**DELIVER US FROM EVIL (#1)**

***The Curse Of The KOGAE Tree***

Since childhood I have been terrified of the KOGAE tree. I stared long and hard at all the drawings of what that tree must have looked like. It was infinitely more scary than any scene from haunted houses from the Twilight Zone with their ghost-like trees. This frightening tree had a hissing snake coiled around it that spoke with a forked tongue and menacing evil eyes. As a small boy I was petrified of this tree. For many years I had KOGAE-phobia.

What? You don’t know what the KOGAE tree is? It’s right there in the Bible. In fact that is where I first saw it. There was a painting of it on the third page in the book of Genesis. Underneath the painting was this writing:

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of ***the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*** you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17)

See? That tree was named by God Himself as the KOGAE tree. The tree of the **K**nowledge **O**f **G**ood **A**nd **E**vil. The snake, a.k.a. the D*evil* (now you see why he liked that tree so much, and likely where he got his name), had slithered up into that forbidden tree and planned his sneak (snake) attack on Eve.

Ever since his rebellion against God and his removal from heaven (for a fascinating study on his fall read these verses in order: I Jn. 3:8; Job 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) he has been fighting nonstop to thwart everything good and decent that God put on this earth. The devil, who can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), seems to have transformed himself into a serpent. Eve, obviously at this early date in history, did not have Ophidiophobia (fear of snakes). She engaged him in conversation, much to her later regret. Like Paul would later warn, she gave “*heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*” (I Tim. 4:1). It was Paul who commented that she was “*deceived*” and “*fell into transgression*” (I Tim. 2:14). The Deceiver deceived her. The world has never been the same since.

Standing in front of that KOGAE tree she was told that a bite from its fruit would open her eyes to make her like God, “*knowing good and evil*” (Gen. 3:4-5). Indeed, it truly opened her eyes. Both Adam and Eve saw they were naked and were ashamed. They had sinned against God and made Satan grin like a Cheshire cat who had just trapped his mouse. God forced them out of this heaven-on-earth paradise. The wages of sin now had to be paid (Rom. 6:23). All of their offspring from that day forward have had to pay the price too, for all of us have also sinned (Rom. 3:23).

That leads me to the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples. “*Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name … And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*…” (Matt. 6:13 KJV). Deliver us from evil! The ESV, RSV and NASB echo that phrase. But the CSB, NKJV, NIV, NLT, NET, ASV and BBE all translate it “*deliver us from* ***the******evil one***.” There is strong grammatical evidence that this translation is accurate. Just as Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness “*to be tempted by the devil*” (Matt. 4:1), so all of us are going to be tempted by the devil (Jam. 1:13-16; I Cor. 10:13). The devil is without question “*the evil one*.” Jesus, who was powerfully tempted far beyond anything we could ever imagine (Lk. 4:2; Heb. 2:18; Heb. 4:15), faced the Evil One down and thoroughly defeated him. In case you doubt me carefully read this grand text of Hebrews 2:14-18 with much meditation and thanksgiving:

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Jesus destroyed the devil’s greatest weapon against us – the fear of death! He released us from a lifetime of bondage. He gives aid, not to angels, but to we mortals on earth who are forever being tempted by the evil one. This is precisely the very point of what Jesus taught us to pray for: “*lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one*.” Deliver us from evil by delivering us from the Evil One.

In Noah’s day “*the imagination of man’s heart is evil continually*” (Gen. 8:21).

In the days of the Judges “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

In Paul’s day, and now in ours, Jesus “*gave Himself for our sins that He might* ***deliver us from this present evil age***” (Gal. 1:4).

The devil, the evil one, is at this very moment stalking us like a hungry lion, seeking to devour us (I Pet. 5:8). He devours us by tempting us with evil. But Jesus, our high priest, is pleading with us every minute of every day to pray this prayer: “*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one*.” He will take that petition from us, weak as we are, and “*provide a way of escape*” (I Cor. 10:13).

Yes, dear brother and sister, we live in an evil age.

Charles Dickens, in his *A Tale Of Two Cities*, poetically described how earth has forever been since the Garden of Eden:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Pray today the Lord’s words that He might deliver you from the curse of the KOGAE tree. From Eve’s fall we have lived in “the worst of times… the age of foolishness… the epoch of incredulity… the season of darkness… the winter of despair.” But Christ can deliver us from this evil age so that we might live in “the best of times… the age of wisdom… the epoch of belief… the season of light… the spring of hope.”

My KOGAE-phobia, my childhood fear of that KOGAE curse, has been cured.

With love, Rick