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CHALDEANS, BEASTS OF THE FIELD, BIRDS OF THE AIR, DRAGON, SERPENT, SCORPION, SATAN, ENEMY

Listed above are some of the words in the Old and New Testaments identifying the devil or demons. (If you question some of the words in the list, just do a word study.)

After spending three years in a cemetery, I mean seminary, and 12 years as a Pastor, I was embarrassed by this subject and never preached about it except to explain that these were symbols of the evil inside man. This was what most Christians believed, and I don't recall that anyone ever questioned my interpretation.

Then, as I have related to you before, God messed up my theology and my life not with some gentle explanation but with a violent, explosive, repulsive and very personal experience when some folks cast demons out of me! What a totally unexpected and unwelcome experience for a nice Methodist pastor.

Yes, on one level it was unwelcome, but I was stuck and didn't know how to get unstuck.....stuck in anxiety, anger, alcohol, and pornography. Oh, and pride. Oh, yes, pride. Invisible to me but obvious to everyone around me. Like a guy who had garlic and onions for lunch.

A BIG QUESTION

What would have happened to me if I had died at that time? Would I have gone to heaven? The answer according to liberal churches is: "Of course! Everyone is going to heaven, if there is a heaven. A

loving God would certainly never send anyone to hell."

The surprising thing is that most Bible believing Christians believe that same way. Polls have shown that only a small percentage of Christians in America believe in hell or in the devil or demons. And fewer still believe that a Christian can be demonized.

I only rarely hear any preaching about the warnings to Christians in the New Testament. Let me share some of those warnings with you, with my paraphrasing:

"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord.' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven.....I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Get away from me.'" (Matthew 7:21-27)

"If you deliberately keep on sinning after you have received the knowledge of the truth, then Christ's sacrifice no longer pertains to you and all you can expect in the future is fearful, raging fire. You have been insulting me and making sport of my love and forgiveness. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of God in your condition." Hebrews 10:26-31)

"They have become slaves of depravity. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and are again entangled in it and overcome, **THEY ARE WORSE OFF AT THE END THAN THEY WERE AT THE BEGINNING.** The old proverb is true about them: 'A dog returns to its vomit.....' (2 Peter 2:17-22)

In a previous Newsletter I told about the friend of one of my sons who was raised in a family of staunch Baptists. He abandoned his wife and two young children and moved into an apartment with a girl who worked in his store. When my son asked him how he could do such a thing, he said, "I know it's wrong, but I am saved and can't be lost, and this is what I want to do,

so I'm going to do it no matter what anybody says."

What he was saying was: "I have an unbreakable contract, so I will do what I want to do, and poor old God can't do a thing about it." Really?

It's easy for me to quote that young man's words in a self-righteous way, but I can look back and see that there were many times when I did what I wanted to do when I knew it was wrong, God have mercy on me! How about you?

If I had died during my rebellious period, what would have happened? Heaven or hell? I don't really know and when I think about it I get the shudders. What I do know is that God had mercy on me and gave me another chance.....and I don't ever want to put him to the test again.

Now I want to go back to the subject of demons and ask the question: "Is it possible, and is it Scriptural for Christians to be demonized?"

Scripture is not definitive on this subject, and if you were in a church where the Pastor "proved" that Christians can't be demonized then your mind is probably closed on the matter. Since I was a born-again Christian and a pastor and was demonized, and since I spent the next 48 years ministering to people and at times casting demons out of Christians, some of whom were leaders, pastors and missionaries, the question has been answered for me.

Now I'm going to quote from an article in the March Charisma magazine by Pastor Alexander Pagani, founder of the Risen Tabernacle in the Bronx, New York:

"In my denomination and in my Bible school, the idea that a Christian might need deliverance from the demonic after being saved was a heresy. So I spent the first 19 years of my ministry preaching against the ministry of deliverance and called all deliverance ministries 'sensational' and 'fanatical.' Not until a surge of pornography circulated among the male membership of my church, along with my

own season of struggle to get free from pornography, did I consider the possibility that this sexual perversion running rampant among us might have a demonic root. The men engaged in this battle loved Jesus and were obviously saved, but they struggled with pornography in such a way that it seemed to go beyond the threshold of the flesh.

What was I to do? Naturally, I encouraged my church to pray more and fast more. But that didn't work. In a moment of frustration, I cried out, 'Lord, I'm doing everything right as a pastor. What am I doing wrong that so many people in our church still seem bound? I don't know what else to do.'

Just like that, a still, small voice said, 'The ministry of deliverance.'

I thought, 'What do we have to lose?' and decided to explore the ministry of deliverance. To my great surprise, demons began to manifest and come out of my church members. Without any training and operating on pure trust in the Holy Spirit, my theology shifted.

Immediately I found myself engaged in an inner theological conflict. I learned what it means to 'deny myself, take up my cross and follow Jesus' by denying my theological preferences and traditions.

The second conflict is the one that hurt the most. Many of my ministerial colleagues whom I had known for years, as well as members of my church, publicly disagreed with me. Many of my leaders and members left the church. I was called a heretic and lost many friends. I was 'scourged' on social media.

You may remember that at one point Jesus' own family thought he was insane, and he was accused by others of being demon-possessed (Mark 3:20-22).

Many years have passed, and this movement has become bigger than the religious restraints set up against it. Christians from all denominational backgrounds are seeking out deliverance ministers and thousands are getting set

free. The Holy Spirit is pushing back against the religious Sanhedrin who want to control this move of God but can't stop it. People are desperate for real freedom and God is hearing their cry.

Anyone venturing into the ministry of deliverance will be marked by the backlash of demonic resistance. There will be no way around it. The kingdom of darkness will find a way to accuse, harass, or torment you with circumstances beyond your control and to distract you from being effective.

But Jesus made a promise to believers: 'Look, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.' (Luke 10:19) The attacks persist to this day — against my ministry and every ministry that seeks to set people free in the same way that Jesus and the apostles set them free.

But the Apostle Paul writes: 'Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.' (Eph. 6:10-11)"

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IMAGINE HEAVEN

John Burke, the author of Imagine Heaven, is pastor of Gateway Church in Austin, Texas (the Holy Land), and an international speaker. In this book he compares more than 100 near-death experiences (NDEs) to what Scripture says about our biggest questions of Heaven:

1. Will I be myself, the person I have been on earth?
2. Will I see and know my loved ones and friends?
3. What will Heaven look like?
4. Will Heaven be boring, and what will I do forever?
5. What is God like?
6. What about children and pets?

Burke assembled over a thousand NDEs (near-death experiences) but only used

those from children and from doctors, college professors, bank presidents, people from other cultures and religions, blind people - - people who had nothing to gain by selling books, etc, and much to lose by sharing their personal stories. Following are some of their stories:

First, a quote from Mother Teresa:

"In light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth, a life full of the most atrocious tortures on earth, will be seen to be no more serious than one night in an inconvenient hotel."

Gary Wood had a car accident and was killed instantly. He states: "I turned to see what the matter was. There was an explosion, then a sharp, instant pain seared across my face. There was a brilliant light that engulfed me, and I remember being free from all pain. I slipped out of my body...I was above the car now and began to ascend up through a tunnel of light. I could hear angels singing and I was granted access to an incredible city.

The first person I saw was my friend John who had been decapitated in an accident in high school. I had always been haunted by that memory. He was a joyful, complete person. He ran and embraced me. His arms went all the way through me."

Gary revived after being pronounced dead for 20 minutes. Due to his injuries he has no vocal cords, yet God did something the doctors say is impossible, he can talk and sing.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes: "But someone may say, 'How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?'"

In essence, when we die we get an upgrade from our temporal, earthly bodies (version 1.0) to a spiritual body (version 2.0) that has a far greater "glory." Yet it's still not the final version. When God wraps up human history as we know it Scripture says all original bodies will be resurrected just like Jesus' body was resurrected. Then our spiritual body will be united with our resurrected earthly body (version 3.0).

What clothes will I wear? In Revelation 3 and 7, it says that they “will be dressed in white,” and “They were wearing white robes.” But before that time comes, NDErs reported other types of clothing worn in Heaven. Bank president Marv Besteman said he looked down and saw he no longer wore his hospital gown but was dressed in a light brown golf shirt, tan slacks and shoes. He said, “The smiling people who stood before me were from all over the world including Scandinavian, Asian, African and Middle Eastern, and wore comfortable clothing appropriate to their culture.”

NDErs note this translucent body seems to be able to “shine” or radiate a light that comes from within, and different people radiate different degrees of brilliance. Maybe the “white” robe isn’t white at all, or even a “robe” as we know it, but what it means to be clothed in God’s glory.

Daniel was told by an angel (12:1-3): “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

YOU WILL BE YOURSELF...FINALLY!

Crystal struggled with God, with her identity, and with shame.....and for good reason. Sexual abuse had started at age 3 at a babysitter’s house. At age 6, she had watched two marriages fall apart. Her mom started partying each week, while downstairs Crystal and her brother were left alone. For five straight years, she was sexually abused during these weekly escapades.

At age 33, Crystal died in a hospital due to pancreatitis. During a nine-minute span she went to Heaven and stood before God. God clearly told her to share her experience with others, but when she returned to earth she hesitated. She questioned why God had chosen a terrible person like her. Although she had grown up in the Bible

Belt, been baptized and attended church during her youth, she turned from God and claims she broke every one of the Ten Commandments. She concluded that God had no interest in protecting her so she cut him out of her life. Then in the hospital she awoke in Heaven.

“The first thing I remember becoming aware of was that I was still me. I was the me who had just told my mother that I loved her and died. But I was a different me. Unlike on earth where I was plagued by doubts and fears, in heaven there was absolute certainty about who I was.”

Crystal felt infused with complete and total self-understanding and self-knowledge. All the baggage and abuses that had muddled her identity on earth instantly evaporated, revealing for the first time her true self. “And now,” says Crystal, “I knew myself. Imagine that - - the first person we meet in heaven is ourselves.”

Many NDErs reported that they had a sort of life review. Dr. George Ritchie said: “Every detail of my life was there to be looked at, the good, the bad, everything. And there was a question that pervaded all that I saw: ‘What did you do with the life I gave you?’ But it was not a harsh, judgmental question.

“There was a brightness that seemed to vibrate and shimmer with a kind of holy laughter - - not at me, not a mocking laughter, but a mirth that seemed to say that in spite of all errors and tragedy, joy was more lasting still. He was not reproaching. He was simply loving me.”

From Glenn: I love this book and will continue to excerpt it next month if I am still around. (True statement: Every month I wonder if this will be my last Newsletter, and these reports about Heaven make me tingle in anticipation of what is to come.)

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God bless,

Glenn

