DEFINING DEVILS & SERPENTS IN MARK 16 17/7/16

The church age began on Pentecost (33AD) when the New Covenant was activated with signs miracles and wonders. The sacrifice that Christ had made opened the door for all men to witness the salvation plan of God. Faithful disciples began speaking in tongues as the spirit entered their bodies… other signs and wonders were being equally poured out for the first time. Much of what Jesus had prophesied was now becoming reality. This encouraged men and women to search the scriptures so they could identify and learn exactly how the New Covenant applied to them. Every era and culture has their own terminology and unique culture. That is why scriptural terminology and observable reality need to be put into a spiritual perspective… keeping in mind that the bible usually self interprets for the seekers of the truth. **1COR 2:13** Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; **comparing spiritual** things with spiritual. *People are easily confused by Hollywood stereotypes, religious errors and cultural myths… that is why we use the bible to interpret itself where possible.*

Let's compare the scriptural record with our current experience. **MAR 16:14** Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. **15** And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel** to every creature. *Preaching the gospel is the context of the following verses… not the day to day running of the church.* **16** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be **damned** *(very clear cut statement)*. **17** And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out **devils** *(1140 false gods);* they shall speak with new tongues; **18** They shall take up **serpents**; and if they drink any **deadly thing**, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover *(these signs are God given, non human doctrine… they identify those who are true believers and those who aren't. This is what the true gospel produces)*. **19** So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. **20** And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. *Speaking in tongues is a very obvious and clear sign… it identified the religious faithful of the day, who received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and also clearly identified the same promise to the rest of the world's people in Acts 10&11. This is what Acts records… it should also be the experience of all Christian churches today. However, many are confused or bypass the scriptural record. The devils and serpents referred to here, are further qualified.*

The bible self explains (serpents & poisonous creatures). **LUK 10:17** And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the **devils** *(1140)* are subject unto us through thy name. **19** Behold, I give unto you power to tread on **serpents** and **scorpions**, and over all the **power of the enemy**: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **20** Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the **spirits** are subject unto you *(serpents and scorpions are revealed as 'spirits' {false doctrines and their speakers}… not poisonous snakes nor dangerous insects of the natural variety)*; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. *The snakes and scorpion are metaphors for deadly and fatal doctrines. Satan is also referred to as a serpent, in Genesis… so there is nothing new in this. The spiritual risks of doctrinal corruptions are likened to the toxin from the bite of these creatures. Foreign toxins are intended to kill and paralyse, not to keep you alive. Thus the metaphor relating to false doctrine and death (the power of the enemy) is revealed. Those who truly have the Holy Spirit are safe from spiritual deception if they exercise it using scriptural principles… the true gospel protects life.*

The bible also self explains many of the concepts of devils. *Let's keep in mind that our references relate to both the preachers and preaching of the gospel (Mark 16). Most people would assume that the word 'devil' or 'demon' implies a Hollywood style possession where a person is controlled by a satanic force. This is not the case in the following scriptures.* **JOH 6:70** Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a **devil** ***(****1228 diabolos****)****? A traitor/betrayer… one of Satan's messengers/angels.*
JOH 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the **devil** ***(****1228 diabolos, metaphor applied to a man opposing the cause of God****)***, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. *Those who are outside the gospel truth (those who don't believe Mar 16, etc.,), as Jesus had said.*
MAT 12:22 Then was brought unto him one **possessed with a devil** ***(****1139 daimonizomai****)***, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, **insomuch** *(self explanation)* **that** the **blind** and **dumb both** spake and saw. *This verse self interprets. Being possessed with a devil on this occasion refers to physical and mental sickness… Only two healings occur, both are specifically qualified… supernatural demonic possession is clearly not an issue on this occasion… this scripture was wisely qualified by God to counter cultural and religious confusion.*
*Same word '**devils**'* ***as in*** *Mark 16… (1140) Daimonion… false God's and/or their ministers or messengers.*

1COR 10:20 But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to **devils** *(1140)*, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with **devils** *(1140)*. **21** Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of **devils** *(1140)*: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of **devils** *(1140)*. *The Corinthians were being taught that they could not mix their natural lives with the false God's that were not of the gospel. Preaching the gospel replaces the deceit of false doctrine/disciples whether Gentile or 'Christian'. Judas was a disciple, but he was a devil, meaning he was false and unbelieving.*

'Unclean spirits' are powerless those who practice and preach the true gospel.
1TIM 4:1 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** *(1140). False doctrines and teaching, particularly in the last days… now!!*
LUK 6:18 And they that were vexed with unclean **spirits**: and they were healed. *Sickness- mental, physical and spiritual were all powerless against the power of the Holy Spirit (discernment, wisdom, knowledge and healing).*
1JOH 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the **spirits** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. *As we see once again… the term 'unclean spirits' is open to multiple use in the same way that devils and demons may have numerous applications. God has solved the 'devil, demon, unclean spirit' issue, by giving us the ability to distinguish between right and wrong… this empowers us to have the wisdom to weigh up scripture… and correctly discern between truth and error, This is particularly true in the areas of the basic salvation Gospel and the simple running of the church.*
1COR 12:10 …to another discerning of **spirits**… *We all have this ability dwelling in us… let us not run with every doctrine and belief. Some may seem to be scriptural and others are clearly in error. We seek the truth and apply it to the best of our current ability… if we are humble, God will open our eyes and the church will refine its beliefs as the Spirit reveals.*

Let us consider a few obvious points relating to 'devils' and 'demons' as presented by the self interpretation of comparing the scriptures with the scriptures. We are talking specifically about the included scriptures in this document only.

**The vast majority of times… devils and demons are not referring to indwelling evil forces possessing some hapless individual. There are a few verses that seem to support the possession viewpoint, but no instructions to the church as how to determine or deal with such possibilities are clearly presented by either example or doctrine. This document does not deny demonic possession in its entirety, but simply highlights that the scriptures revealed here are not suitable to establish possession concepts, as such. Also, a simple question… how a possessed person can be judged, if they have no control over their thoughts and lifestyle? Where is the scriptures that qualify this position?*

**Most references are for physical and mental illnesses or both (the word 'lunatic' [twice used… extreme mental impairment]. There are no references to mental illnesses, as the common term of the day was 'devil' or 'unclean spirit' and was equally used to describe physical illness, depression, schizophrenia, split personality, many variations of false doctrine and false worship, etc… depending on the context.*

**The fact that devil/demon possession rarely if ever mentioned in the Old Testament, nor after Christ should give us reason to make a greater effort to interpret these verses according to scriptural context. There is one exception being in Acts where the meaning of 'evil spirit' can be equally that for a person with a mental illness.*

**A spirit filled person cannot have a demon or devil dwelling in them in the sense of a possession. A scriptural fact.*

**We know very little about 'demon' possession as such. Nothing is explained or detailed in any epistle and no instructions are given to the church in such matters. Obviously we are not meant to do anything about supernatural forces that are not of God and not explained in scripture. This is not a problem for spirit filled people, or it would be detailed! There is no gift of casting out devils, something that would be provided and explained for the modern church if such needs were expected to be met.*

Mark 16 faithfully addresses all primary issues for those who wish to serve God. That is exactly what Jesus sets out to explain… be filled with the spirit and receive God given power and signs or suffer damnation and extinction… a simple choice in that context. Those preaching a gospel based on signs, miracles and wonders will never face any force that can prove them wrong. No force or power can prevent a repentant person from receiving God's spirit.

We are well advised to build our faith and doctrine on that we know and can prove, rather on that which we may speculate or guess.