability, and the role faith plays in the process—not faith of the demoniac [as is so prevalent in modern miracle-workers], but the faith of those executing the exorcism and the faith of the crowds in general. It is difficult to determine to whom Jesus is referring when he responds to the report that his disciples could not cast the demons out [Mt 17.17; Mk 9.19; Lk 9.41]. It seems unlikely he would refer to his disciples as an "unbelieving and perverted generation."<sup>132</sup> At the same time, it also seems unlikely he would be referring to the father who had enough faith to bring his son to Jesus even after the failure of his disciples. It may well be that Jesus is referring to his own generation's general lack of faith [Mt 12.39, 45; 16.4]. Mark raises doubt about the father's faith: "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us" [9.22b]. Jesus immediately takes note of the father's qualified request: "If you can?" [9.23]. He responds to the father in essentially the same way he does to his disciples when they ask him privately why they could not accomplish the exorcism: the lack of faith—presumably in all parties—prevented success. The father expresses faith, perhaps in desperation. Jesus then cast out the demon, but Mark alone adds that Jesus' motive may have been something other than the mere expression of the father's faith, however genuine it may or may not have been: "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit" [9.25]. Jesus may have acted when he did to impede the swelling of a following who did not fully understand his ministry or who he was—particularly in Gentile surroundings, and he certainly was not about to perform miracles for curious sightseers.<sup>133</sup>

Jesus was specific about the role of the disciples' lack of faith and their failure to cast out this particular demon [Mt 17.20].<sup>134</sup> This, however, was not the first time Jesus accused the disciples of "little faith" [Mt 6.30; 8.26; 14.31; 16.8]. In Mark, Jesus responds to the query of the disciples as to why they failed by saying only, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" [Mk 9.29].<sup>135</sup> His response may simply be another way of saying the disciples needed an unbroken dependence and communication with God in order to accomplish their mission, in other words, a continued reliance on faith in the true source of power.<sup>136</sup>

There may be yet another reason the disciples had not demonstrated faith in this particular failed effort. Perhaps they were not being faithful to their mission. When Jesus initially commissioned his apostles to preach, heal, raise the dead, and cast out demons, he specifically forbade their entrance into Gentile territory; they were to "go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" [Mt 10.1–8].<sup>137</sup> In short, perhaps the disciples had no business even attempting to cast out demons in Gentile territory at this time; they were exceeding the parameters of their Lord's commission.<sup>138</sup>

In the final commission of the Lord to his apostles, their mission extended beyond the house of Israel into the entire world [Acts 1.7–8], and their mission included authority over demons without restriction [Mk 16.14–20]. There are only a few passing references to disciples casting out demons among the Jews [Acts 5.12–16], the Samaritans [Acts 8.4–8], and the Gentiles [Acts 16.16–18;<sup>139</sup> 19.11–12]. In Ephesus, where Paul had been successful in casting out demons,

<sup>132</sup>However, it is not unreasonable to think Jesus' frustration at their failure, perhaps instigated by the nine apostles' uneasiness with the absence of Jesus and his inner circle of Peter, James, and John [Mt 17.1; Mk 9.2], led him to such a rebuke. Jesus may have viewed them in their unbelieving posture as representative of their whole generation, the generation who failed in belief and rejected Jesus as the Messiah [*cf.* Lk 7.31; 11.29–32, 50–51; 17.25].

<sup>133</sup>It is likely not the case that "The press of the crowd may have interfered with what was clearly a difficult exorcism." Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Mark 1:1–8:26, vol. 34B, p. 53. It is unimaginable that the size of the crowd could affect Jesus' effectiveness.

<sup>134</sup>However, only Matthew includes this information. Luke omits the disciples' question on the exorcism, and has Jesus refer only to his coming passion and the disciples' failure to understand his reference [Lk 9.43–45].

<sup>135</sup>Some later Matthean manuscripts add at Mt 17.21, "But this kind does not go out except by prayer *and fasting*," possibly to accommodate the Markan tradition.

<sup>136</sup>There is no indication Jesus prayed [or fasted] before this, or any other, exorcism he performed. This recalls, however, the admonition of Paul to "pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit..." [1Thess 5.17–19]. This is an admonition toward unbroken communication with God, which will keep the disciple from quenching God's Spirit and preventing his work within them.

<sup>137</sup>See also Mk 3.14–15; 6.7–13; Lk 9.1.

<sup>138</sup>This may explain Luke's addition of Jesus' reference to his coming passion in Jerusalem as a subtle reminder to the apostles that "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" was their current mission. Luke also adds, however, that the disciples did not understand. The same reference follows immediately in Mk 9.30–31.

<sup>139</sup>"This slave girl (as in 12:13, the Greek implies that she is very young) has literally a 'spirit of a pythoness'—the same sort of spirit that stood behind the most famous of all Greek oracles, the Delphic oracle of Apollo

there were unsuccessful attempts by Jewish exorcists who tried to invoke the name of Jesus, but presumably, only because of the success they had seen in Paul [Acts 19.11–18].<sup>140</sup> Although the book of *Acts* reveals little concerning the post-resurrection exorcisms of the disciples, it does demonstrate some similarities to the exorcisms of Jesus. The demons are pictured as "coming out of them shouting with a loud voice" [Acts 8.7], and at the simple command by Paul, in Jesus' name, the demon "came out at that very hour" [Acts 16.18]. As in Jesus' exorcisms, there were no lengthy incantations, physical struggling with the demoniac, or prolonged rigorous ceremonies.

Shortly after the exorcism of the man's son in Mk 9.14–29; Lk 9.37–45, both Mark and Luke depict the disciples as being unformed of Jesus' and their own missions, manifesting immaturity as well. At this point in both accounts the disciples come to Jesus to complain about "someone"—the reader is not informed beyond this brief reference—who was successfully casting out demons in Jesus' name, but he was not one of their followers, so they unsuccessfully tried to stop him. Jesus tells them that "he who is not against us is for us," implying they should let him be [Mk 9.38–39; Lk 9.49–50]. Luke ends the discussion there, while turning to Jesus' mission to return to Jerusalem for his passion [Lk 9.51]. Mark, however, adds a considerable block of teaching on humility and sacrifice before turning to Jesus' return to Judea [9.30–10.1].

Whoever this "someone" was, he must have manifested the faith that Jesus called for in order to cast out demons earlier in this incident. However, this recalls Jesus' disconcerting words in Mt 7.21–23, which seem to imply that the casting out of demons and performing miracles in his name need not always issue from hearts of genuine faith. It is true the claims in Mt 7.22 may only be the *claims* of professing believers, who have knowingly not conformed entirely to the will of God. However, Jesus does not call their claims fraudulent, neither does he deny they were acting in his name. Nevertheless, he does seem to imply one could act [successfully] in the name of Jesus while at the same time be out of harmony with at least some other aspects of the will of God—aspects significant enough to bring judgment on the last day.

Nevertheless, it is likely Jesus had given authority to others as well as the apostles. Luke follows this chapter with the commissioning of the seventy [10.1–16] who successfully cast out demons, which Jesus declared was a sign of Satan's defeat [10.17–20 *cf.* Jn 12.31; 16.11; Rev 12.7–9 (see discussion below)]. The successful ministry of Jesus and even his disciples in casting out demons is graphically described as Satan falling from heaven—the defeat of the kingdom of Satan by the kingdom of God: "if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" [Mt 12.28]. In other words, Satan's defeat is a present reality because the kingdom of God has broken into history through the Messiah's ministry. The eschatological judgment of Satan and his demons is but the finale of that ministry: "the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" [Mt 25.41 *cf.* Rev 20.10].

The pericope in Lk 13.10–17 is found only in Luke. This is the second occasion when Jesus casts out demons on the Sabbath [*cf.* Mk 1.21–39; Lk 4.31–43], although the passage never uses exorcism terminology. However, unlike the previous occasion, the exorcism becomes an issue with the synagogue rulers, because he did it on the Sabbath. Jesus' response to their accusations is the same as on other occasions when he *healed* on the Sabbath.<sup>141</sup>

The possession of the woman is defined in terms of [lit.] "a spirit of sickness [weakness, infirmity]."<sup>142</sup> Jesus simply tells the woman she is "freed from" or "released from" her sickness, and he "laid his hands on her" immediately healing her, signified by the fact she could stand upright for the first time in 18 years. This is the only example of an exorcism where Jesus laid his hands on the demoniac.<sup>143</sup> However, laying on of hands is often associated with healings *in*

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whose priestess was called a pythoness (she was named after the 'Pythian Apollo,' slayer of the great Python)." Craig S. Keener, IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament – Acts. "The Python was a mythical serpent or dragon that guarded the temple and oracle of Apollo, located on the southern slope of Mount Parnassus to the north of the Gulf of Corinth. It was supposed to have lived at the foot of Mount Parnassus and to have eventually been killed by Apollo (cf. Strabo Geography 9.3.12). Later the word python came to mean a demon-possessed person through whom the Python spoke—even a ventriloquist was thought to have such a spirit living in his or her belly (cf. Plutarch De Defectu Oraculorum 9.414). Undoubtedly all who knew the girl regarded her as neither fraudulent nor insane but as demon possessed and able to foretell the future. By her fortunetelling, she earned her masters much money." Richard N. Longnecker, Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Acts*.

<sup>140</sup>This may well be an example of those condemned by Jesus in Mt 7.21–23 [see below].

<sup>141</sup>See, for example, Lk 6.7; 14.3–6; Mt 12.10–12; Mk 3.2–6; Jn 9.14–16.

<sup>142</sup>See for "sickness" Lk 5.15; 8.2; Acts 28.9; 1Tim 5.23; for "weakness" see *esp.* Heb 4.15; 5.2; 7.28; 11.34.

<sup>143</sup>In fact, there is no other account of Jesus ever *touching* a demoniac.

*general* [Mt 9.18; Mk 5.22–23; 6.5; 7.32; 8.23–25], and Lk 4.40–41 might suggest it in connection with exorcisms.<sup>144</sup>

At first glance, Jesus appears to confirm the "*spirit* of sickness" was demonic by stating "Satan has bound" the woman "for eighteen long years" [13.16]. However, this may not be decisive, for in Acts 10.38 Peter summarizes Jesus' ministry, in part, as "healing all who were oppressed by the devil," which could well be a reference to healing in general. If that is the case, Jesus' statement here concerning the woman being bound by Satan may only be a general reference to sickness. Nevertheless, Peter's statement in Acts 10.38 may also *include* exorcisms.

If indeed this is an exorcism, this raises yet another question as to how long demon possession had been occurring. This incident, along with the one of the father whose son who had been possessed "from childhood" [Mk 9.21], suggests demon possession existed at least in the first century and clearly before Jesus' ministry began. Although the reference to demonic possession in the early church is infrequent, it is also clear it existed at least sometime following Jesus' earthly ministry. In other words, demon-possession did not exist solely for the demonstration of Jesus' power over the demonic realm, and demonic confrontations with Jesus in his earthly ministry did not bring to a close demon-possession. Nevertheless, as there is no specific reference to demon-possession in the Hebrew Scriptures,<sup>145</sup> and exorcisms in the early church are attributable to the Spirit of the risen Christ in his disciples, it is possible the phenomenon of demon-possession existed to bring glory to the person of Christ and demonstrate his absolute authority over the realm of darkness.<sup>146</sup>

Mary Magdalene appears 12 times in Scripture, all in the gospel accounts and all but one at the time of Jesus' passion<sup>147</sup> and resurrection.<sup>148</sup> She was the first witness to the resurrection of Christ [Mk 16.9; Jn 20.11–18]. Luke introduces the readers to her in Lk 8.1–3. She was one of a group of women who ministered to Jesus [serving and financially] during his ministry. What many consider her last name actually represents where she was from. It was possibly Magdala, a place on the coast of the Sea of Galilee near Tiberias.<sup>149</sup> Nowhere does Scripture record, or even suggest, Mary Magdalene was a prostitute.<sup>150</sup>

Mary was among other "women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses."<sup>151</sup> Her case is emphasized probably because of the more serious nature of her possession: "from whom *seven* demons had gone out." Jesus himself cast the demons out [Mk 16.9], but there is no record of it. The number seven is no doubt exact, but also may carry the symbolic significance of *completeness*, or simply a consuming possession.<sup>152</sup> In referencing Mary as the first to see the risen Christ, Mark also mentions the seven demons Jesus had cast out. Thus, the significance of the number had carried in the tradition.

<sup>144</sup>'Laying on of hands' is included in the promise of Christ to his disciples just before his ascension, but it is connected only with healing of the sick, and distinguished from casting out demons [Mk 16.17–18]. It is infrequently associated with physical healing in the early church [Acts 9.10–17; 28.7–9], but never exorcisms. It is more frequently associated with anointing for a special task [Acts 6.5–6; 13.3; 1Tim 4.14; 5.22; 2Tim 1.6; Heb 6.1–2(?) and the conveyance of the Holy Spirit for a special empowerment [Acts 8.17–19; 19.5–6]. Jews also believed it bestowed a special blessing [Mt 19.13–15].

<sup>145</sup>The "evil spirit *from the Lord*" that terrorized King Saul is not described as "possessing" or controlling him as in later cases of actual demon-possession. The spirit would depart when David refreshed Saul simply by playing the harp, suggesting that it was Saul's own spirit that the evil spirit tormented [1Sam 16.14–23; 18.10–11; 19.8–10]. God's use of alien spirits to serve him is taken for granted in the Hebrew Scriptures [Job 1.1–12; 2.1–7; Zech 3.1–5; 1Chron 21.1–8 with 2Sam 24.1ff]. Under a theology of divine providence, Jews could ultimately attribute everything to God. The "evil spirit" may simply have been, or embodied, a messenger [1K 22.19–22]. Some have suggested it was a spirit of discontent, fainting, or torment in the heart of Saul God created, or allowed to develop, because of Saul's continuing disobedience [cf. Is 37.7; 61.3]. This may also be the sense in Judg 9.22–24.

<sup>146</sup>This raises the question of demon-possession in modern times. Although there are numerous claims and experiences that may suggest the possibility, it seems disciples of Christ cannot be demon-possessed because of their allegiance to him and willingness to submit to God [Jas 4.7; 1Jn 4.4]. The world not demonstrating these characteristics is not only vulnerable to, but under the authority of, the Devil [Eph 2.1–3].

<sup>147</sup>Mt 27.55–61; Mk 15.40–41, 47.

<sup>148</sup>Mt 28.1; Mk 16.1–3, 9; Lk 24.6–10; Jn 20.1–2, 11–18. She was most likely with the other disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem awaiting Pentecost [Acts 1.12–14].

<sup>149</sup>Magdala is not found in Scripture. However, some scholars suggest [without evidence] Magadan was Mary's hometown [cf. Mt 15.39].

<sup>150</sup>Reference is sometimes made to Lk 7.36–50, but Luke makes no connection.

<sup>151</sup>The phrase "evil spirits and sicknesses" could indicate *distinction* [demon-possessions as well as sicknesses] or a single thought, a hendiadys [sicknesses produced by evil spirits].

<sup>152</sup>See also the possession of the man with a "Legion" of demons [Mk 5.9; Lk 8.30].

- **Accusations about Jesus' exorcisms and his claims**

The incident of Jesus casting out demons in Mt 12.22ff [and *pars.*] sets up an opportunity for Jesus to defend himself against accusations against his ministry by the Pharisees and to make a statement about the forgiveness of sins that has resulted in a variety of interpretations.<sup>153</sup> Jesus' statement about forgiveness should not be divorced from the accusation of the Pharisees and Jesus' defense.

This is not the first occasion on which the Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. In a very similar incident [presumably also in Galilee], Jesus casts a demon out of a mute [κωφός] man, and while the crowds are amazed, "the Pharisees were saying, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of demons,'" but the account ends at that point [Mt 9.32–34].

Additionally, John records three occasions on which the Jews accuse Jesus of being possessed by a demon. In each case, the accusation was a response to claims by Jesus concerning his unique relationship to God [7.19–20], his identity—"I am" [8.48–59], and his power to raise himself from the dead [10.17–21]. In one sense, these were not "formal" accusations about demon-possession, but probably hyperbolic reactions based on the astounding words they were hearing. Thus, they add little to the study about demon possession other than the fact that it was not a rare accusation against Jesus, regardless of the degree of seriousness by the accusers. They do suggest that the Jews believed at least one manifestation of demon-possession was insanity, which, for some Jews, could account for the claims of Jesus.<sup>154</sup>

Following Matthew's more complete account than either Mark's or Luke's, it is helpful to examine the words of Jesus following the accusation of the Pharisees later in Mt 12.

The exorcism and the charge [Mt 12.22–24; Lk 11.14–16; Mk 3.22 (no record of the exorcism in *Mark*)]

1. Jesus' *argument* against the charge [Mt 12.25–30; Lk 11.17–23; Mk 3.23–27 (presented as a parable in *Mark*)]
2. Jesus' *warning* about blaspheming the Holy Spirit [Mt 12.31–37; Mk 3.28–30; (Lk 12.10)]
3. Jesus' *warning* about seeking a sign [Mt 12.38–42; Lk 11.29–32]
4. Jesus' *warning* about the return of the evil spirit [Mt 12.43–45; Lk 11.24–26]<sup>155</sup>

The demoniac was blind and mute [*cf.* Mk 9.14–29]. Only in this case does Scripture directly connect *blindness* to demon-possession. Nevertheless, the healing of blindness was a continuing theme of Jesus' ministry, possibly because of the spiritual significance the disease can symbolize.<sup>156</sup> Matthew only writes that Jesus "healed" [θεραπέυω] the man, but the Pharisees recognized Jesus had done an exorcism [Mt 12.22, 24].<sup>157</sup>

The accusation is nearly identical in Matthew [12.24] and Luke [11.15]: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons" [*cf.* Mt 9.34]. Mark, however, is more specific as to the meaning of the accusation: "'He is possessed by Beelzebul'<sup>158</sup>," and 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons'" [Mk 3.22]. "Beelzebul" is Satan [Mt 12.26–27; Lk 11.18–19]. The term Βεελζεβούλ occurs in Scripture only in this episode as well as in Mt 10.25.<sup>159</sup> The

<sup>153</sup>Three other passages fall into a general category of "unforgivable sins," [Heb 6.4–6 (apostasy); 10.26–31 (willful sin); and 1Jn 5.16 (unrepented sin)].

<sup>154</sup>In Jn 10.21 some of the Jews respond to the charge against Jesus of having a demon by arguing, "A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?" This is a reference to the healing of the man born blind in Jn 9, which presumably had become well known. Not only does this question suggest that demons were not likely to do such a good work, but that they were not *able* to.

<sup>155</sup>A key to understanding sections 3 and 4 is that Jesus is specifically warning his "generation" [Mt 12.39, 41–42, 45], which brings the charge against Jesus about casting out demons by the power of the devil. Therefore, the reader must consider the warning about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in this context. Interestingly, Jesus also chastised his generation for making a similar accusation against John the Baptist [Mt 11.16–19; Lk 7.31–35].

<sup>156</sup>See Jn 9; Mt 9.27–31; 15.30–31; Mk 7.31–37; 8.22–26; 10.46–52; Lk 7.21–22; 18.35–43.

<sup>157</sup>Mark, without mention of the exorcism, attributes the accusation against Jesus to "the scribes having come down from Jerusalem" [9.22 *cf.* 2.6; 7.1], while Luke, who does mention the exorcism, but not the blindness, attributes the accusation only to "some of them" [*i.e.*, some of the crowds observing the exorcism, 11.14–15].

<sup>158</sup>*Lit.* "he has Beelzebul," which is the common way of expressing *possession* [Mk 7.27; 9.17; Lk 4.33; Acts 8.7; 16.16; 19.13]. See *esp.* Mk 3.30, "He has an unclean spirit."

<sup>159</sup>Here Jesus is likely referring to the fact that "if they [*i.e.*, the Pharisees] have called the head [*i.e.*, Jesus] of the house [*i.e.*, God's household] Beelzebul [as implied in Mt 9.34], how much more will they malign the members [*i.e.*, Jesus' disciples] of his [*i.e.*, Jesus'] household" [Mt 10.24–25]. This statement from Jesus to his

variant reading *Beelzebub* has often led interpreters to equate *Beelzebub* with the Philistine deity of the city of Ekron [2Kings 1.2, 3, 6, 16]. *Baalzebub* (Heb *ba'al zēbūb*) likely means "lord of flies."<sup>160</sup>

The main point of this pericope is the Pharisees' charge against Jesus, which is why there is so little in the text about the remarkable exorcism itself. At the very least, the Pharisees accused Jesus of operating under the *authority* of Satan; at worst, they accused him of being *possessed* by Satan. Either way their view is diametrically opposed to the truth, and most likely, the greatest affront to Jesus they could make.<sup>161</sup> The last thing they wanted to believe was that Jesus was "the Son of David" [*i.e.*, the Messiah—"but when the Pharisees heard *this*," Mt 12.24–25a];<sup>162</sup> the best thing they could hope for was his allegiance to the devil, as they exposed in their accusation.<sup>163</sup> Of course, if Jesus was possessed or simply a pawn of Satan, their conspiracy to kill him would be that much more justified, at least in their minds, and likely also in the minds of the crowd, if they could be convinced.

In addition to the reaction of the Pharisees, there appears have been at least three other reactions from the crowds. First, some were questioning as to whether he was the Messiah [Mt 12.24]. Second, "his own people" [οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ]<sup>164</sup> said "He has lost his senses" [NASB, NIV has "He is out of his mind"].<sup>165</sup> Third, "Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven" [Lk 11.16].<sup>166</sup> The crowds were still in a state of confusion about Jesus, but the Pharisees had their minds set against him.

The first part of Jesus' defense to the Pharisees' accusation is an appeal to common sense [Mt 12.25–30; Lk 11.17–23; Mk 3.23–27]. It would be counter-productive for Satan to empower Jesus, or anyone, to cast out his demons because in effect he would be opposing his own work, tearing down his own kingdom—defeating himself. In short, their accusation was absurd. Should anyone suggest such an action could be a diversionary tactic by Satan to discredit the claims and ministry of Jesus, Satan is still left with a weakened kingdom and short-lived victory, because all of Jesus' claims would soon be validated by his resurrection. In addition, the recognition and proclamation by his own demons that Jesus was "the Son of God" and "the Messiah" served as a witness against the Pharisees' accusation [Mt 8.29; Mk 3.11; Lk 4.41].<sup>167</sup>

In the course of his initial response, Jesus adds a secondary argument by asking a rhetorical question [Mt 12.27; Lk 11.19]: "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons [*i.e.*, those of your own Jewish circle, Mt 8.12, or your own followers] cast them out?" Jesus appears to be acknowledging actual exorcisms by Jewish exorcists [*cf.* Acts 19.13], or at least

disciples occurs in the context of the commissioning of the disciples [10.1–4] and what they are to do and expect in their mission including rejection and persecution [10.5–23]. The disciple should expect nothing less because they are not above Jesus, who experienced all they would experience [10.24–25]. Nevertheless, there will be blessing for their life of sacrifice [10.26–42].

<sup>160</sup>Other etymologies have been offered and can be examined in the various biblical dictionaries. For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to recognize this is a reference to Satan. In reference to Mt 10.25, Donald Hagner follows another possible derivation of the term: "The name means 'lord [=בַּעַל, *be'el*, or *ba'al*] of the house [=בַּיִת, *zēbūl*, 'height, abode, dwelling']" and thus itself stands as a play on words opposite Jesus as the 'lord of the household.'" Hagner, Donald A., *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33A, Matthew 1–13, p. 282.

<sup>161</sup>Even their denial of his deity, which everyone misunderstood, until following his resurrection, is excusable on these grounds.

<sup>162</sup>This contrast of views between the people and the Pharisees of Jesus as "the son of David" and empowered by Satan is also recorded in Mt 9.27–34.

<sup>163</sup>Their accusation was rooted in Jewish expectations of Satanic deception and should not be misunderstood as pure fabrication on their part [Dt 13.1–3; Mt 24.24; 2Thess 2.9; Rev 13.13–14; and *cf.* 2Cor 11.14].

<sup>164</sup>See Pr 31.21 for the similar phrase [οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ] meaning "her family" in context. Perhaps these people were from his own family [Mk 3.31–35], although Mark seems to indicate they arrived after the events, which Matthew [12.46–50] leaves open. Note also Mark records at the beginning of the pericope, "[Jesus] came home [*Lit.* 'to (his or a?) house!']" [Mk 3.20]. With all the commotion in the vicinity because of his arrival, his own family must have been observers. Mark also adds, "they went out to take custody [possession, charge] of him," which could simply mean his family was attempting to rescue him from the crowd. It would not be surprising if his family had thought Jesus "lost his mind," for they too had difficulty understanding him [*cf.* Lk 2.48; Jn 2.3–4; 7.3–5].

<sup>165</sup>The vb. Mark uses nearly always means "amazed, astonished" in the GNT, which would make little sense in this context. Paul uses the vb. also to mean "out of our mind" in contrast to "in our right mind" [2Cor 5.13]. The root idea carries the sense of "confused," as if "by wine" [Is 28.7].

<sup>166</sup>Ironically, they *were* witnessing a sign, as Jesus would soon explain. Perhaps they had something in mind akin to "the sign from heaven" that was used to validate Moses [Jn 6.30–31].

<sup>167</sup>Although Jesus may have silenced the demons from telling anyone [Mk 3.12; Lk 4.41], no doubt those on the scene during the exorcisms—including the demoniacs themselves [Mk 5.18–20; Lk 8.38–39]—could have testified to what they had heard from the demons during the exorcism [Lk 8.36].

using their own lack of logic against them, regardless of the authenticity of their "sons" exorcisms. The point remains that because Satan was clearly not in the business of casting out his own demons, what other option is there. Jesus had to be accomplishing the exorcisms by the same power as the other Jews. He then adds, "For this reason they will be your judges." "They," *i.e.*, their Jewish exorcists—"your sons," would judge [or condemn] the Pharisees making this accusation because not only would the accusation reflect on their exorcisms, but oppose the work of God.

At this point, for the first time in this discussion, Jesus brings in the Holy Spirit [Mt 12.28; Lk 11.20].<sup>168</sup> This is not so much an argument against the accusation of the Pharisees, but rather the only alternative possible to Jesus' casting out demons, which forces the Jews' hand. All would have agreed there is a power behind such Jesus' action; the power is not inherent. However, how many options were there? In effect, Jesus offers the only two,<sup>169</sup> with the first—Satan casting out Satan—as illogical.

The Jews would certainly recognize the only other real option would be God casting out Satan. Thus, Jesus offers up the suggestion knowing the Pharisees would be hard pressed to argue against it: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>170</sup> If it is the Spirit of God behind Jesus, the Pharisees have had "the kingdom of God come upon [them]." To the Jew, "the kingdom of God"<sup>171</sup> was God's rule or sovereignty, his authority, his presence. Thus, Jesus is declaring that as he casts out demons by the power of God, the kingdom of God is now present in his person, the Messiah. However, because the Pharisees reject Jesus, and attribute his power to the devil, Jesus tells them, "the kingdom of God has come [φθάνω<sup>172</sup>] upon you," suggesting a "ominous edge" to the presence of God: "God's judgment has come upon you."<sup>173</sup>

Jesus adds to the logic of his argument implying that the presence of the kingdom in his person [as stronger than Satan (Lk 11.22 *cf.* 1Jn 3.8b; Is 53.12)] also reflects the binding of Satan ["the strong man" *cf.* Rev 20.2; Lk 10.17–20]. This enables Jesus to cast out the demons ["carry off his property...plunder his house" (Mt 12.29; Mk 3.27); "takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder" (Lk 11.22); *cf.* Is 49.24–25].<sup>174</sup> Both Matthew and Luke add what is in effect another warning from Jesus against the Pharisees [Jews]: "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."<sup>175</sup> These Jews are scattering God's revelation of his Son, with the implication of judgment beginning with the presence of the

<sup>168</sup>Matthew, however, has already set up this encounter by introducing the reader to the Holy Spirit while describing the ministry of the Messiah as prophesied by Isaiah [12.15–20 with Is 42.1 *cf.* Lk 4.18 with Is 61.1].

<sup>169</sup>The contrast is absolute: either cast out demons by Satan OR by God; neutrality is not an option. See also Mk 9.40; Lk 9.50.

<sup>170</sup>Luke [11.20] has "But if I cast out demons by the *finger* of God..." which is identical save for the substitution of "finger" for "spirit." This phrase "the finger of God" is unique to this passage in the GNT, but has a background in the Hebrew texts concerning God's working the plagues [Ex 8.19] and his writing of the tablets for the ten commandments [Ex 31.18; Dt 9.10]. See also Ps 8.3. This is simply and idiomatic expression in reference to God putting forth his power as in the plagues, and acting directly as in the stone tablets.

<sup>171</sup>The usual form for the phrase "kingdom of God" in Matthew [12.28; 19.24; 21.31, 43] is "kingdom of heaven" [Mt 3.2; 4.17; 5.3, 10, 19–20; 8.11; 10.7; 13.11ff; *et al.*], which does not occur outside Matthew. However, the Synoptic parallels of the phrase "kingdom of God" demonstrate it is synonymous with Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" [Mk 1.15; 4.11ff; 9.47; 10.14–15, 23–25; 14.25; Lk 4.43; 6.20; 10.9; 13.28–29; 18.24–25; *et al.*]. The phrase only occurs twice in *John* [3.3, 5], six times in *Acts*, eight times in Pauline epistles, and nowhere else. The phrase "kingdom of God/heaven" does not occur in the Hebrew, however the Phrase "kingdom of Yahweh" does occur [1Chron 28.5; 2Chron 13.8]. Other indirect references [as with personal pronouns] to God's kingdom occur a few times [1Chron 17.14; Ps 103.19; 145.11–13]. See also Dn 2.44; 7. Matthew may use "kingdom of God" here to contrast the kingdom of Satan, or it may simply use it stylistically to complement "Spirit of God."

<sup>172</sup>The term occurs only 7 times in the GNT [Lk 11.20 also] and 14 times in the LXX.

<sup>173</sup>Paul wrote to the Thessalonians of the Jews who had rejected "the Lord Jesus and the prophets" and were now rejecting his [Paul's] gospel "with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come [φθάνω] upon them to the utmost" [1Thess 2.16]. The phrase "come [φθάνω] upon you" has stronger implications than "the kingdom of heaven is at hand [ἐγγίσις]" [Mt 4.17; 10.7; Lk 10.9; Mk 1.15]. See also Lk 17.21, "the kingdom of God is in your midst [ἐντός]."

<sup>174</sup>Satan's "property" may refer to the demons or those possessed, whom he had previously "bound" [Lk 13.16].

<sup>175</sup>Jesus speaks omnitemporally and absolutely, of anyone at anytime, and certainly more specifically of the Pharisees and "your [Pharisees'] sons" [Mt 12.27] who may be casting out demons in God's name, but remain under the threat of judgment for rejecting God's Son. As with the options of casting out demons by either Satan or God, there is no neutrality in following Jesus: either one advances the cause of Christ or one opposes it.

Son in his earthly ministry. The ministry of Jesus is the beginning of eschatological vindication [those with Jesus] and judgment [those not with Jesus].

In the same context, Jesus uttered his warning concerning "the blasphemy<sup>176</sup> of the Holy Spirit" [ἡ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος βλασφημία (12.31), εἶπη κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου ("speaks {aorist subjunctive} against the Holy Spirit," 12.32)] [Mt 12.31–37; Mk 3.28–30; (Lk 12.8–12)].<sup>177</sup> The exposition of these passages has caused much difficulty throughout the church age. Augustine represents the traditional view;<sup>178</sup> however, this understanding needs more specification.

The Lukan context aside for a moment, it seems apparent that the attribution of Jesus' works—in particular, exorcisms—to Satan when in reality it was the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus, is blasphemous to the Holy Spirit, whether it was intentional—*i.e.*, knowing it was the Holy Spirit, and yet still attributing it to Satan—or unintentional. Mark specifically comments on Jesus' warning about blaspheming the Holy Spirit and the eternal consequences associated with it: ὅτι ἔλεγον πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει ["because they were saying he has an unclean spirit"].<sup>179</sup> Thus, there is a direct correlation between the "eternal sin" and the Jews attributing Jesus' exorcism to Satan.

Jesus sets "the blasphemy against the Spirit" in contrast to sins that will be forgiven: "any sin and blasphemy" [Mt 12.31; Mk 3.28], "a word against the Son of Man" [Mt 12.32; Lk 12.10].<sup>180</sup> In contrast, "the blasphemy against the Spirit": "shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" [Mt 12.31–32], "never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" [*i.e.*, a sinful act with eternal consequences, Mk 3.29], "it will not be forgiven him" [Lk 12.10]. The terminology is quite decisive; this sin will *never* be forgiven.<sup>181</sup> Is it that the sin against the Holy

<sup>176</sup>Βλασφημία [βλασφημέω, βλάσφημος] means "speech that denigrates or defames, reviling, denigration, disrespect, slander...to demean through speech, an esp. sensitive matter in an honor–shame oriented society. to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns" [BDAG]; "to speak against someone in such a way as to harm or injure his or her reputation (occurring in relation to persons as well as to divine beings)" [Louw and Nida].

<sup>177</sup>Mark uses a verbal phrase, βλασφημία εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ["blasphemes (aorist subjunctive) to the Holy Spirit," 3.29], while Luke, in a different context, also uses a verbal construction, τῷ δὲ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα βλασφημήσαντι ["to the one blaspheming (aorist participle) to the Holy Spirit," 12.10]

<sup>178</sup>"...it is clear that He does not refer to every sin of whatsoever kind against the Holy Ghost, in word or deed, but would have us understand some special and peculiar sin. But this is the hardness of heart even to the end of this life, which leads a man to refuse to accept remission of his sins in the unity of the body of Christ, to which life is given by the Holy Ghost... Whosoever therefore has resisted or fought against this gift of the grace of God, or has been estranged from it in any way whatever to the end of this mortal life, shall not receive the remission of that sin, either in this world, or in the world to come, seeing that it is so great a sin that in it is included every sin; but it cannot be proved to have been committed by any one, till he has passed away from life. But so long as he lives here, 'the goodness of God,' as the apostle says, 'is leading him to repentance'; but if he deliberately, with the utmost perseverance in iniquity, as the apostle adds in the succeeding verse, 'after his hardness and impenitent heart, treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' [Rm 2.4–5] he shall not receive forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come." *Treatise Concerning the Correction of Donatists* [Epistle 185], Chapter 11.49

<sup>179</sup>The Lord, through the prophet Zechariah, promised that in the ministry and age of the Messiah [Zech 12–13] "the names of the idols...the prophets and *the unclean spirit*" [הַיְהוָה הַיְהוָה, occurring only here in the HMT] would be removed from the land of Israel [13.2]. The implication was that the prophets were speaking for or by an unclean spirit [cf. 1Kings 22.22]. The LXX translates הַיְהוָה [hann<sup>o</sup>hī'im, "the prophets"] with τοὺς ψευδοπροφήτας ["the false prophets"]. In Zechariah's time [sixth century BC], the demonic nature of such spirits was not as clearly developed as in the time of Jesus' ministry. Concerning the word "spirit" in the HMT, F. W. Horn writes, "the basic dynamic meaning 'wind, breath' gradually disappears. Originally the focus was on sudden experiences ('spirit of jealousy' [Num 5:14]; 'unclean spirit' [Zech 13:2]; 'evil spirit from God' [1 Sam 18:10]), but in Judaism this usage eventually devolves into demonology." "HOLY SPIRIT," *AYBD*, 3:262. The confrontation of the Messiah with the unclean spirits [demons] anticipated the complete banishment of the Jewish false prophets from the land realized in Israel's destruction in AD 70.

<sup>180</sup>The Son of Man, *i.e.*, Jesus, in his earthly ministry was veiled as to who he actually was. Misunderstanding, and therefore charges against him were understandable, and needed correction. When that correction came in the proclamation of the gospel, many repented of their earlier rejections.

<sup>181</sup>"This age" [τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι] is generally understood as the age of the Messiah, before he comes on the last day; "the one [age] about to come" is that following his return on the last day [οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι cf. Eph 1.21, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι]—"the resurrection age," *i.e.*, following the day of judgment. However, "this age" could refer to the old covenant age, while "the one about to come" would be the new covenant age [the Messianic age]. The latter makes more sense, for no Jew would expect to receive forgiveness in "the resurrection age." Either way, Jesus' point is the sin against the Holy Spirit, once committed, *never* receives forgiveness. See also Mk 3.29, οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ["to the age," *i.e.*, "forever" cf. Mt 21.19; Mk 11.14; Jn 6.51, 58; 8.51–52; Heb 1.8; *et al.*]. ἀλλά ἔνοχος ἐστὶν αἰώνιου ἁμαρτήματος ["eternal sin" cf. Mt 19.29; Mk 10.30; Jn 3.15–16; αἰώνιος most frequently occurs (over 40 times

Spirit cannot [or will not] be confessed or repented of, which seems to be the implication? Once these particular accusers of Jesus said what they said, was there no possibility of a change of mind and heart? Was this sin context specific or does it have a universal application—can it be committed today?

Jesus clearly argued that the accusation of the Pharisees was invalid, and that the only other option is that God is the power behind Jesus' works—through the Spirit [12.18]. They must have come to realize this; Jesus not only claimed it, but the lack of options left little to debate. Thus, there was a conscious and deliberate rejection of the Spirit's work through Jesus. It was one thing to attack the person of Jesus, but quite another to attack the divine origin and empowerment of his Messianic ministry. The sin that cannot be forgiven is a life [a "perpetual act," not a single instance] of the obstinate rejection of the Spirit's work in God's kingdom [speaking against the Spirit],<sup>182</sup> here specifically represented by crediting Jesus' exorcism to Satan. To reject the Holy Spirit in this manner is the most basic way of frustrating the experience of God's saving acts. It may be analogous to—but not equivalent to—the spirit of apostasy, which makes repentance impossible while one is in that frame of mind and heart [Heb 6.4–6].

Jesus generalizes the warning—which certainly includes his immediate adversaries—with the relative pronoun "whoever" [ὅς]. The brief parable Jesus follows his warning with [Mt 12.33–37] also universalizes, but he specifically calls out his immediate antagonists, the Pharisees: "You brood of vipers....," *lit.* "offspring of snakes" [12.34; see also 3.7; 23.33]. In effect, Jesus tells them they are incapable of not blaspheming, speaking against what is good [Lk 11.13; Mt 7.11], because their hearts are evil, and their mouths can only speak their hearts. The words they speak will condemn them because they are speaking their heart.

Clearly, believing the ministry of the Messiah<sup>183</sup> was empowered by Satan is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; this sin could be committed in any age, as well as in the first century by those who actually encountered Jesus face to face, like his accusers. Extending this sin to the rejection of the Holy Spirit by simply rejecting the word or the proclamation of the gospel seems unwarranted—one can reject the gospel without attributing it to the Devil.<sup>184</sup>

The Lukan context concerning blasphemy against the Spirit [12.8–12] is disconnected from the Beelzebul controversy [Lk 11.14–26] and may simply have been spoken at another time. Nevertheless, the statement is sandwiched between Jesus' words about men confessing or denying him before men with the result of Jesus either confessing or denying them before God [Mt 10.32–33; Mk 8.38]. This seems to have eternal consequences, but he then says those speaking against the Son of Man [denying him(?)] can be forgiven. In contrast, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Then he informs his disciples that the Holy Spirit will give them prophetic words before "the rulers and authorities" [Sanhedrin, Pharisees], who, as numerous texts in *Acts* demonstrate, reject their words, perhaps constituting blasphemy against the Spirit [*cf.* Mt 10.19–20; Lk 21.14–15]. Thus, blasphemy against the Spirit might include a rejection of the proclamation of the truth by God's prophets, which of course is a denial of the power behind the gospel. In other words, it may include a rejection of or rebellion against the witness of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In the Matthean account, the scribes and Pharisees interrupt Jesus' discourse with a request for a sign from him [Mt 12.38–42; Lk 11.29–32].<sup>185</sup> Ironically, he has just given them a sign—casting out the demon, which they rejected and attributed to Satan. Jesus knew no sign would convince them.<sup>186</sup> Jesus had his immediate audience specifically in mind when he said, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign" [12.39], which he effectively spelled out in the following verses as he referred to the judgment coming upon "this generation" [τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης]

in the GNT) with ζωή, "eternal life". In Lk 18.30 Jesus promises sacrificial disciples great reward ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦτῳ ["in this time"] καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ["in the age coming"] ζῶν αἰώνιον ["eternal life"]. "Eternal life" is not likely a designation for "the age coming," but rather the reward to be received for discipleship. It was available to faithful followers of the Christ "in this time" [*i.e.*, his earthly ministry] and "in the age to come" [*i.e.*, Messianic age] [see Jn 3.16; 5.24–25].

<sup>182</sup>It is an obdurate, stiff-necked refusal to accept the sanctifying work of Spirit.

<sup>183</sup>*i.e.*, his earthly ministry as a man, not his exalted ministry as Lord.

<sup>184</sup>It is likely anyone genuinely concerned about having blasphemed the Holy Spirit, by virtue of that concern, can hardly be guilty of the sin.

<sup>185</sup>Luke adds the request for a sign from Jesus following Jesus' discussion on the return of the evil spirit [Lk 11.24–26 *cf.* Mt 12.43–45].

<sup>186</sup>Mark indicated their spirit by revealing they were seeking a sign from him "to *test*" him [Mk 8.11–12]. They do not want evidence from him; they want failure. Elsewhere, Jesus indicated that signs [miracles] were not necessarily indicators of true discipleship and therefore do not necessarily reveal the Holy Spirit's presence and power [Mt 7.21–23].

on the last day.<sup>187</sup> The only sign he promised was that of his resurrection, which the Jews would likewise reject [*cf.* Lk 16.27–31].

Only Matthew and Luke record Jesus' warning about the return of the evil spirit; the passages are nearly identical, with Matthew adding a few, though significant words [Mt 12.43–45; Lk 11.24–26]. Jesus had just cast out an unclean spirit, but because of the unbelieving generation he was dealing with and their rejection of the authenticity of his words, his reference to the evil spirit's return applied to his generation, *viz.*, Israel—"That is the way it will also be with *this* evil generation" [Mt 12.45].<sup>188</sup>

The spirit ends up in "waterless places"<sup>189</sup> following an exorcism.<sup>190</sup> He is without a "house," *i.e.*, he desires someone to inhabit. Demons seek to inhabit humans, but this demon apparently could find no suitable resting place—no willing human to inhabit. It seems demons could not enter whom ever they chose, but in some sense, the person had to allow it, or become a victim through circumstances of their own willingness. In Mk 8.31 the demons Jesus had cast out begged him to allow them to enter the swine—presumably they wanted some "house" to dwell in, and for the moment would even settle for swine.

The demon chooses to "return to my house from which I came"; he chooses to return to the demoniac from whom he was either cast out of or left on his own accord. Presumably, he based his choice to return to the same person because the person had been "swept and put in order," suggesting he was cleaned out and empty—Matthew adds he was "unoccupied" [σχολλάζω, to be empty (rare word)].<sup>191</sup> This may suggest the person, although exorcised of a demon, had not been *filled* with anything good or clean in the demon's place. The person is still a willing, or at least susceptible, subject for demon possession.

In such a case, such an individual becomes the target of "seven other spirits more wicked" than the original demon. Seven, the biblical number for completion, likely means the repossession of the man is thorough; it is complete domination, even worse than his previous possession because he had done nothing to improve his state spiritually [*cf.* 2Pet 2.20; Jn 5.14]. This is likely the significance of the possession of Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons, but who became thoroughly committed to Jesus as Lord—vastly improving her spiritual state [see above on Lk 8.1–3; Mk 16.9].

Jesus applies [in Matthew only] the observation that the last state of the possessed man "becomes worse than the first" directly to "this evil generation" [12.45]. Jesus' reference is possibly to the Jews some of whom had accepted the preaching of John the Baptist, were thus "swept and put in order" in preparation for the coming Messiah, yet rejected the Messiah and became worse off than they had been.<sup>192</sup> Thus, in response to the woman pronouncing a blessing on Jesus' mother as he spoke, he responded, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" [Lk 11.27–28]. Israel was not hearing and observing the word of God in the ministry of his Messiah. Some Israelites were so deaf to the call of the Messiah they perceived him as empowered by Satan; they actually attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to the Devil. Jesus told them, any sin could be forgiven but that one; it was unpardonable.

### III. Demons in the first century church

#### A. Teachings in Acts and the epistles

In Acts 5.1–6, Peter's charge that Satan [ὁ σατανᾶς]<sup>193</sup> "filled [πληρώω] your [Ananias'] heart" is similar to the action involving Judas in his betrayal of Christ [see above].<sup>194</sup> Although in Judas' case, Satan actually "entered" Judas. Interestingly, although the cases are hardly of equal magnitude, they are both motivated by greed. Ananias' greed was in stark contrast to the believers who were generously donating whatever they had to meet the needs of others [4.32–35].

<sup>187</sup>See *fn.* 155 on "generation."

<sup>188</sup>Luke omits this sentence.

<sup>189</sup>The demon ended up in "waterless places," signifying *desolate wastelands*, from which God had rescued Israel [Dt 32.10; Jer 2.6] and to which he returned her in consequence of her rejection and rebellion [Hos 2.3]. Demons apparently gravitated to such places, perhaps until they could inhabit a new victim [*cf.* Rev 18.2].

<sup>190</sup>That the demon was exorcised, perhaps by the Jewish exorcists mentioned in 11.19, is only a possibility. It is equally possible he left the demoniac on his own accord; the verb ἐξέλιθη is in the *active* voice ["he goes out"].

<sup>191</sup>Perhaps he was unable to find anyone else more suitable—a better person in whom he could find "rest."

<sup>192</sup>This may be a veiled reference to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 [Mt 24; Lk 17; 21].

<sup>193</sup>It is difficult to know whether Peter meant, or Ananias would have heard, "Satan" as a formal identification the reader might assume, or simply "the adversary."

<sup>194</sup>Lk 22.3–6 [*cf.* Mt 26.14–16; Mk 14.10–11]; Jn 6.70–71; 13.1–2, 21–30.

Striking is the charge that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and God,<sup>195</sup> not Peter, the church, or even the apostles [4.35, 37]. There is a resemblance between Ananias' action, inspired by Satan, and the sin against the Holy Spirit [see above on Mt 12.22–45 (Mk 3.20–30; Lk 11.14–26 (12.10)]. This has encouraged some to understand this as an example of "the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit," especially because Ananias and his wife [5.7–11] died on the spot, without the opportunity for repentance or forgiveness. However, "the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" is a much deeper evil—attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, which Ananias and his wife did not do. Peter's charge to Sapphira was that she and Ananias had conspired "to test the Spirit of the Lord" [5.9, *πειράσαι τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου*]. Again, it is doubtful they consciously thought they could deceive the Holy Spirit, but in essence, any lie against his people, particularly his prophets, is a lie against him.

As even in the case of Judas, Ananias and his wife were willing participants in this sin, as Peter indicates when he tells Ananias he himself had "placed this deed in [his] heart" [5.4, *ἔθου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο*]. Likewise, to Sapphira, Peter said, "you have agreed together" [5.9, *συνεφωνήθη*] to test the Spirit. Satan forced neither participant to act against their own wills; they were not simply predetermined pawns in Satan's evil scheme.<sup>196</sup>

Elymas was a "false prophet [*ψευδοπροφήτην*], "full of deceit [*δόλος*] and fraud [*ῥαδιουργία*]. . . an "enemy of all righteousness" [Acts 13.6–12]. These are clearly characteristics of the fruit of Satan [2C 11.13–15].

"Son of the devil" [*υἱὸς διαβόλου*] is simply a way of designating Elymas as one antagonistic to the kingdom of God, because Satan is behind his works.<sup>197</sup> This is the only occurrence of this exact phrase; however, Jesus referred to the "tares" in the parable of the tares [Mt 13.36–39] as "the sons of the evil one" [*οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ*], set over against the "wheat," "the sons of the kingdom" [*οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας*]. They are "the sons of the evil one" because they are the products of the devil's work—"the enemy who sowed them is the devil."<sup>198</sup>

Jesus also referred to the devil as the father of the Pharisees because they were doing his works by rejecting the truth and attempting to kill Jesus. They rejected the truth as sons of the devil and sought to do his desires, and accordingly could not even recognize the truth because they served "the father of lies" [Jn 8.41–47]. Likewise, Elymas was "a son of the devil."

The philosophers listening to Paul in Athens [Acts 17.16–21] supposed he was proclaiming "strange deities [NIV, gods]." The word translated "deities" is *δαίμόνιον*. Possibly the philosophers had mistakenly understood *ἀνάστασις* [resurrection] as a reference to "the goddess consort of a god named Jesus."<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, the word *δαίμόνιον* is always translated "demons," although occasionally what the writer implies as "demons," the world might perceive as "gods" [Dt 32.17; Ps 96.5LXX; 106.37; Is 65.3LXX; 1Cor 10.20–21].

<sup>195</sup>In practical terms, one cannot "lie" to the Holy Spirit and God who know all things, which is clearly indicated by the fact Peter, presumably through revelation, knew Ananias lied.

<sup>196</sup>The question about their eternal status is often raised, having died in a sin without repentance or forgiveness, as it appears. Note that it is not the church or Peter who brings this judgment; presumably it is directly from God who knew their hearts. Later, Peter gives a sinner the opportunity to repent [Acts 8.20–22; this sin also involves money]. If however, they were Christians, walking in the light, there is no reason to believe this sin could not be cleansed by the blood of Christ. If they had been walking in darkness, clearly, it would not have cleansed [1Jn 1.6–10]. There could be no assurance for believers if they had to live in the fear of dying in a moment of the weakness of the flesh [1Jn 5.13]. This is not to diminish the heinous nature of the sin of lying [Rev 21.8]. Where there is even a hint of conscious deception and misrepresentation in any relationship or communication, trust is irreparably violated. See 2K 5.20–27. The Qumran community reflected the serious nature of this sin:

"These are the rules by which cases are to be decided at a community inquiry. If there be found among them a man who has lied about money and done so knowingly, they shall bar him from the pure meals of the general membership for one year; further, his ration of bread is to be reduced by one-fourth." [1Qs 6.24–25]

<sup>197</sup>No doubt Paul referred to him with this designation playing off the man's name *Βαρισησοῦ*, which is Aramaic for "son of Jesus."

<sup>198</sup>"Sons of..." is a way of designating allegiance, discipleship, or distinguishing characteristics [see Gen 6.1–4 ("sons of God" contrasted with "daughters of men," *i.e.*, sons of the ungodly *cf.* Ps 12.1; 11.5; 1Kings 20.35; 2Kings 2.3–15 Job 1.6; 2.1 (contrasted with Satan); 41.34; Hos 10.9; Mk 3.17; Lk 20.34–36; Jn 12.36; Eph 2.2; 1Thess 5.5].

<sup>199</sup>Richard N. Longnecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, The Acts of the Apostles*, comments on 17.18.

"Angels" in Rom 8.37–39 seems out of place for the context; why would they threaten the believer's relationship to God? Is Paul writing of "fallen angels"? Perhaps the meaning is that no good angel would seek to come between Christ's love and the object of that love. Demons, on the other hand, would delight to separate Christians from Christ, but they cannot do so. Perhaps all Paul is suggesting is that the complete range of spiritual forces, however conceived—good or evil, every possibility and eventuality is included [as with death and life]. What Paul actually believed about heavenly beings and their power over events and individuals on earth is never clear; the existential realities about which he was most concerned were primarily sin and death.

In directing the church at Corinth concerning an incestuous member whom the church continued to fellowship, Paul directed them to disfellowship him [1Cor 5.1–5]. Paul views this process as including the following: "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh [τῷ σατανᾷ<sup>200</sup> εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός], so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" [5.5].

Presumably, Paul meant that by turning the sinner over to the indulgence of his fleshly desires, they would eventually bring his ruin so that he will have a change of heart and return.<sup>201</sup> "Deliver such a one to Satan" was likely a graphic way of saying have him return to the kingdom of darkness, rather than deluding himself as being the kingdom of light, which the church was likely reinforcing. Life in darkness, especially for those who have tasted the light, would reap the consequences of a life of sin, causing repentance and a return to the light. Even though Satan can be viewed as an agent of God's purpose, it can hardly be understood that Paul viewed Satan as purposing to bring the man to repentance, for that would be counterproductive to his demonic mission.

This course of action proved successful, if 2Cor 2.5–11 [cf. 7.9–12] can be identified with 1Cor 5.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, in the case referred to in 2Corinthians, Paul was quick to remind the Corinthians to be receptive to a repentant brother in terms of "forgive and comfort...love" to the end goal "that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes" [2Cor 5.5].<sup>203</sup> Should a brother return and not be received, Satan could use that lack of forgiveness and love on the part of the church to destroy both the rejected brother and the church. The punishment could become vindictive [2.6]; suffering punishment, especially if it is prolonged, could become a source of "excessive sorrow" and perhaps resignation to defeat [2.7 cf. Col 3.21]. In such a case, Satan fulfills his purpose [1Pet 5.8] and wins the spiritual battle.

A similar course of action seems to be in mind in 1Tim 1.18–20 for Hymenaeus and Alexander whom Paul "handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme." As in the case in Corinth with the incestuous member, Paul desires for these teachers of false doctrine [blasphemers] in Ephesus not only punitive action, but remedial action. Certainly, this is never Satan's purpose, but God can use him in the process of redemption, indicating God is always in control and always seeking repentance from sinners, particularly those who belong to him [Heb 12.3–11; Rev 3.19; 1Cor 11.30].<sup>204</sup> Paul specifically instructs Timothy along these lines to lead sinners "from the snare of the devil" [2Tim 2.24–26].<sup>205</sup> From the perspective of the sinner, it may not be clear who is behind suffering, and for what purpose it is occurring. Nevertheless, the faithful can perceive it as from God to bring about repentance and redemption, even if the devil himself—with entirely opposing purposes—is in the course of action.

Paul addresses a very common issue of temptation in 1Cor 7.1–7, temptation through sexual desire. In short, he admonishes husbands and wives to mutual responsiveness in the sexual relationship at all times—save by agreement "for a [presumably short] time" for prayer.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>200</sup>With one exception in Paul [2Cor 12.7], σατανᾷς is otherwise articular [9 occurrences], giving Satan his full due as "the adversary."

<sup>201</sup>This hope of the apostle might rest in the story of the prodigal son [Lk 15.11–24].

<sup>202</sup>It is not certain that the referent in 2Cor 2; 7 is the man of 1Cor 5. That was the traditional understanding, but recently scholars reject this identification for a number of reasons [see various commentaries, e.g., The Expositor's Bible Commentary and Word Biblical Commentary].

<sup>203</sup>Readers are informed of Satan's schemes through the study of Scripture.

<sup>204</sup>The history of Israel demonstrates that God often used her enemies—Satan's agents—to execute his judgments [1Kings 11.14; Is 45.1–13; Hab 1–2; Rom 9.15–18; *et al.*].

<sup>205</sup>If the Hymenaeus and Alexander of Paul's later letter [2Tim 2.15–19; 4.14] can each be identified with those of 1Tim 1.18–20, it would appear the discipline was not effective.

<sup>206</sup>Whether Paul is referencing the view of some who wrote in the statement, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman" [7.1b] or is making a statement of fact is academic for this discussion. Paul only conceded to—he does not *command*—any particular degree of intimacy in marriage; abstinence was a matter of mutual

The reason was "in order that the Satan should not tempt you through your lack self-control." As is always the case, Satan is waiting for opportunities to draw [especially] believers into sin [1Pet 5.8], and there is no better place than in the area of sexual desire.

In Corinth, Paul was fearful those preaching "another Jesus..." might lead the Corinthians away from the purity of the gospel [2C 11.1–6]. Those preaching this "different gospel" were "false apostles, deceitful [δόλιος] workers" [11.12–15] threatening to lead the readers' minds astray [φθειρω, corrupt, destroy]. The leading astray of minds [νόημα] is clearly the objective of the devil: "the god of this world has blinded the minds [νόημα] of the unbelieving" [4.4].

These "deceitful workers" were operating in the same manner as the "serpent" in Eden who "deceived [ἐξαπατάω] Eve" [11.3 *cf.* Gen 3.13, "the woman said, 'The serpent deceived (ἀπατάω) me, and I ate.'"]. Paul alludes to this same event in 1Tim 2.13–14 without specific reference to the serpent, but who is implied as the agent in the *passive participle* "being deceived" [ἐξαπατηθεῖσα].<sup>207</sup>

Paul seems to have accepted the historicity of the events in Gen 3.<sup>208</sup> Whether he believed the serpent actually was Satan, or simply an agent of Satan is unclear. Nevertheless, he believed the false apostles attempting to deceive the Corinthians were agents ["servants, ministers" διάκονος] of Satan [11.14–15]. Such agents "transform [μετασχηματίζω, disguise, masquerade] themselves as apostles of Christ...angel of light...servants of righteousness" [11.13–15 *cf.* Gal 1.8]. The middle voice of the three verb forms of μετασχηματίζω suggests they are transforming themselves into something they know they are not. These are not self-deceived agents believing they truly are "apostles of Christ...servants of righteousness." They are what Jesus warned of in Mt 7.15–20: "false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." These agents are in the business of "deceiving" and "leading astray," precisely what Satan has done from the beginning, because he is, in his own nature, a liar [Jn 8.44]. His disciples seek to be just like him [*cf.* Mt 10.25].

It is naïve to think Satan would reveal himself in his true nature; few would follow him. Most people would prefer to think they were believing and following the truth, doing the "right" thing; they would rather be deceived. Knowing this, Satan indulges and fulfills human pride and self-delusion. It is disconcerting that what appear to be true angels of God, may not be, but all the more reason for the faithful to be diligent in their quest for truth.

Paul's experience recalled in 2Cor 12.1–10 is very similar, if not as severe, as Job's encounter with Satan. Much of what Job 1–2 revealed [see above] applies here. It appears Job endured more than the apostle Paul, but the purposes of God and Satan were the same. God effectively enabled Job's faith to be tested successfully, while Satan did all he could—God *allowed* him to do—to destroy Job's faith so he would curse God [Job 1.11; 2.5 *cf.* 2.9].

Who is the agent of the third singular passive ἐδόθη—"it [*i.e.*, σκόλοψ, a thorn] was given to me"? The purpose of the thorn was to keep Paul from *exalting* himself [ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι (here and 2Thess 2.4 only in GNT *cf.* 2Chron 32.23), "in order that I might not exalt myself"]. The

consent. In addition, he seemed to view the celibate life as a gift from God, rather than simply a matter of self-control. These facts suggest it was *not* his view that "it is good for a man not to touch a woman"; he did not view celibacy as the ideal.

<sup>207</sup>Paul alone refers to the person of Eve [Εὐα, Heb. חַוָּה] and this event from Gen 3, nevertheless, he appears to recognize the historicity of the story. See also the discussion on Gen 3 above. The name "Eve" is mentioned only four times in Scripture [Gen 3.20; 4.1; 2Cor 11.3; 1Tim 2.13]. The LXX translates Ζωή ["life"] "because she [is] mother of all the living [τῶν ζώντων]" in Gen 3.20, but Εὐα in Gen 4.1.

<sup>208</sup>Gen 3 was Paul's background for his terminology [perhaps Job 1.6–12 was also in mind]. There is a retelling of the Genesis story in the pseudepigraphical *Life of Adam and Eve* [ca. 100BC – 200AD] presenting Eve's version reflecting similar terminology:

15.1 "Then saith Eve to them: 'Hear all my children and children's children and I will relate to you how the enemy deceived us...' 16.1 And the devil spake to the serpent saying, Rise up, come to me and I will tell thee a word whereby thou mayst have profit." 2 And he arose and came to him. And the devil saith to him: "I hear that thou art wiser than all the beasts, and I have come to counsel thee. 3 Why dost thou eat of Adam's tares and not of paradise? Rise up and we will cause him to be cast out of paradise, even as we were cast out through him." 4 The serpent saith to him "I fear lest the Lord be wroth with me." 5 The devil saith to him "Fear not, only be my vessel and I will speak through thy mouth words to deceive him." 17.1 And instantly he hung himself from the wall of paradise, and when the angels ascended to worship God, then Satan appeared in the form of an angel and sang hymns like the angels. 2 And I bent over the wall and saw him, like an angel."

The writer views the serpent also as an enemy of humanity distinct from Satan, yet Satan's agent ["vessel"] of deception. Satan is presented as disguising himself as an angel worshipping God [*i.e.*, an angel of light].

repetition of the telic clause ἵνα μὴ... suggests strong emphasis.<sup>209</sup> Paul wants to make certain his readers understand divine agency is behind the "thorn." It would be counter-productive to Satan's purposes to keep Paul from boasting about his experience [12.1–6]—for reveling in selfish conceited behavior, pride.

Satan's purpose was to "torment" [κολαφίζω, beat, cause physical harm] Paul. This suggests the "thorn" may have been some physical issue—thus, "in the flesh" [τῇ σαρκί],<sup>210</sup> which may have been encompassed in his persecutions [12.10 cf. 1Cor 4.11 (κολαφίζω); 2Cor 1.8–10; 4.8–11; 11.23–28].<sup>211</sup> The only description given for the "thorn" is that it was "an angel [ἄγγελος, messenger] of [from, genitive is likely subjective] Satan." However, the actual identity of the "thorn" is unknown.<sup>212</sup> Regardless, Satan's purpose was to discourage, crush, or perplex Paul, lead him to despair, make him feel forsaken, destroy his spirit, or just get him to take his eyes off Christ and put them upon himself. Satan need not get someone to curse God to get him to charge God with not caring. A loss of trust in God's grace would be sufficient for Satan and devastating to Paul.

Whatever the details of Paul's "thorn in the flesh," the apostle conveys the idea, clear throughout Scripture, that God is always in control, even though he may allow Satan to do his evil. In the end, the purposes of God and Satan are always in diametric opposition: God desires humility and faith in his people, purposing for their trust in his grace; Satan desires pride and distrust in God's people, purposing for them to fall.

The distinction between righteous and unrighteous [sinful] anger is often difficult to detect. The tendency is to assume our own anger is usually justified. Nevertheless, Paul, cites Ps 4.4[LXX] in Eph 4.26–27, admonishing readers to resolve justified anger issues immediately so they do not develop into sin; anger not quickly put to rest becomes a "flaming fire" [cf. Hos 7.6].<sup>213</sup>

One must always guard against anger as it is such a common sin [Jas 1.19–20] and therefore offers the devil a playground of opportunity. The word Paul used for "opportunity" was τόπος, which generally means "place." However, the sense here, as in a few other passages where someone does or does not take *advantage* of a circumstance [Acts 25.16; Heb 8.7; 12.17], is clearly that the Devil always looks for "a place" [an "opening"] to accomplish his plan, *i.e.*, to make people sin.<sup>214</sup>

This is a common concern of the apostle—the devil taking advantage. As anger gives the Devil a "place" to work out his evil, so does an unforgiving spirit give him an "advantage" [2Cor 2.10–11], while questionable character and a quarrelsome spirit give him the opportunity to set his "trap" [παγίς, 1Tim 3.7; 2Tim 2.24–26 cf. 1Tim 6.9]. Paul knows Satan has one objective: to bring people, especially believers, to failure in sin.

Paul makes two references to the devil in Eph 6.10–16, forming an *inclusio* around the this paragraph, as he warns believers against what he summarizes as the true challenge of believers in vs. 12 as "the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly places":

<sup>209</sup>Unfortunately, the NIV omits the second repetitive clause.

<sup>210</sup>Some take the dative [τῇ σαρκί] as a *dative of disadvantage*, "FOR [or AGAINST] the flesh" [taking "flesh" in the ethical sense, Paul's lower nature], with the view that the purpose of the thorn was to keep his "flesh" in check—from self-exaltation. This fits the context, but is somewhat redundant and generally when Paul writes of the "flesh" in this sense he contrasts it with "spirit."

<sup>211</sup>Clearly, as Paul knew and accepted the story of Job [1–2], he recognized that God might discipline and/or test his people with physical ailments [1Cor 11.30].

<sup>212</sup>Spicq argues it "must be an allusion to Num 33:55, where Canaanites who are spared 'will become thorns (σκόλοπες) in your eyes.' If we recall Gal 4:13–15...we will conclude that Paul's missionary activity must have been hindered by an affliction of the eyes, probably by an "eye migraine" [under the Art. σάρξ, σαρκικός, σάρκινος, *fn.* 28]. Other than an unknown physical problem, regardless of how it was achieved, a viable understanding is that the "messenger from Satan" was an ironic way of referring to Paul's opponents [adversaries], so called "apostles of Christ," but actually "angels of Satan" [11.13–15]. Paul sometimes used ἄγγελος in reference to people [Gal 4.14], "thorn" likewise can refer to people [Num 33.55], and the verb κολαφίη otherwise always means "to beat" in reference to human acts [Mt 26.27; Mk 14.65; 1Cor 4.11; 1Pet 2.20].

<sup>213</sup>Some Greek philosophers and the Qumran community required that disputes be settled the same day: "Each must reprove his fellow according to the command, but must not bear a grudge day after day" [CD 7.2–3].

<sup>214</sup>In Lk 4.13 after failing to get Jesus to sin, Luke writes, "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an *opportune* time [*lit.* ἄχρι καιροῦ, 'until a time']." In other words, Satan would look for a better "opening," perhaps which he perceived to find at Jesus' crucifixion.

...stand against the schemes of *the devil* [6.11]

...be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of *the evil one* [6.16]<sup>215</sup>

The "schemes" of the devil are his "deceitful methods" [μεθοδεῖα, here and Eph 4.14 only in GNT]. The "flaming arrows" of the evil one is simply a summary metaphor for all his *attacks* ["schemes"] on believers, which Paul contrasted by the summary metaphor "full armor" [πανοπλία] of God [6.11, 13 *cf.* Lk 11.22].<sup>216</sup> As usual, Paul characterizes the objective of the devil as an attack on the people of God. As usual, the only defense against such attacks is rooted in the truth of God from God [2Cor 10.4].

Perhaps the most curious concept in this paragraph is Paul's reference of the believer's opponents as not of this world—"blood and flesh,"<sup>217</sup> but rather "of *this darkness*,"<sup>218</sup> against the spiritual forces of wickedness *in the heavenlies*." This seems clearly to be a reference to demonic forces in the immaterial world. The phrase "in the heavenlies" [ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις] occurs only five times, all in *Ephesians*: three times as the realm of Christ's rule, which includes the entire created realm [1.3, 20; 2.6] and once as what seems to be a parallel to 6.12 [3.10]. Elsewhere, the adjective ἐπουράνιος is essentially a reference to "heaven" or the things of "heaven" in contrast to this world [Jn 3.12; 1Cor 15.40, 48–49; Phil 2.10; 2Tim 4.18; Heb 3.1; 6.4; 8.5; 9.23; 11.16; 12.22].

Paul is clearly not using the term as a reference to "heaven" in its ultimate sense: being in the favorable presence of the Lord. He likewise is probably not using it in the sense that fallen created spiritual beings [angels, demons] were in the presence of the Lord [*cf.* Job 1–2; Zech 3] before the incarnation and ministry of the Christ [Lk 10.18; Rev 12.7–10]. He can only be referring to the spiritual, immaterial realm of non-corporeal evil beings set over against the physical, material realm of corporeal evil beings. Ultimately, the believer's struggle is with demonic forces ruled by Satan, though they may well manifest themselves in human agents. The human agents are nothing more than secondary causes of the attack, often ignorant of the master they truly serve. The believer must never lose sight of whom the ultimate enemy actually is, *viz.* Satan [Rev 12.17].

Paul writes of Satan "hindering" [ἐγκόπτω] his efforts to visit the Thessalonians [1Thess 2.17–18]. How or why Satan hindered the apostle is not explained.<sup>219</sup> Paul was also "hindered" from visiting the Romans, however in that case, preaching the gospel to Gentiles was the cause [Rom 15.22], and it is never Satan's purpose to encourage the proclamation of God's word anywhere. Somehow, Paul perceives this as a possibility in Thessalonica, but why in this particular case is anyone's guess.<sup>220</sup>

2Thess 2.1–12 raises many questions. For one, how could "the man of lawlessness" [Titus, or anyone for that matter] display Satanic "power and false signs and wonders"?<sup>221</sup> Paul clearly indicates that Satan has such power. The words describing Satan's activity are always otherwise used to describe God's activity in Christ and his prophets [Acts 2.22; 6.8; Rom 15.9; 2Cor 12.12; Heb 2.4]. The three words are synonyms understood as "supernatural works" [miracles] contemplated from different points of view: "powers" [δύναμις, miracles] look to the *source* behind the acts, "signs" [σημείον] look to the theological or ethical *purpose* of the acts, "wonders" [τέρασις] looks to the extraordinary *character* or *nature* of the acts. In 2Thess 2.9 "power" is *singular* pointing to Satan as the *source* and the "signs and wonders" are therefore "false,"<sup>222</sup> genuine "signs and wonders" are only those empowered by God, the Holy Spirit [Rom 15.9].

<sup>215</sup>See also 1Thess 3.3; Mt 13.19; Jn 17.15; 1Jn 2.13–14; 5.18–19 for "the evil one" [τοῦ πονηροῦ].

<sup>216</sup>Paul gives the πανοπλία of God more detail by further metaphors [6.14–16], but the point is to "stand" [6.11, 13] against the devil and "extinguish" ["quench" *cf.* Heb 11.34] his attacks [6.16 *contrast* 1Thess 5.19].

<sup>217</sup>The expected σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα [1Cor 15.50; Gal 1.16; Mt 16.17] is reversed, but see also Heb 2.14 [αἵματος καὶ σαρκός]. There is likely no difference in meaning.

<sup>218</sup>"Darkness" is always set in contrast to "light" as meaning that place outside the presence or fellowship of the Lord, this present age, this world [Eph 5.8, 11; Rom 13.12; 2Cor 6.14; Col 1.13; *et al.*].

<sup>219</sup>Speculation runs in many directions, like the thorn mentioned in 2Cor 12 or the Jews mentioned in 1Thess 2.14–15, but the specific cause cannot be known with certainty.

<sup>220</sup>Interestingly, it took the Holy Spirit's direct intervention to have the gospel proclaimed in Thessalonica and the surrounding areas [Acts 16.6–10].

<sup>221</sup>The actual identity of "the man of lawless" does not significantly affect this study.

<sup>222</sup>"False" is the final word in the Greek construction [σημείους καὶ τέρασι ψεύδους] suggesting the adjective describes both nouns of the preceding nouns, "false signs and wonders."

"False" does not suggest Satan actually has no power and that the "signs and wonders" he does empower only *appear* to be extraordinary acts. However, they are only extraordinary in the *natural* sense, and cannot be considered *supernatural* because he is only a *natural* being, *i.e.*, part of the created order, incapable of functioning supernaturally. He does not have the capacity to operate outside natural boundaries.

Jesus seemed to recognize miracles even in "lawless" people [Mt 7.21–23]. However, these miracles need not be "false" in that they were empowered by Satan and not God. Clearly, Jesus would later use, as his most basic argument that his exorcisms were not by Satan, the fact that Satan would never cast out demons [Mt 12.22–30]. In addition, it is possible to prophesy by the power of the Holy Spirit and still be disobedient to God [lawless] [1Sam 19.20–24]. It is possible these standing before Jesus at the judgment were lying or deceived [possibilities that would never escape Jesus' knowledge], but Jesus does not deny what they were claiming; he only denies their faithfulness.<sup>223</sup>

Nevertheless, this raises the issue of how to identify *true* miracles in that not only are they empowered by God, but that they validate those performing them as from God, and, as importantly, that they are not a function of "a deluding influence" sent by God. The acts [miraculous or not] of anyone [believer or not] are confirmed by the *words* of miracles worker, not the acts themselves. God warned Israel of "legitimate" miracles undermined by the message that would accompany them [Dt 13.1–5]. Whatever the sign or wonder, if it draws observers from the truth—God's commandments—it is either a *false* Satanic work or a *test*—or even a *delusion*—from God to determine one's faithfulness to the truth.

John dealt with a similar problem as in 2Thess 2 in 1Jn 4.1–6 writing about *professing* believers—"false prophets"—who perverted the *truth* about the Christ, whom he called "antichrists," many of whom were already in the world [1Jn 2.18]. The believer was to "test the spirits" to determine the source of the "prophecies." The messages of those from God would correlate with what the known true prophets of God [like John] had revealed. If not, they were to be rejected, regardless of their prophecies [*cf.* Dt 13].

Many *professing* believers twist and pervert God's word to conform it their theological *systems* or moral *preferences*, like the antichrists. Although "the man of lawlessness" was anything but a professing believer, the realities were the same.<sup>224</sup> Satan was behind the events described in 2Thess 2.1–12, but as always, in the history of human affairs, *God* is ultimately in control, *allowing*, even *enforcing*, such activities. Whether one outwardly opposes God or simply does "not receive the love of the truth" or "believe the truth, but [takes] pleasure in wickedness," only judgment awaits [*cf.* 2Thess 1.8–9].

Rev 13 presents a similar scenario where the earth beast draws people to worship the sea beast by performing "great signs." See the discussion below.

In the context of the startling events described in 2.1–12 and comforting reassuring words given to his readers in 2.13–17, Paul requested prayers for the success of his mission [2Thess 3.1–3]. Included in his request is that he be delivered from "evil men" [πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων], at the same time he reassures his readers that the Lord will strengthen and protect them from "the evil one" [τοῦ πονηροῦ]. In effect, Paul is paralleling "evil men" with "the evil one" [2Thess 3.2–3]; the former are merely agents of the latter, both enemies of the truth.

Paul rarely used the term "the evil one" [here and Eph 6.16 only]. Only Jesus [in the Gospels, see *fn.* 58] and John in 1Jn used the term regularly. However, Paul, Jesus, and John all characterize him in the same terms as one out to destroy [especially] God's people, who continually need and have the Lord's protection [Mt 6.13; 13.19; Jn 17.15; 1Jn 5.18]. The means of overcoming "the evil one" is through the word [1Jn 2.13–14]. Nevertheless, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" [1Jn 5.19 *cf.* Mt 13.38; Eph 2.1–3], which is clearly something most of the world does not recognize.

<sup>223</sup>The determinist's argument that these people were never truly disciples—"I *never* knew you"—does not militate against the points raised here.

<sup>224</sup>Titus—"the man of lawlessness"—was not of this sort, and neither does Paul attribute miracles directly to him, but his παρουσία was "in *accord* with the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders." Early historians [Tacitus, d.117; Suetonius, d.130] attributed miracles to Titus' father, Emperor Vespasian, as he ascended the throne of Rome, and as Titus revealed himself as "the man of lawlessness" by entering into the Temple of Jerusalem [69–70 *cf.* Mt 24]. Vespasian was on the throne of Rome because God put him there for his divine purpose: "the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and He sets over it whomever He wishes" [Dan 4.17, 25, 32; 5.21 *cf.* 2.21].

Among the qualifications of an elder in the church, Paul mentions two with accompanying consequences [1Tim 3.6–7]. He frames each consequence in terms that the candidate might fall [ἐμπίπτω] "into the *condemnation* of the devil" or "into the *reproach and snare* of the devil." In the first, he must not be a new convert, otherwise he might become "conceited" [τυφώω, proud]<sup>225</sup>; this sin inevitably leads to κρίμα—"judgment," however, in the stronger contextual sense of "condemnation" [Rom 3.8; Jude 4] as in this context,<sup>226</sup> God's "judgment" of the devil necessarily involves "condemnation." This takes the genitive as *objective*, and so the prideful young elder might fall into the same condemnation even as the devil fell because of pride. If the genitive is taken as *subjective*, Paul may be suggesting the devil, acting as God's agent, is involved in the judgment [punishment] of the young elder, much in the same way he was used by God in Corinth and Ephesus [1Tim 1.20; see notes above on 1Cor 5.1–5]. The former sense of the genitive [objective] is preferable.

The second qualification states, "he must have a good reputation with those outside" [*i.e.*, outside the fellowship of believers, the church]. Failure in this prerequisite might lead to a "fall into reproach [disgrace, insult] and snare [παγίς, see above under Eph 4.26–27] of the devil." The "reproach" the candidate must not face is likely that from "those outside" [vs. 6]. This is not the same "reproach" shared by the Lord himself [Mt 27.44; Rom 15.3; 11.26; 13.13] and by those "reproached" because of their commitment to Christ [Mt 5.11]. Rather this would be justified "reproach" from outsiders because the candidate for elder did not have a "good reputation."

Although the genitive "snare of the devil" might seem parallel to "condemnation of the devil" and therefore also an *objective* genitive, there is no grammatical requirement for this view and the context dictates otherwise—it is unlikely Paul meant "the snare in which the devil was ensnared." Taken as a *subjective* genitive, the sense is similar to that in other Pauline passages where the devil is presented as setting a "snare" [trap] for believers [2Tim 2.26 *cf.* 2Tim 4.1]. In this case, the devil would use the candidate's bad reputation to bring even greater reproach against him and the church or the "reproach" is the "snare" itself the devil uses against the candidate.<sup>227</sup>

Διάβολος is translated "malicious gossips [NASB]," relative to qualifications for *deaconesses* [1Tim 3.11],<sup>228</sup> the description of humanity "in [the] last days" [2Tim 3.3], and the description of "older women" as examples to "young women" [Titus 2.3].<sup>229</sup> The NIV translates "malicious talkers," "slandering," and "slanders" respectively. Διάβολος in its general sense means "slanderer"; it is a derivative of διαβάλλω, meaning "to slander" and occurs only in Lk 16.1 in the GNT and 2Macc 3.11; 4Macc 4.1; Dan 3.8 in LXX. Διάβολος occurs in its general sense in the LXX at Est 7.4; 8.1 in reference to Haman. Otherwise, the term is translated "devil" in Scripture and is generally *articular*. In the Pastorals, the term is found only three other times, each of which is articular and translated "the devil" [1Tim 3.6–7; 2Tim 2.26].

In 1Tim 4.1–3, Paul makes reference to apostates following πνεύμασιν πλάνοις καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαμονίων, "deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." More specifically, he defines these "teachings" as "forbidding [hindering, preventing] to marry, to abstain [*cf.* Acts 15.20, 29] from foods."

The exact nature of the Ephesian heresy is uncertain. It appears to have been Jewish in part [1Tim 1.3ff *cf.* Eph 2.11–22] and proto-gnostic in part—"opposing arguments of what is falsely called *knowledge*" [6.20]. Both Jewish and early Gnostic heretics advocated self-abasement, thru the abstinence of sex and certain foods.

Regardless of the specifics, Paul reveals the driving force behind the heresy is not some misdirected or confused enthusiasm, but rather evil [*cf.* Eph 6.12].<sup>230</sup> The spirits are "deceitful" [πλάνος].<sup>231</sup> The teachings are promoted by "the hypocrisy of liars," both ideas of which are

<sup>225</sup>Paul alone uses this word, and only to Timothy [1Tim 6.4; 2Tim 3.4].

<sup>226</sup>The stronger Greek cognate always meaning "condemnation," κατάκριμα, rarely occurs, and only in *Romans* [5.16, 18; 8.1]. Note: κρίμα preceding κατάκριμα in 5.16 demonstrates the neutral sense of κρίμα.

<sup>227</sup>This understands the καὶ as exegetical, explaining the "reproach," or the whole phrase [both nouns are anarthrous] as a *hendiadys*: "the reproach *which is* a snare," or "so he will not fall into an *insult trap* set by the devil."

<sup>228</sup>Some would argue for the qualifications of the *wives of deacons*, but this distinction has no bearing on this study.

<sup>229</sup>The *plural* form of διάβολος occurs only in these three passages in the GNT and LXX.

<sup>230</sup>The reader must always remember, demonic teaching and false teachers are not generally self-evident [2Cor 11.14–15].

<sup>231</sup>John calls this the spirit of the "antichrist" [2Jn 8].

adamantly condemned by Scripture.<sup>232</sup> This all speaks of the character and works of the devil, who completely distorts the way those who do not love God—though they may think so—perceive his word [Jn 8.42–47]. Paul told the Thessalonians, that not only does God *allow* such deception; he *sends* it [2Thess 2.10–11].

In 1Tim 5.14–15, the translation of τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ as "the enemy" is unfortunate for it strongly suggests an image of the devil [Mt 13.39; Lk 10.19], which may or may not be Paul's intent. Paul uses a participial form of the verb ἀντίκειμαι, meaning, "to oppose." The identity of "the one opposing" is not clear. Generally, in the *plural*, it refers to human *opponents* [Lk 13.17; 21.25; Phil 1.28]. In 1Tim 1.10 Paul uses the *singular* "whatever else *opposes* sound teaching" following a litany of ungodly human characteristics. Here, however, it is not only *singular*, but also *articular* with no immediate antecedent. However, in this letter, Paul has made it clear either the devil himself [3.6–7 *cf.* 2Tim 2.26] or demonic forces [4.1] are opposing the saints and he immediately warns of Satan's threat [5.15]. Regardless of whom "the one opposing" is, Satan is behind the opposition and he will take every *opportunity* [ἀφορμή, Rom 7.8, 11; Gal 5.13]<sup>233</sup> to destroy the saints.

Paul writes some of the "younger widows" had already "turned aside [ἐκτρέπω] to follow Satan." The term ἐκτρέπω is used only six times in the GNT and LXX, four times by Paul, all in the correspondence to Timothy, and always with a negative connotation [1Tim 1.6; 5.15; 6.20; 2Tim 4.4].<sup>234</sup> There is no thought of the "younger widows" becoming "Satanists" by the apostle's words, but in effect, they become disciples of Satan ["follow" from ὀπίσω, *cf.* Mt 4.19; 10.38], and, as one cannot serve two masters [Mt 6.24],<sup>235</sup> *turn away* from Christ.<sup>236</sup>

There is a fairly strong variant reading in Jas 2.19 for εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός ["the God is one"; NASB, "God is one"],<sup>237</sup> which omits the article: εἷς θεός ἐστὶν [MS B]. The anarthrous construction can be translated "there is one God" as in the NIV, but the NIV is based on the UBS text, which does not follow the variant [MS B], *i.e.*, it has the article, and the articular reading is better translated "[the] God is one." This passage in James is based on the most basic creed of the Jews, Dt 6.4, the שמע [shema' "hear"]—literally translated from Hebrew is "Yahweh our God one Yahweh." The NASB translates, "The LORD is our God, *the LORD is one!*" The NIV translates, "The LORD our God, *the LORD is one.*" The NASB and the NIV agree on the second clause, which suggests that reading is also better in the GNT translations, as in the NASB. The LXX translated the Hebrew κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστὶν ["The Lord our God is one Lord" (LXX-B)], which is followed by Mk 12.29 [κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστὶν]. The difference seems to be between the *unity* of God [NASB, "God is one"] and the *singularity* of God [NIV, "there is one God"]. The Jews, however, understood Dt 6.4 as asserting both the *singularity* and *unity* of Yahweh, as well as the fact the Yahweh was *uniquely* Israel's God.<sup>238</sup>

Whichever is the better understanding of the Dt 6.4 and Jam 2.19 on this point, Scripture is clear that *both* ideas are correct, and James declares his readers' belief in this truth is also held by demons: τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσοσιν<sup>239</sup> ["the demons believe and shudder"]. James' point is that "faith without works is [useless] dead" [2.20, 26], and therefore one can have the proper *object* of belief, but not the proper *system* of belief, *i.e.*, the means of living out the belief.<sup>240</sup> The obvious contrast is between the *works* of true believers and the *works* of demons.

<sup>232</sup>On "hypocrisy" see Mt 6.2, 5, 16; 23.13ff; Mk 7.6; on "liars" see *esp.* Rev 21.8.

<sup>233</sup>See also Eph 4.26–27 [*fn.* 214].

<sup>234</sup>See also Heb 12.13; Amos 5.8.

<sup>235</sup>With neither Jesus nor Paul is there a middle ground of indifference or indecision. Either one is with the Lord or with Satan [Mt 12.30].

<sup>236</sup>These women seem to fall into the category of "rocky soil" mentioned by Jesus in Lk 8.13, "they believe for a while, and in time of temptation *fall away.*" Their "time of temptation" was likely remaining unmarried and opening themselves to the desires of the flesh [1Cor 7.1ff]. However, in Ephesus, as in Corinth, Paul was not mandating marriage.

<sup>237</sup>The articular θεός is the subject of the copulative sentence.

<sup>238</sup>See Jos Ant 3.91; 4.201; 5.112, "to acknowledge God as one is common to all the Hebrews"; Ep Arist 132; Sib Or 3.629: "there is only one God and no other one"; Philo Opif, 171; Rom 3.30. Accordingly, the scribe, in responding to Jesus' citation of Dt 6.4, said, "You have truly stated that 'He is one and there is not another except him'" [Mk 12.32].

<sup>239</sup>The vb. φρίσσω is found only here and Job 4.15; Jer 2.12; Judith 16.10 in the LXX.

<sup>240</sup>The scribe in Mk 12.28–34 correctly agreed with Jesus that such a confession of faith in God is inadequate by itself. It must be followed by action ["works"] in loving one's neighbor, which is essentially a blanket command for all commands, as the context of Lev 19.18 demonstrates.

Although their works are diametrically opposed to God's kingdom, the demons nevertheless *believe* in the existence and identity of the one true God of Israel. This demonstrates that mere mental ascension to a given reality does not mean correspondence or conformation to that reality. This is James' most basic point: knowing [believing] something to be true without a commitment to that truth ["works"] is meaningless.<sup>241</sup> The extreme of this point, the demons, proves the point. They obviously had knowledge of God, but rejected what that knowledge entailed.<sup>242</sup>

The demons' knowledge of God exceeded that of humanity realized through the evidence in creation, Israel's history, and the presence and works of Jesus the Messiah all as revealed in Scripture. As part of the immaterial creation, they have access to truth in the spiritual realm ["the heavenlies," Eph 6.12], those of the material realm lack [cf. Job 1–2; Zech 3; Rev 12]. Demonic "faith" in and *fear* of ["shudder"] God was expressed in the presence of Jesus [Mk 1.23–24; 5.7 cf. Acts 16.16–17].

James describes the sinful characteristics "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition" as "earthly"<sup>243</sup>, unspiritual<sup>244</sup>, *demonic* [δαμονιώδης<sup>245</sup>] [Jas 3.14–16]. It is as if, with each adjective James intensifies the evil behind these sinful characteristics: of this world, having no spiritual content, *of the Devil*. Each is in direct contrast to that which "comes down from above," *i.e.*, from God the Father [1.17]. These characteristics are, on the contrary, from the Devil, producing "disorder"<sup>246</sup> and every evil<sup>247</sup> deed" [2.16].

James seems to be going beyond calling these sins "demon-like," as if comparable to things demons do, but that they are "demon-empowered," *i.e.*, demonic forces are in view as directly behind the actions of those committing these sins [cf. Lk 22.3; Jn 13.2, 27; Acts 5.3; 1Kings 22.21, 22; 1Chron 21.1–3]. In 2.14, James equates these sins to "*lying* against the truth," which in effect makes such sinners children of the Devil [Jn 8.39–47].

James' two commands in 4.7 are direct corollaries: ὑποτάγητε τῷ θεῷ [be subject (a *permissive passive* voice) to the God] and ἀντίστητε τῷ διαβόλῳ [resist or oppose (*active voice*)<sup>248</sup> the devil]. This is not an either/or proposition, it is a both/and: the believer must passively be subject to God AND actively resist the devil in order for the desired effect—the devil fleeing. The devil will not flee those refusing subjection to God, even though they attempt to resist Satan, and likewise, those in subjection to God must actively resist the devil, which necessarily follows true subjection to God. The implications are clear: (1) ONLY those subject to God can resist the devil, and (2) the devil CAN be resisted by God's people; there is no excuse for the people of God to given in to the devil's charms.

The "therefore" [οὖν] expands on the words preciously cited [4.6] from Pr 3.24, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" [also cited in 1Pet 5.5]. The "humble" are those who already submit to God or those who, when convicted of sin, are humbled, repent, and submit to God. The "proud" refuse to submit to God, and whether consciously or not, concomitantly refuse to resist the devil. The proud person is the *enemy* of God, and the *companion* of the devil.

The imperative "therefore, *submit*" begins a catena of ten imperatives culminating in the imperative, "be *humbled* [*permissive passive*]" [4.10] forming a type of *inclusio* with 4.6 ["(God)

<sup>241</sup>Perhaps James is implying those calling themselves "Christian," but have no works, should be "shuddering" along with the demons!

<sup>242</sup>Exactly how and when are matters of speculation, but it is clear Scripture places the demons in a category, like humans, of fallenness, yet unlike humans whom God gave the opportunity to be rescued from fallenness [2Pet 2.4].

<sup>243</sup>See also Jn 3.12; 1Cor 15.40; 2Cor 5.1; Phil 2.10; 3.19; the word is not found in the LXX. The idea is always a contrast to that which is "heavenly," *i.e.*, the things "from above."

<sup>244</sup>Ψυχικός is found only six times in the GNT, three of which are ethically neutral [1Cor 15.44, 46]. The remaining three, including Jas 3.15, have a negative ethical emphasis suggesting *worldliness* [1Cor 2.14; Jude 19].

<sup>245</sup>The adjective δαμονιώδης is found only here in the GNT and LXX.

<sup>246</sup>"God is not [a God] of *confusion* [ἀκαταστασία] but of peace" [1Cor 14.33].

<sup>247</sup>The word is φαῦλος and is found only six times in the GNT [Jn 3.20; 5.29].

<sup>248</sup>This is a *conditional* imperative: "If you resist the devil—as you should, he will flee from you." See Wallace Greek, p.485.

gives grace to the *humble*".<sup>249</sup> The string of commands all point to the developing of a humble spirit: "*submit to God...resist the devil...draw near to God...cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; change your laughter into mourning and your joy to gloom.*"<sup>250</sup> *Be humble* in the presence of the Lord, and he will exalt you" ["God is opposed to the proud (self-exalted)"].

In 1Pet 3.22 [cf. Rom 8.37–39], Peter does not venture to define or distinguish his three orders of supernatural beings: ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων. Together they add up to "all things," every power, whether good or evil, in the universe. Therefore, the oppressed Christians in Asia Minor to whom Peter is writing need not fear anyone. It is possible to understand these as evil angels [enemies] in accordance with Psalm 110:1 [cf. 1Cor 15.24–26; Ps 8.6].

Peter personalizes the adversarial role of the devil in 1Pet 5.8–10: ὁ ἀντίδικος<sup>251</sup> ὑμῶν διάβολος ["Your adversary devil"]. "Satan" [σατανᾶς] is borrowed from the Hebrew and Aramaic שָׂטָן meaning "adversary," and is usually a title or name in reference to the devil [often articular, see notes on Job 1.1–12; 2.1–7; Mt 4.1–11].<sup>252</sup> The metaphor is clear, "as a lion<sup>253</sup> he walks [present active indicative] roaring, seeking [both present participles] someone [anyone!] to swallow up." The present tenses demonstrate his relentless continuing effort—as a pacing hungry lion—to accomplish his purpose. As always, it is the devil's purpose to destroy his prey.

Nevertheless, Peter admonishes the faithful to "resist" the devil, implying the possibility for *believers*. This passage is reminiscent of Jam 4.7ff; James and Peter teach essentially the same truth. Whereas James focuses on *humility* [submission] as the key to victory over the devil, Peter focuses on *the faith* [στερεοὶ τῇ πίστει].<sup>254</sup> The faith in which Peter's audience participates is the [only] objective faith [system] shared by others suffering similar experiences [attacks from the devil], which holds out the promise of God's "eternal glory." God will reward their resistance of Satan at the coming of Christ.<sup>255</sup>

2Peter and Jude should be considered together in this study for their obvious similarities.<sup>256</sup> 2Pet 2.4–6 and Jude 5–9, in the context of addressing false prophets and teachers, assured their judgment and destruction by recalling the judgment of others who opposed God: "angels...the ancient world [at the flood]...the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah...those who did not believe [following Egyptian exodus]" [2Pet 2.4–6; Jude 2, 7]. Peter's point is that God could "keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" [1Pet 2.9].

With regard to the fallen angels, Peter and Jude wrote:

"God did not spare angels when they sinned, but in chains of gloom<sup>257</sup> cast them into Tartarus, he delivered [them] keeping [them] for judgment" [2Pet 2.4].  
"And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned [left] their [own] proper abode, He has kept in eternal chains under gloom for judgment of [the] great day" [Jude 6].

<sup>249</sup>These are almost 20% of the 54 imperatives in James' epistle, suggesting a central roll for this passage, which presents a spirit contrary to the spirit promoting to the destruction of interpersonal relationships as in 4.1–6.

<sup>250</sup>James [4.9] is likely recalling Mt 5.3–4 and Lk 6.20–21, which establish humility and sorrow for sin as the foundation of the disciple's character, as he recognizes his own creatureliness.

<sup>251</sup>Used only here in this sense; see Mt 5.25; Lk 12.58; 18.3 and nine times in the LXX all of human opponents.

<sup>252</sup>Here alone in 1Pet, the apostle personifies the opposition to the faith as a singular opponent. Elsewhere the opposition is always plural [2.7–8 and 4.17; 2.12, 15, 18; 3.1, 14, 16; 4:4b, 14.].

<sup>253</sup>The "lion" metaphor is infrequently used in the GNT [2Tim 4.7; Heb 11.13(?)], but common in the OT [e.g., Num 23.24; Ps 10.9; 17.12; 22.13; Hos 5.14; Ezek 22.25]. Both 1Pet 5.8 and 2Tim 4.7 are likely allusions to the same passage [Ps 22.13].

<sup>254</sup>The articular dative "firm *in the faith*" is possibly *objective* as in *the system of belief* [the gospel of Christ], rather than *subjective* as in the faith of the believer [cf. Acts 6.7; 14.22; 1Cor 16.13; 2Cor 13.5; Phil 1.27]. However, πίστις in the rest of the letter is *subjective* [1.5, 7, 9, 21], suggesting support for the *subjective* view in this case also. Taken either way, resisting the devil is realized by faith.

<sup>255</sup>1Pet 1.3, "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

<sup>256</sup>Whether Peter followed Jude of *vice versa*, has little affect on this study.

<sup>257</sup>From ζόφος [2.17; Jude 6, 13; Heb 12.18] meaning "gloom" or "darkness" cf. Jude 13, ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους, "the gloom of the darkness."

The writers raise a number of questions. Exactly when did the angels sin (leave their own abode) and get cast into Tartarus? What is "Tartarus"? What is the nature of their imprisonment—"chains of gloom...eternal chains under gloom"—and exactly how binding is it?

Peter refers to the action of the angels *generically* as "they sinned" [aorist active participle of ἀμαρτάνω] [2Pet 2.4]. Jude 6 is more *specific*: "[they] did not keep their own domain, but abandoned [left] their [own] proper abode." There are four leading views as to *when* this judgment event upon the angels occurred.

(1) Perhaps the most widespread view is that the reference is to Gen 6.1–4. In contemporary Judaism, "the sons of God" were "angels" [*cf.* Job 1.6; 2.1]—called "The Watchers" in Judaism—and "the daughters of men" were human females. Likewise, the LXX understands "sons of God" as οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ in Job 1.6; 2.1 and πάντες ἄγγελοί μου ["all my angels"] in Job 38.7.<sup>258</sup> 1Enoch [2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BC – 1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD]<sup>259</sup> and 2Baruch [2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD] provide good examples of this view well known in the first century:<sup>260</sup>

"Enoch, thou scribe of righteousness, go, declare to the Watchers [angels – SS] of the heaven who have left the high heaven, the holy eternal place, and have defiled themselves with women, and have done as the children of earth do, and have taken unto themselves wives: 'Ye have wrought great destruction on the earth: And ye shall have no peace nor forgiveness of sin: and inasmuch as they delight themselves in their children, The murder of their beloved ones shall they see, and over the destruction of their children shall they lament, and shall make supplication unto eternity, but mercy and peace shall ye not attain.'" [Enoch 12.4–6]

"For, moreover, at that time when he was created, they [angels – SS] enjoyed liberty. And some of them descended, and mingled with the women. And then those who did so were tormented in chains. But the rest of the multitude of the angels, of which there is (no) number, restrained themselves. And those who dwelt on the earth perished together (with them) through the waters of the deluge. These are the black first waters." [2Bar 56.11–16]

Proponents of this view cannot easily ignore certain difficulties. It is a view clearly influenced, if not unreservedly controlled, primarily by historical interpretation rather than strict *biblical* exegesis. Scripture never otherwise hints at the concept of angels having sexual intercourse with humans. In fact, Jesus suggests they are asexual [Mt 22.30; Mk 12.25]. Additionally, the context of the flood [Gen 6–9] as a judgment event focused solely on the *human* race; there is no reference to the judgment of angels: "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with *man* [אָדָם (ʾādām) 6.1–7; 2.21–23] forever, because he is *flesh* [בָּשָׂר (bāśār)<sup>261</sup>]" [Gen 6.3, 12–13, 17; 7.21]. The offspring are also referred to simply as "men" [6.4, "*men* of renown," מֵנִים (ʾiś cf. 6.9 in ref. to Noah)<sup>262</sup>], not some hybrid of men and angels. Many take the term "Nephilim" as a reference to such hybrids, however that idea is problematic in at least two ways. First it is unclear the text actually refers to the Nephilim as the offspring of "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men."<sup>263</sup> Second, as stated above, the text refers to them simply as "men." Interestingly, even some who view them as the offspring of angels and humans still view them

<sup>258</sup>Nevertheless, the LXX translates Gen 6.2, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>259</sup>Lending credence to this view is that Jude 14 quotes 1Enoch 1.9, "And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones To execute judgment upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." There are also other allusions to 1Enoch in Jude, for which see Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Waco: Word Books, 1983), 36ff. Obviously, Jude was familiar with the document [written 2 cent. BC – 1 cent. AD] and perhaps the source of his reference in verse 6, or perhaps Jude served to influence Enoch.

<sup>260</sup>This traditional Jewish interpretation lasted only until the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD in Judaism [when Judaism interpreted "the sons of God" as humans], but it did not disappear in Christian interpretation until the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. AD.

<sup>261</sup>The term is always associated with human and animal flesh, never with non-corporeal beings.

<sup>262</sup>The term is never used in reference to angels. It is found with compound proper names ["Ishbosheth" ("man of Baal") 2Sam 2.8–15], "man" [אִישׁ (ʾiś) in contrast to "woman" [אִשָּׁה (ʾiššā) [Gen 2.23], humans in contrast to animals [Ex 11.7; Lv 20.15].

<sup>263</sup>Scholars are nearly unanimous that they are the offspring of "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men." The only other occurrence of the term is in Num 13.33 where the writer refers to the "sons of Anak" as "part of the Nephilim" [*cf.* Num 13.22, 28]. Such men are unique only in their large size and corresponding strength [see also Dt 1.28; 2.10, 21; 9.2], but nothing is ever mentioned of a unique angelic or divine/human nature.

simply as men: "Despite their origin and their fame, the Nephilim were only human."<sup>264</sup>

An alternative view to the above-mentioned interpretation of Gen 6.1–4, and one seemingly more in harmony with Scripture as a whole, understands "the sons of God" as males [primarily] from the godly line of Seth who married into the ungodly line of Cain ["daughters of men"]. This problem would essentially continue throughout the history of Israel when—against God's commands—the Israelites would marry into the heathen nations leading to her own fall [Dt 7.1–4; Josh 23.9–13; Ezra 9.10–15].

(2) The second more classical view looks back to sometime "in the beginning," a pre-historic event, when the angels abandoned their proper place in creation before the Creator. A difficulty with this view is the lack of explicit discussion of it elsewhere in Scripture, although Satanic and demonic activity from the very beginning assumes it—embodied in the serpent of Gen 3. Nevertheless, there is no other record in Scripture of demonic activity in the antediluvian period.

Another difficulty raised against this view is the activity of fallen angels [demons] in the midst of human affairs from ancient Israel to the ministries of Jesus and his disciples of the first century. This seems to counter the idea in 2Pet 2.4 and Jude 6 that the fallen angels are held in captivity unable to move freely, suggesting the fall discussed could not go back to the beginning. This has been explained by two groups of angels, some in this captivity [from the flood judgment], others not [from the fall in the beginning]:

"Apparently some fallen angels are free to plague mankind as demons while others such as these are imprisoned. The connection with Genesis 6:1–4 provides a reason for this phenomenon."<sup>265</sup>

This suggestion seems to cater more to the flood judgment view based on Gen 6.1–4 than it does to Scripture in general; it is essentially circular logic. The idea of the imprisonment in Peter and Jude may refer only to the fact that the fallen angels are in bondage to God's final purpose of judgment for them without the possibility of conversion.<sup>266</sup> There is little doubt they are imprisoned in darkness until the final day, but the kingdom of darkness under the leadership of Satan is still pervasive in the world, as it battles against the kingdom of light [Eph 6.12 *cf.* 1Cor 4.5; 2Cor 6.4; Eph 5.7–12; Lk 23.44; Jn 1.5; 3.19; 12.35; *et al.*]. Why should those of the original fall be able to maintain activity in human affairs and those of the flood judgment not be able to do so?<sup>267</sup>

(3) A third view relates to the first. It takes "the sons of God" in Gen 6.1–4 as a reference to "kings, judges, and other members of aristocratic nobility who displayed their own greatness by indulging in polygamy and creating harems."<sup>268</sup> This view recalls the words of Jesus when accused of deifying himself he turned to Scripture [Ps 82.6] to demonstrate the Jews' accusation was inconsistent to what they already believed, *viz.* that their leaders were called "sons of God" [Jn 10.31–36 *cf.* 1.49].<sup>269</sup> Although this view has gathered some adherents, it seems to ignore the *universal* indictment of Gen 6.1–4, which could hardly be the case if "the sons of God" were limited to kings, *etc.*

An alternative view takes this view as basically true, but suggests that the kings, leaders, *etc.* claimed divine status and were "possessed" by the fallen angels [demons], with the same result. The same problem raised in the preceding paragraph holds here, with the additional

<sup>264</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Waco: Word Books, 1987), 143. Could one conclude that the origin of Jesus as the offspring of God's Spirit and Mary's humanity left him as "only human"?

<sup>265</sup>Edwin A. Blum, *2 Peter* (EBC 12; ed. Frank E. Gaebel and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), n.p.

<sup>266</sup>This appears to be the case of the unrighteous who have died and remain "under punishment for the day of judgment" [2Pet 2.9]. The *certainty* of their judgment is the issue, not the *nature* of their pre-judgment existence, although it is defined as "punishment" [κόλασις *cf.* Mt 25.46; 1Jn 4.18 for the noun κόλασις].

<sup>267</sup>Are not those fallen angels of the flood judgment a part [at least] of the fallen angels from the beginning? Is this sin [of Gen 6] the "unforgivable sin" that keeps them more restricted than the other fallen angels? This is pure speculation. That they are a *new* group of fallen angels seems highly unlikely.

<sup>268</sup>D. A. Carson, "2 Peter," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1049.

<sup>269</sup>It is not to be overlooked that Jesus' comments and Ps 82.6 fall strictly within the limitations of a Jewish context, whereas Gen 6 not only predates any Jewish context by nearly 2 millennia but is universal, not national, in its scope.

difficulty that the context does not even hint to such a phenomenon. "Demon possession" itself was not recognized until many centuries later.

(4) A fourth view of this angelic judgment is the fall that resulted from the presence and ministry of Jesus [Lk 10.18; Rev 12.7–9]. The only similarity seems to rest in the idea of a fall. Peter and Jude view the fall of the angels as permanent. It is true "the fall" of Satan and his angels according to Rev 12 might be permanent,<sup>270</sup> but it is difficult to liken their fall "to the earth" with the fall to "tartarus...pits of darkness" in *2Peter*.

Option (2) is likely the best view, as it requires much less speculation and is in better harmony with the rest of Scripture.

Exactly where the fallen angels went is confused by the fact that nearly every major translation reads "[God] cast them into *hell*..." The Greek word for "hell" is *γέεννα*, and with one exception, where James uses it metaphorically [Jam 3.6], it is only on the lips of Jesus speaking of the final destination of unrighteous humans<sup>271</sup>—there is never a mention of fallen angels.<sup>272</sup> The word used in 2Pet 2.4 is actually the *verb* *ταρταρώω* [aorist active participle] and is literally translated, "having cast [them] into Tartarus."

What is "tartarus"? The verb occurs once in GNT [2Pet 2.4] and in the LXX it occurs three times only in the noun form [τάρταρυς] [Pr 30.16; Job 40.20; 41.24]. In the LXX it is described as the lowest part [of the deep ("lowest part of Sheol" cf. Dt 32:22)]: Job 40.20 ["And when he has gone up to a steep mountain, he causes joy to the quadrupeds in *the deep*" (τάρταρος, Heb. "field, low place")]; Job 41.24 ["the lowest part (τάρταρος) of the deep (ἄβυσσος) as a captive: he reckons the deep (ἄβυσσος) as his range" (Eng. Job 41.32)]; Pr 30.16 ["The grave (ᾗδης, Heb. Sheol), and the love of a woman (καὶ τάρταρος, some MSS) and the earth not filled with water" some MSS].

In Greek mythology and Jewish apocalyptic "Tartarus" was a subterranean place lower than *Hades* where God punished the unrighteous until the final judgment.

"In classical Greek mythology murky Tartarus was said to be as far below Hades as earth is below the heavens, so much so that an anvil could fall for nine days and nights until it reached it. Tartarus is described as a prison with gates, and it too is personified (Homer Iliad 8.13–16; Hesiod Theog. 713–35)."<sup>273</sup>

From Peter and Jude, it is a place of darkness [ζόφος cf. 2P 2.17; Jude 6, 13] reserved for fallen angels [possibly humans, Jude 13] until judgment [2P 2.4]. In contrast to *γέεννα*, *τάρταρος* is a *present* reality, whereas *γέεννα* is a *future* reality of final judgment.

The word *ἄγγελος* does not appear in 2Pet 2.10b; Jude 8.b as in NASB. The word translated "angelic majesties" is *δόξα*, which means "glory": lit. "they do not tremble blaspheming *glories*":

NIV "these men are not afraid to slander *celestial beings*"

KJV "they are not afraid to speak evil of *dignities*" [dignitaries, NKJV]

RSV "they are not afraid to revile the *glorious ones*"

The possibility that *δόξας* refers to human authorities, ecclesiastical or civil, can be ruled out at once, for it can make no sense of 2Pet 2.11. We take *δόξας* to refer to *angelic powers*. In that case, there are two possible interpretations. Either (a) *δόξας* are *evil angels* and *κατ' αὐτῶν* ["against them"] refers to these *δόξας* [so most scholars]; or (b) *δόξας* are *good angels*, identical with the *ἄγγελοι* [2Pet 2.11], and *κατ' αὐτῶν* refers to the false teachers. In the first case, the false teachers are accused of insulting *devils*—something that not even the angels do. In the second case, they are accused of insulting *angels*, and this behavior is contrasted with that of the angels toward the false teachers.

In Jude 8, *δόξας* ["glories"] are likely good angels, but this cannot determine the meaning of Peter's words here. The false teachers opposed by Jude are not the same as those opposed by Peter; there is no reason why the same accusation should be made in Jude 8–9 and 2Pet 2:10b–11.

<sup>270</sup>Their fall "to the earth" might suggest they no longer have access to the presence of God in heaven as previously seemed to be the case [Job 1.1–12; 2.1–7; Zech 3.1–5].

<sup>271</sup>The term *γέεννα* is not used in the LXX, Josephus [probably because he was a Pharisee and therefore denied the resurrection of the unrighteous], or Philo [who does, however, use *τάταρος*].

<sup>272</sup>Although the term *γέεννα* is not used, Jesus' words in Mt 25.41, 46 imply the same idea. Jesus is speaking of the final judgment for unrighteous humans—"eternal fire...eternal punishment," and he refers to this judgment as also "prepared for the devil and his angels." However, Jesus says nothing to the effect that they are, at the time of his utterance, already there.

<sup>273</sup>"DEAD, ABODE OF THE," *AYBD*, 2:105.

The most natural reading of 2Pet 2.11 is that the ἄγγελοι ["angels"] are to be distinguished from the δόξαι ["glories"], and that κατ' αὐτῶν ["against them"] refers back to δόξαι, which must therefore designate *evil angels*.

The phrase "although they are greater in strength and power" compares the angels either (a) with the δόξαι ["glorious ones"], or (b) with the false teachers. Either would make good sense: (a) Even the good *angels*, who are more powerful than *the evil angels*, do not insult them. How foolhardy of the false teachers, who are less powerful than the devils, to do so! (b) The *false teachers* venture to insult the devils, whereas even the angels, who are so much more powerful than the false teachers, do not do so. It is probably slightly more natural to read the phrase in sense (a), in which case both μείζονες ["greater"] and αὐτῶν ["them"] refer back to δόξαι, but the general significance is the same in either case. What is important to notice is that this phrase implies that the false teachers are being rebuked for ignoring the *power* of the δόξαι ["glorious ones"]. The same implication is to be found in οὐ τρέμουνσιν ["are not afraid," 2Pet 2.10b]. The δόξαι are powerful beings whom the false teachers ought to be afraid of insulting. The arrogant audacity of the false teachers is seen in the fact that they dare to abuse the powers of evil.

Jude gives the example of the archangel Michael<sup>274</sup> who knew better than to underestimate the power of evil [9], an example the false teachers should have followed. He is identified as not merely an angel, but as ὁ ἀρχάγγελος.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of his higher rank, Michael did not "bring a blasphemous judgment [κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας]" against the Devil, but rather deferred the issue to God—ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος ["the Lord rebuke you"]. If Michael had respect for the δόξαι, how much more should the human false teachers do so?

The incident Jude 9 describes has a background in Dt 34; Zech 3.1–5 and other Jewish literature. However, the primary source for the story comes from the lost ending of the *Testament Of Moses*.<sup>276</sup>

It seems in their confident immorality the false teachers were even contemptuous of the demonic powers. When they were rebuked for their immoral behavior and warned of the danger of falling into the power of the devil and sharing his condemnation, they laughed at the idea, denying that the devil could have any power over them and speaking of the powers of evil in skeptical, mocking terms. They may have even doubted the very existence of supernatural powers of evil.

According to the book of *Hebrews*, the purpose of the humanity and death of the Christ was that καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον, "he might render ineffective the one having the power of death, that is, the devil" [2.14–15]. The NIV, KJV, NRSV, *et al.* translate καταργέω as "destroy" [NIV11 translates it "break the power of," which is better *cf.* NASB, "render powerless"]. This translation gives the verb an *eschatological* sense whereby the writer would be anticipating the final destruction of death [1Cor 15.54–57; Rev 20.14; 21.4]. However, the sense seems to be contemporary: Christ, through his death and [implied] resurrection, removes the fear of death for "Abraham's descendants"—here and now—because they will also rise [2.15–16 *cf.* 11.19, 35; 2Tim 1.10].

Satan's enslavement of the saints through fear of death has been "rendered ineffective" in their lives. Victory over death is contingent upon victory over the Devil [*cf.* Lk 11.21–22; Is 49.24–26], who has the power of death;<sup>277</sup> this also assumes victory over sin, which is the precursor of death [Rom 6.16]. It is through sin that the Devil gained control over death when he seduced humanity in Eden (Gen 3; Rom 5.12). Through Christ, the rule of humanity over creation [2.6–8] stripped away by sin and death is given a new light as the fear of death is removed.

<sup>274</sup>The angel "Michael" is identified by name only here and Rev 12.7; Dn 10.13, 21; 12.1.

<sup>275</sup>This is the only use of the term in Scripture. In Rev 12.7–9 Michael is clearly singled out, not only as commander of "*HIS* angels"—which suggests there may be other angels not under his command, or at least not in this "war," but also as the godly counter part of Satan himself [a roll commonly held by God or Jesus]. See my "*Angels*" in *Scripture*, pp. 7, 10, 12–13.

<sup>276</sup>See the extended discussion in "Excursus: The Background and Source of Jude 9," Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Waco: Word Books, 1983), 65–77.

<sup>277</sup>Satan's power over death is both *temporary* and *contingent* upon the one who has the ultimate power over life and death [Job 2.6; Lk 12.4–5; Rev 1.18].

## B. Teachings in Revelation

The book of *Revelation* has much on the subjects of demonic activities,<sup>278</sup> worship,<sup>279</sup> and judgment.<sup>280</sup> The apocalyptic nature of the book, replete with symbolic and prophetic language of national judgment, makes it difficult to approach these subjects without a wider understanding of this type of literature. In addition, one's over all view of the material<sup>281</sup> will affect his interpretation of the subjects in this study, but likely not as to the basic nature and activities of demonic forces.<sup>282</sup>

For contextual purposes, the approach here will be to examine the relevant passages in the order they appear in the text.<sup>283</sup> First, a brief summary of the main characters of the demonic forces:<sup>284</sup>

Dragon: Satan *cf.* 12.3–4, 7–9, 13–17; 13.2, 4, 11; 16.13; 20.2 [See also Ps 74.13; Is 27.1; 51.9; Jer 51.34 (Pharaoh); Ezek 29.3 (Nebuchadrezzar)]  
 Sea Beast: Rome *cf.* 11.7; 12.3; 13.1–10, 12, 14, 18; 14.9, 11; 15.2; 16.2, 10, 13; 17.3–18; 19.19–20; 20.4, 10; Dan 7.7–27  
     Composed Of Former Empires 13.2 *cf.* Dan 7  
     Leopard: Greece (333–63 BC)  
     Bear: Medo–Persia (539–333 BC)  
     Lion: Babylon (606–539 BC)  
     Ten Horns: Vassal Kings 13.1; 12.3; 17.3, 7, 12–14, 16  
     Seven Heads: Kings [emperors] of Roman Empire 13.1; 12.3; 17.3, 9–11  
     Great Harlot (Babylon the Great) rides upon the sea beast eventually devours her: Rome or Jerusalem 17.1–18; 14.8; 16.17–21; 18:1–24; 19.1–3 *cf.* Is 1.21; 23.15–18; Ezek 16.15ff; Na 3.4  
 Earth Beast: religious deceiver (false prophet) *cf.* 13.11–17; 16.13; 19.20; 20.10  
 Gog and Magog: 20.8; Ezek 38–39; Gen 10.2 & 1Chron 1.5 [Magog]; 1Chron 5.4 [God]

The first probable reference to demonic forces, although not directly mentioned, is in 9.1–11. In 9:1b–2a it is likely "star" is a metaphor for a supernatural being, probably an angel. See also 8.10–11 [there "the great star" is named "Wormwood"]; 12.4; Judg 5.20; Job 38.7; Dan 8.10. Falling stars sometimes represent demons and even Satan [IEnoch 86.1–3; 88.1–3 *cf.* Jd 13; Lk 10.18; Rev 12.9]:

Enoch 86.1–3 "And again I saw with mine eyes as I slept, and I saw the heaven above, and behold a star fell from heaven, and it arose and eat and pastured amongst those oxen. And after that I saw the large and the black oxen, and behold they all changed their stalls and pastures and their cattle, and began to live with each other. And again I saw in the vision, and looked towards the heaven, and behold I saw many stars descend and cast themselves down from heaven to that first star, and they became bulls amongst those cattle and pastured with them [amongst them]."

Enoch 88.1–3 "And I saw one of those four who had come forth first, and he seized that first star which had fallen from the heaven, and bound it hand and foot and cast it into an abyss: now that abyss was narrow and deep, and horrible and dark. And one of them drew a sword, and gave it to those elephants and camels and asses: then they began to smite each other, and the whole earth quaked because of them. And as I was beholding in the vision, lo, one of those four who had come forth stoned (them) from heaven, and gathered and took all the great stars whose privy members were like those of horses, and bound them all hand and foot, and cast them in an abyss of the earth."

<sup>278</sup>Rev 12–13; 16.12–16; 20.7–10.

<sup>279</sup>Rev 9.20–21; 13; 14.9–12; 16.1–2; 18.1–3; 19.19–21.

<sup>280</sup>Rev 12.7–12; 14.9–12; 18.1–3; 19.19–20.10.

<sup>281</sup>Continuous Historical, Futurist [premillennial (*esp.* dispensational) views], Idealist, and Preterist [including some amillennial and postmillennial views] are the major general approaches.

<sup>282</sup>The greatest differences of opinion essentially rest in the *fulfillment* of the material.

<sup>283</sup>Rev 9.1–11, 20–21; 12–13; 14.9–12; 16.1–2, 12–16; 18.1–3; 19.19–20.10. The occurrences in Rev 2.8–29; 3.7–13 are discussed under [The Christ's teachings on demons](#).

<sup>284</sup>This is taken primarily from a *Preterist* point of view.

In 9.1 the fallen star "from heaven" could be simply an angelic messenger from God [see 20.1]<sup>285</sup> and not necessarily identified with "the angel of the abyss" [τὸν ἄγγελον τῆς ἀβύσσου] named "Abaddon" or "Apollyon" in 9.11 or Satan in 12.9.<sup>286</sup> Nevertheless, it is more likely an allusion to Satan's fall from heaven because of the Christ event [Lk 10.18; Rev 12.7–9 (see below)] understood not only as his banishment from heaven, but as his role as an instrument of God's judgment on the beast.<sup>287</sup> The close proximity of "the angel of the abyss" [9.11] supports this understanding.

The "throwing [βάλλω] down" of Satan to "the earth" [12.9] and "the abyss" [20.3] are related, if not the same, actions. "Abyss" is a transcendent place associated with the dead [Rom 10.7], and generally is the haunt of hostile powers toward God [Rev 9.1–11; 11.7; 17.8], perhaps including a place of punishment for the demons [Lk 8.31]. In the LXX the word is generally translated "the deep" [or something to that effect] as in the primordial ocean [Gn 1.2], subterranean waters [Gn 7.11; 8.2], a great sea [Jonah 2.6], the Red Sea [Ps 106:9; Isa 51:10, 63:13], and the depths of the earth [*i.e.*, Sheol, Ps 71:20]. Often, in *Revelation*, "the earth" is likewise the haunt of the hostile powers toward God [6.10; 8.13; 11.10; 12.9; 13.3, 8, 11–14; 17.2, 8, 18; 18.3, 9, 11; 19.9].

The angel's possession of "the key [authority] of the abyss" is possibly the same as "the keys<sup>288</sup> of death and of Hades" [1.18 *cf.* 3.7] possessed by Jesus,<sup>289</sup> which he gave to the angel [9.1]. In effect, the earth-dwellers abide in death, unless and until they enter the kingdom of God.

The casting of Satan to the earth [abyss] and his binding coincide with the Christ event. The binding of Satan was inaugurated in the ministry of Christ. Jesus declared this binding was reflected in his exorcisms [Mt 12.22–30], and confirmed by the exorcisms performed by his disciples [Lk 10.17–19]. The demonic activity during the ministry of Christ, which continued during the ministries of the apostles [Acts], vividly depicted the battle between the earth bound angels of Satan and the woman [people of God] of Rev 12.13–17.

The resurrection of Lazarus and its repercussions [Jn 11–12] signaled Jesus' power over death, which culminated in his own resurrection [Rev 1.18 *cf.* Heb 2.14–15; Acts 2.22–24]. According to John, the Lazarus event was a watershed in Jesus' ministry. At the Passover feast that immediately followed, Jesus declared his hour of crisis and glorification and that it was simultaneously the fall of Satan:

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world *shall be cast out* [ἐκβάλλω]. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [crucifixion (Jn 3.14–15) or exaltation and enthronement (Acts 2.33; 5.31) or both]<sup>290</sup>, will draw all men [all nations, not just Israel] to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die" [Jn 12.31–33].<sup>291</sup>

"Locust" in 9.3, 7 [ἀκρίς] is "a migratory phase of the grasshopper, of the family Acrididae, even today commonly eaten by the poorer people in Arabia, Africa, and Syria...used as food by John the Baptist."<sup>292</sup> As the "abyss" was likely the dwelling place of demons [*cf.* Lk 8.31; Rev 20.1–

<sup>285</sup>A close parallel is in the Sibylline Oracles 5.155–161:

"But when after the fourth year a great star shines, which by itself shall destroy the (whole) land, [because of the honour which they first paid to Poseidon god of the sea, then shall come a great star from heaven into the divine sea, and shall burn up the deep sea and Babylon itself, and the land of Italy on whose account many faithful saints of the Hebrews have perished, and the true people."

<sup>286</sup>In 9.1 the angel "had fallen [πίπτω] to the earth" from heaven and was given the key to the bottomless pit [*i.e.*, the abyss], in 20.1 the angel already possessed the key to the abyss when he *descended* [καταβαίνω] to the earth [implied].

<sup>287</sup>Judgment is clearly the role of the fallen "star" in 8.10–11 *cf.* Is 14.12–15, with clear demonic overtones.

<sup>288</sup>Plural is likely no more than agreement with the two articular genitives.

<sup>289</sup>This recalls the authority ["keys"] over the kingdom Jesus possessed and gave to Peter, assuring Hades would have no power over the kingdom [Mt 16.18–19].

<sup>290</sup>Jn 8.28 is likely a reference to the enthronement, as Jesus declares at his "lifting up" τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι ["then you will know I am"]. If ἐγὼ εἶμι carries the theological weight most assume [*cf.* 8.24, 58], clearly his deity was not known at the cross, but only following his ascension [Jn 1.1, 14, 18].

<sup>291</sup>Paul later wrote it was at the cross "when [Jesus] had *disarmed* the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him [or "it," *i.e.*, the cross (NIV)]" [Col 2.15].

<sup>292</sup>"ἀκρίς," BDAG, 39. See Mt 3.4; Mk 1.6 on John the Baptist for the only other uses in the GNT. Locusts was food for the Jews [Lev 11.22], but at the same time were the means of destroying the food of the Jews [Dt

3], the locusts could symbolize demons here and are clearly playing a role in judgment—perhaps on Israel<sup>293</sup>—of the fifth angel released by God through the star [angel] that fell—was sent—from heaven.

"The angel of the abyss" is named only here in Scripture, and in one location in other Jewish literature describing Belial [4Q280]: "[Cursed be you Ange]l of the Pit, and Spir[it of Aba]ddon."<sup>294</sup> In *Revelation* neither "Abaddon" nor "the angel of the abyss" occur again. The article with ἄγγελον suggests that the author expected the readers to be familiar with this figure [possibly as Satan], and it might naturally bring the reader back to the angel in 9.1.

Ἄβαδδών [only here in Scripture] is a transliteration of Hebrew אַבְדּוֹן [ʾābaddōn] meaning "the place of *destruction*" and is paralleled with שְׁאוֹל [šəʾōl, *Sheol*, "the place of the dead (grave)," Pr 15.11; Ps 88.22; Job 26.6] and מָוֶת [māwēt, *death*, Job 28.22 cf. 31.12, *par.* with "the fire that consumes"]. Accordingly, the LXX translated ʾābaddōn with ἀπώλεια ["destruction"]. Ἀπολλύων [only here in Scripture] is a present participle of ἀπόλλυμι, meaning "destroy" [Mt 10.28; Mk 1.24; Lk 13.5; 17.29; 19.10 ("lost"); Jn 3.16; 10.28; *et al.*], here as a noun, "destroyer."<sup>295</sup>

Certainly, these names would be fitting for Satan. It is clearly appropriate to imagine him as the leader of the demons ["locusts"] coming upon Israel(?) in judgment. In Amos 7.1–3 an invasion coming upon Israel is described in terms of "a locust-swarm" under the leadership of a king "mowing" [Heb. *gizzē*]. The LXX translates *gizzē* hammelek ["the king's mowing"] as βροῦχος εἰς Γωγ ὁ βασιλεύς ["one locust, the king Gog," *i.e.*, γωγ for *gizzē*], which links the locusts with "Gog and Magog" of Ezek 38–39 from which John draws upon in Rev 20.7–8 where Satan is viewed as the leader of "Mog and Magog."

Therefore, it is possible, "the star from heaven which had fallen to the earth" [9.1] and "the angel of the abyss" [9.11] are one in the same, and none other than Satan—empowering his human representatives [Vespasian, Titus(?)]—leading his demons [locusts from the abyss—this world of darkness; Roman armies] as God's unsuspecting instruments in judgment [upon Israel(?)].

In the reference to those of mankind remaining after the judgment of the fifth and sixth angels in 9.1–19 [9.20], John declares they "did not repent of the works of their hands." Specifically they refused to repent "in order that they will not worship the demons and the idols [ἵνα μὴ προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἰδωλα] of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood..."<sup>296</sup> The term for "worship" is προσκυνέω, which means "to bow down with one's face to the ground."<sup>297</sup> The only one who can properly receive "worship" is the Lord [Rev 4.10; 5.14; 7.11; 11.1, 16; 14.7; 15.4; 19.4 and *esp.* 19.10; 22.8–9].<sup>298</sup>

This act of reverence and commitment to God is a central concern of *Revelation*, and it is set over against the "worship" of satanic forces, beginning with the first mention here in 9.20 in general terms of worshipping "the demons" in direct connection with *idolatry*. This is the only passage in Scripture that specifically mentions *worship of demons*, however, sacrifices to demons implies the same idea, and perhaps is included here [Dt 32.15–17; Ps 106.35–38 cf. Lev 17.7; 2Kings 22.17; Is 2.8; Jer 25.6; Acts 7.41; 19.26]. In 1Cor 10.14–22 Paul equates participation in pagan idolatry as, in effect, the worship of demons—the reality behind idols.<sup>299</sup> Idolatry, in all its forms, is one of the most powerful means Satan has at his disposal to keep people in his grip.

Rev 13 is the strongest expression on the worship of satanic forces. The "earth," Satan's domain [12.7–9]—which includes "everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain"—worships the dragon [Satan, 12.9; 20.2] and accordingly worships Satan's earthly agent, the sea beast [Rome] [13.4, 8]. The driving force behind the worship of the sea beast is the earth beast [false prophet], equally as

28.38] leading to an apt symbol of judgment from God [2Chron 6.28; 7.13; Ps 78.46; 105.34; Amos 7.1; Joel 1.4; 2.25; Nah 3.15–17], and specifically as symbols of judging armies [Judg 6.5; 7.12; Jer 51.14, 27]. The background for this symbol is likely from Ex 10—the plague of locusts as an act of God's judgment on Egypt.

<sup>293</sup>See David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 271ff for this Preterist view of Israel's judgment.

<sup>294</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 534.

<sup>295</sup>"It is possible that an allusion to Nero is intended, for Nero, identified with Belial in some early Jewish literature, claimed a special relationship to Apollo." *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>296</sup>Sighting five different natural elements from which the ungodly craft their idols may seem like overkill, but the emphasis is on the idea idols are non-living beings, and the foolishness involved in thinking them gods [Hab 2.18–19; Dan 5.23; Ps 115.4–7; Is 44.12–17 cf. Acts 17.29].

<sup>297</sup>See *esp.* Jn 4.20–24.

<sup>298</sup>The classic expression is from Jesus himself in Mt 4.10.

<sup>299</sup>Cultic idolatry is mentioned in Rev 2.14, 20, which clearly suggest worship of demons, and idolatry is included in the two catalogues of sins barring souls from glory in 21.8 and 22.15.

powerful as the sea beast, who by signs and wonders gets the world to worship the sea beast and persecute those who do not [13.11–15]. What follows Rev 13 is the corrective for satanic worship, in one word, "judgment," upon anyone who "worships the beast and his image" [14.6–12; 16.2; 19.20], and in contrast to the persecution of those refused satanic worship [13.15] victory with the Christ [20.4].

What is generically introduced as demonic worship in 9.20 is more specifically described as the worship of Satan and his human agents—the sea and earth beasts. Regardless of the historic identities of these two agents, it seems clear they are political and religious systems supportive of one another and opposed to God. It is certainly doubtful those who worshipped idols and the two beasts were cognizant of the fact that the identity of whom they were worshipping was Satan and his demons.

Chapter 12 is the key to *Revelation*; coupled with chapter 13, it comprises visions of the cosmic conflict between light & darkness on a deeper level than as seen in this world. The battle scene begins in heaven & ends on earth. The protagonist is *the woman*, whom God protects throughout the conflict. The chief antagonist is *the dragon* [Satan], who suffers his Waterloo [chapter 12], yet continues to oppose and persecute the woman by manifesting himself in the form of two of his instruments, pictured as beasts, one political, the other religious [chapter 13].<sup>300</sup> One need not understand all the details of the political and religious circumstances as they applied to John's immediate readers to understand and be encouraged by the overall message of the symbols and figures as they apply to saints of every age.

Chapter 12 starts a new vision, yet it continues and develops the themes of chapters 1–11.<sup>301</sup> It begins to delve more deeply into what Paul designated as the real antagonists of saints, whose battle is not with "flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" [Eph 6.12]. John already alluded to the forces of darkness—and some of their human agents [particularly Jews]—in the first part of *Revelation* [2.9–10, 13–15, 20–24; 3.9; 9.1–11, 20; 11.7]. In chapter 12ff he reveals the real driving force behind the attacks on God's people—of every age—is Satan, who unbridles his demonic "beasts" from the sea [political] and earth [religious, "false prophet"], along with the whore of Babylon, to destroy the saints—followers of the Messiah, particularly after he failed to destroy the Messiah. The reader must understand that to compromise or in any way comply with idols, political and earthly systems, is to concede to the devil's agenda, regardless of how he masks his identity. To compromise or simply be complacent with worldly systems is to concede to the devil himself.

Satan's ultimate goal—destroying the Messiah—was thwarted by the resurrection and enthronement of the woman's seed [12.4–5].<sup>302</sup> John clearly demonstrates throughout *Revelation* that Satan—although powerful, but not powerful enough—does not operate autonomously; he is always subservient to the all powerful Lord and his agents, especially the Christ [12.10 *cf.* 1.5; 11.15; 19.11–16; 20.4–6], and even Michael, Satan's counter-part [12.7–9].

In Rev 12 Satan is represented by the figure of ὁ δράκων ["the dragon," 12.9; 20.2 with 12.3–4, 7, 13, 16–17].<sup>303</sup> In Rev 13.1–4, 11–12; 16.13–14, as "the dragon," he is presented in relation to the sea beast, the earth beast ["false prophet"], and "three unclean spirits...spirits of demons" [πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα... πνεύματα δαιμονίων]. Additionally, 12.3 depicts him as having "seven heads and ten horns," which is more specifically descriptive of the sea beast [Rome]

<sup>300</sup>At first, the sea and land beasts have a demonic partnership against God's covenant people. Then, however, they turn against each other in order that God's people are crushed between them.

<sup>301</sup>Chapter 13 is *temporally* parallel with 12.13–17, specifying with more detail the nature of the agents [instruments] through which Satan operates on earth against the people of God.

<sup>302</sup>John makes no direct mention of the death—Satan's seeming victory—and resurrection of Christ—Satan's clear defeat. John possibly meant to encourage and indicate to the reader that in spite of the cosmic effect of these events, it was just a blip in the history of Satan's continuous war with God.

<sup>303</sup>"The dragon" is "red," which is likely to bring up in the minds of the readers bloodshed and death [Rev 6.18 *cf.* Zech 1.8; 6.2; 2Kings 3.22], and perhaps even the personification of sin(ners) [Is 1.18]. The word for "red" [πυρρός] is of the same root as "fire" [πύρ, pyrotechnics (fireworks)], which is the prevailing symbol of judgment in Scripture. The whore of Babylon, "drunk with the *blood* of the saints, and with the *blood* of the witnesses of Jesus," and the beast upon which she rides in 17.3–6 are colored or covered with "scarlet" [κόκκιον, *cf.* 18.16], again associating the color with the blood of sacrifice [*cf.* Lev 14.4–6, 49–52]. Although it may be pushing the symbol "red" [scarlet] too far, curtains of the Tabernacle and the roof covering included scarlet, possibly suggesting the place God set up where atonement for the sins of the people occurred was symbolically covered in blood. This idea was vividly realized as the priests continually poured out the blood of the animal sacrifices.

upon whom the whore of Babylon [Jerusalem, the earth beast, false prophet] is seated [13.1; 17.1–18 cf. Dan 7].

"The dragon" symbol is found only in *Revelation* in the GNT. In the Hebrew Scriptures the figurative תנין [tannin, serpent, dragon, monster] is used of the evil nations that oppress Israel, such as Tyre called "Leviathan" [Is 27.1 cf. Is 23; Ps 74.13–14], Egypt called "Rahab" [Is 51.9 cf. 30.7; Ezek 29.3; 32.2; Ps 74.13], and Babylon [Jer 51.34]. Thus, in Scripture, the dragon/serpent symbol represents the satanically inspired pagan cultures opposing the covenant people of God. What seems to be clear to John, as well as the old covenant prophets and writers [see also Ps 91.13; 148.7], is that "the dragon" is inevitably defeated and subservient to Yahweh.

David Aune offers a summary of a number of interpretations of the heavenly "woman" [γυνή].<sup>304</sup> The context and Old Testament background favor the interpretation of the woman as *the people of God*, [1–2, 4–6, 13–17]: faithful Israel before the Messianic age,<sup>305</sup> the church of Christ following the enthronement of the Messiah.<sup>306</sup> Gen 3.15–16 no doubt influences the image of the dragon desiring to devour her child. It was in the Garden of Eden the war between Satan and Yahweh began over the seed of woman. The unveiling of this war is the central theme of the Old Testament. Critical to the scene in Rev 12 is the fact that the "woman" is always protected from the dragon [6, 13–16]; Satan was unsuccessful throughout Israel's history in destroying the royal seed. His ultimate failure was his thwarted cross effort. Likewise, Satan will be unsuccessful in destroying the remnant, "the rest of her [the woman's] children" [cf. Mt 16.18].

John writes that Satan "swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." The chronological sequence of all the events is not that exact. *When* Satan actually did this is unclear, but the correspondence to the judgments in 8.7–9.19 is unmistakable. Jesus spoke of "the stars" falling from the sky as an indication of judgment upon Jerusalem AD70 [Mt 24.29 cf. Is 13.10; 34.4]. Jude [13] describes false teachers as "wandering stars," the metaphor obviously carrying an evil connotation. In *Revelation* "stars" can have both a good connotation [1.16, 20; 2.1, 28; 3.1; 12.1; 22.16] and an implied negative connotation as they are involved in judgment [6.13; 8.10–12; 9.1 (see notes above on 9.1–11)]. When they are not specifically numbered, however, the metaphor always suggests judgment.

This may be an allusion to Dan 8.10, "The [small horn]<sup>307</sup> grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down." The reference in *Daniel* is likely to Antiochus' destruction of many Jews during his desecration of the Temple [168BC] [cf. 8.24]. The metaphor "stars" in Rev 12.4 could be a reference to Satan's continual onslaught against the people of God ["stars" as in 1.16, 20; 2.1], many of whom he destroyed,<sup>308</sup> or it may be anticipatory of Satan himself, along with his angels ["stars"], being cast from heaven by Michael [12.7–9].<sup>309</sup>

Rev 12.4b describes the primary offensive of Satan's mission, for all history: "the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child."<sup>310</sup> This had been Satan's objective since God first promised him, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" [Gen 3.15]. Satan probably understood God's promise as his final defeat by the woman's seed; what he likely failed to understand was that any victory of his over her seed attempting to preempt that defeat, was at best temporary, a bruised heel, and not final, a crushed head.<sup>311</sup> Even after he unsuccessfully goes for the Messiah, he continues to attack God's people, even as he had done throughout history; it is always Satan's

<sup>304</sup>*Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 680–681.

<sup>305</sup>The figure could have been drawn from Gen 37.9–11 where Jacob and Rachel [the sun and the moon] and the twelve sons, tribes [12 stars] represent the nation of Israel.

<sup>306</sup>Rev 12.14 prevents this woman from being limited to Mary herself, neither could it be said of Mary she suffered the implied persecution. Nevertheless, she carried the seed for Israel the dragon sought to destroy.

<sup>307</sup>Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

<sup>308</sup>References to Herod's slaughter of the first born of Bethlehem as he attempted to destroy the Messiah [Mt 2] or persecution of the early church [Acts] or even the cross itself are attractive possibilities, but may seek too much detail in the symbol.

<sup>309</sup>A less likely possibility is that the "stars" are those Satan led in rebellion in the pre-historic creation, first manifested in Gen 3.

<sup>310</sup>Satan, as the dragon Nebuchadnezzar, had devoured Israel—the royal seed—centuries earlier only to see his work undone by God through the Medo-Persians [Jer 51.34–58].

<sup>311</sup>It is interesting how often Scripture represents the defeat of those opposing God's covenant people as accomplished by *head wounds* [Judg 4.21; 5.26–27; 9.50–57; 1Sam 5.1–5; 17.49–51; 2Sam 18.9; 20.21–22; Ps 68.21; Hab. 3.13].

purpose to attack the purposes of God within history, from the first to the last day. Not only the Messiah, but also God's people ["the woman"] are protected from Satan.

"The war in heaven" [12.7–9] seems to come out of nowhere. Nevertheless, it recalls Jesus' words concerning Satan's fall from heaven, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning," which he said in a context of his seventy disciples expressing surprise that "even the demons are subject to us in your name." Jesus continued, "I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy [τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, Satan], and nothing will injure you" [Lk 10.17–19 *cf.* Jn 12.31–32]. The presence of Jesus in his ministry, particularly in his resurrection, marked the end of Satan's reign and the establishment of Jesus' kingdom.<sup>312</sup> His authority over Satan was permanently established: "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night" [Rev 12.10]. Before the ministry of Christ, Satan was active in heaven accusing the saints before God [12.10 *cf.* Job 1–2; Zech 3].<sup>313</sup> Following Jesus' ministry, Satan's activities were limited to this world, and doomed to failure [Rev 12.13–14].

John is recalling the inauguration of Satan's war against the royal seed in the Garden of Eden [Gen 3.1–15] by referring to the dragon, Satan, as "the serpent of old" [ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, 12.9, 13–16; 20.2]. The death of Christ was only a "bruise" on his "heel"—a temporary wound—as the resurrection would demonstrate. His resurrection and exaltation to God's throne was effectively a "bruise" on Satan's "head," more like a deathblow.<sup>314</sup> The fatal nature of Satan's head wound is ultimately realized in the final judgment [Rev 20.1–10].

Just as there was an expulsion of Satan and his angels from God's presence at the first creation [Is 14.11–16; Ezek 28.12–19; 2Pet 2.4; Jude 6], John in Rev 12.7–9 indicates a similar fall [expulsion] at the *new* creation [2Cor 5.14–17; Gal 6.15], inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ [1.5; 3.14; 12.5; 1Cor 15]. With his expulsion at the new creation, Satan's powers to deceive the world [12.9 *cf.* 20.1–3] and accuse the saints [12.10] were significantly curtailed. Before the work of Christ, Satan ostensibly had every right to accuse the people of God of their sins, and by implication God himself for not punishing their sin [Job 1–2]. How was God justified in removing Joshua's filthy garments and replacing them with white ones [Zech 3]? Satan was correct to presuppose that sin deserves judgment and not righteousness. Satan's accusation that Job would not have been righteous [faithful], had not God freely blessed him with abundance, was legitimate on the surface—of course, Satan could not see the cross in eternity as God could. Nevertheless, the Christ event in history revealed that God's actions before that event were indeed justified and Satan's accusations could no longer hold the legitimacy they appeared to once have. Paul effectively said the same to the Areopagus while in Athens on his second missionary journey [Acts 17.30–31] and clearly spelled it out to the Roman saints [Rom 3.21–26 *cf.* 8.33–39].

Not only was Satan stripped of his powers of deception and accusation before the people of God by the Christ event, he was stripped of his power of death [Heb 2.14–15], a power which Christ took for himself [Rev 1.18].

Just as Scripture placed Satan, following his fall, in heaven before the Christ event, Paul does so following that event and his fall [Eph 2.2; 3.10; 6.10–17]. This suggests Satan's expulsions were symbolic, but following the Christ event, Satan had been stripped of his privilege

<sup>312</sup>This is clearly anticipated by the exorcisms in Jesus' ministry. The "casting" [βάλλω] of Satan to the earth [12.9] is represented by Jesus "casting out" [ἐκβάλλω] demons [Mt 10.8; Mk 1.34, 39; Lk 13.2; *et al.*].

<sup>313</sup>Similar accounts are recorded in *Pseudepigraphical* literature:

Jubilees 17.15–16 "And it came to pass in the seventh week, in the first year thereof, in the first month in this jubilee, on the twelfth of this month, there were voices in heaven regarding Abraham, that he was faithful in all that He told him, and that he loved the Lord, and that in every affliction he was faithful. And the prince Mastema [*i.e.*, Satan] came and said before God, 'Behold, Abraham loves Isaac his son, and he delights in him above all things else; bid him offer him as a burnt-offering on the altar, and Thou wilt see if he will do this command, and Thou wilt know if he is faithful in everything wherein Thou dost try him.'

Enoch 40.7 "And I heard the fourth voice fending off the Satans and forbidding them to come before the Lord of Spirits to accuse them who dwell on the earth."

<sup>314</sup>The translation of the Hebrew מַשַּׁח is problematic because it occurs in only three passages [Gen 3.15; Job 9.17; Ps 139.11]. "In favor of two different roots and translating "crush" and "snap at" respectively is that 'the two actions are different, corresponding to the different bodily forms of the parties' (C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 1974, [ET 1984], 260). On the other hand, it is understandable that the majority of modern scholars prefer keeping the sense the same in both instances (see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC, 1987, 80), because of the reciprocative nature of the passage. Furthermore, the sense of "crush" or "batter" also fits the two other occurrences of this vb. in Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11." "מַשַּׁח," *NIDOTTE*, 4:67.

to accuse the saints before God. No longer could his accusations—that the saints' righteousness was an arbitrary and selective action by God—find legitimacy from any perspective.

It is clear from the "war in heaven" that Michael and his [holy] angels are victorious over Satan and his [evil] angels. Michael is also presented in direct conflict with Satan in Jude 9<sup>315</sup> and in conflict with the enemies [Satan's agents] of God's people in Dan 10.13, 21; 12.1. In each case, the superiority and victory of Michael are implied, and in Rev 12 the acme and consummation of the conflicts occurs. It is clear the forces of Satan are not matches for the forces of God—"The dragon and his angels waged war, and *they were not strong enough*, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven" [12.7b–8].

Following his defeat "in heaven," which most significantly included his failure to destroy the royal seed [the Messiah, 12.5], Satan turned his attention to "the woman" [*i.e.*, the people of God, the church following Pentecost, Acts 2] and "the rest of her seed"<sup>316</sup> [σπέρμα, *i.e.*, followers of her child (τέκνον) who "was caught up to God and to His throne," 12.5] [12.12–17].<sup>317</sup> Satan's attacks on "the woman" ultimately fail, because God protects her [12.6,<sup>318</sup> 14–16 *cf.* Mt 16.18].<sup>319</sup> However, the church should never lose sight of the fact that their battle is not simply with the agents of Satan but primarily with Satan himself [*cf.* Eph 6.12], and he is enraged [12.12] with them precisely because he lost his war with God over the promised seed.<sup>320</sup>

There are MSS variances between 12.17 and 13.1 reflected in the various translations: "And *he* [*i.e.*, the *dragon*] stood on the sand of the sea" [NASB, NIV, RSV], "Then / [*i.e.*, John] stood on the sand of the sea" [KJV, NKJV], omitted entirely [NRSV].<sup>321</sup> Whichever the case, it has no impact on this study.

This vision brings the war against God's people "down to earth" in the "flesh and blood" human institutions that are merely Satan's agents, instruments of "the spiritual forces of

<sup>315</sup>See notes above on 2Pet 2.9–11; Jude 8–10.

<sup>316</sup>"The rest of her seed" may be a reference to the predominantly Gentile church throughout the Roman empire [*cf.* 7.1–8 with 7.9–10], or it may point to the devil's attacks on individual saints apart from the body as a whole.

<sup>317</sup>Luke recorded the history of Satan's attack on God's people in the first century in Acts 3ff and there are references throughout the gospels and epistles [Mt 5.10–11, 44; 10.23; Jn 15.20; Rom 12.14; 1Cor 4.12; 15.9; Gal 1.13; 2Tim 3.12; *et al.*]. The Old Testament is in effect a history of Satan's war with God and his people and his futile attempts to destroy the woman's seed in the nation of Israel [see, for example, Gen 4; 6; 12; 20; 26; 37–50; Ex 1; 1Sam 17–18; 2Chron 22; 2Kings 18–21; Est 3–7; Mt 2]. John clearly demonstrates that the rage behind the persecution against the people of God [*cf.* Dan 3.13, 19; 11.30; 3Macc 3.1; Acts 5.33; 7.54; *et al.*] is really Satan: "the dragon was *enraged* with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children" [12.17].

<sup>318</sup>David Chilton understands the flight of the woman into the wilderness [12.6, 14] as "a picture of the flight of the Judean Christians from the destruction of Jerusalem, so that the Dragon's wrath is expended upon apostate rather than faithful Israel." *Days of Vengeance*, 309, 321. This may be the case, but the symbolism need not limit the protection of God's covenant people to that historical event.

<sup>319</sup>The imagery of waters [12.15–16] symbolizes destruction [Ps 32.6; 69.1–2; 124.2–5; Is 43.2; Jer 47.2], drawing on Israel's exodus experience through the Red Sea [Ex 14–15]. Whether the destruction is by persecution, false teaching, or both [*cf.* chapters 2–3], Satan's goal of destroying the church will be unsuccessful. 12.17 is a summary statement of 12.13–16, and however he makes war with God's people, he will fail.

<sup>320</sup>Satan's anger is great "because he knows he has *little time*" [12.12]. "Little time" [ὀλίγον καιρὸν] suggests an [understandably] apocalyptic [imminent] expectation of Christ's return and Satan's final defeat. Of course, no one, including Satan, save the Lord himself, knows when the Christ will return, but the day is set [Acts 17.31]. Nevertheless, Satan is aware God has placed *temporal* limitations on his evil purposes, and in the grand scheme of God's *eternal* purpose and plan of redemption Satan's days are numbered. The "little time" parallels the three and one half years in 12.6, 14; 11.2–3; 13.5 where the saints are persecuted but protected [*cf.* Dn 7.25; 12.7]. The martyred saints in 6.9–11 were told they only had to wait "a little time" [χρόνον μικρόν] for the judgment of Satan and his agents, which is answered in chapter 20.1–10 following Satan's futile efforts in the "little time" [μικρόν χρόνον, 20.3] he was given by God.

<sup>321</sup>In many critical editions of the Gr. text, the sentence 'And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea' is made v.18 of ch. 12 rather than v.1 of ch. 13 following the reading ἐστάθη (*estathe*, 'he stood') instead of ἐστάθην (*estathen*, 'I stood'). The third person reading is well supported and may be correct, though the first person yields good sense and the MS evidence is not such as to eliminate it from consideration. A single letter in the Gr. text makes the difference. If 'he stood' is the correct reading, the sense would be that the dragon, who has now turned his rage on the children of the woman (12:17), stands on the seashore to summon his next instrument, the beast from the sea. But if the text reads 'I stood,' the sense is that John receives a new vision (*cf.* 10:1) as he gazes out over the sea in the same manner as Daniel (7:2)." Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation* (EBC 12; ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), n.p.

wickedness in the heavenly places" [Eph 6.12]. Two beasts symbolize the agents: one "out of the sea" [ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης] [13.1–10] and the other "out of the land [earth]" [ἐκ τῆς γῆς] [13.11–18].

There is a variety of interpretations of what these symbols represent.<sup>322</sup> The more prevalent among them in modern scholarship fall into two general categories. Some relate the symbols to John's readers and the first century context [preterists], while others would not exclude that context but would extend it to include all institutions and individuals opposing the kingdom of God at any point in church history [idealists]. Hence, the sea beast is understood by many as the Roman empire<sup>323</sup> and sometimes the Roman empire more specifically represented by its rulers [i.e.g., Nero].<sup>324</sup> Others would view it as representative of "any world-wide anti-God system of Satan and its manifestation in periodic, historical human antichrists...whether political, social, economic, or religious."<sup>325</sup>

The whore of Babylon rides upon the sea beast that eventually devours her [17.1–19.2 cf. 14.8; 16.19].<sup>326</sup> Nevertheless, the whore is generally taken as Rome [sometimes Jerusalem<sup>327</sup>], "the great city" [17.18; 18.16].<sup>328</sup> The whore [πορνῆ] represents spiritual apostasy into idolatry. In 2.14, 20–21 the πορν- cognates are directly linked to "things sacrificed to idols." It is likely the false teachers in those churches were not leading the believers into *sexual* immorality, but rather *spiritual* immorality, i.e., idolatry.<sup>329</sup> This understanding of the πορν- cognates is also probable in 14.8; 17.1–5; 18.3, 9; 19.2.<sup>330</sup>

The earth beast [13.11–18] is understood by some as "the priesthood of the imperial cult,"<sup>331</sup> or, similarly, "the local provincial council who supervised the imperial cult in Asia."<sup>332</sup> Some preterists understand the religious earth beast as the "apostate Jewish leaders."<sup>333</sup> From a more idealistic perspective, the earth beast represents "the false prophets of the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22)...satanic false teaching and false prophets" in every age, deceptively similar to the truth,<sup>334</sup> not just from pagan religious influences, but also from within the covenant community.<sup>335</sup>

The specific identities of the symbols is perhaps not essential to understanding how Satan operated in human affairs, and presumably continues to do so until the final judgment. The sea beast, as Satan's agent, is a secular ["blasphemies<sup>336</sup> against God," 13.6] political authority [government] that arises out of a long line of authorities [13.2], and faces great adversity, but survives. The government has the allegiance of its followers, particularly as it survives adversity [13.3–4]. This allegiance is framed in terms of "worship" [13.4, 8, 12, 15].

It is clear, as John reveals, the power behind the sea beast is Satan [13.2, 4], and the "worship" by "all who dwell on the earth" [13.8]<sup>337</sup> of the sea beast is in effect the "worship" of

<sup>322</sup>Some should be dismissed as products of a culturally dominated exegesis [Reformationists reading the Roman Catholic church back into the text] or fantastical gymnastics of eisegesis [premillennialists and dispensationalists ignoring the contexts of Scripture and history].

<sup>323</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 779.

<sup>324</sup>Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327–329.

<sup>325</sup>Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation* (EBC 12; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), n.p. Similarly, G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 684–686, specifically, Rome in the first century.

<sup>326</sup>This suggests a distinction between the whore and Babylon, which is the beast, Rome.

<sup>327</sup>See Rev 11.8, "where also their Lord was crucified," and 16.19, "Babylon the great was remembered before God." See Chilton, *Vengeance*, 423–432.

<sup>328</sup>Babylon is a fitting symbol for Rome as both great cities were not only centers of ungodly world powers, but each destroyed the city of God, Jerusalem, the former in the sixth century BC, the latter in the first century AD.

<sup>329</sup>This would not exclude possible allusions to the literal sexual immorality that was a part of idolatrous rituals in Pagan religions [Acts 15.20, 29; 1Cor 6.15–16].

<sup>330</sup>In 9.21; 21.8; 22.15 the sense is likely literal fornication, *sexual* immorality.

<sup>331</sup>Aune, 780.

<sup>332</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), n.p.

<sup>333</sup>"The Jewish leaders, symbolized by this Beast from the Land, joined forces with the Beast of Rome in an attempt to destroy the Church (Acts 4:24–28; 12:1–3; 13:8; 14:5; 17:5–8; 18:12–13; 21:11; 24:1–9; 25:2–3, 9, 24). Thus the Land Beast exercises all the authority of the First Beast." Chilton, *Revelation*, 336–337.

<sup>334</sup>Alan F. Johnson, *EBC*, n.p.

<sup>335</sup>Beale, 707–709

<sup>336</sup>"Blasphemies against God" can take any form of false teaching set over against the truth of his word. They might manifest in seemingly innocuous political policies to outright immoral policies that evolve in a culture less and less committed to God's word and increasingly enamored to the philosophies and traditions of man.

<sup>337</sup>"The ones dwelling upon the earth" [οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 13.8, 3, 12, 14 cf. 8.13; 14.6; 17.2, 8; 18.3, 9, 11, 23; 19.2] are set over against "the ones dwelling in heaven" [τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας, 13.6]. See

Satan [13.4].<sup>338</sup> Such "worship" was not a conscious action by the earth dwellers, *i.e.*, they would not regard themselves as "Satanists" *per se*.<sup>339</sup> Nevertheless, their allegiance to the worldly governmental powers was allegiance to Satan. This is a point that readers must not minimize, for even true believers can mistakenly give allegiance to political ideologies that are not in harmony with biblical ideologies.<sup>340</sup> As John reveals concerning the earth beast, *deception* is very much a part of Satan's strategy [20.10], and he is very effective [13.13–14 *cf.* 2.20; 12.9; 18.23; 19.20; 20.8]. The image of deception is seldom transparently Satanic, especially when it works impressive "miracles," and it can mislead even the people of God [16.14; Mt 24.4–5, 11, 24 *cf.* 2Thess 2.8–12].<sup>341</sup>

The seven bowls of wrath/judgment [15.1–16.21] follow the opening of the seals and sounding of the seven trumpets [Rev 5–11]. The vision of the dragon and his two agents—the sea beast and the earth beast, clearly depicted in Rev 12–13, prepare the way for the seven bowl judgments.<sup>342</sup> Under the sixth bowl, the dragon and his agents make a final assault upon God's kingdom at Ἄρμαγεδών [Harmagedon] [16.17–21]. Bowl number seven, however, seems to rectify the situation by pouring out final judgment: γέγονεν, "It is done!" This bowl only anticipates greater detail of that final judgment in the destruction of the great whore in 17.1–21.8 *cf.* 21.6, γέγοναν, "It is done!"

The dragon [Satan], the sea beast [Rome] and the earth beast [the religious arm of the sea beast, here described more aptly as τοῦ ψευδοπροφήτου, the false prophet *cf.* 13.11–15; 19.20; 20.10],<sup>343</sup> are described as leading "the kings of the world" into war against God's kingdom [16.12–15; 19.19; 20.8]. They do so by performing the "signs" [σημείον] previously attributed to the earth beast [13.13–14; 19.20], but, of course, ultimately coming from Satan himself, and so described here as coming from each of the demonic characters.<sup>344</sup>

The signs are attributed, more specifically, to "three unclean spirits [πνεύματα] like frogs;<sup>345</sup> for they are spirits [πνεύματα] of demons [δαμονίων]" [13b–14a].<sup>346</sup> The repeated attacks on God's people coming from the devil's mouth [12:15–16; 13:5–6] is countered by the judgment upon God's enemies coming from the Lord's mouth [1:16; 11:5; 19:15, 21]. "Unclean spirits" and "demons" are also pictured as inhabitants of Babylon [18.2 *cf.* 17.4], and so destined

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also 6.10; 11.10; 14.3; 19.19 for the contrast between the 2 groups. Chilton [*Revelation*, 331] limits the "earth dwellers" to those dwelling in the "land" [γῆς] of Israel—"It is true, of course, that Nero was loved all over the Empire as the benevolent provider of welfare and entertainment. But it is Israel in particular which is condemned for Emperor-worship. Faced with a choice between Christ and Caesar, they had proclaimed: *We have no king but Caesar!* (John 19:15)."

<sup>338</sup>The sea beast sits on Satan's "throne" [13.2 *cf.* 2.13], which represents his "kingdom" [16.10], in contrast to "the throne of God and of the Lamb" throughout *Revelation* [22.1–3; 4–5; 20.11–12; *et al.*].

<sup>339</sup>The *literal* demands for worship, including prayer and sacrifice, by the Roman imperial cult is likely the immediate historical reference. Nevertheless, the homage ultimately reaches to the true power behind the throne, Satan.

<sup>340</sup>In our culture, such issues as abortion, homosexuality, the dissolution of family values, capital punishment, warfare, pluralism, humanism, *etc.* immediately come to mind.

<sup>341</sup>"The Book of Acts records several instances of miracle-working Jewish false prophets who came into conflict with the Church (cf. Acts 8:9–24) and worked under Roman officials (cf. Acts 13:6–11); as Jesus had foretold (Matt. 7:22–23), some of them even used His name in their incantations (Acts 19:13–16)." Chilton, *Revelation*, 338. Some have suggested the animated speaking image [13.15] might refer to statues of the Caesars manipulated by some trick of machinery, magic, or ventriloquism, perhaps by imperial priests. The meaning may be strictly symbolic in that Satan gives life to idolatrous systems of the world.

<sup>342</sup>"Seven" is repeatedly utilized in *Revelation* as a symbol of *completeness*.

<sup>343</sup>Ψευδοπροφήτης best characterizes the deceptive *religious* nature of the earth beast, for "false prophets" in Scripture always arise from within the covenant people of God, particularly Israel [Mt 7.15; 24.11, 24; Lk 6.26; Acts 13.6; 2Pet 2.1; 1Jn 4.1]. This fact supports the contention of many preterists that the earth beast is Israel. The warning of 16.15 addresses saints not to compromise their faith, which suggests the deception of the earth beast might even penetrate the covenant community [*cf.* Rev 3.3–4, 18]. The deception, either within or outside the covenant community, leads to idolatry. The whore of Babylon holds in her hand "the unclean things of her πορνείας [fornication]" [17.4], which clearly has an idolatrous implication [*cf.* 2.14, 20 for the connection, prevalent in the Old Testament, of idolatry with πορνεία].

<sup>344</sup>"What they do not realize is that the battle is the Lord's, and that the armies are being brought to fulfill God's purposes, not their own. It is He who prepares the way for them, even drying up the Euphrates for their passage." Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 408.

<sup>345</sup>"Frogs" were unclean under the dietary restrictions of the Law [Lev 11.9–12, 41–47].

<sup>346</sup>The "three" unclean spirits of demons is set over against "the seven spirits of God" [3.1; 4.5; 5.6] suggesting the *incompleteness* of Satan's force. The genitive [πνεύματα δαμονίων] could be *descriptive* ["demonic spirits"], *appositional* ["spirits that are demons" *cf.* Lk 4.33], or simply *ablative* ["spirits from demons"] as the parallel with τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ might suggest [1.4].

to destruction, even though they were able to impress the kings of the world, and even receive worship [9.20].<sup>347</sup> The three "frogs" would have reminded the readers of the *innumerable* frogs of God's judgment upon Egypt [Ex 8.1-15; Ps 78.45; 105.30].<sup>348</sup>

This symbolism and the actions of the deceiving spirits suggest that ultimately God is behind the scene carrying out his plans. A parallel scenario is recorded in 1Kings 22.19-23 where the prophet Micaiah had a vision of Yahweh orchestrating evil spirits to deceive the evil King Ahab to go against Ramoth-gilead only to meet his final destruction. Therefore, the kings of the world will likewise meet their final destruction.

In 17.1-21.8, John is carried away "in spirit to a desert" [17.3] to witness the judgment of the whore of Babylon and her paramours. In 17.1-19.10 she is described in great detail [17.1-18], her ultimate destruction is assured [18.1-24], and a heavenly chorus celebrates the judgment and the victory of God [19.1-10].

In 19.11-21.8 the victorious king—"The Word of God"—who judges and wages war in righteousness enters the vision on "a white [purity] horse," followed by his army on white horses [19.11, 14, 19, 21], and finalizes the judgment of the anti-God forces, specifically of "the beast," "the false prophet," "the dragon," and those who worshipped them [19.19-20.10]. With the beast and the false prophet totally destroyed, Satan makes one last strike at the kingdom of God with new agents "Gog and Magog," only to suffer the same final judgment as his previous agents in "the second death" [20.6, 14; 21.8].

The final judgment of "the beast" and "the false prophet" is described in 19.19-21: "the two were thrown living into the lake of fire, the one burning with sulphur." Likewise, following Satan's abortive comeback [20.1-10], he too "was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where also are the beast and the false prophet, and they will be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages." In an earlier vision, John included all the worshippers of "the beast and his image..." in this same judgment [14.9-11 *cf.* 21.8].<sup>349</sup>

A prolonged discussion on the binding of Satan for one thousand years [20.3], particularly as interpreted by premillennial and dispensational theologies, is well beyond the scope of this study.<sup>350</sup> However, see the discussion above on pp. 43ff, which essentially relates this binding to the casting down of Satan from heaven to the earth by the ministry and exaltation of the Christ [12.7-9].

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<sup>347</sup>See *fn.* 179.

<sup>348</sup>Note also the "three plagues" of judgment in 9.17-19.

<sup>349</sup>The anti-God demonic forces tried their hand at "fire and smoke and brimstone" succeeding to kill only a portion of mankind, and their efforts resulted only in temporal death set over against "the second death" of final judgment [9.17-18].

<sup>350</sup>See my *SpecStud on 20.1-10*.