

1Pet 5:8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

When the subject is Satan and his activity today, this is a very common verse that is used to demonstrate the devil's working in this world today. A couple weeks ago we saw that this wasn't true in this present dispensation. We'll have more on that today.

Last week we looked at the subject of devils and their workings in time past. What we saw was that when the word devils was used, it was always in respect to what Satan, the prince of devils, was doing at that time. We also saw that there are spirits that work, sometimes in harmony with Satan's plan, but often they worked with individuals to empower them by lending them supernatural abilities.

This week we want to look at what the scripture tells us about the working of devils and spirits in this present dispensation. When we looked at the workings of devils and spirits in time past, we went to Acts 8 to show how sometimes spirits worked in time past to empower individuals.

Acts 8:9-11 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: **10** To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. **11** And to him they had regard, because that of long time **he had bewitched them with sorceries.**

Here was a man who was being empowered by sorcery to make people think he was a great man, and to get their respect. Sorcery means: Magic; enchantment; witchcraft; divination be the assistance of evil spirits, or the power of commanding evil spirits.

So it is instructive and interesting that the dispensation of grace begins with the blinding of a sorcerer. This sorcerer was doing Satan's bidding, and was also a type of the unbelieving nation of Israel.

Acts 13:6-12 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: **7** Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. **8** **But Elymas the sorcerer** (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. **9** Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, **10** And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, **thou child of the devil**, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? **11** And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. **12** Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

The next spirit we see is a very irritating fellow. He is a spirit that is working for the enrichment of several individuals in the city of Philippi. Although this spirit is irritating and quite persistent, he seems bent on making sure that everybody knows that Paul is speaking truth and has a true message from God.

Acts 16:16-18 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel **possessed with a spirit of divination** met us, **which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying**: **17** The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, **These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.** **18** And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

This ended up causing Paul to be put in prison, but our point this morning is that in this transition period in the book of Acts there were still spirits doing the bidding of individuals and spirits working for Satan.

Again, when Paul is in Ephesus, we find more evil spirits. Whether these were independent contractors or Satanic soldiers we aren't told, only that they were evil.

Acts 19:11-17 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: **12** So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and **the evil spirits went out of them.** **13** ¶ Then certain of the vagabond Jews, **exorcists**, took upon them to call over **them which had evil spirits** the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. **14** And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. **15** **And the evil spirit** answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? **16** **And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them**, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. **17** And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

So during this transition period, when Paul was establishing his gospel and still testifying to Jews, these spirits were still active. It is commonly thought that Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians during the period described in Acts 19. From 1 Corinthians we can see that Satan's devils were still active in their work in the pagan religions.

1Cor 10:19-21 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? **20** But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to devils**, and not to God: and I would not that **ye should have fellowship with devils.** **21** **Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.**

What was going on before Moses wrote the law was still going on when Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. He is quoting Deut. 32:17 in verse 20. So throughout the Acts period we still have evil spirits, devils, and those using curious arts, as they are described in Acts 19:19.

But during this same transition period, Paul was healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out evil spirits, baptizing, speaking with tongues and so on. All of this ceased after the end

of Acts. So what about devils? What about spirits of divination, sorcerers, witches and so on?

As for the devils who are under the command of Satan, we know that they would be doing today what Satan is doing today. To know what Satan is doing today, first we'll look at what God is doing today. How is God working in the world today?

1Tim 3:15-16 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth. **16** And without controversy great is the **mystery of godliness**: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

God today is working in the world through His church, the pillar and ground of the truth. We aren't going to get into this today, but verse 16 is talking about the body of Christ, not the person of Christ. Tracy has gone over this before. The point for this morning is that God today is working through the mystery of godliness. We talk about the mystery all of the time as far as the revelation of a dispensation. But this verse is specific in how God is working in the world today to reconcile individuals back to Himself.

It should be no surprise, then, that Satan is also working through a mystery that he is dispensing.

2Thess 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

The second part of this verse is much disputed and discussed, but the first part is a revelation of the way that Satan is mimicking God through his own mystery. That mystery finds its' fruition in the end times.

2Thess 2:3-4 ¶ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; **4** Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

That mystery is fully revealed to the world when Satan enters the anti-Christ and declares himself to be God. Today, that mystery works through the Christian church.

2Cor 11:13-15 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. **14** And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. **15** Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Satan is the most devout Christian that there is today, with the exception that he is claiming the position of the Christ. He works through ministers, the same as God works through preaching. God works today through the scriptures. Satan works today through Bibles. God works through the body of Christ. Satan works through the Christian church.

Now returning to the verses where we see how God is working through the mystery of godliness, we will encounter the only post-Acts period mention of devils, plural.

1Tim 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

1Tim 4:1-5 ¶ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, **giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;** **2** Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; **3** Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. **4** For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: **5** For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

I had always just assumed that these verses were speaking of the end times because of the phrase “latter times.” But in the context that it is in, I think it is obvious that it isn’t, nor does latter times here refer to the end times. This is the only verse in the scriptures that uses that phrase. As a matter of fact, it is the only time that the Greek word translated ‘latter’ is found in God’s word.

So if we look at how Webster defines it, it means “Coming or happening after something else.” When we look how the word ‘latter’ is used throughout scripture, it can mean the end times (as we use the phrase), or it can just mean later on.

And the word ‘times’ refers to seasons, ages, or an undisclosed period.

When compared to the passage that Paul is specifically referring to the end of the age of grace in 2 Tim. 3, there is nothing about doctrines of devils or seducing spirits, only the ungodliness that the church has descended to.

Another reason I think that latter times just means later on is that the context of 1 Tim 4:1 is 1 Tim. 3:15: “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Everything in 4:1-3 has already happened. There was a great departure from the faith that began before Paul finished 2 Timothy, culminating in the formation of the Roman Catholic church.

The question then is: how did and do the seducing spirits and doctrines of devils work? How does God work? Through His Word. Where are doctrines of devils found? In the seducing spirits of corrupt Bibles.

John Dean Burgon, who was one of the great defenders of the traditional text of the scriptures, wrote that most of the corruption that is found in later manuscripts was put there in the first century. Many other scholars agree with him. There was a concerted effort in the first century to corrupt God’s Word, even as witnessed by Paul when he wrote:

2Cor 2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

The corruptions were copied, translated, and distributed the same as the true scriptures. To a large degree the true scriptures kept surviving while the corruptions slowly went away, only to be rediscovered in the 19th century.

Tracy talked about doctrines a couple weeks ago. Doctrines are based on words that are written or spoken by the progenitors of those teachings. Doctrines of devils were propagated in the first century, and combined with mankind's natural lusts and pride, caused and still causes some to depart from the faith.

The Holy Spirit works through the pure word of God. Seducing spirits work through corrupt Bibles and mankind's fleshly lusts and pride. I believe that any and all of the supernatural work by devils was undertaken before the end of the first century. From that point on, mankind ran with it.

Most notably was the Roman Catholic church, who forbid even the reading of the Bible in Latin, let alone permitting any translating work. That way their lies could go unchallenged for hundreds of years. But that departure from the faith never ended and continues today.

The recovery of the scriptures for the masses and the translation into their respective languages moved men to resurrect those corrupt manuscripts and translate them again. And the cycle repeats.

Just as the working of Satan is achieved through the lusts and pride of man, the foundation of the doctrines and devils continues by the same device. What are those doctrines? They are the same doctrines found in most pagan religions throughout history.

In some form or another, they involve worshipping the creature more than the Creator. Even when that creature is another Jesus worshipped through another gospel.

Col 2:18-19 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and **worshipping of angels**, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, **19** And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Where do you suppose one would get the idea to worship angels? Can that doctrine be found anywhere in God's word? Maybe in the book of Enoch you could be enticed to worship angels. Maybe some of those apocryphal books one might find something to nudge them toward that doctrine.

Not only did some corrupt the scriptures to the degree that could be achieved, but many books were written that claimed to be scripture. Every generation or so we get the new editions of the "lost books of the Bible" foisted on us. The book of Jasher, the gospel of Thomas and so on. These books that were written in the early period of this dispensation still produce best sellers every now and then.

It is my belief, then, that doctrines of devils are found in corrupt Bibles and books that have long claimed to be scripture that continue to rear their ugly heads. Working through Satan's ministers, who are simply those who are out to make gain out of godliness, more lies are propagated in hypocrisy and more people are drawn away from the truth.

What about:

Eph 6:11-13 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** **13** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

We are wrestling with principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness . . . where? In high places. Where are high places? In the heavens.

2Cor 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: **4** (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, **but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds**;) **5** Casting down imaginations, and **every high thing** that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; **6** And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

How can we pull down strongholds?

Eph 3:9-10 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: **10** To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,**

Last week Tracy taught that God's will for us is making known the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers in heavenly places. To what intent? To pull down strongholds and wrestle with spiritual wickedness in high places. That is why part of the mystery of godliness is

1Tim 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, **seen of angels**, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

We are seen of angels when we show off the manifold wisdom of God. And by the way, where are the principalities and powers today according to Eph. 3: 10 and 6:12? They're not on earth.

Now, what about those freelance spirits that we encountered earlier? The ones who work with individuals through sorcery, divination, witchcraft and so on for gain, empowerment, or vanity? What are they doing today?

I don't know. What I do know is that 99.9% of the stuff that is popularized today as spiritual mediums and wiccans spirit guides is all a bunch of hooey.