

## Should Christians Be Involved in Exorcisms?

**Matthew 10:7–8:** *7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*



Demons are scary. Not only are they mysterious, but they are also powerful beyond our human capacity. In our last episode, we mentioned scriptures that assure us they are restrained in “chains of darkness.” While this condition does limit them, they can still exert great influence on our world and on individuals as well.

We know that Jesus cast many demons out of many people and that some of his followers were able to do the same. The big question here has to do with whether or not such power and authority is still present within Christianity today. Are we supposed to be casting out demons today? If so, who is supposed to be doing this, and what scriptural instruction have we been given to follow?

What does exorcism mean today?

(Source: Wikipedia) Exorcism... is the religious or spiritual practice of evicting demons, jinns (invisible creatures like genies most prevalent in Islamic culture) or other malevolent spiritual entities from a person, or an area, that is believed to be possessed. ...The practice is ancient and part of the belief system of many cultures and religions.

In addition to Christianity and Islam, the concept of evicting demons or using rituals to ward off evil in general shows up in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jewish mysticism known as Kabbalah, Chinese Taoism and others.

...In Christianity... The exorcist may use prayers and religious material, such as set formulae (plural of formula), gestures, symbols, sacred images, sacramentals, etc.

Exorcisms in the Catholic church, for example, can involve anointing with oil, laying-on of hands, holy water, the sign of the cross and lengthy prayers.

There are many different practices in many religions and cultures. Exorcism seems to be a commonly practiced ritual across the board.

The Bible uses the Greek word *exorcists* only once, in **Acts 19:13**.

**The context here is about miracles and God’s word in the pagan city of Ephesus:**

**Acts 19:11–14:** *11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. 13 But also some of the Jewish *exorcists* <1845>, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.*

We will come back shortly to explain the phrase *name over those the name of the Lord Jesus* and to identify who the seven sons of one Sceva were.

The Apostle Paul had been working legitimate, amazing miracles in Ephesus. This was a very pagan place, and there were some Jews there who went about as *exorcists*.

What does *exorcist* mean in Scripture?

**Exorcists:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1845 *exorkistes*'; NOUN from #1844; one that binds by an oath (or spell), i.e. (by implication) an "exorcist" (conjuror)

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: 1) he who extracts an oath of one...  
2a) one who employs a formula of conjuration for expelling demons

This Greek word, *exorkistes*', is taken from the following base word, also used only once:

**Adjure:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1844 *exorkizo*; VERB from #1537 and #3726; to exact an oath, i.e. conjure

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to extract an oath, to force to an oath 2) to adjure

**Adjure:** *Oxford Languages*  
verb

- urge, encourage, admonish or request someone to do something:  
"I adjure you to tell me the truth."

**Matthew 26:63:** *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure <1844> you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the son of God.*

There are two Greek words translated into our English word, *adjure*. One <Strong's #3726> was used with the *seven sons* of a Jewish priest (**Acts 19:13**), and the other <Strong's #1844> was used when the high priest tells Jesus in **Matthew 26:63**, *I adjure you—I place you under oath to speak to me the truth in this matter.*

Why did he do that?

**The Old Testament Law included a provision requiring someone to tell the truth:**

**Leviticus 5:1:** *Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration (a command to tell the truth) to testify when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt.*

The high priest "adjures" Jesus as part of the legal process of the Jewish Law. These Jewish *exorcists* in **Acts 19** were in Ephesus adjuring or demanding certain actions from the evil spirits.

**Let's continue in Acts and reread the first part of verse 13. These *exorcists* were trying to command a very powerful demon:**

**Acts 19:13–16:** *13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists <1845>, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus saying, I adjure <3726> you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.*

They were brazenly using Jesus' name even though they weren't his followers.

*Adjure* here has a similar meaning as “to exorcise.”

**Adjure:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3726 *horkizo*; to put on oath, i.e. make swear; by analogy, to solemnly enjoin

The King James Version translates this word as “adjure” 2 times, “charge” 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1. to force to take an oath, to administer an oath to  
2. to adjure (solemnly implore)

By proclaiming an oath in Jesus' name over those with evil spirits, these exorcists were seeking his higher power to apply God's authority to drive out the demons.

These professional exorcists were men who went to different cities, pretending with charms and spells to cure those thought to be possessed by demons.

(Source: Joseph Benson's Commentary of the Old and New Testaments) They strolled through the countries of the Lesser Asia, practicing that magic which was in such vogue among the heathen. But when they came to Ephesus, hearing of the wonderful things which Paul performed in the name of Jesus, and, perhaps, seeing some of them, they took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus.

*15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?*

In other words, *I know the authority and power of Jesus and Paul, but who gave you power to command us in his name?* Jesus and Paul legitimately received their power from God. These men did not even have a relationship with Jesus or Paul!

*16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

The Ephesians could dramatically see the difference between true, God-given power and those who were faking. They were flippantly imitating Paul for money and fame, but demons are nothing to fool around with. There are no magic words to expel a demon. We don't resist the devil using magic charms.

This is the only time in the New Testament this Greek word *exorcists* <Strong's #1845> is used—it was not widespread among the Jewish people. Their method was faulty; exorcism did not work because they attempted to use a higher power to which they had no connection! They were not followers of the Lord Jesus. It was possible to cast out demons, but “exorcism” did not work so well.



**One of the two other uses of the word *adjure* was by a demon responding to Jesus:**  
**Mark 5:7:** *and shouting with a loud voice, he said, What business do we have with each other, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore <3726> (adjure) you by God, do not torment me!*



### Clarifying the Context of Casting Out Demons:

*So far, we have introduced several methods of casting out demons, ranging from the attempts by the seven brothers in the Book of Acts to some traditional methods throughout Christian history. These practices provide us with a basis for scriptural comparison.*

We want to look at these examples and scriptural instructions to compare the two. This will help us understand what is supposed to be happening with the practice of exorcism.

While all of this can be fascinating, we must continually remain uncomfortable and keep our guard up as we further uncover scriptural reasoning!

**Did Jesus instruct all of his followers to cast out demons?  
If yes, where did he say it, and if not, how do we know?**

This question opens up one of the core issues in this whole discussion. If Jesus DID instruct all of his followers to cast out demons, shouldn't we see this on a far and wide basis? If he didn't give all of his followers that instruction, who would have been the ones who could do it? Taking it a step further, did this particular power over demons stay intact until today?

The texts commonly used by those who say the followers of Jesus do have the power to cast out demons, along with other dramatic activities, is in **Mark 16:17-18**.

**These are purportedly some of Jesus' last words before he ascended to heaven:**

**Mark 16:17-18:** *17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*

The problem is that many Bible scholars reject the authenticity of these verses, as **Mark 16:9-20** is NOT in the ancient Vatican or Sinaitic manuscripts. We don't believe Jesus actually said these words.



They were added much later than Mark's time, and there is much scholarly speculation as to why. The Gospel of Mark ends abruptly, so perhaps certain scribes felt there needed to be a better ending.

What matters is these words are not authentic! Jesus did not speak them. If he had, they would be the only Bible verses that can be interpreted as affirming all believers in Jesus would have such powers—including the power to cast out demons. No other verse comes close to saying this.

If the power to cast out demons was not given to all believers, then who received it?

During Jesus' earthly ministry, he gave this power to two sets of believers on two specific occasions.



**First, he gave this power to the 12 apostles:**

**Matthew 10:5–8:** *5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*

*Preach, heal, raise the dead, cleanse and cast out demons—all these gifts of the spirit were performed by the apostles before Pentecost while Jesus was still with them. He sent them throughout Israel to prepare his way and to have them show the people what he would bring to them. Part of his admonition to them was, Freely you received, freely give.*

**Mark adds:**

**Mark 6:12–13:** *12 They went out and preached that men should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.*

Jesus specifically gave the 12 apostles this power. Interestingly, we do not have any other references to healing by the apostles until after Pentecost—the day when they received the holy spirit which came and rested on them as tongues of fire.

However, we do have one allusion to casting out demons in the **Matthew 17** account of the boy with mental health challenges. We just went over this last week in Episode #1356: “Are There Different Kinds of Evil Spirits?”



Jesus simply told the apostles to go out and cast out demons. We are not given many individual accounts of the apostles casting them out, nor how they specifically made that happen. There is no evidence of special prayers, rituals or commands. We only have the apostles returning to Jesus to tell him what happened.

We do have evidence of Jesus casting out demons, which was always straightforward. We will look at one prominent example shortly.



**Jesus also gave this power to cast out demons to the 70 disciples as he sent them out to proclaim he was coming:**

**Luke 10:1–3:** *1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was going to come. 2 And he was saying to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*



**It is not recorded that Jesus told them to cast out demons, but we can assume he did, based on what they reported back to him:**

**Luke 10:17–18:** *17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. 18 And he said to them, I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*

The seventy return all excited to report back to Jesus, but in **Luke 10:20**, Jesus gives them the proper perspective to have: *Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven. In other words, Calm down, and do not think too highly of yourselves for having these gifts. 1 Corinthians 13* warns we are nothing if we aren't acting out of love. There would be other, more important missions the disciples would accomplish.



### Clarifying the Context of Casting Out Demons:

*During Jesus' ministry, the only casting out of demons by any follower occurred when Jesus directly gave them the power to do it. Also, NO casting out of demons by disciples in the New Testament was EVER called "exorcism."*

The casting out of demons was used specifically and was not a common occurrence. Jesus told them clearly not to get cocky; this was not their doing. This triumph over the demons was only through receiving from Jesus a portion of God's power. They were just the vessels that held the power to heal the people and do these miraculous things.

An important sidenote moving forward is the New Testament NEVER shows us any demon possession ever happening to anyone who became associated with the Christian community.

Listeners frequently ask us if faithful Christians, those who have God's holy spirit, can become demon-possessed.

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**Do we need to worry about this happening to us?**



No, true Christians cannot become demon-possessed. We will see in the next segment an example of Jesus casting out several demons, which shows how great the power of Jesus actually is.



If we are walking alongside Christ, we absolutely believe we have protection because his name is well-known in the spirit world and feared by those who are evil. Unequivocally, we believe this is not something a Christian needs to worry about. That does not mean we are not to worry about the influence of Satan. That is a different story.

**1 Peter 5:8** tells us *the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* Yes, we are to guard against his influence, but we do not believe possession would be possible.

In the following text, the Apostle Paul encourages Christians in the pagan city of Corinth to “flee from idolatry” and leave it entirely behind.

**He begins with the symbols of the memorial cup and bread Jesus shared with his apostles the night before he was crucified:**

**1 Corinthians 10:16–21:** *16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*

There is an evident unity of the body of Christ and a resulting separation from everything else. This is the key to understanding where demons can and cannot go. The body of Christ, this fellowship, is a protected entity. This is blocked off from them. There is no entrance for evil in this context.



*18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? 19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*

The nation of Israel was also separated from other nationalities due to their religious practices and God’s protection. In the Old Testament, no cases of demon possession were reported. Separation from evil influence and godly protection are important biblical principles.

*20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

(Source: Bible Commentary from James Burton Coffman) “You cannot drink/partake” has the weight of ‘I forbid you to...’ Of course, it was not a physical impossibility for some to lead such double lives; and it may be inferred that some in Corinth were actually partaking of both; but it was a sin, the words here indicating that it was morally impossible to do such a thing.

From **1 Peter 5:8**, we know *the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* We recognize a difference between demons overtaking an individual (as in these biblical examples) and using him/her as a marionette versus satanic attacks on Christians in the form of temptations and suggestions that take advantage of our weaknesses. We don’t have to be demon-possessed to be manipulated by Satan. He is much more clever and subtle than that and can easily work through our individual and societal definitions of morality.

Here lies the bigger danger. Demon possession is not common, but in society, Satan’s overwhelming influence manipulates everywhere. This is where we need to be especially on our guard. We must be ever vigilant.





### Clarifying the Context of Casting Out Demons:

*While we can certainly be influenced by demon-provoked evil, we, as dedicated Christians, will not be in danger of demon possession. This thought should not give us a reason to relax; rather, it should spur us on to stronger dedication and obedience.*

We must never let down our guard. It is not about being demon-possessed; it is about staying away from any kind of satanic influence to the best of our ability. This is our greatest challenge.

It certainly seems that there were limitations on who could cast demons out. This makes us appreciate how sober a responsibility this was!

### What was Jesus' method for casting out demons and how were his followers instructed to do it?

These are important questions because they make us pay attention to the details of how this whole process began and how it was expected to continue. Once we establish these scriptural understandings, we have a solid biblical foundation on which to compare and contrast what has been happening throughout the entire Gospel Age. We have some scriptural evidence and instruction. Now we need to look at tradition and ask how well the two match.

Many Christian sects acknowledge there is no rite (ceremony) of exorcism or priestly instructions in the Bible. Still, they believe they are carrying on the legacy of Jesus and the apostles and have the authority to do so. These rites may include long and specific prayers where God, angels and others are invoked. Depending on the sect, fasting, breathing techniques, restraints and holy relics might be used. We found one sincere Catholic prayer over 1,000 words long to be used in an exorcism. ([uscatholic.org/](http://uscatholic.org/))

Jesus' example of casting out demons was done by simply commanding them. Why could he do this with what seemed like relative ease? It all came down to who he was and how he wielded God's power and spirit within him. These two things created a power the demons could not withstand.

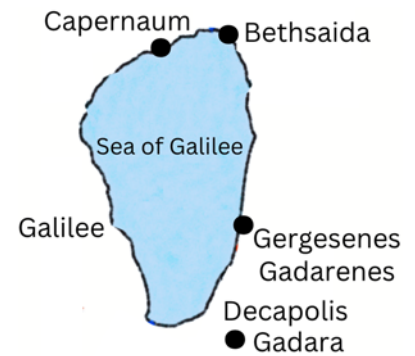
### **This one example reveals many things about how Jesus handled demons:**

**Mark 5:1:** *They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.*

This was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, with a large Gentile population. It was also called the country of Gadarenes.



(Source: biblestudy.org) The country of the Gergesenes is a place on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee located at some distance to the ancient Decapolis cities of Gadara and Gerasa. The country of the Gadarenes (Gergesenes) is one of the few areas Jesus visited where Gentiles composed the majority of the population.



A possessed man rushes to Jesus. The **Matthew 8** account says there were two men. Is there a contradiction? We believe there were two men, but that Mark and Luke focus on the one who came to bow before Jesus. This easily harmonizes all three accounts.

**Mark 5:2–6:** *2 When he (Jesus) got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met him, 3 and he had his dwelling among the tombs.*

He was likely expelled from the town. He was living around the dead and newly buried, which would have been condemned by Jewish Law as well as basic human instinct.

*And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.*

Can you imagine what this looked like? He had superhuman strength and kept hurting himself. How horrible!

*6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before him;*



Think about this: the man sees Jesus from a distance getting out of a boat. He has no idea what Jesus looks like, and yet he knows it is him. How? This is conjecture, but it could be the demons who possessed him knew. They felt the power of God within Jesus as he arrived. The man saw Jesus and realized there was hope to be freed from this torture. He ran up and bowed down before him—he revered Jesus.

**While the man humbly respected Jesus, the demons outwardly feared Jesus:**

**Mark 5:7:** *and shouting with a loud voice, he said, What business do we have with each other, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore <3726> you by God, do not torment me!*

The version of this account in **Matthew 8:29** adds *before the time*.

**Matthew 8:28-29:** *28 When he came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. 29 And they cried out, saying, What business do we have with each other, son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?*

We've discussed the word *torment* in our recent Hellfire Series. It is from the Greek word (*basanos*) meaning a "touchstone" used to test metals like gold and silver. The mark left on the touchstone helps identify the type of metal being tested. In other words, *Do not test me to see what I'm made of before the appointed time*. The demons apparently know there is a judgment day coming even for them.



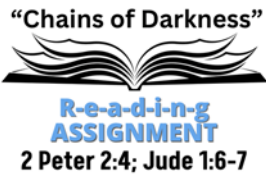
This judgment is confirmed in **1 Corinthians 6:3** (KJV), where the Apostle Paul said to the church, *Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*

**Mark 5:8:** *For he had been saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!*

Demons recognize the power of Jesus and know they are restrained until their judgment (**Jude 1:6**). Their days of being able to hurt people are numbered. They certainly fear Jesus!

The demons fear Jesus because he is pure light. They are living under gross darkness led by Satan, who is constantly changing his evil strategy to please himself and creates chaos at every turn. Talk about mental instability!

Jesus represented the light of God because God's spirit flowed through him.



These demons were in *chains of darkness*, which means they could not see and know everything. Their power could only go so far. They had this limited power of darkness, and they faced the concentrated light of God's spirit working in Jesus!

They knew of the coming judgment because they had been shackled in figurative chains to wait for it. They invoked Jesus with an oath. They went to him and asked not to be tormented (tested) before the appointed time.

### **The argument was escalating. What was Jesus' reaction?**

**Mark 5:9-12:** *9 And he was asking him, What is your name? And he said to him, My name is Legion; for we are many. 10 And he began to implore him earnestly not to send them out of the country. (Luke 8:31 (KJV) adds into the deep meaning "pit") 11 Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. 12 The demons implored him, saying, Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.*

A *legion* was the largest unit of the Roman army, with 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers. There were many demons involved, and by announcing themselves as such, they were trying to show power in numbers to intimidate Jesus. But we aren't told exactly how many demons there were.

This gives us a more revealing insight into the spiritual realm. There's obviously a hierarchy, as these demons clearly fear the power of Jesus. They know they are not more powerful and that Jesus can't be tricked, misled or frightened like the other humans.

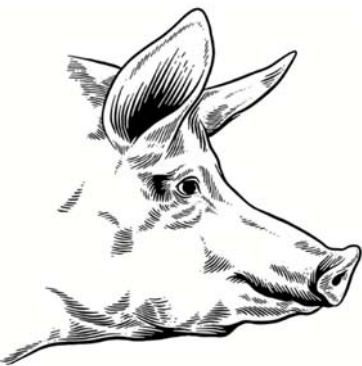
We're not given a good reason why they asked to go into the pigs (swine). By possessing any individual willing to let them in, they had a measure of freedom they did not want to lose. Rather than being restrained as they had been, maybe they asked to go into the swine, where they likely assumed they would have greater liberty. Maybe it demonstrated to those watching that the demons' motive was to destroy the man as they did the pigs.

This was very much a Gentile country, but Jews were living here, too. They should NOT be raising pigs if they were Jews—it was against the instruction of the Law.

The demons knew Jesus had the power to destroy them. He did not rise to their taunts; he just asked, *What is your name?* This brings the tone of the discussion down—Jesus is very much in control of the situation. They say there are too many to name; they just call themselves *Legion*.

They are obeying what Jesus said, but why go into the swine?

1. The swine are convenient because they are right there, and there are lots of them.
2. They did not want to be sent out of the country—they had a good thing going there. They were surrounded by paganism, and they enjoyed their power and influence over the people.
3. They did not want to go into the pit (destruction)—*Don't kill us! We'll go into the pigs and leave the man alone. Just give us the opportunity to stay alive.*



The fact that the demons twice asked Jesus not to destroy them shows the profound fear they had for who he was and the power of God's spirit within him. This is a key point. There were "many" of them, why didn't they gang up on Jesus? They couldn't. He was far too powerful for all of them!

**Their request was to be able to stay in the region they were already in, where paganism was rampant:**

**Mark 5:13:** *13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.*

The swine couldn't handle all that demon possession. They went mad and drowned in the sea. Why send them into these pigs? Why do the pigs end up drowning? What happened to the demons?

Remember, the Jews were not supposed to be raising pigs even if they were only selling them, not eating them. Maybe this was a lesson for the Jewish pig farmers.

The demons did not drown in the sea. Jesus permitted them to come out, and they were released. Every step of this account shows the power of Jesus and the subservience of the demonic realm, which is a huge point here. Jesus is far above them, and he gives them permission to go back into the region.

Why would Jesus release them back into the region? **It simply was NOT the time for their judgment!** God had predetermined a time for their judgment. That is why they were set in figurative *chains of darkness* until that time. Jesus always acts in accordance with his Father's overall word and will.

This example shows us that Jesus' words were enough to command fear and respect from demons. They couldn't do a thing outside of what he said.

(Source: Life Application Study Bible) Just about everything in this situation would make Jesus and his disciples unclean under Jewish Law —they were in Gentile territory, the demon-possessed man was living in a cemetery, and a herd of pigs was nearby.

Jesus had no fear because he was not only begotten by God's spirit, power and influence but also carried God's word, truth and message. He had no reason to fear at any time. This was a very dramatic example of Jesus' power.

**Other times, Jesus cast demons out without even being present:**

**Matthew 15:22,28:** *22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.*

**Jesus didn't answer her, but she persisted. She showed great faith and Jesus responded:**

*28 Then Jesus said to her, O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish. And her daughter was healed at once.*

Moving back to the modern day and in a positive sense, from what we have been able to research, Christian sects that perform exorcisms now often include psychiatry and medicine as part of the process. A specific hierarchy of accountability is established. For example, in the Church of England:

(Source: Wikipedia) Anglican priests may not perform an exorcism without permission from the Diocesan bishop. An exorcism is not usually performed unless the bishop and his team of specialists (including a psychiatrist and physician) have approved it.

There are heart-wrenching historical examples of exorcisms ending in the crippling or death of the individual who was severely mentally disturbed.

(Source: Wikipedia) Exorcism in Christianity: In the modern era, Catholic bishops rarely authorize exorcisms, approaching would-be cases with the presumption that mental or physical illness is the more probable cause.

This is a significant, positive step forward out of superstition.

This one example in **Matthew 15** shows he still healed the child even though he wasn't physically near. This is the power of God's spirit working through Jesus. This demon, even though he possessed the child from an unknown and remote location, was sent away by this power. When it is God's power versus the powers of darkness, there is a dramatic difference between the two.



#### **Clarifying the Context of Casting Out Demons:**

*When dealing with demons, Jesus, through God's spirit, had complete control, unquestioned authority and unchallengeable power. He always carried out the will of God and always did it within God's timing. His power was so overwhelming that he did not even have to be in the presence of the possessed individual to heal them.*

Jesus' power with God's spirit driving it overwhelms darkness.

It is hard to comprehend the might, power, compassion, wisdom and mercy shown here. Jesus truly is Lord!

#### **How did Jesus' example translate to the actions of his followers after Pentecost when they were casting out demons?**

By focusing on this point, we can put the present-day involvement with exorcisms into perspective. We will now highlight every single New Testament follower of Jesus who cast out demons after Pentecost. How can we do that? There are only three! As we go through their examples, let's pay close attention to what they did and how they did it.

Historically, breathing techniques have been a part of exorcism for Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Maronite (Lebanese Christians) and Coptic (Egyptian Orthodox) rites. Insufflation (blowing in) and exsufflation (blowing out) are ritual acts of blowing, breathing, hissing or puffing to renounce evil and inhale the grace of God.

Throughout all these different religions and cultures, there are multiple rituals that cover a wide variety of techniques.

Let's compare the denominational rituals used throughout the Christian age (the last 2,000 years) versus all the examples in the New Testament after Pentecost when the holy spirit was given to Jesus' disciples. (Jesus was no longer with them, and they were given the holy spirit to dwell within them.)



There were only three individuals we are told about who qualified for this responsibility:



**First, Peter casting out demons—this is his only recorded demon-related activity:**

**Acts 5:12, 14–16:** *12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place... 14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, 15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. 16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with **unclean** <169> **spirits** <4151>, and they were all being healed.*

**Unclean:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #169 *akathartos*; impure (ceremonially, morally [lewd] or specially, [demonic])

King James Version translates this word as “unclean” 28 times, “foul” 2 times

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) not cleansed, unclean 1a) in a ceremonial sense: that which must be abstained from according to the levitical law  
1b) in a moral sense: unclean in thought and life

**Spirit:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4151 *pneuma*; a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze

Demons are described as impure and unseen powers throughout the rest of the New Testament. We read this record of the Apostle Peter healing the people, but we don't have a record of him saying anything. It is recorded that his shadow passed over many people and healed them. But there is not a word, a ritual, a breathing technique or a prayer recorded—merely the physical shadow of one profoundly driven by God's spirit—the shadow of the Apostle Peter. The shadow worked because of God's spirit within Peter. Miracles only happen because of the spirit of God.



Also, notice that this casting out of *unclean spirits* was directly related to the gift of healing. This is an important connection that threads through all the examples in the New Testament.



**Second, Philip casting out demons—this is the Philip who converted the eunuch and was one of the seven original deacons.**

Those seven original deacons must have been special individuals. Stephen, who was stoned for his faith, was one of them.

Philip was also one of the original deacons. He was one of the three mentioned in the New Testament who could cast out unclean spirits even after Pentecost and after Jesus had left the disciples, having ascended into heaven.

**This is the only mention of Philip's demon-related activity:**

**Acts 8:5–8:** *5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. 6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 7 For in the case of many who had **unclean <169> spirits<4151>**, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.*



Again, casting out demons was part of the function of the gift of healing.

Notice how there are no specific and dramatic encounters with any specific demon or any ritual involved. He performed his healings in public, not behind closed doors in a dark room—which has been the traditional approach in Christian churches in the last 2,000 years.

In addition, the healings and signs these three could perform were for the public and not for believers. This puts casting out demons and healing into a different perspective than the churches have traditionally taken. In the New Testament, healing was always a public witness to those who were either non-believers or those just beginning to be interested. Those who “heal” inside churches have now removed the concept from its original context. They are doing something the Scriptures never told us to do. It is the same with casting out demons.

We are given a sense of the incredible ability to wield the power of God's spirit in these individuals. In Philip's case, the unclean spirits were *coming out of them shouting with a loud voice*. Philip may have said something to them; we don't know and don't need to know.

The next example is the Apostle Paul, for whom we have two examples. We are going chronologically through the book of Acts, which is the only place in the New Testament these healings occur.



**Third, Paul casting out demons—here is the ONLY example outside of Jesus where words are used:**

**Acts 16:16–19:** *16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a **spirit <4151>** of divination (**soothsaying**) met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. 18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the **spirit <4151>**, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out at that very moment. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,*

Paul tolerates the slave girl for a while and then he gets annoyed. He says simply, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! That's it.

There is no long prayer, ritual, incense or special breathing technique. There is just the simple clarity of a command. This is the only time we have anybody besides Jesus showing us the words used for this type of healing. So this is the template, the example. It is a simple command. No rituals are needed.

**Here is Paul in the final New Testament example of casting out demons after Jesus' ministry:**

**Acts 19:11–12:** *11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil *spirits* <4151> went out.*

The New Testament does not mention casting out demons after this event. No words are used—the handkerchiefs themselves do the work!



Like Peter's experience, healing and casting out demons are intertwined. These acts were used for the specific purpose of establishing Christianity.

One thing to consider is the more time we spend with our focus on demons and Satan, the less time we are spending focused on Christ and God. And, as mentioned before, our biggest challenge is avoiding the influences and often subtle manipulations of Satan.

Demon possession does exist, but how common it is, we don't know. But we know that in Scripture we are given very specific guidelines for dealing with this, and they are very narrow. We can memorize them in a minute—*By the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out! That's it!*

However, we do not see the power of casting out demons passed on to others after the early church, and we do not see anybody doing it throughout the rest of the New Testament. This is different from what society and the churches have sometimes believed and portrayed.

**Clarifying the Context of Casting Out Demons:**

**How do we define the activity of casting out demons after Jesus' earthly ministry ended?**



- *First, it was clearly a gift of the spirit, as was healing.*
- *Second, no rituals were included as they happened by the power of God's spirit, often without words.*
- *Third, when words were used, they were a simple command in the name of Jesus Christ.*
- *Fourth, casting out demons was never shown to be needed with those genuinely associated with following Christ.*

The name of Jesus is very powerful. Even demons shudder at his name! (**James 2:19**)

We are told to have faith, be separate from the world, and honor God through our actions, letting God's spirit guide and direct.

Should Christians be involved in exorcisms today? The Scriptures do not tell us we should. Let's listen to what the Scriptures say.

**For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



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**The full accounts of Jesus sending out the 12 apostles as well as the 70 disciples.**

**There are three accounts of Jesus sending out the 12 apostles:**

**Matthew 10:5–15:** *5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. 9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. 11 And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. 12 As you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13 If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. 14 Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.*

**Mark 6:7–13:** *7 And he summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; 8 and he instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—9 but to wear sandals; and he added, Do not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. 11 Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them. 12 They went out and preached that men should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.*

**Luke 9:1–6:** *1 And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. 3 And he said to them, Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. 5 And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. 6 Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.*



### The sending out of the 70:

**Luke 10:1–20:** *1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was going to come. 2 And he was saying to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8 Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near to you. 10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near. 12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. 13 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! 16 The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects the One who sent me. 17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. 18 And he said to them, I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.*

### Uses of the word for **demon** in the New Testament:

**Demon:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1140 *daimonion*;  
a demonic being; by extension a deity: devil, god.

King James Version translates this word as “devil” 59 times, “god” 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) the divine power, deity, divinity 2) a spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men 3) evil spirits or the messengers and ministers of the devil

### All uses of this word in the King James Version after the Gospels and excluding the one use in Revelation:

**Acts 17:18:** *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange **gods** <1140>: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

**1 Corinthians 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>.*

**1 Corinthians 10:21:** *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>.*

**1 Timothy 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>;*

**James 2:19:** *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils <1140> also believe, and tremble.*

**Another interesting account that shows Satan's influence without one being possessed is Elymas the magician. Note he is called a son of the devil, but Paul does not treat him as one who is possessed:**

**Acts 13:4-12:** (NASB) *4 So, being sent out by the holy spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. 6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the holy spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10 and said, You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1357: Should Christians Be Involved in Exorcisms?

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1357-exorcisms/>

1. What is exorcism? What does it mean to “exorcize” (verb) or “adjure”? How was “adjure” used legally in the Old Testament? Why would the Jewish exorcists adjure by Jesus’ name? (Acts 19:11-13, Matthew 26:63, Leviticus 5:1)
2. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, who was given the power to cast out demons? What kind of special rituals did Jesus and the disciples use to cast out demons? After the two instances of being sent out, in what way were the followers of Jesus involved in healing before Pentecost? (Matthew 10:5-8, Mark 6:12-13, Luke 10:1-3, 17-20)
3. In view of 1 Peter 5:8, why do true Christians (and ancient Israelites) not have to worry about demon possession? Are we totally protected against Satan? Explain how 1 Corinthians 10:16-21 shows us this. Which influences of Satan’s give you the most trouble?
4. Recount the story of the man with the unclean spirit in the country of the Gergesenes (Gadarenes). What were the demons afraid Jesus would do to them? Compare their lives to Jesus’. What were the possible reasons the demons begged to enter the swine? Was there a lesson for the Jewish pig farmers in the region? Why does Jesus release the spirits instead of destroying them? (Mark 5:1-13)
5. What method did Jesus use to cast out demons? How did he handle the demon in the daughter of the Canaanite woman? Why would he even consider healing a Gentile girl? (Matthew 15:22,28)
6. Describe all the accounts of Jesus’ followers casting out demons after Pentecost. What happened at Pentecost that would have helped them to do this? What rituals were used in all these examples? What other gift of the spirit was casting out demons connected to? Who were healed by the disciples? Contrast healing practices in Christian churches now with the apostles’ time. (Acts 5:12-16, 8:5-8, 16:16-19, 19:11-12)
7. Do you feel it is a Christian responsibility to cast out demons at this time? Why do you think there are so few instances of demon possession in the New Testament?
8. What do the Scriptures tell us to be like in this day and age? Think on these points:
  - a. How do you actively pursue and show evidence of your faith every day?
  - b. Are your goals and moral stands based on the world’s or on Christ’s?
  - c. How does God’s spirit in your life guide and direct your actions?
  - d. How do you attempt to honor God in all that you do?