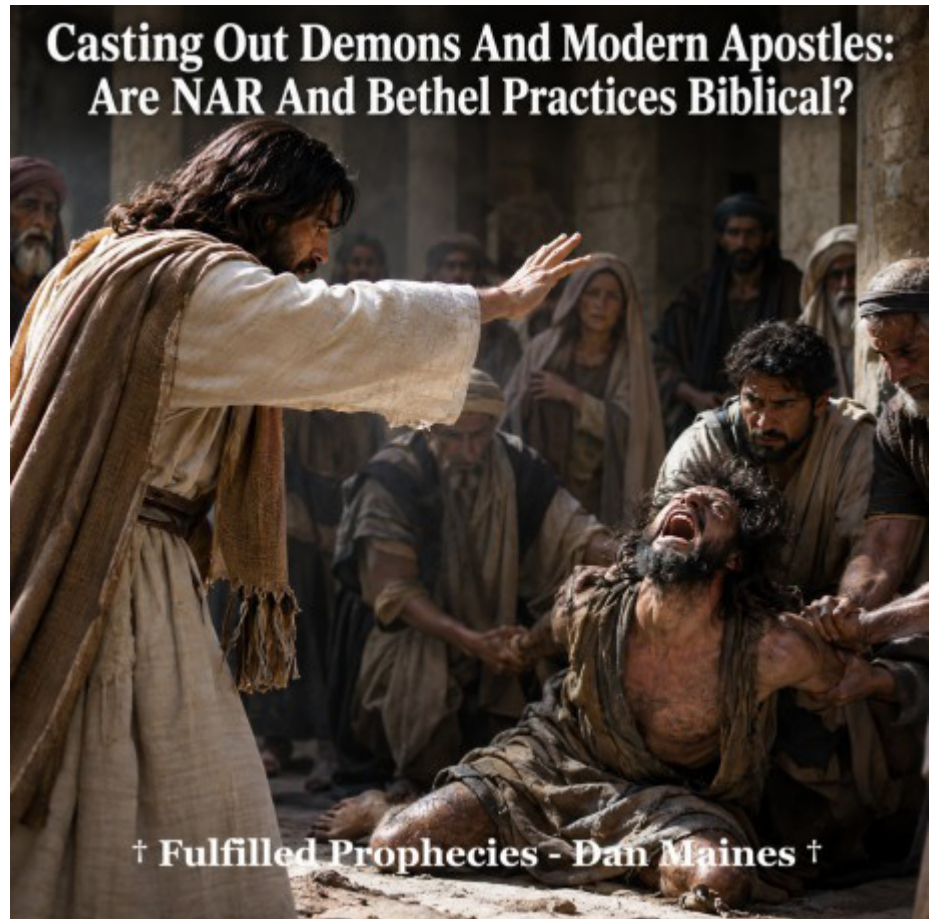


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Casting Out Demons And Modern Apostles: Are NAR And Bethel Practices Biblical?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Casting out demons was a real part of the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, but we must ask when, why, and to whom that authority was given.

† Modern movements associated with the New Apostolic Reformation, commonly called NAR, and ministries such as Bethel often teach that supernatural gifts, apostles, prophecy, healing, and deliverance ministries continue today.

† The question isn't whether demons and demonic activity appear in Scripture. They clearly do. The question is whether Christians today have been commissioned as apostles with the same miraculous authority Christ gave His first-century messengers.

† We can't build doctrine from testimonies, experiences, feelings, supposed revelations, or claims that God told someone something. Scripture must interpret Scripture (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

† The miraculous signs of casting out demons belonged to the first-century ministry of Christ and His authorized messengers as the kingdom was being revealed and the gospel was being confirmed.

Matthew 10:1

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every sickness.

† Jesus specifically gave His twelve disciples authority over unclean spirits. They didn't appoint themselves, attend a deliverance school, or learn a technique. Christ gave them the authority.

† This authority accompanied their mission to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 10:5-8).

† The signs confirmed that God's kingdom was breaking into the old covenant age through the ministry of Christ and those whom He personally commissioned (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Luke 10:17-20

Now the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" And He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to walk on snakes and scorpions, and authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

† Jesus again connected authority over demons with a specific group whom He personally sent. Their authority came from Him, not from a modern apostolic movement.

† Notice that Jesus immediately connected their ministry with Satan's downfall. The casting out of demons was a visible sign that Satan's kingdom was being invaded and defeated (Matthew 12:28-29).

† Jesus even redirected their excitement. Their greatest reason for rejoicing wasn't supernatural power, but that their names were written in heaven.

Matthew 12:28-29

But if I cast out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or, how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

† Jesus explained what His casting out of demons meant. It was evidence that the kingdom of God had come upon that generation.

† Demon casting wasn't presented as an endless Christian program. It was connected directly with Christ binding the strong man and plundering his house.

† This fits the larger first-century story of Satan's defeat, from Christ's ministry through the approaching consummation of that covenant age (John 12:31; Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:1-3).

Acts 8:6-7

The crowds were paying attention with one mind to what was being said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed or limped on crutches were healed.

† The signs performed through Philip accompanied the message he preached. The people heard his words and saw the confirming signs.

† Biblical miracles weren't vague claims that couldn't be

verified. Unclean spirits came out, paralyzed people were restored, and lame people were healed.

† This pattern agrees with the purpose of signs described elsewhere in the New Testament, God confirmed the gospel message through miraculous works during its foundational proclamation (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4).

Acts 19:11-12

God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.

† Scripture doesn't say Paul developed supernatural power through training. It says God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul's hands.

† Paul's apostolic ministry included unmistakable signs that confirmed his God-given authority (2 Corinthians 12:12).

† If someone claims the same apostolic authority today, the biblical standard shouldn't be lowered. Paul's ministry involved extraordinary, observable works, not unverifiable claims or carefully staged demonstrations.

Acts 19:13-16

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to use the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had the evil spirits, saying, "I order you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches!" Now there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, doing this. But the evil spirit responded and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know of Paul, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit, pounced on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

† This passage gives a serious warning against assuming supernatural authority that God hasn't given.

† The sons of Sceva used Jesus' name, but using the right words didn't give them apostolic authority.

† Scripture doesn't teach believers to imitate formulas, rituals, commands, or techniques in an attempt to reproduce apostolic signs. Authority comes from God, not from claiming a title.

2 Corinthians 12:12

The distinguishing marks of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs, wonders, and miracles.

† Paul called miraculous works the signs of an apostle. That language matters.

† If everyone throughout church history was intended to possess the same miraculous authority, signs couldn't function as distinguishing signs of an apostle.

† Modern claims of apostleship must therefore be tested against the apostolic pattern found in Scripture, not against modern testimonies, conferences, schools, titles, or claimed supernatural experiences.

Ephesians 2:19-20

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,

† Paul describes the apostles and prophets as foundational to God's household. A foundation is established as the building begins, it isn't repeatedly laid in every generation.

† Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, and the apostles and prophets belong to the foundational period through which the New Covenant church was established.

† We stand upon that apostolic foundation today. We don't need new apostles giving new revelations, new prophecies, or new authoritative words from God.

Hebrews 2:3-4

how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs

and wonders, and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

† Hebrews tells us why signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts accompanied the early proclamation. God was bearing witness to the message being confirmed through those who had heard the Lord.

† The signs weren't entertainment and they weren't the center of Christianity. They confirmed God's revelation during the foundational period of the gospel.

† We now possess the apostolic testimony in Scripture. Christians don't need a modern apostle or prophet to give additional revelation from God (Jude 3).

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know in part and prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with.

† Paul plainly said that prophecy, tongues, and revelatory knowledge wouldn't continue forever.

† These partial revelatory gifts belonged to the period when God's New Covenant revelation was being delivered and the old covenant age was passing away (Hebrews 8:13).

† From the fulfilled perspective, the completion of that covenant transition by AD 70 explains why Christians today don't need continuing apostles, prophets, tongues, or new revelation from God.

Historical References

† Josephus described the first-century Jewish world as filled with extraordinary claims, false prophets, deceivers, and people promising signs connected with deliverance during the years leading to Jerusalem's destruction. His account provides historical background consistent with Jesus' warnings about deception before the end of that age.

† Eusebius later preserved early Christian traditions concerning

the apostolic generation and the events surrounding Jerusalem's destruction. His writings distinguish the foundational apostolic period from later generations of the church.

† These historical writers don't establish doctrine. Scripture establishes doctrine. Their writings are useful because they help us understand the historical world in which the New Testament events occurred.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Christians shouldn't be frightened into believing that every struggle, illness, addiction, emotional problem, or sinful behavior requires a demon to be cast out.

† We shouldn't accept someone's claim to be an apostle simply because that person claims visions, miracles, healings, prophecy, supernatural encounters, or authority over demons.

† We don't need modern apostles to complete Christ's work. We don't need new revelation to complete Scripture. We don't need deliverance ministries to complete the victory Christ accomplished.

† Our responsibility is to test teaching by Scripture rather than allowing experiences to interpret Scripture for us (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1).

† Christ's victory over Satan is something believers can rest in. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, judged the ruler of that world, and accomplished the victory promised through the gospel (John 12:31; John 16:11; Hebrews 2:14-15).

† The answer to modern deception isn't fear. It's knowing Scripture well enough to recognize when someone is claiming authority that Scripture doesn't give them.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Were demons real in the New Testament?

A: Yes. Jesus and His authorized messengers genuinely cast out demons, and Scripture presents these events as real manifestations of Christ's authority over the enemy (Matthew

12:28-29; Luke 10:17-20).

Q: Did Jesus give His disciples authority to cast out demons?

A: Yes. Jesus specifically gave that authority to those He commissioned during His first-century ministry (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:17-20).

Q: Does the fact that apostles cast out demons prove there must be apostles today?

A: No. Scripture identifies signs and wonders as signs associated with apostolic ministry and describes the apostles and prophets as foundational to God's household (2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 2:19-20).

Q: Should Christians believe everyone who claims to cast out demons?

A: No. Claims must be tested by Scripture. Even in the first century there were people attempting to use Jesus' name without possessing the authority demonstrated through His authorized messengers (Acts 19:13-16; 1 John 4:1).

Q: Do we need modern apostles or prophets to receive new revelation from God?

A: No. We have the apostolic testimony preserved in Scripture, and believers are called to remain faithful to the faith delivered to the saints rather than searching for additional revelation (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Q: What should believers focus on instead of modern claims of apostleship and deliverance ministries?

A: We should focus on Christ, His completed victory, the gospel, and the apostolic teaching preserved for us in Scripture (Hebrews 2:3-4; Ephesians 2:19-20).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:17-20; Matthew 12:28-29; Acts 8:6-7; Acts 19:11-12; Acts 19:13-16; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 2:19-20; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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