

YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

HITS: 575

Chapter 1

The Origin and Reality of Satan

Jerry Moffitt

Chapter 2

Your Adversary the Devil

Tommy J. Hicks

Chapter 3

Do Not Give Place to the Devil

Kevin Berry

Chapter 4

Names By Which Satan is Known

Mark Hanstein

Chapter 5

Demonic Activity in the First Century

Kenneth Ratcliff

Chapter 6

Satan, An Angel of Light

Burt Jones

Chapter 7

Signs and Symbols of Satanism

Keith Mosher

Chapter 8

Satan's Attacks on the Church from Without

Michael Light

Chapter 9

Satan's Attacks on the Church from Within

Greg Weston

Chapter 10

Satan's Attacks on New Converts

Dave Rogers

Chapter 11

Satan's Attacks on Morality in America

Sean Hochdorf

Chapter 12

Satan's Attacks on Christ's Deity

Shan Jackson

Chapter 13

Satan's Attacks on Young People

Mike Hisaw

Chapter 14

Satan's Attacks on the Home

Ronnie Hayes

Chapter 15

Satan's Bible Analyzed

Michael Felder

Chapter 16

Satan's Church Exposed

David Harris

Chapter 17

Satan Worship Examined

Jim Nash

Chapter 18

Witchcraft, Horoscopes, Tarot Cards, Etc.

Don Underwood

Chapter 19

The Truth About Today's Exorcists

Preston Silcox

Chapter 20

Satan's Head Bruised

Neal Pollard

Chapter 21

Satan's Attacks on the Bible, God's Word

Robert Taylor

Chapter 22

Caricatures of Satan

Sam Dilbeck

Chapter 23

Demon Possession Today

Darrell Beard

Chapter 24

Satan's Power of Death

Clay Bond

Chapter 25

Satan's Rule

Don Walker

Chapter 26

Satan's Strategy for "Christian" Unity

Tim Childs

Chapter 27

How Satan Hinders Evangelism

Timothy Wilkes

Chapter 28

Satan Has His Devices

Garland Elkins

Chapter 29

The Children of the Devil

Bryan Braswel

Chapter 30

666 and the Man of Sin

Johnie Scaggs

Chapter 31

Satan, the Father of Lies

Devin Dean

Chapter 32

The Doctrines of Devils

Lynn Blair

Chapter 33

Satan in the Garden of Eden

Denny Petrillo

Chapter 34

Hell: The Place Prepared for the Devil

H.D. Simmons

Chapter 35

Satan's Temptation of Christ

Melvin Sapp

THE ORIGIN AND REALITY OF SATAN

Jerry Moffitt



Jerry Moffitt and his wife, the former Barbara Womack, have three children. Moffitt, is a graduate of the Preston Road School of Preaching in Dallas, Texas. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Southwest State University. Moffitt has authored several books, edited lectureship books, and taught in the Southwest School of Biblical Studies for six years. He has engaged in written and oral debates. Moffitt now resides in Taft, Texas, and works with the Lord's church in Portland.

INTRODUCTION¹

Definitions

Voltaire, once said: "If anyone wants to speak with me let him first define his terms." That may be one of the supreme things a skeptic could ever believe. It is probably wise to begin by defining the main terms found in the title of this chapter. Unless advised otherwise, all definitions will retain the definition first given. By "origin" we mean, "The beginning, cause, or ultimate source of something."² When we use the word "reality" we mean only, "What exists or is real"³ In the Hebrew, as in Zechariah 3:2, "Satan" is from a primitive root that means "to attack." So we can see how it came to mean, "An opponent," "adversary," and in our context, "The archenemy of all good."⁴ The Greek word for "Satan" derives its definition from the Hebrew word as defined above. *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines the word "Satan" as to "be an adversary." It especially uses "adversary" as having the flavor of "resist." He is an "adversary," or "one who withstands."⁵ The New Testament word for "Satan" seems to be of Chaldee or Hebrew origin. Again, it is the word for "adversary," or "opponent."⁶ Other words are used, such as *diabolos*, i.e., "slanderer." Some look at him in this way: the "public prosecutor" of heaven.⁷ In 2 Kings 1:2, "Beelzebub" (Lord of the Flies) is used. He is called the "God of Ekron." In the New Testament he is called *ho poneros* or "the evil one"(Mt. 13:19). He is labeled as *drakon*, "a mythical monster or dragon" (Rev. 13:3-4).⁸ The word can mean a large

“serpent” and is from a primitive root that means “to see.”⁹ He is called the *ophis* in 2 Corinthians 11:3 and Revelation 12:9. It means, “serpent.”¹⁰ *Satanas* is often used by Paul. It is the “Greek form derived from the Aramaic.”¹¹ The word *kategar* (accuser) is found in John 8:10, and is used of the “devil” or “accuser.” In the period between the Old and New Testaments, “Belial” or “Beliar” became “a proper name for Satan.”¹² It seems “Belial” has in it the quality of “worthlessness or hopeless ruin.”¹³ Arnt and Gingrich agree,¹⁴ but Vine adds that the oldest form of “Beliar” could signify “Lord of the forest.”¹⁵ Thayer says “Belial” means “worthlessness, wickedness,” but as a name for Satan, “Beliar” is preferable.¹⁶

Other Names Or Titles

Jesus called him the “prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31). Paul called him, “prince of the powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2). We understand that “Satan” and “Satanas” are the two most common terms in the New Testament for the devil.¹⁷ He is called “Tempter” (Mt. 4:1), “Deceiver” (Rev. 12:9), “Murderer” (Jn. 8:44), “Father of lies” (Jn. 8:44), and “Sinner” (1 Jn. 3:8).

“Satan” and “Devil” started off as general descriptive terms and then to appellations, and finally to proper names.¹⁸ The terms mentioned above may eventually do the same. From all the above information, we get a pretty good idea of the being with which this chapter deals. Notice again the words and phrases: “to attack,” “Satan,” “opponent,” “adversary,” “arch-enemy of all good,” “resist,” “one who withstands,” “slanderer,” “public prosecutor of heaven,” “Beelzebub” or “Lord of the flies,” *ho poneros* or “the evil one,” *drakon* or “dragon,” “to see,” *ophis* or “serpent,” *kategar* or “accuser,” “Belial” or “worthlessness and hopeless ruin,” “Lord of the forest,” “prince of this world,” “prince of the powers of the air,” “tempter,” “deceiver,” and “father of lies.”

IS HE A REAL EXISTING SPIRITUAL BEING?

The View Of World Religions And Other Non-Biblical Sources

There is quite a difference between the Biblical and other viewpoints. Israel’s monotheism kept it from being contaminated “from a threatening dualism.”¹⁹ In “Biblical demonology, Satan is a fallen *creature*, and head of a vast kingdom of evil spirits ... under ... Jehovah, who alone is the Creator and all-powerful God.”²⁰ Unger says: “In Satan’s rebellion it seems he drew with him a great multitude of lesser

celestial beings (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 12:4) in his primal rebellion.”²¹ If these are termed “his angels” (Rev. 12:4), he is also called the “prince of the demons” (Mt. 12:24). In all the above, there are not enough facts to warrant conviction in many areas. I do not believe we can *prove* Satan is a fallen angel or a great fallen demon, or whatever he may be, if we only use the Bible. Likewise, we cannot prove demons and fallen angels are the same. However, when it comes to whether he is a real existing spiritual being, we read that there are, “serious difficulties in the way of accepting the doctrine of a personal, superhuman, evil power” as Satan is described to be.²² The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* feels the difficulties are due to a misunderstanding of the doctrine and that the difficulties are exaggerated.

One of the so-called difficulties is that the doctrine is nowhere systematically developed.²³ The criticism is that Biblical information is scattered and unexplained. The explanation is probably that inspired writers are interested in God and have no morbid curiosity regarding the devil. What we do have in the Bible is that Satan is real, personal, created, fallen, and spiritual in nature. Basically, the alternatives are to claim the idea of Satan is mythology.²⁴ We will show that Biblical usage makes a “mythological view” both unscriptural and illogical.

A second alternative is that the doctrine of Satan is a result of a Persian dualism.²⁵ There is, according to this diabolical view, a struggle of equals regarding good and evil, light and darkness. There is God on one hand and equally an evil spirit on the other, contending for souls and power. Some blame Persian Zoroastrianism, but it seems to this writer that the original views of Zoroastrianism have been corrupted by time and appropriated by other views so as to exaggerate some differences between Zoroastrianism and the Bible.

A third view of Satan regarding his work, personality, and reality is that it somehow destroys the unity of God. If wills are created they would be dualistic, and partake of goodness and lack of change. However, there is room for other wills than God’s, “namely of one on whom God bestows freedom.”²⁶

Regarding the reality and personality of Satan, some hold the view that he is a figure of speech, a personification, or just a *principle* of evil. McClintock and Strong rightly say this point needs to be determined by the same criteria used to determine “whether Caesar or Napoleon were real personal beings, or the personifications of abstract

ideas.”²⁷ One should look at the history in the Bible and the ascription of personality found in describing him and his actions.

What Does The Bible Say?

With scant comments may we merely view a few Scriptures.

And Jehovah said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil. Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah (Job 1:7-12).

The word “personification” is not hard to understand or difficult to remember. We notice embedded in it the word “person.” It is where one may take an abstract idea and represent it with human or personal qualities. One has an imaginary person representing an abstract idea. It is used to give embodiment to a non-human quality. We may call a ship or country “she,” as if it is a female or a mother. We may call a storm “a killer.” However, we do not extend it to the point where God or someone questions the figure of speech and gets a reply. God would not argue with an abstract idea when it was personified, nor would the idea argue back. A “principle” would not cause a whirlwind or move Chaldeans and Sabeans to plunder, as in the book of Job. It would have to be God doing it, and He is no abstraction of evil.

Consider another Scripture.

And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? (Zech. 3:1-2).

Now the first difficulty had with the concept of a personal Satan is that the teaching or mentioning of Satan was not systematically developed but rather scattered and unexplained. This objection fits the

above passage. However, this objection confutes the second, that the idea of Satan is mythology. The definition of a myth makes it anything other than unsystematic or something scattered or unexplained. A myth is a story. Stories are systematic. They provide explanations “for a popular idea concerning some natural or social phenomenon or some religious belief or ritual.”²⁸ Mythology is the exposition of myths; the interpretation of a fable.²⁹ So, the incidents of Satan in the book of Job and the sudden “in and out” of Satan in the Book of Zechariah confute all such objections, along with what we have said before. Notice: 1) The idea of Satan is unsystematic because the focus of the Bible is on a holy God and our relationship to Him. 2) However, the sudden, unsystematic, and unexplained appearances of Satan also show it is not a myth. 3) Satan cannot come from Persian dualism because he is unequal with God, as the Bible describes the relationship. In Job, Satan must get permission to afflict Job. God places restrictions on Satan. 4) Satan cannot be the personification of an abstract idea. Abstract ideas do not cause whirlwinds or fire to come down out of heaven to destroy herds of animals, as in Job. So, may we close this section by noticing that in every verse Satan is presented as a spiritual being which really exists:

Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Mt. 4:8-9).

I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me (Jn. 14:30).

And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ... of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged (Jn. 16:8, 10-11).

[I]f I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ; that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

[B]ecause we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us (1 Thess. 2:18).

The above passages speak of Satan as a spiritual being that really exists. He taketh Jesus to a high place. He shows the glory of the world to Jesus. He promises cities and glory to Jesus. He desires worship.

Jesus knows him and when he cometh, Jesus calls him “he,” and “the prince of this world.” Furthermore, Jesus says the “prince of this world hath been judged [condemned]” (Jn. 16:11). This Satan has devices, and it is he who hinders Paul.

To look at these few passages, picked almost at random, and deny that Satan is a spiritual being that really exists is to make a mockery of Jesus’ words, the relating of Jesus’ encounters with this being, and the conversations Jesus had with him. Such denials make nonsense of the words of Paul. It violates fundamental human thought, mangles all laws of language, and makes evil a fiction. Finally, it makes common sense and its rules of hermeneutics like systematic baloney. What language or wording could God have used that would convince these great philosophical exegetes than that used above. God has expressed in every quality of human language that we are dealing with an evil spiritual being that really exists. All evidence points to personality. To ignore it puts us close to having to spend eternity with our adversary and all that is *not* good.

SATAN’S ORIGIN

The Gospel “hath been hid in God who *created all things*” (Eph. 3:9, emphasis added). God created Satan since Satan’s existence is subsumed in the phrase “all things.” Whether Satan and the angels were created before the material universe or space-time does not matter, it seems clear that Satan was created good.

The truth is, we know little about Satan’s origin. Our main evidence is Ephesians 3:9, as previously quoted: “[A]nd to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things.” Satan was created good, not evil. Notice the following verses and see if you so reason.

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good*. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Gen. 1:31, emphasis added).

The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach ... not a novice, lest being puffed up he *fall* into the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1-7, emphasis added).

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was *cast down*, the old serpent,

he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was *cast down* to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him (Rev. 12:7-9, emphasis added).

For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but *cast them down* to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:4, emphasis added).

And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath *kept* in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Ju. 6, emphasis added).

From the above passages, we have the Biblical view of the moral origin of Satan. We learn more regarding what we do not know than that of which we do know. Nevertheless, we can recognize the following facts. God was pleased with what He had created and made. It was all “very good.” So, we must infer that Satan was created good. However, Paul reveals that Satan fell. He fell into condemnation. Paul indicates the problem was being “puffed up,” a connotative meaning that stands for *pride*.

In the book of Revelation there is an indication of a war in heaven. It was likely some time in the past. Michael and his angels are pitted against the devil and his angels. Satan at this point is described not as an angel or archangel, as is Michael later on (Ju. 9). He has the appellation of “dragon.” He has angels on his side. He is cast out of heaven down to earth. What a decline! The angels go into pits of darkness, in bonds, and into hell (*tartarus*, 2 Pet. 2:4). They await a terrible sentencing day. The final end of the devil is to be cast into the “lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10). However, all this establishes, as best we can see that Satan was created good. There are other items regarding Satan’s origin in which we are interested.

Who Or What Is Satan?

The best way for this writer to answer many questions about Satan is to truthfully say: “I do not know.” There are some good speculations, but none click into the solid statements I would wish.

First, some say Satan is a fallen angel. It makes no difference to me, but I cannot prove it. True, we read of Satan “and his angels” (Rev. 12:7, 9). However, it does not say anything like, “The angel called Satan and his angels.” Nor does it say, “Satan who is an angel and his angels.” We could say: “Skeeter and his pack of dogs got lost.” Surely, that does not mean Skeeter is a dog!

In like manner, Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub the prince of demons (Mt. 12:24). We noticed that Beelzebub was a name for Satan. However, it does not say Satan is a demon. He is just prince over them. We may assume that demons and fallen angels are identical, however I cannot even prove that. They say, for the benefit of all of us, that the mark of a good scholar is to recognize and make fine distinctions. However, since he is prince of the demons and fallen angels are called “his,” we would probably be right to think that Satan is our chief adversary, pitting us against, “the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”(Eph. 6:12).

Many say Satan can be identified with Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12. That verse reads: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (day-star, ASV), son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations” (Isa. 14:12, KJV). Lending support to this view, the passage continues: “And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (vv. 12-14). However, the context clearly shows this section in Isaiah is a parable of the King of Babylon (Isa. 14:4). When he goes to Sheol, all the kings of the nations shall ask: “Art thou also become weak as we?” (Isa. 14:10). He is called a “man” (v. 16). Isaiah 14:19 talks of his “sepulcher,” and verse 20 speaks of his “burial.” Still, some cling to the notion that it speaks of Satan because of the superlatives and grand, heightened language. To me, it is an abuse of clear names and statements in the text. It smacks more of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* than the prophet Isaiah. The people in the ancient area are still prone to use exaggerated language. Earlier, recall, they would build “a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen. 11:4). The wicked and proud are often talked of with such heightened language. Notice God’s view in David who said: “They speak loftily. They have set their mouth in the heavens, And their tongue walketh through the earth” (Ps. 73:8-9). They say of the Roman Emperor Caligula, that at the moment he was stabbed to death, he learned he was not God.

What Do Non-Biblical Sources Say Regarding The Origin Of Satan?

Douglas says: “The witness of the New Testament then is clear. Satan is a malignant reality, always hostile to God and to God’s

people.”³⁰ He does not venture into his origin. The speculations of men always dive deeper and come up dryer than what is revealed in the Bible (Deut. 29:29). The *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* thinks he came from heaven as Lucifer, because of the “super-human terms” used in Isaiah 14.³¹ However, that means little because there is such a thing as superlative language in the Bible, and it is used of people. *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* hints of Dualism, as if Christ and Satan were equal co-antagonists. However, it admits that Dualism is not dominant in the New Testament.³² Again, there was a Persian Dualism in Persian religion. However, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says the Biblical doctrine of Satan is not Dualistic.³³ So, Manichaeism with its dualism of light and darkness had a Persian founder. To support it, it had to combine Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements. Founded in the third century, it is wrong. It taught of a rival creator.³⁴

All other views lie somewhere between the Biblical view and Manichaeism. As to origin, we are content with the Biblical view of Satan being a fallen creature, the exact type of whom is not spelled out.

WHAT POWER DOES SATAN POSSESS?

We should first make as certain as the Scriptures the limitations of his powers. First, let us notice that there is one God in three Persons. To be subject to God is to be subject to all Persons of God. Satan is so subject. For our purposes here, notice these Scriptures:

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah (Deut. 6:4).

For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God (Jesus the Christ, Jn. 20:17).

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee ... but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever; And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; *Therefore God*, thy God, hath anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Heb. 1:5, 8-9, emphasis added).

Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ... thou has not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3-4).

From the above we see that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4). The Father is God (Jn. 20:17). The Son is called "God" by God (Heb. 1:8-9). Finally, the Holy Spirit is called "God" (Acts 5:3-4).

We further notice limitations on Satan's power when he could only test or harm Job if God permits it (Job 1:12; 2:6). Further, Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). God makes sure we can bear and/or escape our temptations (1 Cor. 10:13). John said: "Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). Also, the apostle Paul said: "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:19-20). To all that we learn our own prayers and actions have a powerful influence. James said: "Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

However, with that in mind, Satan has power, even if he is under the permissive will of God. I believe there was an evil supernaturalism permitted by God and executed by Jannes and Jambres in withstanding or duplicating some of the miracles of Moses (2 Tim. 3:8; Ex. 7:12, 22). Paul said: "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch" (2 Cor. 12:7). Again, Paul said: "[B]ecause we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us" (1 Thess. 2:18). Satan has power. However, it is under God's permission, and our own actions and resistance have power under God to influence the devil's wiles and devices.

HOW COULD GOD CREATE SUCH AN EVIL BEING?

It is true that what God does in His permissive will, Scripture will, in measure, attribute to God. God says: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 7:3). Yet, we also find: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken" (Ex. 8:15). Why would God, Who knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10), allow this cruel, malignant, fiend walk to and fro, and up and down in the earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (Job 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:8)?

It may be unrevealed (Deut. 29:29), however, it seems to be connected with several things which are ordained by God: freewill,

testing, creation of endurance and purity, and ultimately, “to the praise of the glory of his grace” and that in us God’s wisdom and the worth of the praise of His glory may be made manifest (Eph. 1:6, 8, 12).

So, it is a time that Satan walks about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). However, we are to withstand him steadfastly in our faith (1 Pet. 5:9). Regarding our great salvation at the end, Peter first says: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

It seems that angels and all heaven are watching and learning the wisdom of God and the glory of His grace through our response in faith to His light. Notice the following, which is that of which we speak.

For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to *angels* and men (1 Cor. 4:9, emphasis added).

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, *Seen of angels*, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16, emphasis added).

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3)³⁵

To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angel desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:12).

I charge thee in the *sight* of God, and Christ Jesus, and the *elect angels*, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality (1 Tim. 5:21, emphasis added).

[T]o the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the *heavenly places* might be made known *through* the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10, emphasis added).

Thus, it seems Satan fell. God makes use of him to test men and to teach heaven. So, Satan will be, and he is.

HOW DOES SATAN WORK TODAY?

All we know for sure is what the Bible reveals. There may be evidence in Scripture, but some evidence is vague, scant, and open to

interpretation. We do our best, but where evidence is weak, we pray our conclusions are as tentative. We encourage all to study for themselves.

Because it is recorded that Satan once appeared as an angel of light, it does not prove it is common or that it will ever occur a second time (2 Cor. 11:14). We do not know the circumstances, and they themselves might rule out a second appearance. Likewise, that Jesus spoke to Satan (Mt. 4) does not mean we ever will. Following are passages which indicate how he works in the later days of the Christian Religion.

And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if *his ministers* also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:14-15, emphasis added).

But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and *doctrines of demons*, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3, emphasis added).

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:11-12).

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Mt. 24:24).

And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).

[E]ven he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9).

It is certain that miracles, signs, and spiritual gifts from God have served their purpose and passed away. That is another lesson, but if you wish, study the following passages (Jn. 3:1-2; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; Mk. 16:20; and Heb. 2:3).

What seems to be left are “lying wonders,” and men who are false teachers and who are ministers of Satan. They sometimes and somehow

get their doctrines from demons,³⁶ and yet these men have hypocrisy and a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Of them, Paul would say: “But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

CONCLUSION

The sum of it is that there is supernaturalism today, if we may call God’s daily grace and providence supernatural in that such does not always come by any choice of nature, but often by prayer and by God working through nature. There is evil supernaturalism if we count our temptations from the devil more than accidents of nature. However, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

All the superstitions, potions, witchcrafts, horror-show material, modern exorcisms, and pacts made with the devil are excluded from the Bible. Left are temptations, trials, and false doctrine.

So, we have looked at the origin and reality of the devil. We noticed vital definitions, and that Satan is a being who really exists. We saw information regarding his origin, his power and authority, his personal and reluctant usefulness to God, and how he works today.

To some, all the fear and fun appealing to morbid, carnal ideas are gone. Yet, to the truly spiritually minded, a horrible, crafty serial killer is stalking our spirit and the spirits and souls of all whom we regard as dear to us. I repeat two Bible sayings:

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Jesus the Christ, Lk. 8:8).

And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Lesley Brown, “origin,” in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, (1993).

³ *Ibid.*, s.v. “reality.”

⁴ James Strong, “Satan,” in *A Concise Dictionary of the Words of the Hebrew Bible*, (1994).

⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, “Satan,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (1980).

⁶ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "Satan," in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (1977).

⁷ Colin Brown, ed. "devil," in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1971).

⁸ W.E.Vine, "dragon," in *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Vine, s.v. "ophis."

¹¹ Vine, s.v. "kategar."

¹² Vine, s.v. "Belial," and "Beliar."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (1957), s.v. "Belial."

¹⁵ Vine, s.v. "Beliar."

¹⁶ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (1970), s.v. "Belial."

¹⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, "Satan," and "Satanas," in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, (1975).

¹⁸ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (1956 ed.), s.v. "Satan," and "devil."

¹⁹ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, (Wheaton, IL, 1967), 26.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Satan."

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 2695.

²⁵ Ibid., 2697.

²⁶ Ibid., 2696.

²⁷ John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "Satan."

²⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "myth."

²⁹ Ibid., 1875.

³⁰ J.D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, "Satan," 1965 bibliographical revision ed.

³¹ *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*. Moody Bible Institute, (1975 ed.), s.v. "Lucifer."

³² *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. (1987 ed), s.v. “Satan,” and “Christ.”

³³ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Satan.”

³⁴ McClintock and Strong, s.v. “Manichaeism.”

³⁵ It is probable that our faith and obedience will judge angels much as the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment and condemn Jesus’ generation, for a greater than Jonah spoke to them.

³⁶ There is disagreement, but many, if not most, of my conservative exegetes do not read this as objective genitive where it would have the meaning of “doctrines *about* demons.” It seems most read it as genitive of *source* or agent. So, it would have the meaning, “doctrines that originate from demons.” None know how demons affect the thinking of the world and religious doctrines, but many ideas could be given. However, recall that Paul said our warfare is against spiritual armies of evil (Eph. 6:10-14).

YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

Tommy J. Hicks



Tommy Hicks is a native of Lubbock, Texas. He and his wife, the former Sue Cave, have two daughters and one granddaughter. Hicks holds an A.A. degree from the College of the Sequoias and a B.A. degree from the University of Texas at Arlington. He has done local work in Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Texas. Hicks is on *The Gospel Journal* Board of Directors. He directs the *Annual Lubbock Lectures* and preaches for the Southside congregation in Lubbock.

INTRODUCTION¹

On June 22, 1941, BBC News stories led with the caption: “Hitler Invades the Soviet Union.”² That invasion prompted Winston Churchill to say: “Adolph Hitler is a bloodthirsty guttersnipe, a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder.”³ During and since World War II, Hitler personified what the Allied forces were fighting against in Europe. This fact is borne out, among other things, by the title of books, such as *Holland at War Against Hitler*, by M.R.D. Foot; *The Naval War Against Hitler*, by Don Macintyre; *The Shadow War Against Hitler*, by Christof Mauch; and, *The War Against Hitler* by Albert Nofi. Indeed, Hitler was the enemy, but he was not a lone adversary. He had command of a monolithic martially-minded mass of men who were meticulously obedient to his every marching order.

Between 1933 and 1939, with contempt for the Treaty of Versailles, by subterfuge and political finagling, Hitler mobilized a military machine the likes of which the world had never seen before. By 1939, there were over 4.5 million soldiers, airmen, and sailors in his Wehrmacht. At that point in history, they were equipped with the most modern and powerful weapons of war, which included 3,200 tanks, 1,200 bombers, 800 fighter-aircraft, and about sixty submarines (U-Boats). Once this hard-hitting army began its blitzkrieg (lightening war), in short order it conquered virtually all of Europe and North Africa. However, stymied on its Western Front by Great Britain and on its Eastern Front by Russia, the mightiest German Army ever assembled would soon become acquainted with its greatest foe—the muscle and might of the United States of America. May 8, 1945 marked the end of

World War II in Europe. Hitler, the world's adversary, was dead. His once powerful army, the Wehrmacht, was defeated. And his kingdom, the *Deutsches Reich* (German Empire) or *Drittes Reich* (Third Empire) was no more. As bad as Hitler was, he is not the worst enemy the world has seen.

Just as Hitler was the enemy of the Allies throughout World War II, our text says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because *your adversary the devil*, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, emphasis added). Satan is our enemy and will be throughout our lives. Understand this, Satan's army, the one combating against us, is even fiercer, more diabolical, devious, and destructive than *all of the armies* that have ever marched, or ever will march, on earth—*combined*. Weaponry used in our warfare against Satan is unlike anything used in the corporeal realm; "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

Hitler had his empire, the so-called "Third Reich." Satan has his empire, which is called "the domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13, ESV). Whereas the Allies were in a "World War" with Hitler, their mortal enemy, the war in which we are engaged with Satan is one that has consequences which surpass anything in this world, extending even into eternity. Those who lived through World War II know it was often described as a situation of "Total War," yet that two-word phrase can only truly be used in its fullest sense to describe the ongoing war between "the domain of darkness" and "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11).

THE ADVERSARY

Peter identifies our "adversary" as the devil (1Pet. 5:8). John shows that the devil and Satan are one and the same being (Rev.12:9; 20:2). The context of Matthew 4 also does this, calling him the "devil" (v. 1) and "Satan" (v. 10). "Devil," "Satan," and "adversary" are significant words which need to be understood.

According to Vincent, the word "devil" means, "*calumniator; slanderer.*"⁴ Barnes further explains: "This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; then, any one opposed to us; then, an enemy of any kind."⁵

Defining the word "satan," Smith states: "The word itself, the Hebrew, *satan*, is simply an "adversary."⁶ "The word 'Satan' is

Hebrew, meaning originally ‘an accuser, a calumniator,’ and then ‘an enemy.’”⁷

Robertson points out that the Greek word translated “adversary” is the “Old word for opponent in a lawsuit.”⁸ Breaking this word down, Vincent says it is, “From *anti*, *against*, and *dike*, *a lawsuit*. Strictly, an adversary in a lawsuit. Here an adversary in general.”⁹ Going into more detail as to the meaning of the word “adversary,” and especially how it is used in 1 Peter 5:8, Gill relates:

Satan is an enemy to mankind in general, but more especially to the seed of the woman, to Christ personal, and to Christ mystical, to all the elect of God: the word here used is a forensic term, and signifies a court adversary, or one that litigates a point in law, or opposes another in an action or suit at law. The Jews have adopted this word into their language, and explain it ... “a law adversary,” or one that has a suit of law depending against another. Satan accuses men of the breach of the law, and pleads that justice might take place, and punishment be inflicted, and which he pursues with great violence and diligence.¹⁰

Thus, our adversary, the devil, is none other than Satan. He is a lying murderer (Jn. 8:44), a malicious slanderer, and an enemy accuser prosecuting us for our sins in an effort to have us condemned before God in Judgment. Yet, he is the one who tempts and deceives us so that we will violate God’s law, i.e., sin (1 Jn. 3:4). He knows that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); therefore, he seeks to murder us—just as he did Adam and Eve.

Sadly, many today are believing the same lie Satan told Eve, i.e., “Ye shall not surely die” if you disobey God. It is as though Satan is whispering in the ears of modern man, saying: “Surely, a loving God will not really send you to hell.” Many not only believe that lie, they are spreading it, and variations of it, to others. Satan’s ministers preach on the common theme: “You can continue in sin and God’s grace will take care of it.” Preferring to believe that lie instead of God’s truth (cf. Rom. 6:1), numbers of people are living in such sins as “sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness” (Col. 3:5, ESV). Unless they repent and obey God, they will find that believing a devil’s lie has brought about their spiritual death and the eternal loss of their souls in a devil’s hell (v. 6; cf. Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:14-15).

Is it any wonder then that Peter tells us to be *sober* and *vigilant*. Too many are neither sober nor vigilant when it comes to Satan. Taking

one's duty seriously and being ever vigilant must be drilled into every soldier. General George Patton gave a speech to an assembly of his troops on June 5, 1944 (one day before "D-Day"), in which he emphasized the importance of their always remaining alert, vigilant. Patton said:

All through your Army careers, you men have [expletive deleted] about what you call "[expletive deleted] drilling." That, like everything else in this Army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is *alertness*. *Alertness* must be bred into every soldier. I don't give a [expletive deleted] for a man who's not always on his toes. You men are veterans or you wouldn't be here. You are ready for what's to come. A man must be *alert* at all times if he expects to stay alive. If you're not *alert*, sometime, a German [expletive deleted] is going to sneak up behind you and beat you to death with a sock full of [expletive deleted]!" The men roared in agreement.

Patton's grim expression did not change. "There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily," he roared into the microphone, "All because one man *went to sleep on the job*." He paused and the men grew silent. "But they are German graves, because we caught the [expletive deleted] asleep before they did" (emphasis added).¹¹

No one should use the profanity and vulgar language that Patton used, but he was 100% correct about the necessity for a soldier to stay alert, vigilant, ever on guard relative to the threats from his enemy. How many Christian soldiers have gone "to sleep on the job" and allowed Satan to capture them? How many "neatly marked graves" stand as a grim testimony to the fact that a soul is lost forever, either because someone did not take sin and Satan seriously or because someone lacked the necessary vigilance.

OUR ADVERSARY'S ARMY

If a person thinks he and Satan are alone, fighting *mano a mano*, he had better think again. Our adversary the devil commands a formidable army in his warfare against mankind. Even in the war in heaven, mentioned in Revelation 12:7, Satan is not seen fighting alone. We are told in Revelation 12:9, "his angels were cast out with him."

Repeatedly, Scripture uses *plural* words, such as "spirits," "devils" (KJV), and "demons" (ASV) in reference to Satan's forces. James says the "*demons* [plural] also believe, and shudder" (Jas. 2:19, ASV,

emphasis added). Paul speaks of the “seducing *spirits* [plural] and doctrines of *demons* [plural]” (1 Tim. 4:1, ASV, emphasis added). The word “demons,” plural, is found four times in two verses in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. A plurality of demons is most certainly indicated in Mark 5:1-20. When Jesus came into the country of the Gadarenes, He encountered a demon possessed man. Addressing the demon, Jesus asked: “What is thy name?” The demon responded, “My name is Legion: for we are many” (v. 9). Dealing with the word “legion” in this verse, more than one commentator has pointed out that, at that time, the number of soldiers in a Roman legion fluctuated, but could be as many as 9000 men. We do not know the size of Satan’s army, but we do know it is numerically strong and trenchant. We also know that its major objective is the defeat and eternal damnation of our souls.

Some may think their struggle with Satan and his army is yet to begin. They are wrong. Satan declared war on man in the Garden of Eden, and that war will continue until Satan and his forces are removed to their final destiny (cf. Rev. 20:10). Right now, at this very moment, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). That one passage alone shows that we are fighting evil forces which are organized, multifaceted, and able to attack on several fronts at the same time.

Tactics-wise, Christ, the Captain of our salvation (Heb.2:10), and His soldiers are open, honest, and above board in their operations (Jn. 18:20; 2 Cor. 4:1-3), but that is not true of our foe and his forces. *Nothing* is done openly, honestly, and above board by the deceiving devil and his malevolent minions. “Sleight,” “covert,” and “fatal” are three words which describe the standard operating procedures for the army of darkness. The nature of Satan’s soldiers is revealed by Jesus as He warns: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15). Using the same kind of language, Paul lamented: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

Agents of Satan pretend to be faithful members of the church, surreptitiously positioning themselves where they can be most destructive to the Lord’s people. About those engaging in such tactics, Paul writes: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transform-

ing themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). “[B]y the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14), these phony “ministers of righteousness” reek havoc in the church. Be on guard, brethren. Paul urges: “I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by *good words* and *fair speeches* deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18, emphasis added).

WE ARE AT WAR RIGHT NOW

Because we are now, at this very hour, in a struggle for our own spiritual survival, as well as battling for the minds, hearts, and souls of others, Paul commands: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Timothy was told: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). This requires sacrifice, but we must understand that the same applies to us. “[T]he kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mt. 6:33) must be our first priority, “the affairs of this life” are secondary. Before succumbing to Satan and being entangled in worldly allurements, we must heed John’s exhortation:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (Jn. 2:15-17).

Make no mistake about it, Satan and his forces use “fleshly lusts” because they “war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

There is no neutral ground in this war. Jesus declared: “He that is not with me is against me” (Mt. 12:30). No man can serve God and mammon (cf. Lk. 16:13). One is either Satan’s or he is Christ’s. Paul says it this way: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves

servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16).

Loyally serving God, Paul, as a faithful Christian soldier, always gave first place in his life to Christ and His church. Ever "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17), he *never* ran from a battle. Likewise, Jude 3 instructs us "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered." In order to "lay hold on eternal life," we must "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and, in so doing, "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). Reflecting upon his "battles scars" that showed, i.e., the ones he had received in his physical body as a result of his many battles for Christ, Paul comments: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). Never compromising, retreating, or wavering, as a valiant soldier of the cross, Paul died, as it were, on the battlefield in the service of his Lord. However, before he died, he wrote:

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

HEAVEN WILL BE WORTH IT ALL

Death could not make Paul cower. He did not fear it or those who would kill him. Though he may never have heard Jesus utter the words, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28), Paul's life and death clearly show that is how he viewed matters. Expressing his thoughts about his own life and death, Paul states: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:21-23). Having complete confidence and trust in his Commander and Chief, Paul confesses: "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12, ASV). For Paul, regarding what awaits beyond the grave, there was no fear of the "unknown." He knew!

Every seasoned soldier knows that the *cause* he serves is greater than himself. That is why a good, conscientious soldier is willing to

endure all the fury, pain, hardship and suffering his enemy can bring down upon him and still continue to fight, even unto his death if necessary. Paul provides us with a partial listing of those things Satan and his followers brought to bear upon him as they waged war against the Cause of Christ. He reports:

I ... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Why would Paul be willing to endure so much? Why should we?

At some time, Paul was given a glimpse of heaven's glory. Most agree that Paul is speaking of himself when he says:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

This experience greatly impressed Paul. So impressed was he that he declared: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are *not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18, emphasis). In other words, heaven will be worth it all. That is why Paul could not be intimidated by the forces of evil, and why he would not be discouraged in his service to God. As an encouragement to other soldiers of Christ, Paul pens:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels,

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

CONCLUSION

Paul should be an example and inspiration to us. He knew his adversary and he knew his adversary's devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Yet, marching forward, ever advancing the Cause of Christ, he never allowed Satan, or all of hell's fury, to stop him from spreading the Gospel in his efforts to save souls. Paul would say: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). Also, when it comes to the raging war with Satan and his maleficent hosts, Paul exhorts: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). We have the blessed assurance that come what may, Christ will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5), and that if we will remain faithful to Christ we will be "more than conquerors." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Victory is ours (1 Jn. 5:4).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² http://news.bbc.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/22/newsid_3526000/3526691.stm

³ *An Anthology of Military Quotes*, ed. Michael Dewar (London, UK: Robert Hale, 1990) 130.

⁴ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 1:27.

⁵ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966), 32.

⁶ Smith's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Satan."

⁷ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), 337.

⁸ Robertson's Word Pictures
<http://www.studydrive.org/com/rwp/view.cgi?book=1pe&chapter=005&verse=008>

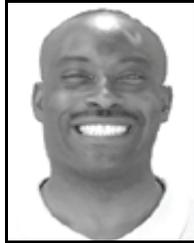
⁹ Vincent, 1:669

¹⁰ John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, 1 Peter 5:8 (e-Sword, Version 7.7.7).

¹¹ Charles M. Province, *The Famous Patton Speech*
<http://www.pattonhq.com/speech.html>

DO NOT GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Kevin Berry



Kevin Berry was born in Hamilton, Ohio. Berry served four years in the United States Air Force as Presidential Radio Operator for Air Force One. He began preaching in 1996. Berry is a 2004 graduate of Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. He has worked with the Northern Oaks congregation in San Antonio, Texas, and the Webster Street congregation in Dayton, Ohio. Berry is now with the Mission City Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, as the minister.

INTRODUCTION¹

The theme for this lectureship, *Your Adversary the Devil*, is fitting and much needed for the church of Our Lord today. Unfortunately, we face a world today which is increasingly more adversarial to the idea of God and to the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Ultimately, Satan is blameworthy of these thoughts, ideas and concepts. He is our common adversary. Satan is not only the adversary of all persons now living, he has been the adversary of all who have ever lived and who will ever live. He is more than just an ardent foe of man, Satan is the archenemy of God.

In the Scriptures, this evil one is called the “devil.” Literally, the term “devil” means “an accuser, a slanderer.”² The devil, known as Satan, is real. He is a spirit-being without a fleshly body, but the devil is a real being. Peter warned that the devil is actively seeking to harm us when he wrote: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Scriptures detail the devil’s outright opposition to the work of the Lord. Thus, to borrow from Paul’s wording in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us,” we must not be “ignorant of his devices.”

New Testament Scriptures are categorical in their certainty that the devil is evil and that he desires for people to become evil like him. The following patent texts put into words the persona of the devil, giving titles which fit his evil objective and character. He is called:

1. “Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (Mt. 12:24).
2. “A murderer ... A liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44).
3. “The prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
4. “The god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4).
5. “The prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).
6. “The evil one” (Eph. 6:16, ASV).
7. “The angel of the bottomless pit ... Abaddon ... Apollyon” (Rev. 9:11).
8. “The great dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Rev. 12:9).
9. “The prince of the devils” (Mt. 9:34; cf., 12:24; Lk. 11:15).
10. “The wicked one ... the enemy” (Mt. 13:19, 39).
11. “An angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-14).
12. “The tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5).

Truly, this subject is of great importance, one that merits our careful examination. My assigned text is Ephesians 4:27— “Neither give place to the devil.” It should be of vital concern to us to understand how one may give place to the devil, the corollary consequences and circumstances that result from giving place to the devil, and how to arrest any actions regarding giving place to the devil.

UNCONTROLLED ANGER GIVES PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Paul instructs: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27). Literally the text reads, “be ye angry, but do not sin.” There is anger that is not sinful. Because of the hardness of heart of those around Him, Jesus “looked round about on them with anger” (Mk. 3:5). Psalm 7:11 reads: “God is angry with the wicked every day.” The Bible teaches that the state of being angry is not sinful, but, to be more precise, protracted and uncontrolled anger is dangerous to one’s soul.

Anger can lead quickly to sin. Therefore, if one does not have his anger under control, he will be wise to quickly regain control of himself and remove it from the heart (Col. 3:8). Christians must not allow uncontrolled anger to abide in their hearts. We must honestly deal with uncontrolled anger, making every effort to get over it. If not, our adversary, the devil will find a way to use it against us. “A fool uttereth all his anger; But a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it” (Pro. 29:11, ASV). Anger must be handled properly and dealt with wisely.

What is the meaning of the phrase, “Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27)? Other versions translate it: “give no opportunity to the devil” (ESV); “leave no loop-hole for the devil” (NEB); and “do not give the devil a foothold” (NIV). The Greek term for “give place” conveys the idea of giving room to something, providing an avenue/invitation to enter into our hearts.³ The devil, will seize upon any and every opportunity to work his evil in our hearts and lives. Contextually speaking, the implication of Paul’s statement is that if one yields to his anger, he is inviting the devil to take advantage of an opportunity to lead him into sin. The devil knows that uncontrolled and unresolved anger may lead to evil thoughts and feelings which can lead to evil actions. As a consequence, the devil is given room to bring about a soul’s downfall and/or keep it under his rule. If a Christian mishandles his anger or wrath, he too may “give place to the devil,” i.e., give the devil an opportunity to harm his own life and possibly that of others.

GOSSIP GIVES PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Another way in which we can “give place to the devil” is by engaging in gossip. Unfortunately, some Christians like to hear gossip and to share it with others. It “satisfies” an “emotional need” they have. Gossip is rooted in our need to feel good about ourselves. As we bring others down, we gain the illusion that we are moving upward. That is one reason why spreading gossip is so difficult to resist. A “gossiper” is a person who habitually spreads intimate or private rumors or facts; one who enjoys telling negative things about other people. Under the guise of sharing “news,” a gossiper is always eager to be “in the know” regarding “current events” no matter how sordid.

Gossip may fall into the category of libel, which includes false accusations and character assassination. The normal pattern of gossip in the Lord’s church is for a disgruntled member to broadcast his grievance to all instead of going directly to the ones involved. Soon the gossip mill has cast a shadow on someone’s good name. The gossiping Christians in such cases have “given place to the devil.” We must work to eliminate the spread of gossip which disrupts both friendships and a congregation’s peace. Inspiration condemns such. Consider these examples from Scripture:

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Tim. 5:13).

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it (1 Pet. 3:10-11).

No doubt, Peter was borrowing his quotation from Psalms 34:12-14—

What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Imagine how many friendships have ended as the result of gossip (cf., Pro. 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:22; Ecc. 10:20; 1 Tim. 5:13).

From the dawn of time, the Lord has deemed it necessary to give direction relative to the use of the tongue. “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:16). “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile” (Ps. 34:13). Gossip sometimes begins innocently, even accidentally. However, as James 3:1-10 shows, all it takes is one careless word, one slip of the tongue, and a whole congregation can be brought down. If we “give place to the devil” [an opportunity or foothold to him] in this manner, it will not take long for a flickering flame of destruction to become a raging inferno. James 3:6 points out: “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body.” Do not believe the old adage about sticks and stones. Gossip (words) will harm others, and it can do untold damage to the body of Christ, too. In a matter of seconds, gossip can crumble godly reputations that it took a lifetime to build. With reference to gossip and “giving place to the devil,” Jesus said: “That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Mt. 12:36). The sin of gossip is self-destructive for the individual who is giving place to the devil in this way. Inevitably, all gossiping done by members of the Lord’s church is giving the devil an invitation to work destruction in the family of God.

EVIL SURMISINGS GIVES PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Another way that we can “give place to the devil” is by evil surmisings. “Evil surmisings” is a phrase found only in 1 Timothy 6:4. With reference to this text, B.J. Clarke makes this observation:

Evil surmisings is a phrase found only here in the New Testament, although the verb form of the word surmising appears three times in the book of Acts, and is translated as “to deem, think, or suppose.” Not all suppositions are evil, but those in the context of 1 Timothy 6 are clearly defined as such. Hence, evil surmisings are unfounded suspicions and uncharitable assumptions toward our brethren. How many times have we been suspicious of the motives and intents of our brethren, and without any factual foundation for so doing? It is always very hard to do justice to the motives of one who seems to us to be living in sin, or to believe it to be possible that he acts from “right motives.” May we ever remember that love will cause us to think the best first, and not the worst (1 Cor. 13:7). This is not to say that we should wear blinders and ignore those who are clearly documented to be false teachers. It is to say that we should believe the best about someone until there is clear evidence for believing otherwise!⁴

The child of God gives “place to the devil” when he judges the heart of another and, without proof or clear testimony, attributes evil motivation or wrongdoing to him. The inclination to attribute evil motives for the acts of others is a devil’s trap in which one is easily ensnared. In our evil surmisings, we “give place to the devil” by cultivating in our attitude a bitter, envious, and hateful disposition toward others. Having this kind of an attitude, we invite the devil into our hearts and provide him with an avenue to work havoc in our lives and in the lives of the brethren.

In recent years, many faithful gospel preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, missionaries and other saints have been victimized by brethren who have not only harbored, but have also given voice to their evil surmisings. When this happens (giving place to the devil in this way) the church for which Jesus shed his precious blood is always hurt. The devil loves to receive the invitation to harm the Cause of Christ—and evil surmisings is one of his deceptive ways to bring this about. We can resist the devil’s deceptive weapon of evil surmisings by adopting the attitude Christ taught us to have. He instructed: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12).

RACISM GIVES PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Another way we can “give place to the devil” is by allowing ourselves to accept or become involved in the despicable sin of racism.

“Racism” defined is: “discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of another race ... the prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races.”⁵

In my estimation, we [Christians] have done a good job of giving this issue a “superficial look over.” My hope and prayer is that we, the children of God, will finally fully acknowledge the fact we have not adequately engaged in the necessary channels of communication and undertaken the consequent actions which seriously address this area of sin. Still, in the twenty-first century, it is a fact that Christians (regardless of their ethnicity) utter racially charged comments and tell denigrating racial jokes. This is the “lighter” side of things, if I can couch it in such a manner. Unfortunately, this writer knows (existentially) racism can demonstrate itself in many sinful and discouraging ways. Racism is still alive and well among some brethren. The devil will always seize the invitation to deceive a Christian’s heart and therein have a place of residence. This he often successfully does when people “give place to the devil” by means of racism.

In Galatians 2:9-14, the text relates a time when Peter and Paul found themselves in an interesting situation. Peter was dining with Gentile Christians until Jewish Christians entered the scene. Then, Peter removed himself from the presence of the Gentiles and ate with “his people,” the Jews. Paul confronted Peter to the face. Furthermore, he went on to explain that Peter and Barnabas were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel when they gave deference to the people of their own heritage (Gal. 2:13-14). The Bible repeatedly makes the point that the Gospel is for all!

God is no respecter of persons and neither should we be. Luke wrote: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Paul wrote: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Likewise, Paul wrote:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye

who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:11-22).

Discussing the subject at hand, Wayne Jackson observed:

There is still prejudice, however, among all groups of the human family. But as the spirit of Jesus progressively invades our souls, racist attitudes must evaporate. Racism is morally wrong for the following reasons:

1. It denies the basic unity of the human family as the offspring of God. Adam and Eve are the grandparents of us all (Gen. 3:20).
2. The denigration of any human being, made in the image of God, is an assault upon the Creator himself (cf. Gen. 9:6).
3. Since Christ died for all people (1 Tim. 2:5-6), any attempt to castigate a segment of humanity, suggesting its unworthiness, reflects upon the Savior's sacrifice.
4. Racism militates against one intended design of Jesus' mission – to eradicate all ethnic barriers (Gal. 3:28).⁶

May we strive to ensure that we do not “give place to the devil” through the horrible sin of racism.

OTHER WAYS ONE MAY GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL

Secular World View

Moses recorded: “Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Gen. 13:12). Today, men “give place to the devil” *when they pitch their tent toward Sodom*. That is to say, men

today are choosing that which is secular and temporary over that which is spiritual and eternal. One of the painful ailments afflicting the church of Christ today is the worldliness of her members. When a Christian's personality reflects the attitude of the world, he is providing an invitation to the devil to "come in" and be the major influence in his life. The Bible provides an abundance of warnings relative to choosing that which is secular over that which is spiritual (cf., Rom. 12:2; 2 Tim. 4:10; Jas. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). We must learn inspiration's lesson and refuse to adopt and live a secular, worldly life. When we do this, we will close another door which might "give place to the devil."

Biblical Illiteracy

Another way Christians willingly "give place to the devil" is by their lack of Bible knowledge. Maybe more so than ever before, the devil is after our souls. We need every aid at our disposal to anchor our souls and to resist and overcome the devil. A good working knowledge of God's Word is one of the best *offenses* and *defenses* we can have to perform this task. Jesus used His knowledge of the Scriptures to resist the devil (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). Our only offensive weapon in our spiritual battle against the devil is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

Having stated the above, getting the members to faithfully attend Sunday morning and Wednesday evening Bible class is a daunting challenge for most congregations. Attempting to give adults homework assignments is even more challenging. Performing simple Bible drills (testing knowledge)—such as citing all of the books of the Bible, identifying the number of the days of creation, giving the text in the New Testament where Jesus said He would build His church, and how to become a Christian—are met with obvious unawareness by a great many saints. Furthermore, a lack of Bible knowledge has fostered Liberalism's growth in the minds of vast numbers of uninformed, receptive, but unsuspecting Christians who have been willing to accept as "Gospel" anything they have been taught. Bear in mind that our common adversary, the devil, will have residence in our hearts and lives if we give place to him by not studying the Scriptures as we should (cf., Hos. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Entertainment Choices

Finally, we can "give place to the devil" by our choices of entertainment. On this point, Louis Rushmore observed:

Some *video games* promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls. One or more video games promote shooting police, rape, pornography, illicit drug use, stealing cars and murder, prompting several states to draft legislation to limit sales of these to minors and many church groups to oppose them. The medium of a video game is neither right nor wrong, but the content will determine whether a particular video game is a threat to one's soul. Does the game condone sinful activity, which condoning sinful activity is a type of sin (Romans 1:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:12)?

Some *movies* and *television* shows promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls. What passes for acceptable primetime, family viewing on television today brings some of the most immoral samples of our society into our homes (e.g., sex, violence, drunkenness, drug abuse, homosexuality, etc.). How difficult is it to think on good things when the scripts for what we watch lead us to root for depraved specimens of society (Philippians 4:8)? Don't we begin to view as less serious the sins that are so commonly illustrated often in vivid detail upon television and movie screens? Isn't it an impossible task to convince family, friends and neighbors of our sincerity as Christians when we revel in some of the same debauchery that they do when they view their videos or television and movie screens (Romans 2:1)?

Some *Internet* content promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls. Especially parents need to exercise vigilance to protect their children from explicit and harmful Internet content (i.e., set strict filters with password protection for search engines). The Internet is a tremendous tool for good, but it can be likewise a channel through which every "filthy conduct" flows into one's home (2 Peter 2:7 NKJV). "Filthy conduct," such as pornography, is as dangerous for adults as it is for minors, and it is a part of the "every form of evil" from which Christians need to "abstain" (1 Thessalonians 5:22 ASV, NKJV).

Some *music* promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls. Some people erroneously suppose that, for instance, all rock music is sinful, but country music is all right. Rather than ascribing sin to the notes and beat (e.g., rock versus country, etc.), the lyrics of any music primarily determine if it promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls. The words, themes and messages of songs in most if not all types of music are riddled with immorality, especially including country music today. It is

no more appropriate to sing or listen to words and sinful activity praised than it would be for us to emulate those sins in our lives. “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:11). “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22); there are some things that the child of God cannot feed upon and still “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Remember, Jesus Christ is our supreme example (WWJD seems appropriate here) (1 Peter 2:21).

Some *printed matter* promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls. Sometimes it's the text that portrays in a favorable light this ungodly world and the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25; James 5:5). Sometimes pictures portray favorably especially sexual perversions (e.g., pornography) (1 Corinthians 6:9). The child of God does not “abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” when he or she reads the devil's literature (1 Peter 2:11).

Some *recreation* promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls. Gambling, for instance, is not merely a form of harmless recreation because it harms most of those who engage in it as well as diminishes the biblical work ethic (Ephesians 4:28). Fun in the sun where people in the presence of other people dress scantily goes against biblical instruction both about modesty and lust (1 Timothy 2:9; Matthew 5:28, e.g., sunbathing, public swimming where contemporary swimsuits prevail). How can the child of God convince his family, friends and neighbors of his sincerity as a Christian when he chooses recreation that promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls?

Some *social activities* promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls. Modern dances have long contributed to improper handling of unmarried males and females, often leading to fornication (1 Peter 4:3 NKJV; Titus 2:12). The pleasurable consumption of alcohol dilutes one's inhibitions and is often the threshold to additional sin (Galatians 5:21). How can the child of God convince his family, friends and neighbors of his sincerity as a Christian when he or she also pursues the vices of the world?

We must never “give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). It doesn't make any sense to not “give place to the devil” in our Christian worship and Christian service if we “give place to the devil” in our Christian living when it comes to our entertainment

choices (James 4:7). Can the world tell the difference between the speech, conduct and entertainment choices of Christians versus worldly speech, conduct and entertainment choices? *If not, there may not be enough evidence to convict us as Christians!* Christians must bring “every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).⁷

Our common ungodly, unethical, evil adversary, the devil, does not “play by the rules.” His *modus operandi* is to have his way by any means necessary, and there are no boundaries. We have to be careful how our children entertain themselves and what we chose for our entertainment. We must be ever careful not to “give place to the devil” through the medium of entertainment.

CONCLUSION

As my parents used to say when I was a child: “The devil is always busy!” Therefore, the question is: “How can we make sure we *do not* give place to the devil?” In answering that question, remember:

[L]et not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil (Eph. 4:26-27).

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16).

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (Jas. 4:7).

Let us instead of giving place to the devil, give place to Christ being formed in us (cf., Gal. 4:19).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), 306.

³ Tyler Young, “Resisting Verses Giving Place To The Devil.” *Satan: Diabolical Ruler Of The World And Enemy Of God And Man*, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2002), 648.

⁴ B.J. Clarke, “Warnings About Riches And A Final Charge.” *Studies in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 2001), 208.

⁵ <http://www.hyperdictionary.com/racism>

⁶ http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/the_tragedy_of_racism

⁷ <http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2006/jan/page2.htm>

NAMES BY WHICH SATAN IS KNOWN

Mark Hanstein



Mark Hanstein is a native of Colorado. He and his wife, the former Lee Lanier, have one son, one daughter and one granddaughter. Hanstein has a B.A. degree from Oklahoma Christian University and an M.A. degree from Austin School of Theology. He has done full time work in Visalia, California, Montrose, Colorado, and Marble Falls, Texas. Hanstein is the Academic Dean and an instructor at the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado. He is also an elder of the Bear Valley congregation.

INTRODUCTION¹

The basic function of a name is to identify persons or places, establish legal identity, or preserve memory. However, in Scripture names tend to have even greater significance. For example, numerous Old Testament places are given names which “commemorate events in patriarchal or later history.”² Frequently, parents chose a name that fit the circumstances of a child’s birth, as in the case of Benjamin (Gen. 35:18); pictured some calamity or tragedy, as in the case of Ichabod (1 Sam. 4:19-22); or expressed their hopes, as in the case of Joseph (Gen. 30:24). Some received a name by divine command, as in the case of Isaac (Gen. 17:19).

“Ideally, however, a name captures the essence of the person.”³ Turner and Myers suggest that names, “often indicated a person’s character or some peculiar quality.”⁴ Thus, the name of an individual is more than a simple designation. It says something about a person’s significance, and describes the character of a particular person.

The names, titles, and descriptions of Satan found in Scripture are significant for they illustrate his character and purposes. The various ones ascribed to him assist one in seeing his evil nature, his despicable character, his pernicious work in the world, and his enmity toward man. These, then, capture the essence of this one who is truly our enemy.

PRIMARY NAMES

Several names and titles are revealed in Scripture for him, but two are primary names used for the enemy of our souls—Satan and Devil.

These names are particularly significant. They give us insight into the character and intentions of the one who opposes us as well as God.

Satan

The term “Satan” is used some nineteen times in the Old Testament and thirty-six times in the New Testament. “It is one of the few English words that has a Hebrew origin.”⁵ In the Old Testament it is found as a verb as well as a noun. “As a verb it means ‘to oppose as an adversary’ ... As a noun it can be applied to a human being, thus designating one an adversary.”⁶

Reid indicates that the term “Satan” is the one “most commonly used to refer to the supernatural adversary of God and his purposes.”⁷ “With the article, ‘the Adversary,’ it becomes a proper name and denotes the personal Satan”⁸ who is mankind’s greatest adversary and, as Woods says, “By implication, the enemy of God.”⁹

Satan is “represented in the scriptures as the adversary of both God and man.”¹⁰ He stands in opposition to the purposes of God and the well-being of man. He consistently engages in activities against the best interests of humanity. Satan seeks to hinder the work of God.¹¹

In the book of Job, Satan is portrayed as a kind of public prosecutor, bringing accusation against the man, Job. He challenges Job’s integrity before God and God’s credibility in His dealings with Job. He is given limited power to afflict Job and his family in an effort to sustain his accusation against this upright man.

During the reign of David, Satan “provoked” the king to take a census of the people (1 Chr. 21:1ff). Motivated by his own pride and giving in to the temptation of the devil, David sinned. “God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel” (1 Chr. 21:7).

In another instance, Satan brings accusation against the high priest, Joshua (Zech. 3:1-2). Satan wanted God to reject the high priest and, by extension, all Israel.

In each of these historical cases, Satan can be clearly seen as the accuser and adversary of man.

Devil

The term “Devil” is used some thirty-three times in the New Testament. It is the “English translation of a Greek word (*diabolos*) meaning ‘accuser’ or ‘slanderer.’”¹² It was “used in the Septuagint to

translate the Hebrew ‘Satan’ and in the NT as a virtual synonym for the same term.”¹³ The two terms are obviously interchangeable.

In Scripture, the devil is the false accuser or slanderer because he speaks against men and God. He accuses men before God and slanders God before men in order to cause distrust and disrepute. “He was regarded by the Jews as the accuser of men before God, laying to their charge the violations of the law of which they were guilty, and demanding their punishment.”¹⁴

We are engaged in a relentless conflict with him. It is no wonder then, that we are exhorted: “Resist him [the devil], firm in your faith” (1 Pet. 5:9, ESV), “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7), “give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph. 4:27, ESV), and “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). We read of “the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6), the “reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:7), and the ferociousness of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). Do we not recognize the serious threat this enemy and adversary of our souls poses?

SECONDARY NAMES

Besides the aforementioned primary terms, there are secondary names used in Scripture to refer to Satan. They, too, give us insight into the work of this nefarious one who seeks to do us eternal harm.

Abaddon And Apollyon

Transliterated from the Hebrew, *Abaddon* means “Destruction”¹⁵ (Rev. 9:11). Hailey points out that, “the Greek name Apollyon means Destroyer.”¹⁶ Here Satan is pictured as one who rules over destruction. He is the destroyer of man’s body and soul. From the beginning this has been his ongoing intention and obsession.

Beelzebub

The term “Beelzebub,” sometimes given as “Beelzebul,” likely means “lord of the flies” or “lord of the dung.”¹⁷ It appears to be the same as a god worshipped by the Philistines at Ekron (2 Kgs. 1) whom Ahaziah, king of Israel, tried to consult in his last days.

Found in three of the four Gospel accounts, Beelzebub is another name given to Satan. It likely came to use in the intertestamental period, “when numerous names were used to designate the leader of the forces of evil.”¹⁸ It may well have been an epithet. In the Gospels, Jesus

is accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul, “the prince of demons” (Lk. 11:15, ESV), a charge He denies and easily refutes.¹⁹

Belial

First used in Deuteronomy 13:13, “Belial” was a rather “common Hebrew noun meaning ‘baseness,’ ‘worthlessness,’ ‘wickedness,’ or ‘lawlessness.’”²⁰ In the Old Testament it often referred to worthless or lawless persons.

MacArthur suggests Belial is, “an ancient name for Satan, the utterly worthless one.”²¹ It was also “a popular name for Satan in the Qumran literature.”²² Elwell and Comfort note: “Noncanonical writings of the NT period commonly used it as a name for Satan.”²³

Used one time in the New Testament, Belial “stands as God’s cosmological opponent who will ultimately be defeated.”²⁴ In 2 Corinthians 6:15, Paul makes a sharp distinction between Satan as the “worthless one” and Christ as the “worthy one,” the One with whom Christians are in fellowship.

TITLES

Several titles give us even more insight regarding the efforts and tactics of our great spiritual enemy. They are considered here.

Accuser Of The Brethren

In Scripture, Satan is often styled as one who brings a charge against another. This “accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10), night and day seeks to charge us as guilty, worthy of punishment because of our sins. How grateful we should be that, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1, ASV), who is sympathetic to our plight (Heb. 4:14-16), and pleads our cause (1 Tim. 2:5). Our Savior, “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2).

Adversary

Schrenk sees the Greek term *antidikos*, in 1 Peter 5:8-9, as “adversary” or “hostile enemy.”²⁵ It takes on the notion of a legal opponent, as in a courtroom. Satan, the adversary, is one who stands against justice, and seeks the Christian’s undoing. He is like a “roaring lion” who seeks to satisfy his insatiable appetite, an adversary seeking the opportunity to slander.

It is no wonder then, that we are urged to be on the alert and resist him by being firm in the faith. What a comfort it is to know that God has equipped the Christian to defeat this foe, no matter how ferocious he is.

Enemy

In the parable of the wheat and tares (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43), the devil appears as “the enemy” (v. 39). This is from *echthros*, a term “particularly used for what is hostile to God and His Christ.”²⁶ Foerster says “the devil is the enemy in the absolute sense. He is the enemy both of men and also of God and His kingdom.”²⁷ With obstinate hostility our adversary seeks to injure and overthrow us.

Evil One

Another New Testament label for Satan is “the evil one” (Mt. 13:19, 38; 1 Jn. 2: 13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19). He is the evil one (wicked one, KJV) in that he opposes God’s will and Word. He is opposed to everything good, holy, and righteous. He seeks to harm and destroy God’s people. Thus, evil originates with Satan. He is morally corrupt in thought and deed.

Satan is never portrayed in Scripture except as intending harm to the human race and the purposes of God. Standing in opposition to all that is good and right, it is appropriate to describe him as “the evil one.” He is not anything else.

Murderer And Liar

Jesus characterizes the devil as “a murderer from the beginning,” one who abides “not in the truth, because there is no truth in him,” and as “a liar” (Jn. 8:44). Satan is a murderer in that he brought death and destruction to mankind through sin. Satan does not stand in the truth because it does not suit his purpose. Satan is a liar because he opposes the truth. So evil and hostile is he that, even while knowing the truth, he chooses to lie anyway (e.g. Gen. 3:1 ff).

Prince Of This World

Three times in John’s Gospel account, Satan is called “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He claimed power over the world when he tempted Christ in the wilderness (Mt. 4:8-9; Lk. 4:5-8), a point Jesus did not deny. However, and thankfully, our omnipotent

God restricts the power of the devil (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:13). Yet, as the “god of this world” Satan has “blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4). Thus, the devil, “though defeated by Christ (Heb. 2:14), continues his hold over the present world (1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 5:19).”²⁸ He is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2), that spiritual power at work in people who disobey God.

Jesus refers to “the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). As Beelzebub (Mt. 9:34; 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18-19), Satan is “the prince of devils.” These expressions indicate that Satan is the ruler of other spiritual beings.

Our adversary engages us in a great spiritual battle for our souls. It is imperative for us to recognize that, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). When Satan and his hosts attack, it is necessary to put on “the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (v. 13).

Tempter

Twice in the New Testament, Satan is called “the tempter” (Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5). This is the one, with hostile intent, pressuring his prey in order to bring about their downfall. He endeavors to alienate all people from God by inducing them to sin. Utilizing “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn. 2:16), Satan seeks to lure us away from God.

Seesemann pointed out that in his wilderness contest with Christ, the devil, “exerts himself in every possible way to deflect Jesus from obedience to God.”²⁹ Jesus “was in all points tempted” (Heb. 4:15). Referring to chapter four in Matthew’s Gospel account, MacArthur suggests that “Satan tempted Him with ‘the lust of the flesh’ (vv. 2-3); ‘the lust of the eyes’ (vv. 8-9); and ‘the pride of life’ (vv.5-6).”³⁰ Thank God that our Lord and Savior did not succumb to this evil onslaught.

Regarding the Thessalonian Christians, Paul desperately wanted to know the condition of their faith. He feared that “the tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5) might have succeeded in accomplishing the spiritual failure of

those new converts. Mindful of Satan's work in the ancient garden (Gen. 3:1ff), as well as in the Judean wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13), he was concerned that Satan would use the persecutions they endured to entice them away from their relationship with God. The anxious apostle was assured that the tempter's efforts were not successful (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10).

We simply cannot afford to take the devil too lightly. He continues to tempt men to sin (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:5). The tempter, "through his subtilty" can corrupt "minds" (2 Cor. 11:3), thereby separating from God those whom he influences (cf. Isa. 59:1-2). We must not give Satan any "advantage" by being "ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Thank God that Christ is able to come to the aid of the Christian in times of temptation (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18) giving us "grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

REPRESENTATIONS

One finds two figurative terms representing Satan in Scripture, as well. Once again, these representations help us to see our great adversary for who he really is.

Great Dragon

In John's Apocalypse, the "great red dragon" (Rev. 12:3) is used metaphorically of Satan. The terrible appearance and brutal ways and great power of this destructive character are clearly emphasized in this figure. He is "the great dragon ... called the Devil and Satan" (v. 9).

Satan is the epitome of evil whose purpose it is to thwart the will and work of God at every opportunity and to "devour" (1 Pet. 5:8-9) whomever he can. He is the great dragon because he is a destroyer.³¹

Serpent

The Bible student is first introduced to Satan in the Old Testament where, in the form of a "serpent," he tempts Eve to sin (Gen. 3:1ff). While not identified there as the devil, he is later referred to as "the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9, ASV). This one "beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (2 Cor. 11:3), using the "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16), in his effort to get the woman to doubt what God had said and to rebel against divine authority. She was "drawn away of [her] own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14; cf. Gen. 3:13). Thus, "sin entered into the

world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

As the ancient “serpent,” Satan is seen as the one “which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). The cunning of our deceptive adversary cannot be underestimated (cf. 2 Cor 11:14). In spite of his guile, the devil must be seen as our murderous opponent. He deceives in order to poison man’s relationship with God. He accomplishes much of his work today through men and women who masquerade, often unknowingly, as “servants of righteousness,” but who actually are “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13).

It is no wonder then, that elders must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2),³² “Holding fast the faithful word ... that [they] may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). For the sake of the souls under their charge, as well as their own souls, overseers must be able to “Prove all things” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21; cf. Heb. 13:17).

Thank God that we have “the word of his grace, which is able to build [us] up, and to give [us] an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). This is the knowable “truth” which sets us “free” (Jn. 8:32) from the devil’s darkness, death, and sin as long as we “abide” (v. 31, ASV) in the words of our Savior Jesus Christ who, “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

IS LUCIFER SATAN?

The notion that Satan and Lucifer are one and the same was advanced by some of the early church fathers.³³ This view was popularized by the poet John Milton in his work, *Paradise Lost*. Today, several scholars believe that Satan and Lucifer are one and the same.

“The Hebrew term, from which the Latin *lucifer* is derived, is found in Isaiah 14:12 ... and means the ‘shining one.’”³⁴ Hailey says: “This verse has been the ground of no little misunderstanding and controversy among Bible students.”³⁵ The term likely was never intended to function as a name. However, due to the fact that the Isaiah text is often applied to Satan, many suggest that Lucifer, then, is a name for the devil. They see similarities between this Old Testament passage and two texts in the New Testament—Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:7-

10—which lead them to this conclusion. Contextually, it is evident that the Luke and Revelation passages have Satan in view. The Isaiah passage, though, clearly does not. He is referring to a “man” (Isa. 14:16), the king of Babylon, who will be humiliated by God because of his intense pride—not Satan.

Additionally, the interesting language of Ezekiel 28 has caused several to believe it provides a picture of Satan. Kaiser writes:

The historic fall of Satan is not directly described in the Bible but alluded to in a number of passages, supplied the background terminology and metaphor for this text, just as it did for Isaiah 14. His fall from heaven back, apparently, before time began will supply the model for the fall of the king of Tyre, as it had for the king of Babylon ... Thus, the mastermind behind God’s enemies is not always recognized, but here is clearly the devil himself. He is the one that finally must suffer a fiery judgment, thereby appalling the nations who knew him, just as the nation of Tyre will suffer fiery judgment from God prior to God’s dealing with their sponsor.”³⁶

Petrillo takes issue with this and gives the following points:

1. Nothing in the text gives any indication that an allusion is being made to Satan.
2. The text states whom the figure represents: the king of Tyre. To suggest anything beyond this is to wander beyond textual support.
3. Other passages that clearly refer to Satan do not support the ideas being presented here.
4. Each description given here can be applied to the illusionary delusions of grandeur and self-worth of the king of Tyre.
5. Too many points made within this text cannot be applied to Satan: (a) The “mountain of God” is nowhere used to refer to heaven in the Scriptures. (b) No biblical passage describes Satan or any angel as one of the cherubim ... (c) The judgment described in verses 16b through 19 does not fit the judgment given to Satan.³⁷

CONCLUSION

Over the years, Satan has been thought of as a myth, some kind of legend invented for the purpose of imparting moral teaching. In many

theological circles, Satan is the personification of evil and nothing more.

For many, Satan has become a manageable pest, in some ways made in our own image. He is an ornery imp who, while sometimes making life difficult for mankind, is more of an amusement than evil. We have made a comic book character out of him, a vermilion red child-devil running around in asbestos diapers, carrying a pitchfork.

We have used names to describe him in less hideous and frightening ways. Thus, he is Old Scratch, the boogeyman, Old Nick, or any number of other appellations our culture uses in referring to him.

In all of this, we have really minimized the true danger Satan poses to the human race. After all, life is much easier, we think, when our arch-foe, so-called, is not so ferocious and really rather forgettable.

The Bible, however, speaks of Satan as a real, personal spiritual being. From Genesis to the Apocalypse, Scripture portrays him as a real, living, personal being. Satan is the ardent enemy of all mankind and the foe of God. The several names and descriptions used of him underscore these facts.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (1984), s.v. "name."

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ J.J. Turner, and Edward P. Myers, *Doctrine of the Godhead* (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1985), 17.

⁵ J.H. Walton, "serpent," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, (2003).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ D.G. Reid, "Satan," and "devil," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (1993).

⁸ D.E. Hiebert, "Satan," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (1975).

⁹ Guy N. Woods, *Question and Answers Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), 335.

¹⁰ L.M. Sweet, "Satan," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (1939).

¹¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

- ¹² James E. Efrid, “devil,” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, (1985).
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Homor Hailey, *Revelation an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 232.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Walter A. Elwell, and Philip Wesley Comfort, “Beelzebul,” in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, (2001).
- ¹⁸ Efrid, 86.
- ¹⁹ Matthew 12:24-27; Mark 3:22-26; Luke 11:15-19.
- ²⁰ Elwell, s.v. “Belial.”
- ²¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 1742.
- ²² Paul J. Achtemeier, “Belial,” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, (1985).
- ²³ Elwell, s.v. “Belial.”
- ²⁴ William R. Baker, *2 Corinthians*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1999), 261.
- ²⁵ Gottlob Schrenk, “*antidikos*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (1964).
- ²⁶ Werner Foerster, “*echthros*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (1964).
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ John Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 2:563.
- ²⁹ Heinrich Seesemann, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 6:33.
- ³⁰ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 1365.
- ³¹ Alfred Plummer, *Revelation, The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 22:312.
- ³² The pointed humor of G.K. Wallace, that elders are “apt to teach anything” is all too true in our day and time. Where are the shepherds who even know the

truth well enough to accurately and effectively communicate it to the church? Where are the shepherds who can actually make sure “the church of God” is adequately fed (Acts 20:28) the Word of God? Where are the shepherds who take seriously the fact that “grievous wolves” will “enter in among you, not sparing the flock ... speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30)? Where are the shepherds who can actually refute the “unruly and vain talkers and deceivers ... Whose mouths must be stopped” (Titus 1:10-11)? Where are the shepherds who can actually distinguish between the truth of God’s Word and the errors and lies of “the deceiver” (Heb. 5:12-14)?

³³ Tertullian and Origen seem to have been the first of the church fathers to do so.

³⁴ Walter A. Elwel, “Lucifer,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (1988).

³⁵ Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 139.

³⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Peter, H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 316.

³⁷ Denny Petrillo, *Ezekiel, Truth for Today Commentary* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2004), 429.

DEMONIC ACTIVITY IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Kenneth Ratcliff



Kenneth Ratcliff is a native of Nashville, Tennessee. He and his wife, the former Eugenia Hollon, have three sons. Ratcliff holds a B.B.A. degree from the University of Texas at El Paso, an M.B.A. degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and a J.D. degree from Southern Methodist University. A retired U.S. Air Force Colonel, Ratcliff has been preaching since 1952. Ratcliff is an elder for the church in Shertz, Texas. He the Business Manager for *The Gospel Journal*.

INTRODUCTION¹

Scholars may spend years in studying demons, all of them reach the same conclusion, and write many literary works on the subject. Ultimately, this means nothing if it is not supported by the Bible. It is too easy to be wrong and for the error to be taken by others to be the truth. This in turn can lead to additional errors and taking positions that could lead to the loss of souls.

Under the circumstances some attention may be given to what others have said about demons, but the basic approach will be to consider what is said in the Scriptures. The often stated concept of “speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent” is definitely applicable to this topic.

Some have already taken the position that there is no hell. It does not take a big leap to also eliminate Satan and his demons. If hell does not exist, then there is no eternal punishment for Satan, his demons or those on earth who have served him. Such ideas make God’s Word a lie and equally does away with the reality of heaven. Both heaven and hell are equally spoken of in the Bible, and if one does not exist it would seem impossible to support the existence of the other. The entire concept becomes a figment of man’s imagination.

WHAT WE CAN KNOW ABOUT DEMONS

The Origin, Nature, Characteristics And Habits Of Demons

It is probably a natural curiosity to wonder about the origin of demons. Some of the sources that were examined will be listed at the

end of the discussion although possibly not quoted and cited.² In examining various writings about demons at least two things will be observed. Considerable attention may be given to the superstitions of various nations that could have influenced the Jews. Also raised is the potential that individuals actually had some form of mental or physical ailment, which might be diagnosed and possibly cured with the medical knowledge available today. Although such thoughts might be of interest, we need to be very careful to not be improperly influenced. Even among some who claim to be religious there can be a tendency to look for what might be considered a logical explanation for any event that does not appear to comply with the laws of nature. For some, it no doubt is an effort to explain away any miracle. The crossing of the Red Sea and the fall of the walls of Jericho are examples of this approach. There should be no doubt that God can use the natural laws for His purposes. After all, they are a part of His creation. Thus, He can set in motion many years in advance to bring about a particular event at the desired precise moment, or He could cause the entire process to occur in an instant. Nothing prevents Him from setting aside the laws of nature at any time that it suits His purpose. It is therefore accepted that during the ministry of Jesus and the early church, there were instances of individuals who were possessed by demons/devils. Such possessions were not the result of superstitions or of a misconception of an illness. Individuals may have made a mistake as to the source of their problem in the same way that it occurs today. Nevertheless, demon possession did exist. The subject is addressed from that point of view without an effort to seek a worldly explanation.

Isaiah 14:12 has been cited by some as the source of Satan, and thus his followers, but the basic context indicates that it was Babylon that was being addressed. The origin of demons likely goes to the time referred to in both 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:4).

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Ju. 6).

This suggests that they were created beings and like man they had the ability to make a choice between right and wrong (good and evil). They made the wrong choice and served their master, Satan. The continual

conflict between the forces of God and those of Satan are demonstrated from the time of Adam in Genesis ³ to almost the end of Revelation where we find the final judgment and destiny of Satan and his followers. At times, we are given a glimpse of the struggle that we otherwise could not see. Daniel speaks of having a vision in which one spoke of a fight with the king of Persia in which Michael came to his assistance (Dan. 10:13, 20). In Revelation 12:7-9, John writes of a war in heaven between Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels. The dragon, which is also described as being the devil and Satan, is cast out to the earth with his angels. When the devil is cast to the earth, he proceeds to persecute the woman that was previously mentioned (Rev. 12:13). The woman that was persecuted most likely represents the church. However, the main thought in this discussion is with respect to the unseen spiritual war that exists. We cannot see or understand all that has and is occurring, but we can definitely see its impact on this world.

Both passages (2 Pet. 2:4 and Ju. 6) refer to a time when angels sinned (kept not their first estate). They were cast down and reserved in everlasting chains of darkness until the day of judgment. This would explain their recognition of Jesus and the statement in Matthew 8:29 when the devils that possessed two individuals asked Jesus if He had come to torment them before the time. They had temporarily been released and enabled to take possession of men and animals on earth. We are not told if they had additional abilities, but they were well aware of their condition and of what the future held for them.

Of special interest is the impact that demons had on the individuals that were possessed. This is particularly true in view of our understanding that man can exercise his free will. To what extent, if any, did individuals have control over whether they might be possessed by one or more demons, to what degree could demons cause individuals to do things that they otherwise would not have done? Once they were possessed, was it within the power of the person who was possessed to cast the demon out? It is easy to pose such questions and entirely different to provide a Bible answer.

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus presents an interesting situation. He says:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is

come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

This might be taken as referring to actual demon possession or as using an illustration to present a lesson. Jesus said that the situation that He spoke of applied to that wicked generation, which does not suggest everyone of that generation was possessed by demons. We can see evidence of this today. Individuals become Christians and there is no reason to doubt their conversion. Nevertheless, there were changes that needed to be made in their lives. For some, sinful practices may have become deeply embedded in their lives. Having been baptized they were cleansed of all past sins. It must not end at that point. Without a great effort to overcome the past and fill their lives with a Christian character, they can easily return to their past way of living and possibly become even worse.

The Jews at the time of Christ were acquainted with actual demon possession and they would have understood the concept that Jesus presented. However, we are not informed as to how and when they first became aware of this unusual condition. The lesson by Jesus might also provide some explanation on how some came to be possessed. We do not know the number or percentage of people who were affected. It would seem that most people did not suffer from demon possession. The return of demon(s) into a life that was open and receptive at least suggests that this was the reason the demon was able to enter the individual initially. The person may not have been wicked. They would already be under Satan's influence. The one who would possibly be the most susceptible to demon possession would be those whose lives were basically empty spiritually. Although not necessarily evil, they had no interest in God. There would be a large "vacancy" sign over their spiritual life, which was a virtual invitation for Satan to enter. Having left, the evil spirit returned to occupy the empty space and brings seven other spirits with him. This not only reflects bringing many, but also the idea of being complete.

It is with this type of thought in mind that we can better appreciate statements that we find regarding the church and Christians. For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul wrote:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

In a similar manner he exhorted the church at Colosse, in Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Likewise, we must have the spirit of Christ or we are none of His (Rom. 8:9). Although not the same type of possession as that of demons, it contrasts the impact Christ is to have on the lives of Christians with that of Satan. There are many passages that address God's attitude towards those who do not obey or who turn away from Him. One passage that paints a very vivid picture is 2 Peter 2:20-22. There, Peter states:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Surely, that is the same picture as portrayed by Jesus in Matthew 12:43-45, but presented in different words.

The above situation could also explain how demons were able to initially take possession of a person and they potentially become worse by having more than one demon. Their spiritual life had a vacancy and the demon took up residency. Possibly its presence was hardly noticed at first but its influence grew. It might be similar to someone learning that you had a small unused bedroom and they invited themselves to move in and you lacked the backbone to tell them "no." At first, they only used that small room but then they began to use your bathroom, then your living room and kitchen. Ultimately, you felt crowded out and that your house was no longer yours even though you paid for and were responsible for everything. If you were not careful, the intruder would soon invite his friends to move in also. At that point, having allowed the situation to get completely out of control, it would require considerable effort to oust everyone and reclaim your house. At that

point the house would probably need considerable attention to restore it to its previous condition.

It is recognized that limits most likely existed as to what the demons might do. This no doubt included the fact that individuals were not robbed of their complete free will. Nevertheless, some questions might be raised in some instances. For example, consider Acts 19:13-16. There were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out evil spirits. The evil spirit said that he knew Jesus and Paul and asked, "but who are ye?" The man that had the evil spirit leaped on them so that they fled from the house naked and wounded. The actions of the man were not those of an individual who is thrown to the ground by a demon. This reflects that of deliberate action. In some ways it is similar to the situation of Matthew 8:28-34. In that case there were two individuals possessed with devils. They are described as being, "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." Mark 5:1-20 speaks of one man who could not be tamed and broke the chains when there was an attempt to bind him. After the unclean spirits were cast out, the man is described as sitting, clothed, and in his right mind. He even prayed to Jesus that he might remain with Him. Without a doubt there was a complete change in the individual.

What we do not know is the character of the individual(s) before they were possessed. This writer is of the opinion that their lives had been such that the demons were able to move in and gradually take control so that these men acted contrary to their previous conduct. They allowed the situation to get out of their control. God will allow individuals to believe a lie and be lost if they refuse to accept the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). It is doubtful that very many people ever intended to allow alcohol, drugs or gambling to control and ruin their lives and yet it happens. If, after sinking to the lowest point, they could suddenly be relieved of that bondage, you would see a new individual.

We might be reminded of Daniel 4 and a situation involving King Nebuchadnezzar, except in that instance the events were brought about by God. The king of Babylon took too much pride in himself and failed to recognize that it is God who rules over all. As a result he was driven from men so that he lived as an animal eating grass as an ox. When his reason returned to him, he blessed the God of heaven, praised and honored Him. In this instance we are told that the king was reduced to living like an animal the same hour in which a voice from heaven told him that his kingdom was departed from him. Nebuchadnezzar had a

lesson to learn and he learned it the hard way. He had to hit rock bottom. That must have been extremely difficult for a man who virtually ruled the world and had just spoken of the great things that he had accomplished. We do not know all that transpired but it brought about a change in the attitude of the king. If it were merely a matter of the king being out of his mind and then regaining his mental well-being it would be expected that his attitude would be just the same as before. However, he was taught a lesson which made a definite impact on him. In some ways, he might have been like the prodigal son who finally came to himself (Lk. 15:17) after he hit the very bottom. The demons also may have not been able to do any more than they were permitted to do by both God and the individuals. However, if one opens the door and allows them to come in, the demons will make themselves at home and ultimately take control.

Demons Belong To Satan's Kingdom And Are Under His Rule

Very little need be said to establish that the demons belong to and serve Satan. Although they recognized and acknowledged Jesus, they did not serve Him. James points out that even the devils believe and tremble (Jas. 2:19). It is important to note that they did obey Jesus, but it was not out of a desire to serve Him. They were subject to His power and they had no choice but to obey. In a similar manner the time will come when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). When the time of judgment arrives, they will not be able to alter or delay their destiny, for that has already been determined.

What Demon Possession Was And How It Manifested Itself In The New Testament

From the conduct of those who were possessed by demons we might be inclined to believe that they had one of the problems known to medical science today. It might be thought that they were epileptics and were having seizures. Others would be considered to have some form of insanity. There might be a diagnosis that would appear to apply to each case of demon possession described in the New Testament. That is not to suggest that demon possession exists today as it did then. We are aware of lives that are filled with sin but they can change the same as God called time and again for the people of Israel to return to Him. Whatever we see today, it is not the same as existed during the New Testament period.

We should not think that the world was ignorant in the field of medicine at the time of Christ. We know there were physicians such as Luke (Col. 4:14), and we read of the woman who had spent all of her money on doctors without being cured (Mk. 5:25-34). Of course, there were superstitious people and those such as Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11) who took advantage of others. However, doctors such as Luke were very likely helpful in their practice of medicine. It is even possible that one reason why Luke was often with Paul on his journeys was to serve as a physician. Miracles were not performed to care for common ailments for the general benefit of Christians but to confirm God's Word. Even Timothy was advised to not drink water but to use a little wine for his stomach and his often infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23). Although not researched at this time, it is the recollection of this writer from past readings that at the time of Christ the medical profession had progressed to the point that there were specialists in a number of areas. Whether or not it was realized at that time by the Jews, or others, the Law of Moses provided a number of provisions that related to their physical and mental well-being. During the Dark Ages there was a great step backward in learning and knowledge which most likely included the field of medicine. Surely, a vast amount of knowledge and experience was lost during that dark period of history.

Did the Jews know the difference between an illness and demon possession? In Matthew 9:1-8, we read of a man who was brought to Jesus on a bed. Verse 2 tells us twice that the man was sick of palsy. It does not matter whether this was a correct diagnosis. The fact was that they did not consider that he was possessed by a demon. In Matthew 8:14-15, Jesus came to the house of Peter and we are told that his mother-in-law was sick with a fever. They understood what it meant to have a fever without any effort to attribute it to a supernatural cause. It is recorded in Luke 17:11-19 that Jesus encountered ten lepers. There was no issue over their problem. They knew what they had and most likely everyone who saw them likewise saw that they had leprosy. Matthew 4:24 further demonstrates that a distinction was made. The fame of Jesus had spread. We are told that "all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy" were brought to Jesus. It can be seen that distinctions were made. Clearly, the people of that time were not so ignorant that they automatically attributed their problems to demons as a way of

explanation. This is not to say that the source of the problem was always understood and a proper diagnosis made. That remains true today. For example, in Matthew 17:14-21, a father came to Jesus asking for mercy on his son who was a lunatic. He also said that the disciples of Jesus could not cure the son. We do not know the age of the son, but verse 18 speaks of him as a child. *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, by James Hope Moulton and George Milligan,⁴ indicates that the word “child” in this instance indicates a young person but does not provide a range of ages, such as 1 to 5 years of age. The son was not an infant and he had been possessed for a period of time. In Mark 9:21, Jesus asked the father how long since the demon came into him. The reply was, “Of a child.” Although it does not give a precise time, it implies that it had been for a period of time (from childhood) and not something that had just occurred. Jesus proceeded to cure the child by rebuking and casting out a devil. The fact that this was a situation beyond the ability of the disciples suggests that the demon was firmly in possession. Although the situation involves a young person, a general observation of society tells us that children can at a fairly young age become evil. It should be particularly noted that nothing suggests that the son had been under this influence from birth. A different Greek word would indicate a “child” from birth onward.

The same observations can be made regarding the damsel in Acts 16:16-18. The language in this instance apparently originally meant “a young woman,” but in later Greek came to mean “a female slave.”⁵ This would be sufficient to indicate that a very small child is not indicated. *The Pulpit Commentary*⁶ raises an issue of whether the young woman was practicing the art of ventriloquism. Such a discussion gives the impression of another effort to find an earthly explanation for events contrary to nature. At least two factors indicate that this was not what occurred. Verse 17 tells us: “The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” This was not a common occurrence, except with those possessed by demons. The demons appear to have recognized what men did not always accept even after seeing the miracles performed by Jesus and hearing Him speak. In addition, verse 18 tells us that Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her, “And he came out the same hour.” That does not suggest that the action of Paul in some way ended her ability to throw her voice.

According to the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*⁷ the idea of a “lunatic” was a popular but neither a technical nor precise word in the King James Version. The term might include one who was an epileptic as well as one who was possessed with a demon. It is entirely possible that neither the father nor the disciples realized the full nature of the problem. It was more fully comprehended when Jesus cast out the demon.

How do we know that we do not have demon possession today as in the time of Christ and for a time thereafter? It is because we do not see and hear the same situations as pertained to those who were possessed in that era of miracles. Consider some of the factors that were associated with demon possession. Matthew 9:28-34 describes a situation where Jesus encountered two that were possessed with devils. We are told that the devils spoke to Jesus. This reflects action independent of those who were possessed. They also recognized and acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God. This, from every indication, was without hearing Him teach or seeing any miracles. This was different from what occurred with others. Even John the Baptist sent men to inquire as to whether Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus called their attention to the mighty works that He performed as proof of His identity (Mt. 11:1-6). Further, it was possible for the devils to leave those who were possessed and to enter into another living creature. In this instance it was swine. The swine acted in a manner that would not have otherwise occurred by running into the sea where they perished. Those who witnessed what happened and told others about it did not consider it an accident, nor treat it as a matter of superstition, but attributed it to the power of Jesus.

*Reason(s) Why God Permitted Demons
To Be Powerfully Active In The First Century*

The activity of demons in the first century could give the impression that the devil holds great power over the earth as his influence is repeatedly shown. We are exposed to a number of instances in which Jesus and His disciples encountered those who were under the influence of demons. The impression readily reflects that most men were lacking in the power to cast them out.

The first century presented a unique time in history that sets it apart from any other period. It was a crucial point in history, a time that had been looked forward to, and a time at which we look back. It could be

expected that unusual happenings would occur and only in that era. It was a time when Jesus and His followers performed miracles. It should not be surprising that the devil was also permitted to show himself. It is somewhat akin to Moses dealing with the magicians in Egypt (Ex. 7-8).

One might be amazed at the power demonstrated by the demons. How terrible to be possessed or have a loved one possessed by a demon. The important fact is that the demons were entirely subject to Christ. On at least one occasion the disciples of Jesus were unable to cast out a demon. Such was not true with Jesus. The demons knew who He was and they were completely subject to His power when many men were unwilling to accept the fact that He was and is the Son of God. Although not the same today, it demonstrates how important it is to stay with and be under the influence of Christ. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

What occurred was similar to that which had happened at other times. For example, God used sinful Babylon to punish Israel and then punished Babylon for its sins. This continues to demonstrate that the power of God is complete in every respect. Even that which is evil can be used for God's purposes. This was also true with the death of Jesus which was essential for the salvation of man and which Satan desired to defeat. With demon possession came a demonstration of God's complete power. Jesus demonstrated His deity by His miracles, which reached into every aspect of the natural world. It was also important to demonstrate that His power went even further and could overpower all that Satan could offer. Those of the first century might not know of the temptation of Jesus, and they might not look upon those things that He confronted daily as potential temptations to sin. Clearly, at His death the general thought was that the mission of Jesus had ended in complete defeat. Just as He had destroyed the efforts of the demons by casting them out, by His resurrection He proved that He had complete power over Satan and everything evil.

Although Job was not possessed by a demon(s) there may be some comparison between him and those possessed by demons in the first century. With Job we see Satan contesting God's care of Job and of him being permitted to do anything to Job but take his life. Satan could not take control of the mind of Job by making Job say or do anything. However, by affecting every aspect of Job's physical and mental life, it was entirely possible that Job, by his own choice, could have sinned.

Job was stripped of his children, wealth, and influence. His body was unsightly and filled with pain. Even the vilest and lowest of people looked down on him. His wife indicated that he should curse God and die. Instead of bringing understanding and comfort, his friends insisted that his misfortune was due to past sins which he would not acknowledge. There was nothing remaining but his spirit residing in a wretched body—and *his trust in God*. There was nothing more Satan could do other than taking his life and that was prohibited by God.

The demons in the first century were surely limited and very likely to a greater degree. Lives were put in danger, but the overall impact was not as great as with Job. Of course, there were no doubt instances of possession that are not recorded, but we are informed to the extent that is necessary. For example, in Matthew 17:15-21, we are told of a father who sought mercy on behalf of his son. He described how the child “oftimes” fell into the fire and water. Jesus rebuked the devil and he departed from the child who was cured from that hour. As the son was still alive, the devil had not been successful in doing greater harm. As with Job, such situations could have driven those affected away from God, even to the point of blaming God for what was happening. It is always easy to say “why me” when you do not see others having the same problems or to place the blame somewhere else as an explanation. In any event, although we are not told, it is both plausible and likely that God permitted demons to possess individuals, within limits, and then Jesus (and others) demonstrated His power over them. The result demonstrated that Jesus was the Son of God so that people would believe in Him. Once again, Satan and his evil works were turned against him.

One would not need to be a Bible scholar to anticipate the destiny of demons. Even those who prefer to think that all mankind will be saved are likely to have a hesitation to take the position that demons will also be saved. It would also suggest that either the demons would have changed to faithful servants of God or those in heaven will be in the company of demons. This would mar the concept of heaven and suggest that those in heaven could potentially come under the influence of demons. It would be akin to suggesting that after the struggle on earth for the souls of men those who served Satan, and possibly also Satan, would find heaven as their home. The distinction between good and evil would be blurred if not completely eliminated. It might easily raise the question as to whether it was necessary for God to unfold a

plan of salvation, send His Son to die for man, and make a distinction between sin and righteousness.

The Judgment Awaiting All Demons

Peter proclaims: "... God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). In verse 9 of that same chapter, Peter indicates that God knows how to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. In a similar manner Jude 6 tells us: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Even the devils/demons were aware of their final destiny. In Matthew 8:28-34, we are told that Jesus was met by two who were possessed with devils. They cried out, saying: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (v. 29). This indicates that they were not ignorant of what was in store for them and there is no reason to expect that it would be a surprise to them. Likewise, men should not be surprised at what awaits them on the Day of Judgment.

CONCLUSION

The public seems to be carried away by the supernatural and the possibility of other forms of life somewhere in space. Ghosts and angels can attract considerable attention. The more mysterious and unknown, the greater is the attraction. The study of angels may stir imaginations and emotions. Even if limited to a study of what is revealed in the Bible, it will not greatly enhance our spiritual life. Such a study will not tell us how to become and how to live as a Christian. In a similar manner we encounter demons in the New Testament and we consider them in that context as they are not found otherwise. The fact that some movies have been made depicting someone possessed, or that we read of someone casting out demons, does not mean it is real and worthy of belief.

Our concern today should be over the manner in which Satan *does* work in individuals and does far greater harm than the demons did to those who were possessed during the first century. There are many in this world whose lives are given to sin. It may be drugs, alcohol, crimes, immorality, and all manner of other sins. They have no interest in God. There are also those who live decent lives and are religious but not according to the law of Christ, or those who are Christians but fall

short of the Lord's expectations. They do not have a demon as those did in the New Testament days, but they are under the influence of Satan. Some of them are doing the work of Satan to the best of their ability as though he is directing their every thought and act while others are deluded into thinking that they are faithful servants of God. This should be our greatest concern.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version is used unless otherwise noted.

² *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, (2002), s.v. "Demon"; *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. Revised ed. 1993; *The Interlinear Bible Greek/English*, Vol. 1V, New Testament, Mark 9:21, s.v. "child", Acts 16:16-18, s.v. "damsel"; *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

³ *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell, ed. *The Pulpit Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), Acts 16:16-18.

⁷ *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (1976), s.v. "lunatic."

SATAN, AN ANGEL OF LIGHT

Burt Jones



Burt Jones is a native of Gadsden, Alabama. He has a daughter, two sons, and four grandchildren. Jones holds a B.S. degree in Music Education from Jacksonville University and an M.A. degree in Middle Eastern History from Youngstown State University. He is also a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. Jones now lives in Diamond, Ohio and does mission work nationwide, conducting singing schools, and seminars on Islam. He is composer of the hymn, "Safe In His Arms."

INTRODUCTION¹

Why is it that when something occurs, which appears to us to be of the supernatural order, it nearly always comes to be attributed to the Lord? Satan is specifically singled out by the Spirit as being equal to the task of deceiving by means of "signs and wonders." Paul, an apostle directly inspired by the Holy Spirit and one having an abundant measure of the supernatural power of the Spirit (2 Cor. 12:1ff), warned: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

If Satan is bent on deceit, and surely is its master, why should we fail to acknowledge this, for his is doing precisely what the Word of God says he will do, and for the specified purpose—that of deceiving those who dwell on the earth? Further, if the "sign" or "wonder" did not appear to be from God, how then would it serve its satanic end? We cannot know whether or not a thing is from the Lord unless we resort to the *Word* of the Lord, and by this Word all "spirits" and "teachings" are to be tested (1 Jn. 4:1).

THE SALACIOUS SLANT OF SATAN

Satan comes disguised as an "angel of light!" He is many things, but he is certainly no fool in this regard. He knows better than to reveal his true identity. During World War II, German troops donned the uniforms of dead American soldiers, infiltrated their lines and de-

stroyed from within. Our enemies did this in Korea and Vietnam—and, they are doing it today in the Middle East. Con men do not approach you dressed as a construction worker if their “con” involves them in their role as a stockbroker or real estate executive. If Satan can use his powers to turn men from the truth; if he can infiltrate their thought processes, then he can destroy from within. The Word of God reads as it has always read. Everything else is chaff compared to the wheat (Jer. 23:28). Satan will do all in his cunning and deceptive power to make men think that things are not as they are, that they are saved when they are lost, and will transform himself into an angel of light to serve his purposes (2 Cor. 11:14).

Another slant of Satan is the tactic of “divide and conquer.” Satan always has transformed himself into this angel of light and he relentlessly always will do so in an attempt to move you away from family, from brothers and sisters in Christ, and from integrity and honor. He will do anything in his sordid power to convince you to break away.

A true “angel of light” in *the context of this lesson* obviously refers to anyone, any group or any situation that would cause you to act on something which is not Christian. The fact is, the capacity for every type of sin resides in each of us. We may not have done it, but chances are, we have thought about it! Please remember that whenever your weaker nature seems to be rising to the forefront that the great deceiver must TRANSFORM himself into that which will tarnish us and diminish our Christian character. But, our Lord Jesus Christ HAS NO NEED TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF. He is already there! He is in the position sought by Satan and his disciples.

THE SUBTLE DECEIVER

Most of us have mustered enough determination to win a round or two in our fight with the devil. However, Jesus warns: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none” (Lk. 11:24). The evil spirit of the devil is the depraved and opposite twin of the Holy Spirit of God. Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. By his very nature, he is *also* able to indwell human beings. He cannot be satisfied simply walking “about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The blackest deed of all was done because “Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve” (Lk. 22:3, NKJV). Saint, Bible class teacher, elder, deacon, preacher, atheist, agnostic—Satan is no respecter

of persons. Brethren, “it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:15).

THE HOUSE OF SATAN

So, where does the sordid prince of this world dwell? Remember, the superstition of 2007 is that Satan hangs out in bad places and gets only bad people. That is not true. Bars, Chat Rooms, My Space, overnight get-togethers at a friend’s house for a mixed-couple-frolic when the parents are away—all these provide a good atmosphere for Satan’s shindig. Yet, when it comes to a place of comfort and rest—not a place simply to visit, but a place to call home—nothing will prevent this shameless transformer from heading directly to an inviting human heart.²

THE PERSISTENCE OF EVIL

The devil can be discouraged, the devil can be driven out, the devil can be overcome—but the devil cannot be destroyed. He is always lurking about, looking for the opportunity to make a counterattack and regain lost ground. What better way to do this than to have these devilish angels turn the most faithful child of God from his appointed way. Now, he may think that he is serving God. He may be deluded into being deceived just as Eve when Satan appeared to her and caused an eternal paradise on earth to be taken away.

Do you ever consider what technique Satan is using on you at this very moment? We, as members of the church of Christ, are never more vulnerable than when we forget about Satan, supposing him to be permanently vanquished. After all, you had resisted him and he was supposed to flee (Jas. 4:7), but no one told you he would be back bright and early during the next temptation. Remember the first encounter Christ had with Satan. About it, Luke reports: “And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him *for a season*” (Lk. 4:13, emphasis added). The earthly temptations of Christ were not condensed into a forty day trial in the wilderness. Neither will yours be. It only takes an instant for this devilish transformation into that angel of light to occur.

Peter had been constantly with Christ for months, but on the night of the last supper the Lord warned: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Lk. 22:31). Within a few hours the Seducer had taken up lodging again in the heart of this

strong and rugged fisherman. As the prince of the world he has tremendous powers to know your heart, your strengths, your weaknesses. He is aware of your moments of vulnerability, your complexes and eccentricities. If you have overcome the sensualism of youth, he will smoothly transform and snarl you in the materialism of middle age. If you have cleansed yourself of vile sins of the flesh, he will fill you with contempt for those people yet contaminated. If you have obeyed the Gospel, Satan, in a bizarre way, will inflate you with pride at this achievement. Christ warned that Satan can “shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt. 24:24).

No, Satan has not forgotten you merely because you once renounced him in favor of the reign of Christ. So, how long has it been since you prayerfully contemplated the technique this persistent evil is using on you now? He thinks about you all day long. What a colossal advantage you give up when you never seriously consider the devil.³

I am presently preparing a lesson for the great Schertz Lectureship on Jeremiah. He was called to service during the saddest hour of sin and shame of Israel. God gave him a twofold commission: “to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10, ASV). The work of plucking, breaking, destroying, and overthrowing has its place. However, it is only a work of preparation. The only way to eliminate evil permanently is to become absorbed in active dedication to God. Paul even gave us a Scriptural formula: “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

There is absolutely no other way to keep this bogus angel of light at bay. Only the abiding presence of our God—that I grow to love more with each passing day—can provide power to permanently withstand Satan. Jesus said: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mt. 5:6).

THE LAST STATE OF MAN

Jesus said that the last state of man becometh worse than the first. But we forget sometimes what that first state was. Perhaps, the most dangerous “angel” is the one most difficult to spot. I am speaking of the stealthy, stalking, night-walking burglars who utilize their newly transformed beings to prey on your heart and rob you of control just when you thought you had reached a comfortable cruising speed in your patient running of the Christian race. No, these are not black-

cloaked ghouls with hideous blood-curdling screams, which torture and terrorize you. They are much more terrifying than that. They are the minions of the prince of this world. After all, “it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:15). These devilish soul-stealers are seemingly kind, apparently loving, whispering flattering words and sweet promises. They are proverbial wolves in sheep’s clothing.

We have all known “angels” like this. They say what we want to hear with an innocence that belies their true intentions. These are coworkers in the Lord who outwardly praise us, then sabotage our efforts and take unearned credit. They are the so-called friends who encourage us to try the drug once—it could not hurt—and then obligingly sell it to us when we become addicted. They could even be Gospel preachers, elders or faithful stalwarts of the church of Christ, who lead you to believe they are acting in your best interest, when in fact they are not thinking of you at all, but of some selfish agenda known only to them.⁴

Recall the first angel of light? He was the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:1-5).

This subtle serpent knew exactly how to entice the first man and woman. He knew that he could twist and distort the truth of God—who simply wanted His creation to obey because He knew what was best for them. These angels of light are like clever actors delivering an award-winning performance. This enemy of Eden preyed on the weaknesses of Eve and Adam: their desire to be loved and valued, their desire to feel good in the moment without considering who their Lord had created them to be. Through my years of preaching, I have attempted to imagine what that hissing serpent tongue was whispering: “God

doesn't want you to eat that fruit because if you do, you'll be just like Him! Go ahead. It is the sweetest, juiciest fruit you'll ever taste!" Instead of clinging to God's unchanging hand and trusting Him, the first couple were blindsided and literally bit into the lies of Satan.⁵

Brethren, it is the same bite of "apple" we are taking when we listen to smooth talkers in 2007. They convince us to ignore the love of God and forget who we are. They beguile us with charm by telling us what we want to hear at that moment. It is the temptation these "messengers of light" use to cause us to think we are a very special human not constrained by the rules of other mortals.

CONCLUSION

Dear reader, you are to strive to be a child of God, never forgetting that, as His offspring, we are created a little lower than the angels (Ps. 8:4-5). He has given all of us a unique and privileged purpose as a Christian that belongs to no one who has not obeyed the hiring requirements. Do not be fooled into compromising your royal identity as a part of His Priesthood and your peculiar identity to street-smart angels of light with bright but poisonous apples up their sleeves.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² William S. Banowsky, *Great Preachers of Today* (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1967), 11-12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Memphis School of Preaching, Class Notes, 1988.

⁵ Ibid.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF SATANISM

Keith Mosher



Keith Mosher and his wife, the former Dorothy Cox, have three children and five grandchildren. Mosher, a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching, holds B.A., M.A., and M.Th. degrees from Southern Christian University and a D.M. degree from Harding Graduate School of Religion. He has worked with churches in Mississippi and Tennessee, and done mission work in several countries. Mosher is a full-time instructor and the Dean of Academics at the Memphis School of Preaching.

PREFACE¹

Having little pre-knowledge of the “Signs and Symbols of Satanism,” I approached this subject with no little apprehension. Most of what I write here was garnered from Internet sources. I have no way of knowing if those sources are incorrect. I discovered that *most* Satanist groups do not believe Satan actually exists, but is “seen as a mascot for personal liberty.”² “Satan is not viewed as a living entity, but as an ideal.”³ This type of Satanism is *philosophical*, not religious, and the “church of Satan” is of this type.⁴ Religious Satanism is less common.

Religious Satanism does involve a belief in Satan as deity, although not necessarily an evil or oppositional one. In fact, the majority view Satan as a Promethean or Gnostic deity—a liberator, or one who encourages mankind to rebel against its state of imprisonment. In many of these traditions the Biblical Yahweh (God, K.M.) is seen as an evil tyrant, an oppressive and cruel deity—which correlates with similar Gnostic beliefs ... Religious Satanists do not make sacrifices or practice “black magic.”⁵

Some disaffected members of society also dabble in Satanic practices, but have no tie with the church of Satan. With the latter three groups in mind, this study of the “signs and symbols” of Satanism is begun.

INTRODUCTION

Koch wrote:

The devil is a many-sided and versatile demagogue. To the psychologist he says, “I will give you new knowledge and

understanding.” To the occultist he will say, “I will give you the keys to the last secrets of creation.” He confronts the religionist and the moralist with a mask of integrity and promises them the very help of heaven. And finally to the rationalist and the liberalist he says, “I am not there. I do not even exist.”

The devil is a skillful strategist. He is the master of every tactic of the battlefield. He befogs the front. He hides behind a camouflage of empty religious talk. He operates through the use of the latest scientific method. He successfully fires and launches his arguments on the social and humane plane. And his sole aim is to deceive, to entice, and to ensnare his victims.⁶

Satan is the great liar (Jn. 8:44). He is so good at his task that some, who claim Satanism, deny his existence while others seem to be obsessed with him. Others, in this lecture series, will write about him in much detail, but the effort here is to explain five things.

1. That myriad symbols have emerged over the years “representing” Satan.
2. That the Bible sets forth no signs nor symbols for Christianity.
3. What are the symbols of Satanism?
4. That there is *no* “power” nor “magic” in such symbols.
5. That there are dangers in such symbolisms to those who use them.

Satan, “the god of this world,” would hide the Gospel from the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:3-4). He is the great slanderer or accuser (Rev. 12:10). He is the enemy and tempter of the righteous (Mt. 4:3). He is the “lord of death” and the “god of flies;” he is the evil one who “rules” in this world (Heb. 2:14; Mk. 3:22-23; Jn. 14:30). This “son of Belial” (1 Sam. 25:17) has ways of keeping himself in the public’s eye (2 Cor. 6:15).

THE “EMERGING” SYMBOLISM

Satanism has its roots in gnosticism which doctrine saw the world as profoundly evil, and the symbols of Satanism have emerged from man’s ideas about “mystical” life after death.

There is music in the world of the supernatural, from primitive drumming and dancing to the splendors of Masses and Requiems. There is art, from the cave paintings and the lumpy, obese

“Venuses” of prehistoric men through the works of Blake, a Bosch, a Botticelli, to the nightmare drawings of Austin Spare and the paintings of modern surrealists. There is a treasure of symbolism, from the rich religious and magical ideas associated with numbers, letters, architecture, the moon and the sun, to the myths and folk beliefs connected with the house or the dog or the cat, the wren, or the raven, the salmon or the spider.⁷

It is essential, here, that the relationship between “magic” (the employing of hitherto unknown forces in nature)⁸ and Satanism is recognized. Ritual magicians (occult) claim knowledge of secrets too “dangerous for the modern herd.”⁹ However, modern superstitions and magical ritual also have their origins in gnostic beliefs.¹⁰

The powerful Gnostic strain in Western magic, which Levi and Crowley did much to resuscitate, values as the paths to the truth behind the outward appearance of things, not reason, but insight, intuition, imagination, inspiration. You cannot find the one great underlying reality by thinking about it. ‘Magic,’ Paracelsus said, ‘has power to experience and fathom things which are inaccessible to human reason. For magic is a great secret wisdom, just as reason is a great public folly.’¹¹

Since the Gnostics held that all of the material world is “evil,” it follows that any part of the created universe, including man’s body, could become a symbol. How ludicrous such symbols are is here illustrated by the sneeze and a nursery rhyme. Note the following:

In the supernatural sense, sneezing has always had a twofold aspect: there are good sneezes and there are bad. The sneeze can represent the spirit of life, as in the case of the image of clay animated by Prometheus with fire stolen from the sun, which gave proof of its vitality with a sudden sneeze, or it can represent, as it did in Aristotle’s time, the first sign of recovery in a patient who was thought to be dying. In later European folklore, a sick person who sneezed could look forward to a restoration of full health, and even today in Yorkshire regular sneezers are supposed to enjoy long life. A 17th-century writer observed that ‘sneezing ... is profitable to parturient women in lethargies, apoplexies and catalepsies.’

In its more sinister aspects, however, the sneeze provided clear evidence of some forthcoming tragedy: it was in fact an omen of death since it symbolized the expulsion of the breath of life from

the body. According to an American superstition, sneezing at a meal is a sign of a death in the family.¹²

The nursery rhyme, “Ring Around the Rosy,” is to the magical arts practitioner, a “reference to the Great Plague: ‘Atishoo, atishoo, we all fall down’ refers to the sneeze; the fatal symptom of the plague, preceding death.”¹³

So obvious is the connection between the “evil” material world and occult Satanism that one of the leading symbols, the *pentagram* is the “weapon of power in magic.”¹⁴ Note this:

The star with five points is traditionally a weapon of power in magic. Its symbolism is based on that of the number 5, which stands, among other things, for the living world of Nature, the four elements and the quintessence or the four directions and the center; for the senses and the union of the sexes; for man as microcosm, man as the ruler of Nature, as the miniature image and potential master of all things.

The pentagram with one of its points projecting upwards can be imagined as a man’s body with arms and legs extended, and is a symbol of the dominance of the divine spirit (the one upward point) over matter (the other four points). A reversed pentagram, with two points projecting upwards, is a symbol of evil and attracts sinister forces because it overturns the proper order of things and demonstrates the triumph of matter over spirit. The two upper points suggest the horns of the Devil. ‘It is the goat of lust attacking the heavens with its horns,’ said Eliphas Levi.¹⁵

McMillon, in noting the connection between gnosticism, the magical arts (even dating to early man) and Satanism wrote:

In the early Christian centuries some of the philosophers asserted that the world was created by evil gods. This led to the worship of evil deities, which in turn prompted several heresies such as the Manicheans, Mandaeans and Gnostics. Among the Gnostics there were several major sects. The Ophite Gnostics rejected the God of the Old Testament and consequently glorified the serpent as the Illuminator of mankind. The Ophites believed that the fall in the garden of Eden was a step forward from ignorance to knowledge. They believed that this was of great benefit to mankind. This Gnostic sect was a mixture of Persian dualism, Egyptian and Greek mystery religions, Greek philosophy, and elements of Judaism. This mixture of beliefs was given a “Christian” baptism thus becoming a serious threat to Christian

faith. While all Gnostic sects stressed salvation through secret knowledge, the Ophites believed that this knowledge derived from Satan or the serpent in the garden of Eden.¹⁶

Traditions related to Satanism further developed in the Middle Ages and the “Black Mass,” itself, can be traced to a rebellion against Catholicism.¹⁷ To give an exact date for the emergence of some symbols is not historically feasible. Marlowe’s “Faustus” (ca. 1600), French Kings (ca. 1560 held Black Masses) and a host of others have “pictured” Satan. McMillon notes:

As late as 1900, the Frenchman Eliphas Levi, drew a picture of the demon Baphomet (a corruption of the name Mohammed). The demonic picture possessed the head and horns of a goat, wings, tail, hoofs and the body of a man. A torch burning on top of the head symbolized the wisdom of the evil creature. This picture of the devil provided the basis of much of a pictorial portrayal of Satan that exists even today.¹⁸

SYMBOLS AND SIGNS ARE NOT BIBLICAL

As Conley put it: “The Bible, from beginning to end, forbids the practice of the occult arts.”¹⁹ However, man seems always to want to know “secret” things, but those things belong to God (Gen. 3:4-6; Deut. 29:29). In fact, God has condemned sorcery, fortune-telling, wizardry, and a host of other profane activities (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26-31; 20:6). Moses commanded the Israelites:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do (Deut. 18:9-14).

The context of Deuteronomy 18 deals with Moses’ description of a settled Canaan where a godly king might reign and *true* prophets would deliver revelation (Deut. 18:15-22). So, there is a warning

against “augury,” “soothsaying,” and “witchcraft.” The magical acts (i.e., “Satanism”) were abominations of the nations having no place among God’s people. The idolatrous practice of burning children as an offering to the gods (cf. LaVey above); or augury (soothsaying, Num. 23:23); or magical acts of astrology, snake-charming, or “speaking” to the dead were *all* forbidden.

It is even the case that no similarity of God was to be constructed nor worshipped. “Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth” (Deut. 5:8). In Isaiah’s day, however, Israel sought wizards and necromancers because they had no dawn light of God’s Word in them (Isa. 8:20), and Jeremiah added: “Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers” (Jer. 27:9). It seems that Judah had turned to Satanism instead of the Mosaic code.

The New Testament of Jesus Christ also forbids satanic practices.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:14-15).

What about so-called “Christian” symbols and signs? There are about sixty such floating around, but no symbol is commanded in Holy Writ nor explained as an indicator of one’s faithfulness to God. All symbols merely originated in the traditions of men. One of the most known is the *fish*. Tradition says that the persecuted Christians of the first century used a fish-like symbol to identify themselves to the other faithful.²⁰

The Greek word for fish is *ichthus* and if one imagined a line drawn around the Greek word a likeness of a fish would appear. The “i” in Greek is the English “j.” The *ch* in Greek looks like the English X; the *th* is a theta (one letter that resembles a capital O with a horizontal line through it. The U is just that, as is the S. The letters, supposedly, stood for *Jesus Christ, God’s* (*Theos* is the Greek for “God”) *Son (uios), Savior*. If the symbol were just an identity ploy, such would be alright. But, many have venerated the symbol as well as a host of others including the cross itself.

The cross represents the essence of Christianity (1 Cor. 1:18). Even so, no verse mentions the “crucifix” nor describes some magical power in wearing one or kissing one or praying over one. (See the appendix for a list of many of the symbols adopted by apostate disciples.) In fact, treating the cross as “magic” cheapens its true meaning. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

SATANIC SYMBOLS²¹

The pentagram (a circle with a five-pointed star in the center) is basic to Satanism. A victim is tied securely to it and is beaten, but not so severely as never to recover. However, some have died from broken bones or from having their hearts pierced with the point of an inverted cross. If the pentagram is placed on the abdomen of a pregnant woman, the meaning is that the baby will be offered to Satan to insure the mother a better place in hell.

The “inverted cross” has nothing to do with Peter, as some imply, but has been a symbol of the magic arts since the seventh century. *All* such inverted crosses are symbolic of, or belong to, satanic worship. (Note there was an inverted cross on the chair used by Pope John Paul II.)

Amulets such as an inscription or picture of a goat’s head, star, horseshoe, tail of a fox, mandrake, root, lizard, fingernail, key, knot, scorpion, or magic words or phrases are worn on persons and said to have magical powers. Though not a symbol, occult-oriented persons believe in apparitions or appearance of disembodied or ghostlike forms. Mediums, by trickery, appear to speak like some deceased person.

A Black Mass is celebrated in honor of the devil. Such a mass is commonly celebrated during a witch’s Sabbath; traditionally conducted in the open air, usually at midnight, and the altar is the back or stomach

of a naked woman. This “mass” is intended to be the reverse of the Catholic practice.

Tarot cards or cartomancy (fortune-telling by cards) is a form of Satanism. Practitioners often call such, “card-laying.” The cards may be an ordinary deck or the specialized tarot deck. Interpretation is at the whim of the fortuneteller.

The “Mendes Goat” is a circle-enclosed pentagram with a goat’s head in the center symbolizing the so-called divine Baphomet or human devil-goat with wings and horns. This symbol is usually an indicator of satanic rituals, but often is worn by non-practitioners who, seemingly, are unaware of its evil meaning.

Two hand symbols that are too profane to describe show hands and fingers pointing up or a fist pointing down. These *mano-coinuto* or *mano-feco* are symbolic of rebellion against God.

The “Sigil of Lucifer” is a complicated, upside down triangle that trails into a “vee.” Along with the “sigil of sulfur,” these “sigils” are signs of the professed ability to change things or the future; to manipulate God. (There are twenty-eight other, lesser known symbols of magic and hermetic practices, but they are not germane to Satanism. Too, astrological signs number about forty-nine.)

In witchcraft practice, the pentagram or five-pointed star, represents the five elements—earth, air, water, fire, and spirit. The “Wiccan” pentagram faces upward to symbolize the triumph of spirit over matter; the Satanic pentagram is transposed, points downward, to symbolize earthly gratification, or the triumph of the individual over dissolution. A form of the star in a circle or with certain writing is used for ritual practices. What is scary about such rituals is some of the statements made as the symbols are waved about. The Black Mass uses the following:

Thou, thou who, in my capacity of Priest, I force, whether thou wilt or no, to descend into this host, to incarnate thyself into this bread Jesus, artisan of hoaxes, bandit of homages, robber of affection—hear ... O lasting foulness of Bethlehem, we would have thee confess thy impudent cheats, thy inexplicable crimes! We would drive deeper the nails into thy hands, press down the crown of thorns upon thy brow, and bring blood from the dry wounds.²²

Such blasphemy is as bad as that committed by the first century Pharisees who accused Jesus of using satanic power to drive out demons (Mt. 12:22-37).

Perhaps it would be good, also, to mention here the “talismans” of Satanism. “Talisman” is an Arabic word meaning “magnet” or “power” and is an object believed to have magical powers. A rock, crystal, piece of metal, a doll, a piece of cloth, a ring, a bracelet, a chain, a coin and other “charms” are thought to bring good luck to the wearer. (The astrological charms honor Satan and those who trust in horoscopes also give homage to the Adversary.)

Characteristic of magic or satanic rituals is the use of God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit in the incantations. Such is incredulous, but nevertheless true. The following is from a transcendental, magic ritual.

Enlighten mine eyes with true light, that they may never be closed in eternal sleep, lest mine enemy should say: I have prevailed over him. So long as the Lord is with me, I will not fear for malice of my enemies. O most sweet Jesus, preserve me, aid me, save me; at the Name of Jesus let every knee bow, in heaven, on earth and in hell, and let every tongue confess openly that Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, Amen. I know beyond doubt that in what day soever I shall call upon the Lord, in the same hour shall I be saved. O most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the great living God, Thou has performed most mighty miracles by the sole power of Thy most precious Name, and has enriched the poor most abundantly, so that by force thereof the demons flee away, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk erect, the dumb speak, the lepers are cleansed, the sick cured, the dead raised up; for wheresoever the most sweet Name of Jesus is pronounced, the year is ravished and the mouth is filled with pleasant savor; at that one utterance, I repeat, the demons take flight, every knee is bent, all temptations, even the worst, are scattered, all infirmities are healed, all disputes and conflicts between the world, the flesh and the Devil are ended, and the soul is filled with every heavenly delight; for whosoever invoceth or shall invoke this Holy Name of God is and shall be saved—even by this Holy Name, pronounced by the angel even before His conception in the womb of the Holy Virgin.²³

Did not the apostle Paul warn that the devil can appear as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14)? One should not be fooled by the above for it is blasphemous.

NO “MAGIC” IN SUCH

To think that there is any power or “magic” in any symbol is mere superstition. The occult stands in opposition to Biblical Christianity for Satanism and magic attempt to manipulate or control God. Unger wrote that the Satanist “prostitutes God’s holy name for an unworthy purpose. God is not a handy man who obeys the magic charmer commands.”²⁴ Unger noted: “The early Christians were quite aware of the magical arts which practices were forsaken and the symbols burned thus making those disciples realize that *no* power of any kind resided in such nonsense.”²⁵

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 19:19-20).

Conley wrote:

It is my conviction that the supernatural claims of occultism are just as reliable as the supernatural claims of pentecostalism—much thunder, but no lightning. I believe both are described in the Bible. “Whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they might believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:9-12).²⁶

Satanism has the appearance of a religion or spirituality, but in essence is walking by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). “The occult is sight-centered; it is physical, sensual, and feeling oriented.”²⁷

DANGERS TO CHRISTIANS

Conley wrote: “The revival of the occult is the direct outgrowth of the spirit of our age.” Since many today deny that the Bible is the Word of God and that Satan, though “honored” does not even exist, it is the case that superstition has replaced true Christianity. Conley added:

Beginning with the philosopher Hegel, modern man has retreated from reason into nihilism (i.e., the conviction that life and the universe are completely without meaning). Or, he has retreated into mysticism on the other—a mysticism that says although

reason teaches us that life is meaningless, and there is nothing but chaos in the universe, we are going to believe in some kind of order and meaning anyway. We thus have not only a retreat from rationality and reality as well.

This retreat takes various forms. In philosophy, it finds expression in existentialism. In art, it finds expression in the chaos and formlessness of “modern” art. In music, it becomes the dissonance and noise of what is called “modern” music. In the general culture, it finds expression in the squalor of modern books and movies. In morality, it becomes the “do your own thing.” In religion, it spawns neo-pentecostalism and renewed interest in Eastern mystic religions. And on the lunatic fringe, it has found refuge in the occult. In the world of the occult, one does not have to deal with reality or come to terms with oneself.²⁸

Since one must “deal with oneself” or repent in order to be a Christian and to remain faithful, Satanism is not even a remote option for the disciple of Christ (2 Cor. 13:5; 7:10). Satanism is worldliness gone to seed!

The Internet source “altreligion” has the following.

Myths, fears, and outright paranoid ideas abound in regards to Satanism. A form of hysteria known most commonly as “Satanic panic” blossomed in the eighties with allegations of a sweeping, organized, and pervasive Satanic cult responsible for everything from the disappearance of children to the popularity of soy foods. After several sweeping arrests of supposedly Satanic child care workers accused of sexually abusing children en masse, reports of adult victims ‘recovering’ memories, the panic eventually trailed off. In-depth studies on “recovered” memories discovered that they were largely a result of dubious therapeutic techniques, and an official FBI report on Satanic Ritual abuse concluded that not only did the widespread Satanic conspiracy not exist, but that religious abuse of children was most likely to be committed by Christians. Of course, the occasional report of the mentally deranged committing murder in the name of Satan does still occasionally make the news, but these are largely eclipsed by reports of abuse and murder committed by members of more mainstream religions.²⁹

Thus, to begin to believe that there is some magical “power” in any occult practice is to give in to worldly panic, and false sources for evil practices. Sin originates in human lust not in Satan.

Satanism represents indulgence (cf. Gal. 5:19-21) and, Satanists accuse “Christendom” of self-deceit, irresponsibility, and argue that they are “the best friends the church ever had, for they have kept it in business all these years.”³⁰

The occult or Satanism is practiced by a large number, the total of which is not known. But, the danger here is that these superstitions fascinate people and wearing the amulets and charms arouses the curiosity of the young. Many Christians, who are ignorant of the hazards, are often involved. ESP, astrology, and the other mind-games are tools Satan uses to deceive the very hearts of many (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3).

Another danger arising from Satanic involvement is best expressed by Koch:

For it is an empirical fact of pastoral care that where white and black magic are practiced, there we have psychic disturbances in the family. This rule may have exception, although I have met with no exceptions where there were active occultists.³¹

Depression and moral inhibition are also seen in those who are occultists.³² In fact, *fear* in general is characteristic of Satanists and those who involve themselves in such rituals.³³

Satanism, clearly, leads one away from Christ and can be as simple as reading Jean Dixon’s fantasies about the future or acceptance of witchcraft, drugs, and human sacrifice. Koch adds:

In spite of arguments to the contrary counseling confirms that fact that when a Christian gets involved in any form of spiritistic activity his spiritual life can be seriously affected. This is not true for the Buddhist or the Moslem or the followers of other religions like this. These religions are not impaired by spiritism. But spiritism does immunize people against the workings of God ... We must be clear in our minds about the distinction here. A person’s religious life is harmed by occultism or spiritism. Indeed spiritism itself is to a large extent a ‘religious’ movement. The devil does not take away our ‘religiousness,’ his real desire is to sever us from Christ and to prevent us from following Him.³⁴

CONCLUSION

Satanism is either philosophical and denies any reality of the supernatural or it is religious or some folks just dabble in it. The signs and symbols may seem innocent, but in reality are dangerous in that

they bespeak of a worldly mindset. There is *no* power in any of the amulets, but there is clear spiritual and psychological danger in one's involvement. Christians must flee from and resist such.

APPENDIX: RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

The four-point star or "Star of Bethlehem" is usually styled to resemble a cross and supposedly represents Jesus' birth. It is usually used for church decoration during Christmas. There is also a five-pointed star or "Epiphany" star used as is the four-point. The six-pointed star is the "Star of the Creator" each point standing for the days of creation. (This is, in Judaism, the "Star of David.") The eight-point star represents redemption since Jesus was circumcised the eighth day. The nine-point star symbolizes the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23, and the twelve-point star represents either the twelve Jewish tribes or the twelfth day of Christmas or "Epiphany"—Catholicism's celebration of Jesus' manifestation as the Christ.

Alpha and Omega (Greek capital letters) often combined with the Greek term for cross, are symbolic of Jesus' eternity. These symbols were found in the Roman catacombs (cf. Rev. 1:8).

Agnus Dei (lamb of God) is a symbol, if standing with a banner, which represents a risen Christ; if standing with a gash on its side or with a cross, the symbol represents the passion of Christ; if seated on a throne or book, the symbol represents the judgment seat of Christ.

The anchor, found in the catacombs, represents hope. It is often combined with nautical symbols such as the fish, dolphin, and boat.

An aureole or halo (although an aureole envelopes the whole body) signifies that one is more holy than another, and the butterfly is a symbol of the resurrection while the chalice or cup represents the Lord's supper.

Several types of crosses have emerged. The Greek and Latin (HIS) and the Chi-Rho (looks like a P standing in an X) are known along with the traditional "t" shape.

The eagle has become a symbol of Christ's ascension and if the eagle has a halo it represents John the Baptist because of his "soaring" style.

The "eye of God" is an equilateral triangle (see a one-dollar bill) with rays emanating symbolizing the omnipresence and omniscience of God. The triangle represents the Trinity.

The peacock, whom the ancients believed had flesh that would not decay, came to represent immortality, but the pelican whom folklore said fed her young in times of famine with blood from her own chest, came to represent Christ's sacrifice.

The pomegranate, with its abundance of seeds symbolizes either the many believers or royalty or hope. One can choose here.

The square is representative of the number four, such as the "four corners of the earth" or the four evangelists. (Christian number symbolism is too extensive for this essay. One can find such on the Internet at Christian Number Symbolism. There are also color symbols. See the Internet for these.)

Perhaps the most intriguing symbol of professed but superstitious religious folks is the Tau-shaped cross. The *Tau* (last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet) is identified with the end of the world and is believed to be the sign protecting the righteous against the devil. This symbol is also known as St. Anthony's cross.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² http://altreligion.about.com/library/fags/bl_satanism

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kurt Koch, *The Devil's Alphabet* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1971), 7.

⁷ *The Occult and the Supernatural* (New York, NY: Crescent Books, 1981), 14.

⁸ Credit is given to Aleister Crowley (1875-1974) as being the "father" of modern Satanism (see endnote one above). Crowley "never considered himself a Satanist, but his writings, *The Book of the Law* and *The Equinox* became the basis for modern Satanism. In 1920 he founded an 'Abbey of Thelma' in Cefalu, Sicily, considered Satanism, and desired to destroy Christianity" (Ibid.). Crowley's teaching was brought to America by a drug addict named Jack Parsons (Ibid.). Crowley's son died during a mysterious ritual at which only he and his

father were present (Ibid.). “Afterward, Crowley became a babbling incoherent, idiot. A Black Mass was said at his funeral” (Ibid.).

⁹ “Uncanny Power,” in *Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition* (New York, NY: Crescent Books, 1981), 11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 36. This encyclopedia is a good source for studying the symbols and the differences between white and black “magic.”

¹⁵ Ibid., 239.

¹⁶ Lyman A. McMillon, *Doctrines of Demons: A Christian Response to the Occult* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1975), 47-48.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47-51.

¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹ Darrell Conley, *The Gospel Versus Occultism* (Montgomery: Apologetics Press, 1997), 9.

²⁰ <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/symbols>

²¹ <http://www.Trosch.org/MSN/help-satanic-symbol>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1971), 136.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Conley, 22.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Conley, 17.

²⁹ http://altreligion.abolut.com/library/fags/bl_satanism.htm 1

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kurt Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1968), 31.

³² Ibid., 12.

³³ Kent Philpott, *A Manual of Demonology and the Occult*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973),141.

³⁴ Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 124.

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH FROM WITHOUT

Michael Light



Michael Light is a native Texan. He and his wife Carrie have four children. Light was educated at Texas State University and holds B.A. and M.A. degrees. He graduated from the Southwest School of Biblical Studies in Austin, Texas. Light has worked with the congregation in Bangs, Texas for the past twelve years. He directs two camp sessions in Cisco, Texas each summer. Light is a founding editor of *Seek Ye First*, a quarterly publication. He has done mission work in England, Russia, Tobago, and Jamaica.

INTRODUCTION¹

Everyone prefers to have everything smooth and easy at all times, but that is not the way life is. The Bible repeatedly teaches us of the benefits of trials and persecutions. David states: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). To succeed in the Lord, we must learn to summon up our courage in the face of difficulties.

Persecutions will come, but the Lord will help us to overcome if we will lean on Him. Paul exhorted: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). God expects us to stay faithful in good times and bad.

We need to know and appreciate the fact that “positives” can come through the fires of trial, persecutions in particular. While we do not enjoy persecution, we should reflect upon James’ statement: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (Jas. 1:2). With God’s support, we can bear up under persecutions. Philippians 4:13 reminds us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

SATAN USED THE JEWS TO PERSECUTE THE CHURCH

In the first century, Satan used the Jews to mightily persecute the church. The Jews’ attacks on the church were just an extension of the

persecution they had leveled against Jesus during His earthly ministry. Even though the persecutions Christ had to endure culminated in His crucifixion, Galatians 4:4 states, “But when the *fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (emphasis added).

All the ingredients were in place for the plan of God to work perfectly. Paul said:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5).

The Jewish sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Essenes, Zealots, etc.) were exactly right for their environment. When Christ arrived on the scene, the religious setting was a tinder box. From the beginning of His personal ministry, the Jews were like a pack of dogs nipping at the Lord’s heels. Their various attempts to thwart His work (all of which failed) came to a head with His crucifixion (Mt. 27; Mk. 15; Lk. 23; Jn. 19).

Once the Lord was gone, the heat of Jewish persecution was turned to His followers. While the church initially had great success and relative peace, it was short lived. By Acts 4, things were changing. The Sadducees were grieved because the apostles were teaching that Jesus had been resurrected. They had Peter and John arrested (vv. 3-5).

Being arrested in no way retarded the work of Peter or John. In fact, it emboldened them. With great courage they affirmed the fact of the Lord’s resurrection. In his record of what transpired between the Jewish authorities and the two apostles, Luke says: “Now when they saw *the boldness of Peter and John*, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, emphasis added). Due to the success the Gospel was enjoying, the leaders of the Jews were very concerned. They threatened Peter and John and told them not to teach the Gospel anymore—but they did.

As tension grew and the conflict became increasingly serious, the boldness of Christ’s disciples became even greater. The stronger the apostles stood, the more men were drawn to the church (Acts 4:21). The news of their boldness quickly spread and it energized the masses.

Their courage emboldened many others to turn to Christ. Acts 4:32 reports: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

In Acts 5, the persecution and threats intensified. Stephen's persecution and martyrdom by stoning are described in Acts 6-7. It might be expected that the brutal murder of a promising young disciple would crush the spirit of the fledgling church. However, that was not the case. Actually, his stoning was inspiring and motivating to many. Seeing a man stand up for what he believes is always encouraging. When a man stands up for and believes in what is right, it can be revolutionary. Note that Acts 8:1-4 records:

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Even though the fiery young Stephen was dead, the church was alive and well. While Saul raged against The Way, the Lord's army was growing stronger by the day. The brethren lamented the loss of such a fine young man, but they still carried out their duty to the Lord. It appears that his death spurred lesser men to greater action. Though Paul succeeded in scattering the church, he failed to slow its growth. Indeed he actually expedited greater growth.

SATAN ALSO USED GENTILES TO ATTACK THE CHURCH

While the Jews brought the charges, false though they were, it was the Romans who actually drove the nails and crucified the Lord. From Acts 13 and the following chapters, we see a pattern in the work of the apostle Paul. He would arrive in a Gentile city, preach, have some success, then the crowds would be stirred up (usually by the Jews) and then he would have to move on to the next town. Typically, the persecutions Paul had to endure—and the necessity they created for him to move from one Gentile area to another—helped in the growth and expansion of the church.

The fickleness of some men can be seen in Acts 14. In Lystra, Paul healed a man and as a result the population of the city celebrated Paul and his entourage of coworkers as gods. When Paul and Barnabas corrected the people's misconceptions, their praise turned to persecution. The crowd determined to kill them, and they did stone Paul. Being persecuted, Paul moved on and we witness the continued growth of the church as a direct result.

There are numerous other Bible examples of the church being persecuted by Jews and Gentiles alike. Both groups also caused the church problems with their erroneous doctrines and their influences. Quite a number of the Jewish brethren seemed to want to "carry over" their Jewish laws and customs into the Christian system. As the years of the first century went by, many of the Jewish converts sought to be teachers, but they were teaching a "Judaized" doctrine which was creating more problems for the church. By the time Paul penned Galatians, the Judaizing teachers were bewitching many brethren, turning them from the faith. Sounding a warning rebuke, Paul charged:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Paul stood firmly opposed to those who were attempting to bind their Jewish traditions, as though they were the law of God, on the Gentile Christians. This reminds us of Jesus' words:

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Mt. 15:7-9).

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AT THE HANDS OF THE ROMANS

In Roman culture, religion and government were joined. Foreign religions were viewed with skepticism. The Romans were polytheists. They honored all gods. However, they were highly antagonistic toward monotheists because they considered them to be atheists. In the Roman

world, lies about Christians spread like wildfire. Members of the church were reported to be cannibals (a lie that grew from the observance of the Lord's Supper). Others lied and said that Christians practiced human sacrifice (a totally unfounded charge). They were also often labeled as rebels. This charge would bring the wrath of the Roman government down upon the church because Rome was always hypersensitive to the notion of rebellion.

Since Christians believed and taught that Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords, it was easy for the church's enemies to make the false charges of insurrection and insubordination against Christ's followers. Many did not understand or they refused to acknowledge the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. Of course, Christians then had, as Christians now have, the obligation to submit to the laws of earthly governments (Rom. 13). Because of what the Bible teaches, Christians should be the very best citizens in any government (as long as that government does not require them to violate the law of God). The brethren did refuse to worship the emperor. They would not say, "Caesar is God."

The "official" persecutions exercised by the Roman government did not begin until the latter half of the first century. For several years the Jews railed against the Lord's people. However, once Rome directed its wrath against the church, the persecutions were extremely violent. It should be noted that the persecutions varied from time to time, from place to place, and in degree. Persecutions would be intense in a given province, yet almost unknown in others. One emperor would seem to take great pleasure in trying to destroy the church, but others more or less ignored it.

CHRONOLOGY OF PERSECUTION

Today, Christians should know something about the leaders in the persecutions in which the Romans engaged. A few of them will be noted here.

Gaius (Caligula, A.D. 37-41) loved his sister and declared that she was a "goddess." Since she was a goddess, he then argued that made him a god. All official oaths had to include that "fact." The Jews opposed this. In retaliation, Gaius had an idol of himself put in every synagogue and a large image put in the temple. When he was murdered in A.D. 41, this was abandoned. Christians had peace during this time (cf. Acts 9:31).

When Claudius became emperor (A.D. 41), he gave the rule of Judea to Herod, who favored the Jews. Because Herod favored the Jews, he permitted them to persecute Christians without mercy. The Book of Acts traces some of the opposition to Christianity which arose due to the political landscape of the day. It might be recalled that Herod killed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2). Never has the church existed in a vacuum. Political movements have always affected the church. One of the reasons we should live a godly life is so that we can have a positive influence on the minds of those in our culture. The persecution of Christians spread from Judea to Rome.

Suetonius reported that Christians were being expelled from Rome due to an uproar caused by the Jews. It is somewhat odd to this writer that the Jews, who often rebelled against Rome (ultimately to their own destruction in A.D. 70), had the ear of the government. Yet, the loyal Christian subjects were abused due to the Jews' lies and manipulation. Of course, the more things change the more they stay the same. Today, the so-called "Christian right" is ridiculed, made fun of, lambasted and called every perverse name in the book. While in truth we are the best citizens in the land, the perverse, crooked, lying, honorless, characterless hordes are extolled for their tolerance and broad-mindedness.

By the time Nero came to power in A.D. 54, the church had grown to a considerable size, which was troublesome to her detractors. Riots led by Theudas (A.D. 44) and "the Egyptian" (Acts 21:38), were blamed on Christians. During this time Christians were referred to as rebels. While the doctrines and ideals of Christianity were fresh and different, they were not riotous.

James, the brother of Jesus, was taken and stoned during Nero's persecution of the church. Beginning on July 18, A.D. 64, a fire was started and burned in the city of Rome for nine days. When it was finally extinguished, the fire had burned over three-quarters of Rome. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire, but many in his day (and most ancient and modern Roman historians) lay the responsibility for the fire at Nero's feet. By the way, those blaming Nero for the fire had/have no particular love for Christians. Nero was evidently trying to acquire property in an older neighborhood, but the owners would not sell it to him. He thought a fire was a good way to clear them out, but the fire got out of control and burned a major part of Rome. To cover his tracks, Nero blamed the Christians and killed hundreds of them as punishment.

People's hatred for the Christians was inflamed and this caused the persecutions of them to become even more violent. It was about this time (A.D. 67 or 68) that Paul, who was in Rome, was beheaded. Paul's remarks in 2 Timothy about his impending martyrdom are especially stirring when we realize they were written in the shadow of the sword that would soon descend upon him.

Under the rule of Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) there is no record of persecution. When Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, according to Josephus, no Christians died. Those brethren gave heed to the warning of the Lord:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes (Mt. 24:15-18).

Domitian (A.D. 81-96) also declared himself to be a god. He banished the apostle John to the Isle of Patmos. Eusebius and Irenaeus agreed that Domitian was the beast John was designating with the number 666. Whether or not this was so, John certainly did include references to religious and legal persecutions in his writing.

Trajan (A.D. 98-117) made Christianity illegal and punishable by death. He and others sought to teach Christians a lesson because they rejected emperor deification and refused to worship him. The law making Christianity illegal was terrible, however, it was only sporadically enforced. It was abused too, because many falsely accused their neighbors of being Christians in order for them to be executed, then they could acquire the dead person's property.

Trajan was fairly benevolent in that he did not pursue Christians. Basically, he had a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. However, many Christians were martyred, including Ignatius.

Under Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), persecutions were not too severe. Antonius Pius, read some of the apologies and relaxed persecution efforts. Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180) considered Christians to be dangerous and did persecute them. Because of this, Justin and several other members of the church were beheaded in Rome. Polycarp and eleven other brethren were killed in Smyrna. Again, Christians (and some falsely accused of being Christians) were turned in so that their property could be acquired by others.

Emperor Severus (A.D. 193 -211) made conversion to Christianity against the law. In his excellent history of the church, entitled *The Eternal Kingdom*, F.W. Mattox tells the story of Perpetua and Felicity. Both were young women. Perpetua had an infant child. Her father and the local magistrate begged her to deny her membership in the church to spare her life. She declined and was condemned to the beast. Felicity was much with child when she was asked to renounce her faith. She refused to do so and she too met a martyrs death.

Decius (A.D. 249-251) had a plan to reveal the identity of all Christians and destroy them all. An annual sacrifice to the emperor was to be made. Christians would refuse to make such a sacrifice. Thus, by their refusal, they would identify themselves to be Christians. Valerian incorporated the same practice during his reign (A.D. 253-260). From A.D. 260-303, there was not much persecution and the church grew at an enormous rate.

When Diocletian came to power he began once again to exercise great control in Rome. Christians would not submit and they were very vocal about their objections (Eph. 5:11). In March A.D. 303, Diocletian made it illegal for Christians to assemble. All church buildings were destroyed and leaders in the congregations were imprisoned. All Christians were ordered to turn in their copies of the Scriptures so that they could be burned. In A.D. 304, Diocletian required all people to sacrifice to idols. Anyone who refused was killed. The prisons ran over. Labor camps were set up where Christians were worked to death.

Galerius came to power after the reign of Diocletian. He issued an Edict of Toleration. Christians were not to be persecuted as long as they did not oppose the peace of the empire. Persecutions were not totally ended until Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313. This edict granted religious toleration to all religions in the empire.

TODAY SATAN USES THE MEDIA, SKEPTICS, AND DENOMINATIONS

In times past, denominational preachers would challenge God's people to debate the various doctrines. Such is extremely rare in our day. This fact in no way means that the denominations are no longer warring against the truth. They play into the pluralistic multicultural ideals of our society. We are pressed on all sides to conform to the idea that there is no absolute truth and that any claim to an absolute standard is arrogant. The media bombards us daily (hourly) along the same lines.

The Lord still says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6). The Bible is our standard regardless of what everybody else in the whole world says. In 2 Peter 1:3, we read: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Also, let us not forget that the Lord declares: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48). Paul adds: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

CONCLUSION

Persecutions have been and can be beneficial to the cause of Christ. While they may not be pleasant, ironically persecutions do just the opposite of their intended purposes. Like the athlete's workout builds his physical muscles, the trials of life (persecutions included) help us to build spiritual muscle. James told us to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2). In the next verse, he reminds us that the trying of our faith gives us patience. Last, but not least, Paul gives us courage, saying: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

We, as the children of God, must trust Him in all areas of life. In the dark days of trial, we need to remind ourselves of the benefits persecutions can have. Furthermore, we must realize the personal benefits we can enjoy if we stay true to God. With His help, we can not only bear up in the days of trouble, we can grow and get stronger.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH FROM WITHIN

Greg Weston



Greg Weston, a native Oregonian, and his wife the former LaDon Lott, have three sons, and five grandchildren. Weston is a graduate of Preston Road School of Preaching and has a B.A. degree from Oklahoma Christian University. He also has an M.S. degree from Southern Oregon State College. Weston has worked with congregations in Oklahoma, Texas, and California. Since 1986 he has been with the Park Street congregation in Ashland, Oregon. He has done mission work in Albania.

INTRODUCTION¹

“Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world” (1 Pet 5:8-9). Satan is ferocious, but we can overcome him through faith. Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, so our faith is strengthened by a constant hearing of His Word. We can only claim victory through a faithful walk with God.

However, Satan expends great energy attacking the church from within. Judas was one of the twelve chosen by Jesus. His betrayal was an attack on our Lord from within His people. The parable of the tares serves as a warning from our Lord that not everyone in the body of Christ is a faithful child of God (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Even from among the pastors who were to feed and protect the flock, wolves would seek to destroy the faithful (Acts 20:29-30).

We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). Yet, Paul noted that Satan uses ‘flesh and blood’ in his service. “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor 11:13-15). Paul even named some who were troubling the church from within (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16-17). In our love of the

Lord and His body we must seek, as did Paul, the purity of the body of Christ in all things.

I have been given the task of documenting, both in the past and present, the attacks of Satan from within the church. This is a difficult task, and one which we all wish was not necessary. As there were attacks from within during the apostolic age, there have also been attacks in subsequent ages. But, a word of caution is necessary. While we must not bury our head in the sand and think that any person claiming a place in the body of Christ is true and faithful, neither do we need to suspect every person and expect to find a worker of Satan behind every tree and under every rock—nor in every seat of the congregation or every congregation in the city, county or state. We must remember the parable of the wheat and the tares. There are workers of Satan who are so difficult to discern from a true child of God that they will remain among us till the Lord and His angels make the final separation (Mt. 13:36-43). Diligence, knowledge, and a growing faith are required of all. While we must note those attacks from within, and fight against every appearance of evil, faithfulness to the Lord and love for the brethren must mark every child of God.

ATTACKS FROM WITHIN—THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The Lord, through the Holy Spirit, guided the apostles and prophets into “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25), which is God’s power to save and is able to make us “perfect in Christ” (Rom. 1:16; Col. 1:28). Despite this perfect law of Christ, problems were and are found in the church. It is not the will of God, but the failure of humanity to listen and live within His will, which causes the problems.

The early church was attacked from within by false teachers. There were some who preached another Gospel, which was not another but a perversion of the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). The Galatian brethren were binding the law of Moses upon the Christians. They failed to note that the law of Moses was designed to lead us to Christ, but when Christ came, the covenant of Moses was no longer binding (Gal. 3:23-27). The false teachers in Galatia were giving up their salvation, for Paul wrote, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal 5:4). This attempt to combine the covenant of Moses with the covenant of Christ was a problem throughout the apostolic age, and beyond.

The church also suffered attacks from within concerning the resurrection. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he reproved the Corinthians who said there was no resurrection (15:12). The entire fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians presses the point that Jesus was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures, and that we, too, will be raised from the dead. Paul reminded Timothy of another false teaching regarding the resurrection. He wrote of “Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim 2:17-18). It is hard to imagine that within a few years of the Lord’s resurrection some would deny a resurrection, and others would err in the time of the resurrection.

Another attack from within concerned the identity of Jesus. There were some in the church who denied that Jesus was the Christ, and that Jesus had come in the flesh. John specifically identified those brethren, about whom he says: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us” (1 Jn. 2:19). John’s sharp words concerning these false teachers demonstrated his attitude toward the attacks on the church which come from within. He judged these brethren unfaithful and declared, by inspiration, that they were not a part of the body of Christ.

Daily Christian living was under attack within the early church. Peter expressed that some false teachers were promoters of immorality, describing them as:

... having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing ... For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage (2 Pet 2:14, 18-19).

Paul saw Corinth’s moral problems. One man was living with his father’s wife and the church was not disciplining him (1 Cor. 5). Their moral dilemmas were compounded by the division among brethren (1 Cor. 1), brother suing brother in the civil courts (1 Cor. 6), and marital unrest (1 Cor. 7). Challenges were also addressed which concerned the Christian’s relationship with idols (1 Cor. 8, 10), abuses in the assembly which compromised the ability to partake properly of

the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11), and challenges within the church concerning the use of the spiritual gifts which were given to them (1 Cor. 12-14). Yes, Paul's first letter to Corinth revealed many problems within the church. However, in his second letter we find that they evidently heard him and corrected their problems. These corrections did not come without difficulty. Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians notes that the church was troubled by certain ones who did not accept Paul's authority. These, Paul said, were deceitful workers (2 Cor. 11:13).

Paul identified problems within the church and moved to correct them. This is the pattern for every generation. We must recognize troubles from within and correct all problems which arise. None are exempt from discipline in the body of Christ. Even elders who sin are to be reprov'd, but with great care (1 Tim. 5:17-21).

Much New Testament instruction is to correct problems within the church. We see positive lessons from these reproofs. There are specific attitudes and actions which are condemned, and others which are commended. In later generations every challenge laid before the church found, and finds, divine guidance in the New Testament. May we be wise enough to see error, and bold and loving enough to correct it. At times, correction may be laid at our own doorstep. Remember, "Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition any more" (Ecc. 4:13).

TROUBLES FROM WITHIN SELECT EXAMPLES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

The instructions of the New Testament are universal (1 Cor. 4:17), and no man was, or is, given the authority to change it. It is to be passed from generation to generation without change (2 Tim. 2:2). Therefore, it is God's standard for all of humanity in every generation. Identifying Satan's attack from within involves the task of comparing the teaching and practice in the church of any age to the truth of the New Testament. Any religious group claiming to be the church is immediately subject to this comparison. Furthermore, any religious group which does not match the Biblical pattern is not the church. If a group is not the church, then the blessings promised to and for the church are not their's regardless of their claim to the contrary.

Teachings On Jesus

As John focused the light of truth on false teachings about the nature of Jesus, we continue to evaluate the teachings of the church in

light of the inspired truths. The identity of God as well as the truth of Jesus was compromised by those claiming spiritual birthright from God. Gnosticism, more of a philosophy or concept than a specific group, denied Biblical truths about Jesus. Ireneaus (A.D. 120 - 202) identified several different gnostic divisions within the church, or claiming to be within the church. A basic teaching of gnosticism was that Jesus was not eternal, was not equal with God, but was a creation of, or was begotten by, God. They consider Jesus to be one of thirty aeons which emanated from one another.² Details vary from one group to another, but the denial of Jesus' true nature was common to all.

Very similar to this denial of the deity of Jesus, but with a different twist, are those who denied that Jesus came in the flesh. Some taught that He only had the appearance of being in flesh. Others said that Jesus was the man but Christ was an aeon who joined Jesus' physical body at his baptism but left before the crucifixion.³ This contradicts Paul's plain declaration: "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). While those false teachers made a separation between Jesus the man and Christ the aeon, Paul specifically stated that 'Christ' died and was raised.

Another false teaching about Christ's nature was Arianism. This doctrine, taught by a 'bishop' in the fourth century named Arius, taught that Jesus was begotten of God and was not co-existent with the Father. It was Arianism, in part, which caused the council of Nicea [A.D. 325] to be convened. And, it was there that Arianism was denied. This teaching fomented great disturbance in the church of the fourth century.⁴

Church Organization

The New Testament clearly defined the organization of the church. Jesus was, and is, the head of the body (Col. 1:18). Each congregation had elders which were appointed to oversee and feed the congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:28). These elders were also called "bishop" and "pastors," also known as overseers and shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-5). There was a plurality of bishops serving together in each congregation, and no man or group of individuals were superior to the local congregation and her elders.

Early in the second century Ignatius (A.D. 30-107) wrote letters which showed a change in this divine pattern. We do not know if he was accurately reflecting the practice of the majority of the churches or was promoting a change in organization.⁵ In his letter *To the Philadelphians*, he wrote: "There is one bishop, assisted by the presbytery and deacons."⁶ The separation of bishop and presbytery [eldership] is included in many of his letters. This change is also found in writings of other, yet later church writers. The Council of Antioch (A.D. 341) added to this change. It ordered that the bishop of the chief city of each province should have precedence over other bishops in the province. This led to the office of Metropolitan Bishops or Patriarchs, who were the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch of Syria and Jerusalem.⁷

The Patriarchs, or Metropolitan Bishops, were a step closer to the rise of the papacy and the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchy. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), Canon XXVIII, placed Constantinople in a near equal position to Rome.⁸ Satan was attacking the church, leading her away from divine truth into a humanly organized religion.

The Teaching And Practice Of Baptism

On the day of Pentecost, when those believing Jews asked what they should do they received a clear and direct response. "Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The New Testament points to baptism as the time when God forgives. One must first believe, repent of his or her sins, and confess Jesus as the Christ, but it is in baptism that the forgiveness of sins is granted (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10; Acts 22:16). Even so, like many other teachings, the truth on baptism was also compromised by some who led the church.

Tertullian (A.D. 145-220) pointed out error on baptism in his day. He charged: "The consequence is, that a viper of the Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism."⁹ His treatise on baptism began with the words: "Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free *and admitted* into eternal life!"¹⁰ In the first chapter of his treatise he warns of false doctrine, and also reminds them that at baptism sins are washed away and eternal life is received. His

treatise also gives details showing certain false practices in the church, but that forgiveness is given by God through baptism is emphasized as fact. Many of the false points on baptism today were also present in his day. Tertullian was firm however, and taught that baptism was necessary and was the moment when heaven's blessings were conferred upon the individual.

Baptism of the young was practiced in the time of Tertullian, but he spoke against the baptism of the young and encouraged it to be postponed till the one being baptized could ask for baptism.¹¹ Cyprian, however, objected to even a delay of eight days, and Augustine agreed with him on the baptism of infants.¹²

Every false teaching and practice in the church is an attack of Satan. These false teachings on baptism erected a wall between the sinner and salvation—a wall which should never be built!

The Addition Of Instruments Of Music In Worship

New Testament worship was different in many ways from Old Testament worship. While the use of instruments was commanded by the Lord in the Old Testament era (cf. 2 Chr. 29:25), the New Testament commands us to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It is a truth acknowledged by historians that the instrument was not used in the early church. While they may draw different and even errant conclusions for the reason instruments were not used, they agree that singing was the music of the early church.

The Greeks as well as the Jews were wont to use instruments as accompaniments in their sacred songs. Their converts to Christianity accordingly must have been familiar with this mode of singing; yet, it is generally believed that the primitive Christians failed to adopt the use of instrumental music in their religious worship ... Basil, indeed, expressly condemns it as ministering only to the depraved passions of men, and must have been led to this condemnation because some had gone astray and borrowed this practice from the heathens.¹³

The Catholic Encyclopedia agrees, saying: "For almost a thousand years Gregorian chant, without any instrumental or harmonic addition, was the only music used in connexion (sic) with the liturgy."¹⁴

These teachings, and numerous other additions and alterations to the teaching of the New Testament, brought cries of opposition through the years. These cries of opposition led to certain men being rejected by the "established church" and their rejection of the establishment, the

Roman Catholic Church. Those involved in this protesting “movement” started their own churches which often were very similar to the Roman Catholic Church, with changes made as deemed appropriate by each “reformer.” Then, in time, some became tired of these new changes and promoted a complete return to New Testament Christianity. This is the restoration movement, a move by many to return to the will of God completely.

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT AND ATTACKS FROM WITHIN

The American Restoration Movement was a monumental movement of godliness and courage. The desire of many to simply be Christian, as found in the New Testament, required courage to step away from family and national roots to enter the kingdom of Christ. Deeply held beliefs and long admired institutions had to be put away in favor of the simplicity of the inspired message. This movement brought unity under the sovereignty of God—at least for a time. It was not long, however, till many attacks were made upon this spiritual journey to Zion.

Organization Of The Church—Societies

As godly men and women were searching the Scriptures and leaving behind the marks of denominationalism and Catholicism they found the simple organization of New Testament Christianity. Elders were again overseeing and deacons were serving the congregations. The rejection of all organizations above the local congregation is illustrated in the “Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.” Congregational purity in organization was enjoyed, but it was soon challenged.

Earl I. West did a superb job of tracing the trend toward a new organization within the church of our Lord in America. There was strenuous opposition from the beginning proposals. Voices of respected preachers were raised on both sides of the issue. The American Missionary Society was born and division arose in this once harmonious body of Christ.¹⁵ Alexander Campbell said: “We are much pleased with the result, and regard it as a very happy pledge of good things to come,”¹⁶ and saw this as a “foundation laid, on which we may build a glorious superstructure.”¹⁷ But, Tobert Fanning later weighed in, describing his opposition to the society. He emphasized:

We regard the church of Christ as the only divinely authorized Bible, Missionary and Temperance Society on earth; and furthermore, we believe that it is in and by means of the church the world is to be converted, and Christians are to labor for the Lord ... In all the efforts to do the service of the Lord through human institutions, it has seemed to us that the church is degraded, and rendered indeed useless.¹⁸

Instrumental Music In Worship

Besides the addition of the missionary society in the work of the church, the instrument was added to the worship of the church. Although the question had been approached earlier, West noted that the first known use of the instrument among the churches of Christ in America was at Midway, Kentucky.¹⁹ The reason it was introduced was the inability of the congregation to sing. L.L. Pinkerton was the preacher, and he had no objection. However, an objection had already been written by Ben Franklin. From this time, there was a growing uneasiness in the churches of America. The instrument was pushed upon the church by some and ardently opposed by many others. The brotherhood of believers was again torn apart by another introduction into the church of an unauthorized practice.

Attitudes Toward Biblical Authority And The Colleges

The introduction of both the missionary society and the use of instrumental music in worship demonstrated the attitude of many toward religious authority. It is no surprise to see this attitude in other areas of the church and in the lives of her members.

A third example of this attitude was in Bacon College and her successor, Kentucky University. Bacon College died because of a poor choice as president. Without proper research a president was hired who did not share the same faith as the supporters of the school. The school lost support and was closed. Years later, on the same grounds, Kentucky University was founded. The early days were grand in both attendance and support. The state, however, was included in the establishment of this second college. In time, the college grew and no longer needed the financial support of the Christians who established it and troubles came. Division in the church and among brethren resulted. The institution of education supported by brethren was not faithful to the stewardship with which it was trusted.²⁰ This frustration in establishing a school to reflect the values and teachings of the church

has been repeated many times. Brother West's comment on Kentucky University is worthy of consideration. He said: "The churches of Christ have not yet outgrown the full effect of the troubles at Kentucky University nor are they likely to do so in this generation."²¹

ATTACKS FROM WITHIN—CURRENT PROBLEMS

Perhaps, there is a bit of irony to our concluding application. As soon as attacks from within are noted, those active in the attacks will view this as an attack on them. It is not my intention to cause any harm to the church of our Lord, but to call attention to a few current departures from the path God has given us in the New Testament—with the prayer and hope that it will help breach the gaps that now exist in a terribly splintered brotherhood. Some of the attacks which are noted may appear to be 'old news' to some, but they continue to attack the Lord's body. Consider, in these applications, the charge and counter-charge of Ahab and Elijah.

And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim (1 Kgs. 18:17-18).

Our first responsibility is to understand the Lord's instructions. Then, when we compare ourselves to the perfect pattern of God, we will know whether we are the troubled or the troubler. May we never be a troubler in the church! The troubler is the worker of Satan who does harm to the church purchased by the blood of Christ, whether intentional or not.

Instrumental Music

It was a sad day, yet not a surprising day, when the report was made public that the North Richland Hills church was adding a Saturday night service, with the Lord's supper, and the instrument of music in worship.²² Even those of us who have not followed their every step, but received information from time to time, knew that Rick Atchley has been at least sympathetic to those who use the instrument in worship. This action on their part is a bold step away from the authority of our Lord revealed in the New Testament. There is a grave concern that theirs is a step which many will follow. All, however, are urged to stay in the path God has given. Remember, we are to assemble on the first day of the week, not the seventh (Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor.

16:1-2). On that day we sing, pray, preach [or listen to preaching], give as we have prospered, and partake of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 14:15, 33ff; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). There is no divine authority for the instrument, but singing is commanded by the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Let us all be content with walking in the path given by our Lord. It is the perfect way!

Organization

It was puzzling to this preacher when it was reported that the Putnam Creek church placed herself under the elders of the Highland Oaks church. This 'congregation' assembles in different locations in different towns under a shared eldership, budget and vision.²³ This is nothing more than one eldership over two congregations. The next logical step would be for more to join in this arrangement, with several congregations answering to one eldership. And, what is to stop churches from all over the state of Texas, and beyond, from joining this arrangement? Divine inspiration condemned this action even before it started, but the authority of the New Testament has been put aside.

Carefully consider, too, what has been happening in some congregations for years. To accommodate size, or schedules of members, some congregations have multiple assembly times. Is it truly in the plan of God for a "congregation" to be divided into two, three, four or more different assembly times? Some of our younger men and women may not even think about this, for it has been the practice of many churches all their life. A practice over many years is often viewed by the younger as approved, even when they have not "proved" it by the will of God themselves. In the Scriptures, we find that the church assembled. Let us return to that pattern today. If the congregation is too large for the facilities, let the congregation enlarge their facilities or establish a new congregation in a different part of town so they can assemble as one. Who says we have to strive to be the largest single congregation in town? A similar correction should be applied to the division in the assembly for "children's worship." Where is the authority, in the Scriptures, to divide the assembly? Remember, our Bible classes are not the assembly, but for convenience are scheduled to precede or follow the assembly. Since they are not the assembly, they do not divide the assembly. The pattern of the New Testament is for the whole church to come together (1 Cor. 11:17, 20). To be physically separate is not a coming together, and many of the edifying

acts designed for our assembly cannot be done when it is divided. For example, how can you teach others in song when they are not with you (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It is profitable to check ourselves by the divine pattern to correct ourselves.

The Work Of The Church

There are more recent changes, or at least a greater proliferation of changes, in how the work of the church is done. Para-church organizations are popping up all over the place. Is it not good enough simply to work through the local congregation? Why do preachers incorporate and have “ministries” rather than simply preach the Gospel like Paul? And why are “relief” organizations springing up, and have sprung up, to do the work the church is called upon to do. When we look at 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 we do not see this type of organizing. The apostle collected funds from varied congregations to take to the church in Jerusalem for the needy saints of that region. Have we lost the desire to simply work as the church? When we look at the pages of the New Testament we find amazing simplicity in the body of Christ. Please observe that the church was exceedingly effective in doing her work.

The church has also been troubled with the idea that she needs to be involved in every activity that someone may define as a “good” work. We should be reminded that Paul told Timothy that the church is not to be burdened (1 Tim. 5:16). In this text, Paul laid the responsibility of caring for family upon the family. Let not the church be burdened. Is there a principle we can learn from in this passage? Yes. And, there is a specific point too. The church is limited in her activity. A woman who did not meet the qualifications was not to be “enrolled” for financial support. Brethren should help in the time of her need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; Jas. 1:27), but she cannot be “enrolled” as a widow indeed. If the church is not to be burdened in this matter, should the church be burdened with educational institutions? Should she be saddled with recreational interests? Should she have the responsibility of providing entertainment for the youth, or travel enjoyment for the elderly? The church is under attack by her own people who want the church to provide their personal desires. Brethren, the church is not a social club, recreational club, or a liberal arts education center! The church is troubled by too many demands of well intentioned brethren and she has been derailed from the tasks which the Lord left her to accomplish. The church has the responsibility to build herself up in

love (Eph. 4:16). The church has the responsibility to give aid to those who are in need, during that time of need (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8, 9). The church is to enroll certain ones for financial help (1 Tim. 5:3-5, 9, 16). The church is to honor those elders who serve well (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The church is to support the preacher to preach the whole counsel of God (1 Cor. 9), and by that and the work of each member preach the Gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15). But, we have been under attack by Satan. Too many prefer to rest in comfortable buildings, spend on their entertainment and recreation, and develop social programs than preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the world. Is this too harsh? No. We must be bold. We must return to God's purposes. Our families in the mission field have to spend time and money 'begging' churches to support them in their efforts to preach the Gospel. Many of them are rejected so we can build bigger buildings and participate in recreational activities. Shame on us! We should be looking for those willing and qualified to go preach the Gospel and stand behind them till the work is finished. We should make certain our "budgets" are in alignment with the Lord's instructions for the work of the church. How did our "aids" become so demanding that we ignore the souls of men? Yes, the church is heavily under attack by Satan. He has won some battles, for he has us seeking our own pleasures [worldliness] rather than fighting the good fight. Think on Elijah's challenge—"How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (1 Kgs. 18:21). How long shall we go limping between self pleasure and service to God?

Accepting Whom God Does Not

Can we know who is a child of God and who is not? It is not for man to decide who is a child of God, but to recognize those whom God accepts as his children. We have a growing number who accept people as God's children who have not obeyed the Lord in baptism. The New Testament, however, clearly teaches that a person's sins are forgiven when they are baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Those who teach that a person can be in fellowship with God, can be a child of God, by any other means are teaching error and attacking the church.

One of the newer books to press this idea is *The Jesus Proposal*, written by Rubel Shelley and John O. York.²⁴ In relating a conversation with a woman who acknowledged she had been "baptized" as an infant

and had recently learned more about baptism, Rubel Shelley boldly admitted that he told her he accepted her as a sister in Christ.²⁵ While these authors admit their background of understanding the place of baptism in salvation, they deny that it is essential.²⁶ They write: “[S]alvation is best understood as a relationship that matures over time than as any single event.”²⁷ Much of the book is more focused on culture and our “postmodern” age than it is on Scripture. They deny the teachings of the Lord, and in their teaching they apparently refuse to teach others the truth of the Gospel. It should not be forgotten that these men are professors in two of our Christian colleges. How many young preachers will come from their tutelage espousing the same? How many members of the body of Christ will be influenced by this attack on truth and lose their souls? How many souls will never rise to walk in newness of life because these men will not teach what the Lord requires of them. This is a tragedy of eternal consequence.

Weak Pulpits

Satan also attacks the church by pressures on our pulpits. Too many preachers are working too hard on presentation and oratory skills at the expense of content. Brothers, we are not after-dinner speakers. We are not entertainers. It is not our job to be the social worker and psychiatrist for the troubled souls around. Let us return to the charge God has given to us. Hear Paul say:

I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Strong, Bible filled pulpits will answer all of Satan's attacks. Preach the whole counsel of God. Handle every text, and every topic. Reveal to the congregation what God says and leave human wisdom on the shelves of the local bookstore. Read less about the Bible and more in the Bible. Consult fewer commentaries on the Bible and dig deep into Scripture. Know God and His will. Then, stand and preach powerfully, and eloquently if you are able. Let those who hear delight in the will of God rather than smooth speech. Let there be less drama and more depth. This was the desire of Paul (1 Cor. 2:1-5) and it should

be ours. Remember that Satan has used “preachers” to promote his attacks on the church. Brethren, let us focus our attack on Satan’s devices and work together to overcome him. Do not be afraid of challenges and meet them with “book, chapter, and verse.” Prove all things with a “thus saith the Lord” and be content in His divine will (cf. 1 Pet. 4:11).

If you are an elder or leader of the congregation, hold up the hands of the preacher who faithfully follows this charge. Do not give ear to the complaints of those who want more entertainment and eloquence. If the preacher is preaching the truth—and all the truth—stand with him. In so doing you are standing with God, for it is His will which is being proclaimed.

CONCLUSION

Satan is cunning. He is ruthless. He boldly tempted Jesus and will also tempt us. He was not successful with our Lord, but he has been successful with the church in many ways. He has attacked the church from within, in our generation just as he did in past generations.

Can we overcome? Yes! We have the truth of God. We have the assurance that we will not be tempted above that which we are able (1 Cor. 10:13). The victory comes through our faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9), and that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. If you look closely at all the above attacks, and contemplate others which have not been included, what is the common factor? Attacks by Satan are attempts to lure us away from the will of God. The response is a diligent study of the Bible. Learn the will of God as revealed in the pages of the Bible, and walk in that path. Victory will follow!

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you (Jas. 4:6-10).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1:1-2.

³ Ibid., 1:26,1.

⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: to A.D. 1500* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1953), 1:151-153.

⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁶ Ignatius *To the Philadelphians*, 4.

⁷ Latourette, 1:185.

⁸ Henry Percival, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series. The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1996), 14:564, 565.

⁹ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 18.

¹² Latourette, 1:195.

¹³ John McLintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1876), 6:759.

¹⁴ Joseph Otten, "Musical Instruments in Church Services," in Charles G. Herbermann et al. "The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church," (New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc. 1911), 657.

¹⁵ Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906: 1849-1865*, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974), 1:149-227.

¹⁶ Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger: Series III*, 6.12 (Dec. 1849): 694.

¹⁷ Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Missionary Society, no. 1," *The Millennial Harbinger: Series III*, 7.2 (Feb. 1850): 76.

¹⁸ West, 1:206.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:310-311.

²⁰ West, 1:270-276; 2:113-127.

²¹ West, 2:24.

²² Bobby Ross Jr., "Nation's Largest Church of Christ Adding Instrumental Service," *The Christian Chronicle*, under Nation, (www.christianchronicle.org/modules.php?namesnews&file+article&sid=555).

²³ Erik Tryggestad. "One Church, Two Locations," *The Christian Chronicle* 64.4 (April 2007): 1.

²⁴ Rubel Shelley and John O. York, *The Jesus Proposal: A Theological Framework for Maintaining the Unity of the Body of Christ* (Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood Publishers, 2003).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 171-174.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 181-183.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON NEW CONVERTS

Dave Rogers



Dave Rogers was born in Omaha, Nebraska and is married to the former Luann Stewart. They have three children and one grandson. Rogers was educated at Austin Community College and Southwest Texas State University. He began preaching in 1979 and is a graduate of the Southwest School of Bible Studies. Rogers has worked with foreign campaigns in Jamaica, Ireland, and Mexico. He has done local work in Oklahoma, and now preaches for the MidTown Church of Christ in Victoria, Texas.

INTRODUCTION¹

Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

There may be no point at which a child of God is in greater danger from the evil one than when that person is a “babe” in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1), one newly converted from the ways of the world. In the animal world, predators have no compunctions about attacking the newborn offspring of their prey, and neither does the enemy of our souls. There is no such thing as “fair play” or a “sporting chance” where the devil is concerned. When David prepared to meet Goliath, King Saul tried to equip the young man with his own armor, but David opted to go into battle without it because it was unfamiliar to him (1 Sam. 17:38-39). Just so, a new Christian is not usually skilled in using the armor of God and the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:10-18) to overcome trials and temptations. For this reason, he urgently needs the support and protection of older brothers and sisters in the faith so that he can have the opportunity to grow and mature spiritually.

In Christ, we are to “press on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1). Reaching the goal of spiritual maturity necessarily involves the process of growth from “infancy” to “manhood,” which is alluded to in Hebrews 5:12-14. While the only permanent relief from temptation that faithful Christians can ever experience will be in eternity, we are especially vulnerable when our faith is new and our knowledge of God’s Word is comparatively small. Peter thus exhorted *all* Christians, including the newly

converted, to “desire the sincere milk of the word” so that we can “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18 KJV). Our goal is to become competent “workmen” of God, capable of properly and effectively handling the “strong meat” of His Word as well as its “milk,” so that we can be “furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17).

Our adversary strikes at the faith of new Christians because each conversion is a desertion from his ranks, a rejection of his authority (Rom. 6:16), and a harbinger of the ultimate judgment which awaits him in eternity (Phil. 1:28). He also strikes at new Christians as a way of wounding and discouraging those who converted them, and as a means of bolstering the fraudulent hope offered by denominational doctrines. As the implacable opponent of heaven, his ideal is that *none* should turn and be saved. If he can simply corrupt and compromise the faith of those who do obey the Gospel, he still accomplishes his purpose.

As we examine Satan’s attacks on new converts, we will “frame” our study under these five major headings:

1. The **F**act of Satan’s attacks on new converts.
2. The **R**easons behind Satan’s attacks on new converts.
3. The “**A**dvantages” of attacking new converts.
4. Satan’s **M**ethods of attacking new converts.
5. The **E**ffects of Satan’s attacks on new converts.

THE FACT OF SATAN’S ATTACKS

The idea that the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) would attack those who are young in the faith, with the aim of *destroying* their faith and dashing their hope of salvation is neither a mere “possibility” nor a “remote prospect”—*it is an absolute certainty* (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul presents the need to “stand against the wiles of the devil” as a normal and expected part of the Christian’s existence in this world (Eph. 6:11), something about which there should be no doubt or surprise whatsoever. While in 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul reminds us that Satan’s “methods” are no secret, in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, we see the devil desperately trying to keep the world in the darkness of sin. Temptation is a fact of life in a fallen world, as Paul’s words reveal:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is *common to man*: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a

way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13, KJV, emphasis added).

Temptation is nothing more or less than the opportunity to use something God created to be used for good in a bad way. It may lead us to do something He has forbidden (e.g., Adam and Eve in the garden, Gen. 3), or it may entice us to leave undone something He desires us to accomplish (note the hypocrisy of the Pharisees addressed by Jesus in Mt. 23:23). For the new Christian, temptation often has the added appeal of *familiarity*; what was once “normal” behavior is now something to be resisted and avoided because it leads to (or even consists of) sin.

The viciousness of Satan's attacks on new Christians should not surprise us. Every person baptized into Christ has escaped the defilement of the world by that act of faithful obedience (2 Pet. 1:4; 2:20) and is thus translated by God (“naturalized”) from the sin-darkened kingdom of Satan “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13, KJV). Like the Pharaoh of Moses' day (Ex. 14:5-9), the evil one wants his servants back and thus pursues them to that end. Here is one of the lessons to be drawn from Jesus' parable of the sower in Matthew 13 and Luke 8; while the seed took root in both the “stony” and the “thorny” ground, in both cases it was swiftly destroyed by the power of evil, lest it bear fruit and multiply. As he used different “methods” of attack, according to the type of ground on which the seed fell, so our adversary attacks in various and sometimes surprising ways, according to our weaknesses. His “goal” is never only one soul, but many, including the mature and strong as well as the young and weak. We must always be alert, lest the effects of his assault on the “newborn” in Christ also injure the “grownups” as well.

Some avenues of attack are left “wide open” in the lives of new Christians simply because they are still in the process of learning to think and react in godly, rather than worldly, ways. We have the mind of Christ revealed to us (1 Cor. 2:16), but “thinking as Christ thinks” (Phil. 2:5) in the face of temptation is a learned behavior, as Jesus' words to Peter show (Lk. 22:31-32). The thought patterns and mental habits of a lifetime are not automatically erased in the waters of baptism, and learning both to “put off the old man with his doings” (Col. 3:9), as well as learning to be a “new man” (Eph. 4:22-24), requires a dramatic turnabout in both attitudes and motives. Small wonder, then, that Paul likened this change to death in Romans 6:2. The

transformation of life that God desires requires a renovation, a “remodeling” of the mind (Rom. 12:2) as a prerequisite to that fundamental change.

REASONS SATAN ATTACKS NEW CONVERTS

New Converts May Be Easily Reclaimed

Why should the devil “pick on” new Christians? Because they are often “easy pickin’s!” The newborn child of God is in many ways a kind of “social misfit.” By his conversion he has rejected the values of his former companions in sin. He may have effectively rejected the teachings and standards of parents, spouse, or children and he may appear hypocritical in the eyes of coworkers or neighbors who formerly saw him indulge in what he now rejects and condemns (1 Pet. 4:3-4). At the same time, his sense of acceptance into the family of God can be very tenuous. He may be frequently reminded by the Biblical knowledge and wisdom of older saints (though not intentionally, we would hope) that he is comparatively ignorant of the Scriptures. Therefore, he may be ashamed to admit that he struggles with temptations, in the mistaken belief that mature Christians do not feel such desires. The new Christian who is wrestling with such feelings of inadequacy may be easily discouraged and may become convinced that he can never “measure up.”

A corollary to the vulnerability of inexperience and immaturity is the tendency of babes in Christ to suppose that “older” Christians are somehow “automatically” mature and spiritually-minded, and that an older saint would never “steer one wrong” in the face of temptation. The tragic experience of the young prophet, in 1 Kings 13:11-25, who trusted the lying words of an older man, provides us with an excellent illustration of the danger of this tendency. The younger man of God was trapped when he supposed that the older man’s age and experience would preclude him from encouraging disobedience to God’s will (v. 19). In his naiveté, the younger man lost his life by disobedience. Just so, babes in Christ may be easily misled by those on whom they *should* be able to depend for sound guidance and Scriptural counsel.

“Punishment” For Those Who Dare To Seek Salvation

Our adversary assaults the faith of new converts because he bitterly hates the thought of “losing” to God. In Job 1:8 and 2:3, we see the Lord fairly “taunting” Satan with the challenge of faithful Job’s righteousness. Job’s steadfast determination to keep faith with the

Father, in spite of his astounding losses and suffering, seems to have incensed the evil one (Job 2:4-5, 7). It often seems that, if he can do nothing else to destroy the faith of a new child of God, the devil will seek to “make ‘em pay” by heaping temptations and challenges to their faith all around him. It makes for an interesting and valuable study in the Scriptures to examine all the instances where moments of spiritual triumph are followed immediately by intense and frightening assaults on faithfulness. There being no greater victory than to escape the clutches of our adversary, why should we be surprised when he seeks vengeance against a babe in Christ? Satan also vents his fury against new Christians as a way of “exalting” himself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5), thus asserting that submission to God’s will is a foolish self-denial on the part of the convert. This is much like the lie he presented to Eve in Genesis 3:4, where he suggested that God was “holding back” something beneficial from Adam and Eve. If he is able to do nothing else, Satan strikes at new converts in order to discourage and intimidate others who might be led to follow them to Christ. If he can make it appear that the price of faithfulness is unreasonably high, that suffering is all that results from godliness, and that there is no hope for relief from his attacks, he may succeed both in intimidating new Christians and in discouraging older saints.

ADVANTAGES IN ATTACKING NEW CHRISTIANS

We should understand that from a “tactical” viewpoint *it makes sense* for Satan to attack those who are young in the faith. “Ease of conquest” is perhaps the most obvious reason. One who is not (yet) skilled in discerning and deflecting Satan’s blandishments will likely require much less time and effort to corrupt than one who has achieved a degree of maturity and wisdom. That Satan *does* assault those who are newly freed from sin is apparent. In Jesus’ parable of the sower, both the “heat” of trial (Mt. 13:6) and the “competition” of worldly cares (Lk. 8:7) are calculated to forestall the development of spiritual strength and maturity.

Lasting Discouragement

There is the likelihood that an early (and perhaps devastating) defeat will lead to a permanent conquest. Once the new child of God has his faith and confidence shaken by having fallen in the face of intense trial or temptation, there will be a second and very strong temptation to avoid repeating that disheartening experience ever again.

To avoid the humiliation and disappointment of being defeated by temptation, some new converts stop trying to grow so as not to “draw fire” from the devil and many others simply drop out of the battle altogether, finding it easier to surrender than to keep fighting.

Is There Not An Easier Way?

Closely connected to the desire to evade further trials is the appeal of a “substitute” for genuine faith and growth in Christ. The wounded conscience may become susceptible to the idea that an “easier” or “less stringent” religion (i.e., denominationalism) will be acceptable to God, which also spares the fallen “babe” the horrible feeling of shame at having disappointed the Father by his sin. The writer of “Hebrews” was mainly addressing Jewish converts to Christianity. They were being strongly tempted to desert the Lord and return to Judaism. A part of that temptation may have been because Judaism was a “legal” faith, but Christianity was not. Also, because Christianity was not recognized by the Roman authorities, Christians were subject to persecution for their faith. This made the civil “legitimacy” of Judaism more appealing. The Holy Spirit used this opportunity to remind them that there is no other “track” they could follow to everlasting life. Jesus had plainly stated: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: *no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (Jn. 14:6, emphasis added). In situations like those dealt with by the writing of Hebrews, danger lies in the young Christian’s failure to distinguish between genuine Christianity and its imitators. When a child of God is convinced that the way of truth is “needlessly” hard, and that an “easier” religion will still afford him a home in heaven, then the evil one has regained what had been lost to him in conversion. Such a temptation is magnified by those in the denominational community who excuse or ignore common sins by asserting that “God’s grace covers all” (a misunderstanding of passages such as 1 Jn. 1:7). Likewise, the appeal of “good”² people’s companionship and the disposition to “just accept folks the way they are” makes this situation a strong temptation for some new Christians.

METHODS OF ATTACK

The scope and variety of temptations at Satan’s disposal is both fascinating and terrifying. His enticements range from the raw appeals of naked lust to the self-righteous hypocrisy and arrogance of a new Christian who energetically identifies every sin and flaw he can find among his family and friends. The temptation to develop a harsh and

judgmental spirit is often one of the devil's most effective tools in neutralizing a new convert's influence among his friends.

Religious Prejudice

Open prejudice against the faith is not only a deterrent to conversion, it is a strong incentive for some new converts to turn back to the world. When the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica could not refute Paul's message, they assaulted Jason and some others babes in Christ in the hope of quashing the impact Paul and Silas were having in their community. These men considered any Jew who would convert to Christianity as a traitor to the nation and an infidel where God was concerned. Jesus had condemned their spiritual leaders for substituting their doctrines and opinions for God's commandments (Mt. 15:9). Jesus warned His disciples of the potential cost of faithfulness when He said,

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Mt. 10:34-36).

In such situations the disappointment and hostility of a new Christian's family members may be the most severe trial he faces. This seems more often to be the case where the new Christian has a strong background or family heritage in a particular denomination. For such babe in Christ, his conversion is often perceived as both a betrayal of the family's faith and values, and a rejection of the family in general.

Uncertainty About "Truth"

When Pilate sarcastically asked the Lord, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38), he inadvertently touched one of the devil's favorite methods of attacking the faith of new Christians, i.e., trying to create uncertainty and confusion about what actually is "truth." Psalm 119:142, 151 and John 17:17 affirm that God's truth is both identifiable and attainable (cf. Ps. 119:11). A new convert may be hindered by needing to "unlearn" the "untruths" of previously believed denominational doctrines, or even by struggling to reconcile the truth of the Gospel with erroneous beliefs which were learned at a parent's knee.

The Disillusionment Of Illusions

One of the most common methods of undermining a new Christian's faith is to encourage the growth of *illusions* about the Christian

life. These can lead to *disillusionment* as they tarnish and fail. The temptation is very strong, for both new converts and those who teach them, to concentrate exclusively on the blessings and joys of life in Christ, leaving no room to consider the cost of discipleship (but note Jesus' warning in Lk. 14:28-33, concerning the need to "count the cost"). Many new Christians begin their spiritual lives with the illusion that they will have no more problems, no more trials, no more temptations to face, and no more strife, difficulties or hard choices to confront once they are in Christ. Likewise, many labor under the illusion that they and their fellow Christians will never be angry, jealous, inconsiderate, weak or dishonest. Some suppose that Gospel obedience is a "cure-all" for dysfunctional family relationships or physical ill-health. Others expecting only admiration from their friends for their newfound faith are shocked when they encounter ridicule or disinterest. The reality of the Christian life is well-summarized by the words of 2 Timothy 3:12—"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

In The Devil's "Pressure Cooker"

Jesus spoke to the devil's use of intensified temptations when He noted the "choking" effect of the "thorns" in Matthew 13:7. Forcing a new Christian to constantly defend himself against the cares of the world robs him of time and energy to grow spiritually, and it wears down his resistance. If the devil can overwhelm a new convert with trials and temptations early on in his walk with Christ, he may be able to find and surpass his "breaking point" before the spiritual "babe" is well-prepared to defend himself. This is without a doubt one of the reasons new Christians often face "new" temptations, things which were never problems for them before they obeyed the Gospel. A good example of this might be the converted alcoholic who learns to chain-smoke at AA meetings. In trying to conquer one temptation, he may succumb to a substitute for it.

Wet Sinners And Stunted Saints

It is important that we remember that the Lord also mentioned "wayside" ground in His parable (Mt. 13:4). Here, we see the seed being "snatched away" before it can even take root. The sad truth is that many new Christians fare little better than if the Word had been taken away before they obeyed it because those who teach them treat their baptism into Christ as if it is the *sum*, rather than the beginning of their

walk with Christ. The absence of fellowship and the lack of further teaching and encouragement after baptism has the effect of stunting the new Christian's spiritual growth. "Drip-dry" saints may never learn that there is more to being a Christian than getting wet! Jesus strongly chastised the Pharisees because they would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, [they] make him twofold more a son of hell than [themselves]" (Mt. 23:15). There is precious little difference in what they were doing and what some consider "evangelism" today! The writer of Hebrews may have been addressing this same kind of situation when he penned:

For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

The failure of "mature" Christians to "water" and "nourish" new converts (1 Cor. 3:6) will surely lead to the loss of many innocent souls! If the devil can keep new Christians spiritually "starved," they will never pose any serious threat to his power in this world.

Who Are "Christians" Anyway?

The "uncertain sound" (1 Cor. 14:8) of indistinct teaching and preaching serves the evil one very efficiently as he seeks to rob new Christians of confidence and conviction. Long ago, God commanded the prophet Habakkuk to make His message so plain that those who read it would "run" in response to its words (Hab. 2:2). When new "converts" do not even realize they were ever lost in sin, or are led to believe they have "joined the Church of Christ church" rather than being converted *to Christ*, they have not been converted at all. It serves no *good* eternal purpose to encourage a man to (in the words of Billy Graham) "make a decision for Jesus," or to offer him "ample choices,"³ which have no foundation in the Scriptures. Christians who feel it necessary to "apologize" for the facts of the Gospel, who seek ways to "soften the blow" of its soul-saving message of repentance unto life (Acts 11:18), or who dilute the preciousness of salvation by excusing "pet" sins are actually functioning as servants of Satan rather than Christ. Such "saints" endanger the souls of new converts by their

poisonous teaching and example. Note Paul's sharp response to such in 1 Timothy 1:20, and his instructions in Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 14-15; and Titus 3:10.

Are We 'Dead' Yet?

New converts are often dismayed to discover that "dying to sin" (Rom. 6:2) is not always easy. While familiar doors of temptation may be closed or closing, new ones may open unexpectedly. Some sins are easily conquered, while others are not, and seem to just "hang on." All sin is addictive (Rom. 7:22-23), but some temptations affect us more intensely than others. This is why Paul wrote to the Christians at Colosse, exhorting:

Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings (Col. 3:5-9).

Attacks From "Within" The Body

The fellowship of the saved ought to be the one place where a new Christian could feel safe and could reasonably expect to escape most of the attacks of the evil one. How sad that this is not necessarily so! Satan does not shrink from using God's elect to injure and destabilize the faith of new Christians. Satan's influence may manifest itself as impatience, unkind words, or an unkind critical attitude exhibited by a "mature" Christian. He may make himself felt through a misplaced sense of "ownership" among the older members of a congregation, who have the attitude: "I was here first, so what I want takes precedence over what you need." Sometimes there is an unwillingness to incorporate new Christians into the congregational body, except on the "terms" of certain members. When it comes to those certain members—whether the "issue" is politics, parenting styles, piercings, tattoos, sports teams, or even matters such as having red or blue carpet in the church building—Satan is using them to attack from within when brethren are not permitted to "accept" one another in fellowship unless everyone conforms to the *personal "scruples"* (Rom. 14:1). Satan knows this is especially new dangerous to the fledgling faith of a new convert.

The Challenge Of "Hard" Topics And Choices

Because the Gospel is meant to "color" and permeate every aspect of the Christian's life, it is sometimes upsetting to new converts to discover subjects and questions in which a clearly defined "right" answer or "right" way is not readily obvious. The child of God faces ethical and moral conundrums with the assurance that God has addressed such situations, but the babe in Christ may struggle to understand what is right, and (more importantly) *why* it is. For one who has lived by the normal standards of our society, the higher calling of the Gospel can seem very constraining. Fornication and lying may be as common and "natural" as breathing, but they are offensive to God and the new Christian may struggle to refrain from things he previously enjoyed.

Whether the subject is differing Bible translations, books like *The Da Vinci Code*, or abortion, Satan will try to pose questions about such things in a way that obscures a definitive right answer. Satan is absolutely consistent with respect to the methodology of his assaults on new converts (and old ones too, for that matter). *He knows no bounds* in his efforts to deceive and ensnare them (2 Cor. 11:14b-15).

EFFECTS OF SATAN'S ATTACKS ON NEW CONVERTS*He Shoots At Everyone In Sight, Not Just The New Converts*

When our adversary directs his malignant attention to any individual, the purpose of his scrutiny is the enslavement and eternal loss of that soul. He has no other purpose for us. His attacks are intended to discourage, dishearten and distress, and to "disconnect" from God *as many people as possible*. In assailing the faith of the new convert, however, his attention is not restricted to that person alone. He also strives to harm the mature children of God in the process. The impact of his evil deeds may be seen as discouragement over the loss of "young" souls (Paul must have felt as he penned 2 Tim. 4:10), or the discouragement at the loss of our own personal investment of time and effort. If Satan can get us to lower our expectations, to approach our evangelistic responsibilities ineffectively, and can convince us that trying to teach new converts is just a wasted effort, he has won more than one battle.

Death X3

When we give in to discouragement and depression by backing off our evangelistic efforts, souls will die because they never heard the

saving Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:14). Seeing new converts suffer and fall, we confront the danger of letting our own hope for lost souls die as we ask: “What’s the use?” Most devastating, however, is the death of our own trust, hope and confidence in God and His ability and willingness to fulfill His promises. In the selfish and misguided desire to “own” our own sense of failure—thinking such things as: “I guess I just can’t teach effectively, or they wouldn’t fall away”—there is a tendency to forget, to mistrust and to adulterate the power of God’s Word, but note Isaiah 55:10-11, where God says:

For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

CONCLUSION

To effectively thwart Satan’s attacks on new converts, we must acknowledge these spiritual “little ones” for what they are:

- Often ignorant of God’s Word;
- Inexperienced at resisting temptations;
- Trusting toward older Christians;
- Hungry for the strength that comes from knowledge-building in the Word;
- Sometimes, “needy”—in need of daily encouragement, compassion, patience, love, acceptance (which is *not* an endorsement of sin), and on occasion, correction (Gal. 6:1-2).

In accordance with Ephesians 4:32, we must exercise Christian kindness, applying the wisdom of Proverbs 25:11, as we seek to encourage and correct new converts.

We Cannot Escape Our Responsibility

When we were new babes in Christ, we were blessed by the nurturing and encouragement of others. This enabled us to grow and begin to “bear fruit” (Jn. 15:8). When we repeat these same things for others, we are engaged in a practical application of Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:12, and of Paul’s exhortation in Gal. 6:1. The motive in such works is to glorify God, and the object of our fellowship in this

world is to help one another go to heaven. New converts *can* be safely “shepherded” through their spiritual infancy to maturity in Christ *if* we lead according to God’s Word and not our own wisdom: These will be the “good ground” Christians, who are able to bear fruit “some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Mt. 13:8, KJV).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² The word “good” in this context is defined by community standards, rather than by God’s word.

³ In the transcript of Max Lucado’s sermon introducing the use of instrumental music at what had been up to that day the Oak Hills Church of Christ, presented on 31, August, 2003, these “ample choices” are clearly a reference to worship assemblies incorporating instruments. The transcript of this sermon was taken directly from the Oak Hills Church website, but it is no longer posted there.

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON MORALITY IN AMERICA

Sean Hochdorf



Sean Hochdorf was born in Houston, Texas. He is married to the former Anita McGuffin. They are the parents of one son and one daughter. Hochdorf graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1996, and their graduate program in 2001. He holds a B.A. degree from Southern University. He has been on mission trips to Russia, Singapore, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Hochdorf recently moved from the West Visalia Church of Christ in California, and will be going to Arusha, Tanzania, to preach.

INTRODUCTION¹

Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people (Pro. 14:34).

Admittedly, the subject assigned is an unpleasant one. That our nation has plummeted to an all time low concerning morality is an issue about which all of God's children should be concerned. At only 14%, our nation's congress has its lowest approval rating ever. Our self-seeking, self-indulgent societal environment provides the child of God with numerous temptations to forsake the God Who has penned his name in the book of life. "Politics" and "morality" seem to be mutually exclusive terms in our day. Indeed, Satan has attacked every facet of life in America. It is with these "cheery words" in mind that we take note of the demise of morality in the United States.

MORALITY ON THE DECREASE

Generally speaking, our nation has enjoyed a lengthy span of time in which politicians have been honest and moral. Yes, there has always been immorality. Certainly, not all presidents have been upstanding moral leaders. However, a marked change in the way our country functions and looks upon her leaders occurred in the twentieth century. Prior to this time our nation enjoyed a moral fabric that was strong and tightly woven together. However, in the 1960s, with the onset of the Vietnam War and the "make love not war movement" a more rapid decline began which has continued to spiral downward even to this day. Along with the "free-love" movement came the onslaught of the

women's liberation movement. Traditional views, such as the marriage of one man and one woman for life, became laughable at universities across the country. The attitude expressed in the Crosby, Stills and Nash song lyric, "if you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with," was accepted as the mantra among many. While the nation's youth were experimenting with LSD and other hallucinogens, the moral fabric was getting weaker day-by-day.

It became acceptable for women to have children out of wedlock. Common law marriage was adopted by many who wanted to have a quick "way out" if a relationship turned sour. The divorce rate in the country surpassed the number of marriages taking place. Besides these and other attacks upon the home, in 1973 the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision began a torrential murdering of the nations unborn which has yet to be stopped. Homosexuality is no longer a disgrace to many. In fact, homosexual "marriage" is now openly and proudly promoted and it is among the major battles which are being fought in our nation's courtrooms. Our nation's leaders have certainly contributed their part to the decline of morality in America.

Politicians And Immorality

When thinking of politicians and immorality, former President Clinton quickly comes to mind. Even though it has been seven years since he was president, his blatant acts of immorality while in office are still a disgrace to those who consider the United States of America to be a "Christian" nation. Having traveled to more than twenty-five foreign countries, it is the opinion of this writer that while America is not a "Christian" nation, in the Biblical sense of that word, it *is* the most moral country on the planet.

President Clinton's contributions to the moral decline of the United States include: 1) His own acts of adultery (throughout his career as a politician), 2) The lifting of the ban on gays in the military, which was settled by the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, 3) His efforts through government programs to promote abortion, and 4) His ending of "the restrictions instituted in the Bush administration on federal funding of transplanted research using fetal tissue from induced abortions."² While President Clinton was undergoing the investigation into his adulterous affair with Monica Lewinski, the writer was in Russia. On more than one occasion, Russians expressed that President Clinton's actions were nobody's business as long as he did his job. The fact that

he lied under oath was also looked upon as a normal action. This was a prevalent attitude throughout ultra-liberal Europe as well. Unfortunately, many in the United States also adopted this sentiment. Is this truly the way we desire our nation's leaders to be?

President Clinton is not the only President or politician who has frequented the streets of immorality. John F. Kennedy was another. The term "Camelot," used to describe the Kennedys and their associates, was a misnomer if ever there was one. Kennedy was known for his numerous adulterous affairs. He was addicted to amphetamines, which alter a person's judgment. Kennedy was known to have ties with a number of mafia henchmen and would do anything, right or wrong. To what degree the mafia was involved in Kennedy's "victory" over Richard Nixon is still being debated.

Richard Nixon has never been accused of being sexually immoral, but he was morally corrupt in other ways. He followed in Kennedy's steps in that he would go to any lengths to see his agenda carried out. Nixon believed that since he held the Office of the President, a position of law, that he could lie and obstruct justice to protect that which he believed. In other words, since he *was* the law, he was not amenable to law. Since Joseph Fletcher's book, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, was released just a few years earlier, Nixon's position was hardly a surprise. Having to resign and leave his office in disgrace, Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal will override all else history has to say about him.

Other politicians who have not made the presidency their aim have nevertheless exhibited such immoral behavior that they are a disgrace. Ted Kennedy is not only known for the Chappaquiddick incident but also for his severe marriage to alcohol. Barney Frank, Massachusetts congressman, is an admitted homosexual and for a while his "partner" was running what amounted to a homosexual brothel out of their shared Washington apartment. How is it that he remains in office? Republican congressman Mark Foley was discovered to be sending sexually explicit messages to his congressional pages. The list of such immoral behavior by our nation's politicians is seemingly unending. Tragically, the modern perception most citizens have is that politicians, in some way, shape, form or fashion are corrupt and immoral.

What is our point in saying these things? Simply this—when a nation's leaders are corrupt, history tells us that its citizenry will follow suit. While America remains the moral leader in the world, it is certain

that we are following a path that can only lead to our utter destruction. Unfortunately, the church has not been left unaffected by society's lax attitude toward morality and objective standards of authority.

Preachers And Immorality

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (Jas. 3:1). Sadly, if this passage has not been forgotten by some preachers, it has at least been pushed to the back of their minds. We shall not belabor the point as we did with our nation's politicians, but suffice it to say that God's objective standard of morality has escaped a number of men who fill pulpits. How sad it is that men who dedicated themselves to proclaiming God's Word in order to lead people in the paths of righteousness have abandoned that path themselves. The number of men who preach that have been caught in adulterous affairs is overwhelming. While a student in preaching school, I remember it being mentioned that there were two common pitfalls for preachers: money and sex. In the fifteen years since that time, I have seen it happen over and over again. While there is great damage to the preacher and his family, it almost pales in comparison to the effect it has on the body of Christ. Those who look to the preacher for spiritual guidance and expect him to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12) are devastated when such immorality is revealed. The number of brethren who have "quit the church" because of their preacher's actions is innumerable. Yes, they will be held accountable for themselves (2 Cor. 5:10). Yet, for the one who is guilty of casting a stumbling block before the sheep of God's pasture, his judgment will be to spend an unbearable eternity with Satan and his angels. May preachers live their lives in keeping with God's objective moral standard and be the upright moral spokesmen and citizens in the kingdom that He expects them to be.

Philosophies Behind America's Increased Immorality

When contemplating the philosophies that have contributed to the demise of morality in America, one does not need to look very far. While it is true that numerous technical terms are used to describe the many and various philosophies regarding morality, almost all of them can be filed under one of three categories: Humanism, Atheism, or Evolution. In B.J. Clarke's excellent lecture on the subject, he states:

As much as we deplore the tragic crimes perpetrated by such nations [Iraq, Syria and North Korea] we must point out that another “axis of evil” has done even more damage to the human race. The damage done involves much more than the loss of physical life. It involves something much, much more serious—the loss of multiplied millions of souls! Satan has many devices, and he is the influence behind the most deadly “axis of evil” the world has ever known: Atheism, Darwinism, and Humanism! These three philosophies are closely related and highly destructive.³

Is there any wonder why morality in the United States is continuing to spiral downward when these philosophies rule the day? While technically only a hypothesis, evolution is nonetheless boldly proclaimed as a fact by a majority in the scientific community. Our public and private schools are inundated with the false doctrine of evolution. If one among those in the academic community adheres to creationism, he is treated with contempt, looked upon as an imbecile, and shunned. After all, no “credible scholar” would ever believe in a Supreme Designer of our magnificently engineered universe. For those who objectively view the evidence, however, there can be no other answer than the Genesis account of creation. Indeed: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

Humanism’s view of man’s lot in life is intimately tied to atheism and evolution. Providing a good working definition of “Humanism,” Wikipedia explains:

Humanism is a broad category of ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appeal to universal human qualities—particularly rationality. Humanism is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems, and is incorporated into several religious schools of thought. Humanism entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. In focusing on the capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects the validity of transcendental justifications, such as a dependence on faith, the supernatural, or divinely revealed texts. Humanists endorse universal morality based on the commonality of the human condition, suggesting that solutions to human social and cultural problems cannot be parochial.⁴

Simply stated, humanism allows a person to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, as long as the humanists think it does not hurt anyone. When one rejects an objective standard of authority, however, chaos always ensues. Our nation's classrooms (preschool through postgraduate), media (newspapers, radio, and television), entertainment (movies), and government (the executive, legislative, and judicial branches) have been affected by materialistic humanism.

With these three philosophies being the "norm" in our society, is it any wonder that we have school shootings like the one at Columbine? Why be shocked at millions of abortions or homosexual "marriages" if we have no standard by which to live? If man is nothing more than the product of chance, an accident that evolved from a primordial soup, which has no objective standard of morality or authority, how can there be anything but immorality? In fact, "morality" has become such a subjective term that most people think it is up to the individual to define for himself what his morality is (as long as he does not bind his morality on others). When people do not know from whence they came, why they are here, and where they are going when this life comes to a close, the end result is Humanism, Atheism and Evolution.

The Bible: Man's Only Objective Source For Judgment

"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48). For those who believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, these words are a constant reminder of that which we shall one day face—Judgment before the eternal throne of the Almighty. Yes, but what about those who simply look at the Bible as an influential book in the history of man, a book that is no more powerful than any other great literary work? How can one be convinced that the Bible is the final authority concerning all things religious and eternal? How can one know without any doubt that the Bible should be his only guide for that which he practices in life? Volumes have been written that give detailed answers to questions like these. However, our purpose here is to give some brief answers to these ever important questions.

About what other book can it be said that it was compiled over a 1600 year period, by some forty men who lived in different countries, spoke different languages and yet managed, without seeing the writings of many of their predecessors, to maintain one central theme with not

a single contradiction. Such an accomplishment utterly boggles the mind. Even the casual reader glancing through *The Koran*, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Vedas*, etc., can quickly see their numerous contradictions and their great emphasis upon carnal, worldly things.

One can search the world for the remainder of his days and he will never find a book comparable to the Bible. There is no other single volume in the history of the world, nor will there ever be, which carries the Bible's weight of divine inspiration. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

CONCLUSION

What is presented here is just a brief glimpse of the immorality in America. While brief, it is discouraging nonetheless. As the children of God, however, we cannot afford to be ignorant of our surroundings. By that same token, we cannot afford to dwell on our surroundings to the point that we become discouraged. Let us never fail to look to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Our hope is in Him. One day He will take us away from the wickedness of this world to a place where we will bask in His glory forever.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Charles W. Dunn, *The Scarlet Thread of Scandal: Morality and the American Presidency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2001), n.p.

³ B.J. Clarke, "The Axis of Evil: Humanism, Atheism and Darwinism" *Darwin's Damnable Doctrine*, ed. Sean Hochdorf (Visalia, CA: West Visalia Church of Christ Publications, 2004), 455-483.

⁴ Wikipedia "humanism," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/humanism>

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON CHRIST'S DEITY

Shan Jackson



Shan Jackson was born in Port Lavaca, Texas. He and his wife Linda have five children and two grandsons. Jackson is a graduate of Victoria College and Abilene Christian University. He has published articles in brotherhood periodicals and has held Gospel meetings in the United States, Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. Jackson preached for eighteen years in Palacios, Texas and now works with his hometown congregation in Port Lavaca.

INTRODUCTION¹

My assignment is: 1) To prove the deity of Christ, 2) To show that Satan knows that Christ is deity, 3) To give examples of Satan's attacks on Christ's deity, 4) To discuss how skeptics throughout history have attacked Christ's deity, and 5) To point out that today Satan attacks the deity of Christ through movies, books, et cetera. There are two passages with which I want to introduce our lesson. One is from the pen of the inspired apostle Paul, and the other is from an even higher source.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (which is, for all practical purposes, reiterated by Peter in 1 Pet. 1:8-9). Brethren, even if we had no proof of the deity of Jesus, and we do have an abundance of proof, but even if we had no proof we would know, by faith, that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). When Peter uttered those words, Jesus' response was: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (v. 17). Therefore, logic and human information supplied by flesh and blood did not prove to Peter that Jesus was deity. Rather, Peter's faith supplied him the assurance, therefore concerning the deity of Christ "we walk by faith, not by sight."

The second passage is found in connection with Jesus' baptism. Matthew 3:17 states: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God Himself attested to the fact that His only begotten Son was, in fact, deity.

DEITY OF CHRIST

Throughout the entire current of inspired Scripture the fact of Christ's deity is clearly revealed. He is consistently shown as God in human form (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Jn. 1:14; 8:58; 17:5 [cf. Ex. 3:14]; Heb. 1:3; Phil. 2:11; Col. 2:9; Rev. 1:8,17-18; et al). In fact, the deity of Jesus Christ is one of the pillars and foundational bulwarks of the entire Christian system. As such, Christ's deity has been attacked more vigorously throughout the ages than any other single doctrine of the Christian faith. However, the testimony of the Scripture stands sure, though the power of Satan himself deceives many with his deceitful handling of the Word of God.

Since I was asked to give Scriptural examples of other items in this lesson, let me offer these Scriptural affirmations concerning the deity of Jesus: Jesus was revealed as God's companion from the beginning. John affirmed: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). He also wrote: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 Jn. 1:1). Genesis 1:26 shows a statement of God that says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." John the Baptizer bore witness of Jesus' deity, and cried, saying: "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (Jn. 1:15). Jesus Himself prayed: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Jn. 17:5). John the apostle also penned these truthful words: "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (1 Jn. 5:8). The penman of Hebrews wrote: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). Jesus affirmed: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). Jesus is also revealed as the Divine Communicator. John wrote:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon

white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev. 19:11-14).

Hebrews 1:1-3 states:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Jesus is also revealed as the Divine Creator. Paul said, Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:15-17). Ephesians 3:9 states: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

Jesus is the Divine Christ and is recognized as such. Paul writes: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13). John the baptizer "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (Jn. 1:7). The apostle John records: "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28). Again, he writes:

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but

for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God (Jn. 10:24-33).

John 1:12 says: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." 2 Corinthians 4:4 says: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Ephesians 2:1 says: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

SATAN KNOWS THAT CHRIST IS DEITY

Another part of my assignment is to show that Satan knows that Jesus is deity. To this section we will also add examples of Satan's attacks upon the deity of Christ.

The Parable of the Sower is found in Luke 8. In Jesus' explanation of the parable we find this information given: First, the seed is the Word of God, and second, the Sower sows the seed into the various hearts of man. However, note Jesus' next comment: "Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (v. 12). If Satan did not fully know that Jesus is deity, why would he work so hard to keep the Word out of the hearts of man? Satan knows Jesus is deity and he knows that only through Jesus can an individual find salvation (Jn. 14:1-6).

Another passage that will help us understand Satan's work of preventing the acceptance of Christ's deity is 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. There the apostle is talking somewhat about his own efforts and about how God changed his life, transforming him to one who spoke the entirety of truth. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul says: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Here the inference is that Satan can only blind ones who willfully disbelieve (cf. Heb. 10:27). Satan is in the business of perverting and preventing—perverting the purity of the Gospel message, and preventing the lost from finding its truth. To such people, people with hard hearts, the Gospel is irrelevant and the deity of Christ is in doubt. Satan, of course, would rather not have to do the work of taking away the seed that has been sown. He would rather so control the one who is doing the

preaching that something other than the good seed of the Word of God is proclaimed.

Why is Satan so interested in convincing mankind that Christ is not deity? If Satan can create doubt concerning Jesus' deity, then he can also bring doubt as to the validity of Jesus' teaching. If he can do that, then he can also bring man to doubt the existence of God. If Satan accomplishes that, then everything becomes arbitrary (which is a philosophy espoused by many in the religious world today). Satan began to attack Christ's deity in the very beginning (Gen. 3) and he will continue to do so until he is thrown into the lake of fire. Casting aspersions on the truth of God's Word has always been Satan's main line of offense as he challenges the deity of Christ.

Satan invariably denies the deity of Christ, as will his false teachers, even to the extent of denying the Lord that bought them. Such denial would include the doctrine of salvation. If Satan wipes out the deity of Christ, he has wiped out the doctrine of salvation with it. The two must go together. If Christ is not deity, and if He was not deity in human flesh as He was dying on the cross, then the atonement that He purported to accomplish—He did not accomplish at all.

SATAN ATTACKS THROUGH MODERN ENTERTAINMENTS

As Christians desiring to please Christ, we should know that exposing our mind to satanic ideas and concepts must be constantly avoided as a place of potential snares and contact. Some modern examples are: Movies that follow the theme of Satan and his demons, science fiction that portrays superhuman powers available from cosmic sources (such leave unguarded minds open to endless fantasies about what may be true, and thus a conflict with the authority of God's Word), television programs dealing with the occult directly or indirectly, music that popularizes demonic activities, through satanic words and occult mantras, games promoting contact with demons or which encourage contact with demons and their related activities. As Paul states, we must "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). Occult practices such as black magic, astrology, fetishes and talismans, fortune-telling, séance meetings, witchcraft, palmistry, spiritism, ESP (extra-sensory perception), pictures of witches and occult propaganda, voodoo dolls, candles with occult significance, incense, excessive superstition, religious practices that highlight the

emotional, cults, Satan worship, tarot cards, Ouija Boards, crystal balls, pyramids, black cubes and related occult practices should also be completely avoided. When Paul taught the believers about the strategies of Satan, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all (Acts 19:19-20).

IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE

There is a habit common among humans that many of us practice from time to time. This practice is called “Ignoring things we do not like and hoping they will go away.” With minor aches and pains that method often works. However, with water leaks, debt, and mechanical problems it almost never works. When we ignore problems with our health, with our homes, and with our automobiles those problems only worsen in time. People and problems that bother us we ignore, and hope they go away. Sometimes it works, but most of the time it does not. However, when we enter into the realm of our spiritual life, spiritual health, and spiritual safety—ignoring Satan is the worst choice we can make.

SATAN’S USE OF SKEPTICS AND SKEPTICISM

Jesus had to deal with skeptics all the time. The main opponents in His day were the religious leadership of Israel (i.e., Pharisees and Sadducees). For the most part, they refused to acknowledge that He was deity, the promised Savior spoken of in the Scripture. They also rejected His teachings and exposition of the true meanings of God’s Word. They even rejected the supernatural proofs He gave to support and prove His deity. There will always be skeptics and skepticism. There will always be those who mock the self-evident truths of God to their own judgment. However, it seems that today there is even more skepticism and it is getting to be more mainstream every day.

In recent years, the skeptic’s respect for people of faith has turned from apathy to disdain. Films on the life of Jesus in the 50s and 60s carried some degree of acknowledged respect, but today a new type of approach is presented. These new age historians have decided that only their twisted view is the correct view (from the liberal perspective) and the elimination of the true Bible student’s point of view is an absolute necessity. Television networks such as A&E, The Learning Channel, Discovery Channel, the National Geographic Channel and the History

Channel have broadcast documentaries on the lives of Jesus and other Bible characters on a regular basis. These documentaries typically interview academic liberals, but rarely give true Bible students a voice. Unfortunately, many viewers take the words of these liberal theologians as the viewpoint of all Biblical scholarship.

Here is a partial listing of direct attacks on the credibility of the Bible as seen on local television stations around the world. Often these attacks are in the mantra of humor but their attacks do tremendous damage nonetheless. On the cartoon show, "Family Guy" the lead character was heard to remark, "God is Evil." He also stated: "Jesus was drunk most of the time." On the FOX cartoon, "The Simpson's," one character said, "He [God] is my favorite fictional character." He also referred to the Bible as a "2000 year old sleeping pill." An animation of Jonah's skeleton still inside the remains of the great fish (or whale) was also depicted.

On "Adam and Eve," an A&E program, Lillith, a promiscuous demon, was said to be Adam's first wife. The program also stated that God was jealous of His creation. The Discovery Channel in connection with BBC America aired a program falsely entitled, "Noah's Ark: The True Story," which stated that the dimensions of the Ark were falsified in the Bible account and that the Ark was actually several small boats tied together. It also stated, in an attempt at humor, that Noah was originally a beer vendor and was not permitted to return home after the flood because of outstanding debts. The audience was also informed that the flood was very limited in size and only affected only the small village where Noah lived. The audience was also told that Noah was an "albino" who had encounters with demons his entire life, before and after the flood. On another program dealing with Noah ("Noah's Ark" on NBC) the audience was told that Noah lived in Sodom with Lot and a waterspout was sent by God to destroy only that city.

Other lies propagated to challenge the reliability of the Bible are: Sodom and Gomorrah were mythical ("Sodom and Gomorrah" on The History Channel); Joseph never existed ("Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors" on BBC/National Geographic Channel); There was no Satan in the story of Job ("Job: The Devil's Test" on A&E); Moses used a magic wand and mystic incantations ("Moses" on A&E); Jericho's walls did not fall nor is there any other evidence for the Bible story ("Joshua and the Walls of Jericho" on BBC/America and The Discovery Channel); The Hebrews did not overtake Jericho but were people

fleeing from tax collectors (“Joshua and the Walls of Jericho” on BBC America and The Discovery Channel); David did not kill Goliath (“King David: Poet Warrior” on A&E); Queen Esther was weak and the story is probably a myth according to the programs narrator who plants doubts into the viewers mind (“Queen Esther: Far Away and Long Ago” on A&E); Herod did not kill the Bethlehem infants (“Herod: Madman or Murderer” on The Discovery Channel); There was no virgin birth and Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier (“Jesus: Holy Child” on A&E and “In Search of Christmas” on The History Channel); Mary Magdalene is referred to as a prostitute and the mother of Jesus’ children and John calls Jesus a sinner (“Jesus” on CBS); Jesus was romantically involved with both Mary Magdalene and Mary, sister of Martha and Jesus abused His power (“The Real Mary Magdalene” on The Discovery Channel and “Jesus” on CBS); Jesus has many identity crises as a human and as God (“Mary, Mother of Jesus” on NBC); Jesus denies His heavenly Father and believes that He is not the way, the truth and the life but others are equal to Him (“Jesus” on CBS); Jesus did not rise from the dead, and His body may have been eaten by wild dogs, if He was buried at all (“The Execution of Jesus” on A&E); The people who saw Jesus after the resurrection were only seeing a vision (which the audience was told is a normal part of the grieving process), He did not actually appear to people after the crucifixion (“The Execution of Jesus” on A&E); Peter did not heal through the power of Jesus he just faked it (“Peter: Jesus’ Fisherman” on The Discovery Channel); and, Paul was converted by an earthquake’s flash (“Who was Paul” on The Discovery Channel). All such programming is doing Satan’s bidding, attacking the deity of Christ.

THE DA VINCI CODE AND OTHER Gnostic SKEPTICISM

Recently, there has been a lot more talk and skepticism concerning the deity of Christ. Much of this is due to the book and subsequent movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, and to the publicity that has been to other writings such as *The Gospel of Phillip*, *The Gospel of Judas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, et cetera. Historically speaking, except for *The Da Vinci Code* which was published in 2003, all these writings date some 200 to 500 years after Jesus’ life. They are historically recognized as the writings of early sects and cults. Most scholars believe those works are related to, and are at the core of the eastern mysticism and new age thinking today (Gnosticism). In fact, Gnosticism was addressed by the

apostle John in his letters (1, 2, 3 John). Suffice it to say, we can be assured that our Bible is inspired of God and that scholars and leaders placed each of its sixty-six books through the rigorous tests of canonicity. For people of faith it is quite simple. If we believe that the Bible was given to us by God, then we should naturally accept that the same God who made sure it was written perfectly and completely would also make sure that it contained the correct books and epistles.

However, first century Gnosticism is making an incredible comeback, which has led to many books and movies that challenge the deity of Christ. By definition Gnosticism is: "An early Christian religious movement teaching that salvation comes by learning esoteric spiritual truths that free humanity from the material world, believed in this moment to be evil."² *Gnosis* is the Greek word for "knowledge"³ and it was used by the Gnostics in reference to knowledge gained not through intellectual discovery but through personal experience or acquaintance which initiates one into esoteric mysteries. The experience of *gnosis* reveals to the initiated the divine spark within. *Gnosis* has a very different meaning in the New Testament, one which excludes esotericism and self-deification. Gnosticism is a philosophy that stresses the acquisition of knowledge. The knowledge sought is not strictly intellectual, but mystical as well; not merely a detached knowledge of or about something, but a knowing by participation. This knowledge discloses the spark of divinity within which is thought to be obscured by ignorance. Modern interest in ancient writings has presented Gnosticism an opportunity to gain new followers. Examples of some of the ancient writings which have seen modern interest should be considered here. *The Gospel of Mary*, in which Jesus is reported to have said: "All natures, all formed things, all creatures exist in and with one another and will again be resolved into their own roots, because the nature of matter is dissolved into the roots of its nature alone."⁴ *The Apocryphon of John*, in which God supposedly said to John, "I am Father, I am Mother, I am Son ... I have come to you that you may know the things not revealed."⁵ In this work, Mary Magdalene is also quoted, saying:

When the soul had overcome the third power, it went upwards and saw the fourth power, (which) took seven forms. The first form is darkness, the second desire, the third ignorance, the fourth is the excitement of death, the fifth is the kingdom of the

flesh, the sixth is the foolish wisdom of flesh, the seventh is the wrathful wisdom. These are the seven powers of wrath.⁶

The Apocalypse of Peter, in which Peter has this conversation with Jesus—“And I [Peter] said, what am I seeing, O Lord? Is it really you whom they take? Are you holding on to me? And are they hammering the feet and hands of another? Who is this one above the cross, who is glad and laughing? The Savior said to me, ‘He whom you saw glad and laughing above the cross is the Living Jesus.’”⁷ *The Gospel of Philip*, which states: “The world came about through a mistake. For he [God] who created it wanted to create it imperishable and immortal. He fell short of attaining his desire.”⁸ *The Gospel of Thomas* (saying 114): “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘See, I am going to attract her to make her male so that she too might become a living spirit that resembles you males. For every female (element) that makes itself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’”⁹

In the book, *Gnostic Gospels*, the author said: “Today we read them with different eyes, not merely as ‘madness and blasphemy’ but as Christians in the first centuries experienced them—a powerful alternative to what we know as the orthodox Christian tradition.”¹⁰

The Bible’s response to such madness can be summed up in one clear and distinct passage where Paul says:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

F.F. Bruce made an interesting comment about the Gnostics. He said: “There is no reason why the student of the conflict should shrink from making a value judgment: the Gnostic schools lost because they deserved to lose.”¹¹

CONCLUSION

Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, warns the church about the dangers of Satan. He commands every believer in the name and the authority of the Lord to be aware of, ready for, and armed

against Satan. Today, we all must be reminded that we live on an active battlefield. Not only is there a war swirling around us—there is also a war swirling within us. Satan is the ultimate terrorist insurgency. He is able to creep around us unnoticed. He can be absolutely silent when he wants to. He is completely invisible. Yet, he is more deadly to our spiritual lives than any truck bomber or suicide vest is to our physical existence. That is why Paul tells us to not ignore Satan or his devices. We must not yield any ground in our life to Satan by ignoring him. Nothing in life is neutral, and nothing about Satan is harmless. Everything in life is either for God or against Him. Everything is either promoting God's glory or opposing it. Nothing is neutral when it comes to God. We must never forget to assess the daily patterns and habits of our life, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us" (2 Cor. 2:11).

May we all find eternal strength in the fact that Jesus is indeed—deity. He is enduringly strong, entirely sincere and eternally steadfast. He is immortally graceful, imperially powerful and impartially merciful. He is God's Son. He is every sinner's Savior. He is the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He is unparalleled, unprecedented and supreme. He is preeminent and the fundamental truth in life. He is the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak and is available for the tempted and tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals and cleanses. He forgives sinners and discharges debtors. He delivers captives and defends the weak and feeble. He blesses the young, serves the unfortunate, regards the aged, rewards the diligent and beautifies the meek. He is deity. He is God's Son, the anointed Christ.

Christ is the giver of knowledge, the Prince of peace and the well-spring of wisdom. He is the doorway of deliverance and the pathway of love. He is the explanation of righteousness and holiness. He is the gateway of glory and the master of the mighty. His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He is indescribable and incomprehensible. He always has been, and He always will be. He had no predecessor and no successor. There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him.

James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² www.thefreedictionary.com/Gnosticism s.v. "gnosticism."

³ www.gnosticteachings.org s.v. "Gnosis."

⁴ www.earlychristianwritings.com/gospelmary.html

⁵ www.earlychristianwritings.com/apocryphonjohn.html

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ www.earlychristianwritings.com/apocalypsepeter.html

⁸ www.earlychristianwritings.com/gospelphilip.html

⁹ www.earlychristianwritings.com/thomas.html

¹⁰ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*
www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html

¹¹ F.F. Bruce, www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/b/bruce.ff.html

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Mike Hisaw



Mike Hisaw was born in Parsons, Kansas. Hisaw is married to the former Charity Justice. They are the proud parents of one daughter, Mary-Kate, and two sons, Jacob and John. Hisaw attended Freed-Hardeman University and graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee. He has spoken on different lectureships around the country. Hisaw works with the Carriage Oaks Church of Christ in Bossier City, Louisiana, as the pulpit minister.

INTRODUCTION¹

Satan is the enemy of all that is holy (Lk. 10:19). He is a greedy foe. Peter admonished: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Solomon wrote: “Hell and destruction are never full” (Pro. 27:20). Just as the hades realm never stops admitting the souls of the dead—it never has a “No Vacancy” sign outside of it—Satan is never satisfied with the souls he holds captive (2 Tim. 2:26). He is always after more souls (Job 1:7). He is after all humans—men, women, rich, poor, old and young. Consider Satan’s attacks on young people.

SATAN IS AFTER MAN EVEN FROM HIS YOUTH

Some teach that Satan has all men from conception. Calvinism has as one of its fundamental tenants the doctrine of “Total Hereditary Depravity.” It states that all of Adam’s descendants are tainted with a “sin nature” which compels them to evil and hinders them from even having the desire to do good. Many passages are wrested and enlisted in a futile attempt to prove this.

David penitently wrote: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). This is a sugar-stick passage of hereditary-depravity advocates. However, this passage does not place the sin on David. Acts 2:8 serves as a great commentary. The devout Jews questioned: “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” Were these Jews born speaking

particular languages? No, they were born in regions where these languages were spoken. So with David; he was born in a sinful world. Just as being born in a corn field does not make one corn, so being born in a sinful world does not make one a sinner.

Psalm 58:3 reads: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” On the surface this appears to support the notion of inherited sin. However, David’s use of hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis) when contending that sinners err from birth is clear by observing that those under consideration are “speaking lies.” No newborn can speak lies. Therefore, since “speaking lies” is the sin that separates them from God, it cannot be true that infants are estranged. David is simply saying that sin starts early in life.

Children are spiritually safe and pure before God. Jesus rebuked: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 19:14). The kingdom is composed of purified souls (Acts 2:47). Jesus said that children are like those who make up the kingdom. Therefore, children are pure.

No, Satan does not have men from conception. Children are created pure in the womb, for they receive their souls from God (Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:9) Who is Himself sinless (Zeph. 3:5). “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,” Solomon stated (Ecc. 7:29). Children do not inherit sin from their parents in the womb. Ezekiel wrote: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezek. 18:20). Children do not sin while in their mothers’ wombs. It is said of Jacob and Esau: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil” (Rom. 9:11). Children do not sin until they reach the age of responsibility. Paul said: “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom. 7:9). There was a time when Paul was alive without the law; when was that? It was that period of time when he had “no knowledge between good and evil” (Deut. 1:39), i.e., the time between his conception and when he reached the age of accountability. However, when he reached the point in his life when God would hold him accountable, “the commandment came,” i.e., he became amenable to God’s law, he then sinned and died spiritually (Eph. 2:1).

Though Satan has none from infancy, he starts pursuing people early in life. Eventually he gains all. “We know that we are of God, and

the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 Jn. 5:19, ASV). Sin starts at a relatively young age, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Also, Jeremiah wrote: "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice" (Jer. 22:21). Youth can be a time of grievous sin. David prayed: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Ps. 25:7). Job said: "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job 13:26).

SATAN'S SNARES FOR YOUTH

Satan entices men to engage in sin (1 Cor. 7:5). In fact, he does so much of it that he is called "the tempter" (1 Thess. 3:5). These sins "entangle" men (2 Pet. 2:20-22) and are "the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26). Certain sins have a particular appeal to youth. Paul commanded the relatively young Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12), "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Consider some of Satan's chief snares for young people.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is extremely common among young people in high school and college. Unfortunately, many (even some in the church) try to defend the moderate consumption of alcohol. The Bible does sanction drinking alcohol in one case. Paul encouraged Timothy to "use a little wine for [his] stomach's sake and [his] often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). The medicinal use of alcohol is legitimate. However, drinking alcohol for any other reason is sinful. Solomon wrote: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Pro. 20:1). Carefully note that Solomon did not say that "drunkenness is a mocker," but did say "wine is a mocker." Drinking alcohol in any amount is sin. Proverbs 23:29-35 is a very clear Biblical statement on drinking.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in

the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they
have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek
it yet again.

God forbid an Israelite from even looking with desire upon fermented wine (Pro. 23:31). If God forbid looking with desire upon wine, do you not suppose that He forbid drinking it? Solomon likens it to a biting serpent (elapid) and to a stinging adder (viper). Just as one cannot play with poisonous snakes without being hurt, alcohol can irreparably destroy young people's lives.

Sex

The sexual relationship is a gift of God to married people (Sol. 5:1), and only to married people. Sex is sinful outside of the marriage relationship (Heb. 13:4). Youth is a time when the sexual temptation is great. Especially is this true in our twenty-first-century America. Jesus called the first-century Jews a "wicked and adulterous generation" (Mt. 16:4). Our nation can be so described, too. Sexual taboos are disappearing. Sex is viewed so casually that it is used to sell almost every product. So many have "eyes full of adultery" (2 Pet. 2:14), they view every woman as a possible partner. Young people need frequently to read Genesis 39 in which Joseph, a young man, resisted the sexual advances of Potipher's wife. He said: "[H]ow then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Fornication is a far reaching sin. Obviously, it is against God since it is a violation of His law (1 Jn. 3:4). David, referring to his adultery with Bethsheba, said to God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). It is also a sin against the fornicator (Hab. 2:10), but it is unique among sins in the dishonor that it brings upon the body. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18). Paul further wrote: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (Rom. 1:24). Fornication is a sin against one's partner because he/she is enabled to sin. Jesus warned: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mt. 18:6). Guarding the mind is indispensable if one is going to avoid sexual sin. This is true because fornication

originates in the heart (Mt. 15:19). Knowing this, Job said: "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). Self-control is an essential in combating fornication. Paul stated this in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, saying: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." The "vessel" of this passage is the body. Without self-control, one is a sitting duck for fornication. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Pro. 25:28). Do not allow your body to become fornication's slave. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12).

Dancing must be avoided if one is going to "flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18). Dancing causes one to run toward fornication. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mt. 5:28). If Jesus forbad the look that leads to lust, would He allow the movement (dancing) that leads to lust?

Entertainment

Our society is obsessed with pleasure. Many are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). Not all entertainment is lawful before God. When Herod Antipas allowed his step-daughter to dance before those attending his birthday party, he provided sinful entertainment (Mt. 14:6). Paul challenged: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3-4). Note that Paul forbad the church from speaking lightly about evils like fornication and engaging in off-color, sexual humor. Yet, this is the subject matter of a lot of modern entertainment. Jeremiah said that the Jews "weary themselves to commit iniquity" (Jer. 9:5). This perfectly describes Hollywood. They work overtime to try to figure out how to make movies more perverse that they might draw greater crowds. It is sometimes argued that the movies and music are art, thinking that this justifies their filth. Isaiah sternly said: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isa. 5:20). An advisory is sometimes run before movies saying that it is not appropriate for younger audiences. Really,

it is not appropriate for any audience. We should say with David: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me” (Ps. 101:3). May we hate sin and not be entertained by it (Amos 5:15). “The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them” (Pro. 20:12). Since God made the eyes and ears of all, He can regulate what those eyes are to see and what those ears are to hear. Do not willingly allow sin to enter them. What we see and hear affects us. Therefore, Solomon admonished: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Pro. 19:27). In interpreting the Parable of the Sower, Jesus explained that the choking thorns consisted of “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in” (Mk. 4:19). Movies one watches and music he listens to can be a thorn that causes the Word to become unfruitful in his life. How can one possibly “keep [himself] pure” (1 Tim. 5:22) when he allows filth to enter his mind? Choose entertainment that will help you to think on that which is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Only then can your heart be guarded (Phil. 4:7).

Disrespect for Parents

One of Satan’s chief ploys with young people is deceiving them into believing that they know what is best for themselves and, consequently, causing them to rebel against their parents. However, youth means that one is deprived of wisdom and not that one is filled with it. “For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing” (Job 8:9). Solomon understood this and, therefore, said to God: “I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in” (1 Kgs. 3:7). God wisely ordained that children be born into the world through a home consisting of a father and a mother. The father and the mother are of necessity older and thus possess some greater degree of wisdom than their children. Job said that there is “in length of days understanding” (Job 12:12). The parents are to “train up” their children (Pro. 22:6) “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Both are to teach their children. “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro. 1:8). “[T]he father to the children shall make known thy truth” (Isa. 38:19). The virtuous mother “openeth her mouth with wisdom” (Pro. 31:26). Children are charged: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1). This command, which

is the first of God's laws to be taught to a child, comes with a promise (Eph. 6:2). The promise is: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:3). Jesus respected this arrangement. Though He initially created man (Jn. 1:3), and eternally preceded all men (Jn. 8:58), when He was "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4, ASV) He made Himself "subject" to her and to Joseph (Lk. 2:51). Some children are "stubborn and rebellious" and "will not obey" their parents (Deut. 21:20). Paul said that the "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against" those who are "disobedient to parents" (Rom. 1:18, 30). Solomon pleaded: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Pro. 23:26). May all young people obey the words of, and follow the example of, righteous parents and thereby be protected from Satan's snare.

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN OVERCOME SATAN

Young people do not have to be casualties in Satan's war (Rev. 12:17). The aged apostle John said: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 Jn. 2:14). Young people can conduct themselves in a way that the "wicked one toucheth [them] not" (1 Jn. 5:18). Satan, though powerful, is not all-powerful. "[G]reater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). To Cain, God said: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). Cain did not repent of his unauthorized worship and neither did he choose to rule over sin. Rather, he continued in his evil works and made himself a child of the Wicked One (1 Jn. 3:12). However, this does not have to be the lot of young people. Consider how they can overcome Satan.

First, young people can overcome Satan by learning and applying the Bible. John taught this in 1 John 2:14. It was because the Word of God was abiding in those young people that they overcame Satan. The Psalmist wrote: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word ... Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:9, 11). When Paul described "the whole armour of God" through which one can "stand against the wiles of the devil," he identified the only offensive component of it as "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"

(Eph. 6:11, 17). Through skillfully handling the Spirit's sword (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:13), like Jesus did in thrice quoting Scripture to the devil (Mt. 4:1-11), one can cause the devil to flee "for a season" (Lk. 4:13). Any ignorance that exists relative to God's Word is willful (2 Pet. 3:5). God has blessed us with abundant access to the Scriptures (1 Pet. 1:23-25). We should "read therein all the days of [our] life" (Deut. 17:19). And be meditating upon it "day and night" (Ps. 1:2). Hosea said: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). If one does not know the Bible, Satan will destroy him. Make learning God's Word an even higher priority than your homework from school (Mt. 6:33).

Second, young people can overcome Satan by realizing that no temptation is too powerful for a Christian to resist. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). No superhuman temptations come our way. They are all through the avenues of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16). Because God provides a way out of every temptation, we can "sin not" (1 Jn. 2:1) and "rule over" sin (Gen. 4:7). Peter rebuked Ananias in inquiring: "[W]hy hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ... why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" (Acts 5:3-4). Peter's strong words prove that Satan only overwhelms us when we let him. We can "withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:13)—if we will.

Third, young people can overcome Satan by avoiding evil associates. It is true that the church is to be influential (Mt. 5:13-16). Jesus taught this truth by likening the church to leaven placed in dough (Mt. 13:33). Just as leaven must contact the dough in order to cause it to rise, the church must contact sinful society to influence it. Even so, such should always be done while "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Our closest associates should not be sinners, but Christians who can daily exhort us to be faithful (Heb. 3:13). Solomon said: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Pro. 13:20). Solomon should have taught that lesson to himself and not just to others (Rom. 2:21). He married foreign women who "turned away his heart" (1 Kgs. 11:1, 3). "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33).

Do not think that a man like Jonadab is your friend. The subtle Jonadab encouraged Amnon to sin in raping his half-sister (2 Sam. 13). A real friend is one who will chastise you when you have sinned (Pro. 27:6) and who will tell you the truth (Gal. 4:16).

Fourth, young people can overcome Satan by staying busy doing good. Why did David commit adultery with Bethsheba? 2 Samuel 11:1 clearly states the reason—"And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem." David did not keep himself busy doing what kings do and consequently he did what kings should not do (cf. Pro. 31:3-4). It has often been said that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Get so busy doing good that you do not have time to do evil. If you will "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Ecc. 12:1), then you will not turn "aside after Satan" (1 Tim. 5:15). If you, like the young Jesus, will be about the Father's business (Lk. 2:49), then you will not be doing Satan's business.

Fifth, young people can overcome Satan by fervent prayer. In the model prayer, Jesus taught the disciples to pray: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13). In Gethsemane, Jesus commanded the inner three: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mt. 26:41). Paul closed his discussion of the whole armor of God and warfare with Satan by saying: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18). It is hard to sin when one has been pleading with God to help him resist temptation.

Sixth, young people can overcome Satan by remembering the judgment of God. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecc. 11:9). "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:14). When one keeps in memory that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), and that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29), it is easy

to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12:1). Paul said:

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences (2 Cor. 5:9-11).

Note the connection between the judgment and the terror of God. This caused Paul to labor for righteousness that he might have God’s approval. Do not think that God is some overindulgent grandfather who will never scold. No, there is severity with God and He will “show his wrath” (Rom. 9:22; cf. 11:22). When God’s fear is in us, we will resist sin (Ex. 20:20).

CONCLUSION

Young people, do not raise a white flag of surrender to the devil. “Resist” him and be “stedfast in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:9). You can “[overcome] him by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

SATAN'S ATTACKS ON THE HOME

Ronnie Hayes



Ronnie Hayes is native to Alabama. He and his wife, the former Cynthia Reeves have three children and three grandchildren. Hayes attended the Memphis School of Preaching in Tennessee, and received a B.A. from Southern Christian University and an M.A. from Freed-Hardeman University. He has done mission work in Latvia, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago. Hayes is the editor of the *Vigil*, a by-monthly publication of the Lord's church at Adamsville, Alabama where he has worked since 2002.

INTRODUCTION¹

The theme of this lectureship is one of which we all should be aware. As Christians, we face a formidable foe in Satan. Satan is not someone who should be taken lightly. Satan will attack us on many fronts. The subject of this discussion is certainly one that needs much attention. "Satan's Attack on the Home" becomes stronger every year. For that reason, we will consider our assigned topic in three major areas: 1) God's PLAN for the home, 2) Satan's PERVERSIONS on the home, and 3) How can Christians PROTECT the home from Satan?

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE HOME

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines "home" as "the social unit formed by a family living together."² This social unit begins with a husband and wife. God recognized that man being alone was not good. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). God has always intended for marriage to be the beginning of the home. Marriage is, one man, for one woman, for life. Christ said:

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mt. 19:4-6).

The kind of home God wants us to have has several characteristics. Let us look at these building blocks of a Christian home.

The home is a monogamous relationship. Monogamy is “the practice of marrying only once during a lifetime.”³ This would exclude polygamy, which is “a marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time.”⁴ Monogamy also speaks to the “one man and one woman” aspect of marriage. Marriage was never designed to be homosexual in nature. Mack Lyon says in his book, *With This Ring I Thee Wed*, “Please notice, too, it was male and female that God created (no third gender). And it was male and female that he joined together in marriage (not male to male or female to female). By ordaining marriage for the man and the woman, God gave human life dignity he gave to no other of His creation.”⁵ It is through the social unit of the family that God has given man the right of reproducing. The writer of Hebrews stated: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Children should be born into a happy and healthy home where they can receive the love, discipline, and instruction they need for life.

The home is also a cleaving relationship. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). About the word “cleave,” H. Leo Boles wrote: “The original word here implies a union which nothing can dissolve. The tie of husband and wife is stronger than that of parent and child, as the tie which binds husband and wife maintains its union during life, hence, ‘shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.’”⁶ This relationship is the very soul of the marriage. Without this commitment there is no trust. Usually in the vows, each couple promises his/her loyalty to each other. What kind of a home would you have if you did not have this trust? Probably a “Hollywood” version of marriage that usually does not last as long as it takes for the ink to dry on the license.

Commitment provides stability to our homes. One of the things I remember from my childhood was regardless of what happened in our family, mother and daddy were going to be there. I cannot imagine what it must be like for some children today. Will daddy be here when we wake up? Will mother be gone when I get in from school? These questions never entered our minds when we were children. What kind of stability do you have in your home?

Commitment also provides strength to our homes. Commitment gives us the strength to perform our responsibilities in the home. Husbands and wives are to love, honor, and respect each other.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:22-25).

Paul reminds parents of their responsibility, saying: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Children are also told "... obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3). Commitment will see us through the difficult as well as good times.

Commitment will provide self-abasement to our homes. This is so important to our homes. Christ said, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mt. 23:12). The "me first" attitude will never build up the home but it can and will destroy it. If you want a happy home, try to out-give your mate! When we learn to put others first, our lives will be more fulfilling and more meaningful. When we have the attitude "it's my way or the highway," then usually everyone is miserable. It can destroy the home and the church (cf. 3 Jn. 9-10).

The leaving relationship is another one of the building blocks of a Christian home. How can you get married and not leave your parents. Leaving means we should become independent of our parents. This is what God wants. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother" (Gen. 2:24). It is time for us to leave the security of our parents' home and to build the same in the home we are beginning.

Leaving means we should become dependent upon each other. "Leave" mother and father to "cleave" to each other. I heard a marriage counselor say that when couples get married, they should cross at least three rivers. The first two can have bridges and the last one should not even have a bridge. What was he trying to say? That we should become dependent upon each other and not run to our parents when life throws us a curve! When tragedies arise, learn to turn to your mate for the

comfort and strength you need. The more dependent we become on each other, the better prepared we will be to face the difficulties of life, TOGETHER!

The home is to be the place where husband and wife love each other (Eph. 5:22-25). It is where they are to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). It is where Christ is the foundation of this whole structure (Mt. 6:33). The home is the backbone of society. Who is in control at your home?

SATAN'S PERVERSION ON THE HOME

The home is under attack! Satan wants to destroy the home and bring it to a place of non-importance. He is not beyond using any resource to destroy the home. He uses the entertainment field to poke fun at this wonderful institution. He uses politics to promote perverted life styles. He uses ordinary people to persuade us that it really is not as bad as it seems to be.

Satan will make sure that we have many opportunities to compromise our moral fiber. Randall Murphee stated in the *AFA Journal*, "A study commissioned by the Shell Oil Company named the leading factors contributing to our nation's decline in moral values. Of those polled, 73% said adult language and sexually explicit content on television have contributed to the nation's deteriorating morality."⁷ There is no wonder that our family, nation, and world are in the shape they are. We are constantly bombarded with immodesty, impurity, and immorality. Are we getting used to this? How many times have you heard or said: "It's a good movie. There are only ten or twelve bad words and only two scenes of nudity." When did we become desensitized? The truth is we have not! This is one-way Satan attacks the home attempting to bring it to ruin. Listen to the words of Paul: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33).

Satan will make sure that he takes away our spiritual compass. What is our spiritual compass? It is the Word of God. It is Truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). It has the power to set us free. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). We will be judged by it. Jesus said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48). It is God's power of Salvation. Paul wrote: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto

salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). It can guide us through every step of our life. Addressing the Lord, the psalmist penned: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). Satan wants to take this word away from you and me because he knows what this word can do. Remember: “Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Lk. 8:12). What we must realize is the value of the Word of God and never let it go. We should possess the attitude of Peter when he said: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (Jn. 6:68-69). When we see that Christ has the words of eternal life, why would we go anywhere else? If we allow Satan to take away our spiritual compass, then our lives will be adrift on the endless ocean of despair. Ask yourself: “Are those who want to throw away the Bible and live their lives the way they want to truly happy?” No, they are not! Just look at how rampant divorce is in our society. Man is really seeking what God is offering, but he has let Satan steal his spiritual compass.

Satan will make sure that our lives are corrupted with bad attitudes. Selfishness, ingratitude, irresponsibility, and lack of respect are recipes for disasters in the home. One would think that we would be most kind, considerate, and forgiving to the ones we love the most. However, that is not typically true. Paul wrote:

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:30-32).

It is true that our loved ones will tolerate our moments of rage, better than anyone else, but they should not have to. Is there anyone in this world that you know who deserves kindness more than your mate? Our children deserve parents who will speak to them in love and kindness, not bitterness and anger. Family decisions are not just about *me* and *my* wants, but they should be for the good of the whole. Selfishness will destroy the harmony of the home. We do not need big “I’s” and little “you’s” in the home or in the church. When selfishness occurs, you will have those who are willing to destroy the home or the church to get

what they want (3 Jn. 9-10). What kind of attitude do I have toward those I love?

Satan will make sure that we erect barriers to communication. Simple communication will solve many problems. The process of communication can be as simple as talking and listening. Yet, the process can also be made very complicated by many external and internal elements. Sometimes, in communicating we need to be good listeners. A good listener will take the message and process it so that it can be used. In the home there are many distractions that can cause the message not to be received, both internal (such as: hunger, headaches, worry) and external (such as: baby crying, pressed for time, phone ringing). All these barriers may be simple, but in communication they can be destructive. Has your wife ever said, "You are not listening to a word I say"? Oh, the words may be going in, but we are not processing them. We are not giving our full attention to the discussion. This leads to frustration and confusion. Frustration and confusion lead to many homes being destroyed. Satan knows this and will use it against us.

Did you ever notice that when you were dating that you could stay on the phone for hours? I have teenagers and sometimes I think all they do on the phone is listen to their "significant other" breathe. That may not be a lot of communication, but at least they are listening. When did we stop listening to our mates? We would be wise to help stabilize our homes through good communication.

Satan will create situations for our homes so that they will not be Christ-centered. A model home has Christ as its foundation and consists of a loving husband and wife, and their children. Satan wants to create situations that will undermine the authority of Christ. The death of child can literally tear a home apart. Instead of relying on Christ, some will blame Christ.

The sin of David and Bathsheba cost them their first-born. When the child died, David said: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23). David realized that the child was not coming back, but that he could go to where the child was. David did not blame God.

Job did not blame God for all of the calamities that befell him. He pointed out: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed

be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:21-22). Notice that Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. It would be foolish to allow Satan to convince us that God is not on our side. There are many passages that speak of God’s love for us. One of the most familiar is: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). It is hard for me to believe that God is going to forget about His children. He never has! Sure, there are trials and difficulties we will face, but remember, as God’s children we will not face them alone (cf. Mt. 28:18-20). I am determined to *not* allow Satan to take away my Christ-centered home.

HOW CAN CHRISTIANS PROTECT THE HOME FROM SATAN?

We are told: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). Paul told the church at Ephesus: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). The truth is, every relationship is either developing or decaying. Every marriage begins with a dream and then disappointments, discouragement, distance, and discord are encountered. We have to decide if we are going to overcome those problems and their causes or, ultimately, if our home is going to be destroyed through divorce. Are you willing to fight for your home, or will you give in to Satan? Here are some suggestions for protecting your home against Satan.

Make God The Center Of Your Home

God told the Israelites:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

One of the reasons why God’s Word was to be diligently taught was “lest thou forget the Lord” (Deut. 6:12). When God is not in our homes, there will be no righteousness. When God is not in our homes, there will be no purity. When God is not in our homes, Satan will be! Who

have you invited into your home? Christ said: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).

Know The Needs Of Your Spouse

This will eliminate selfishness. Christ set forth a principle that is still true today when He said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). If we would spend a lifetime of trying to out give our mates, we would have a lifetime of happiness. Paul warned Timothy: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Seeing that the love of money is the root of all evil, are we not just asking for trouble if we want to spend the most of it on ourselves? We could do away with this problem by simply recognizing the needs of our spouses and putting them first. When we were dating, we would spend every penny we could to impress him/her. Now is not the time to quit seeking to impress the one we love. It should be a matter of “want to” not a matter of “have to.” The “Golden Rule” would erase selfishness. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12). Certainly, we would want to apply this to our mates.

Guard Your Heart From Temptation

Solomon knew we would have to keep our hearts away from the lure of Satan. He counseled:

To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life (Pro. 2:16-19).

Value Your Marriage

Many fail to recognize the value of their marriage. Concerning wives, Solomon wrote: “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Pro. 18:22) and, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil” (Pro. 31:10-11). What value can you place on a father who will, “Train

up a child in the way he should go” so that “when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6). Or, as Paul said: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). What value can you place on a husband that will love his wife, or a wife that will submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22-25). Who can say enough about children that love and obey their parents? David said: “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Ps. 127:3). Truly, “A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother” (Pro. 10:1). Make no mistake about it: “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Pro. 20:11). Sometimes we lose sight of what is important. We put value on cars, houses, money, and even the opinions of others, but we fail to see their true value. Having a lot of money does not make one rich, but having a God-approved home, as described in the Bible, does!

Remember, Love Is The Glue Which Binds The Home

Love serves instead of seeking its own (cf. 1 Cor. 13:5). Love endures hardships instead of eroding at the first sign of trouble (cf. Mt. 28:20). Love guards the true value of the home instead of giving it away to superficial facades (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4). Love celebrates the good and bad instead of castigating every time something goes wrong (cf. 1 Cor. 13:6). Love renews the hopes, dreams, and desires of every individual that makes up the home, instead of ruining the chances for happiness (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8). Paul gives us the most beautiful example of how our love should be in our homes, exhorting: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Unfortunately, many are not willing to go out of their way for their marriage, much less, to give their lives for their mates. If we could possess this type of love, then our marriages and homes would be succeeding instead of failing.

Establish Priorities To Remind Us Of What Is Important

Christ said: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt. 6:33). He also said: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:26). Christ is not saying we have to despise our parents, but that we are to have everything and everyone in the right order. Our priorities have to be straight.

God must always be first and foremost in our life. God will not take a second place. Growing up in a Christian home, it was never questioned: “Are we going to church?” It was understood that we were. Everything that was done at our local congregation had top priority. Any other event’s importance fell somewhere below what was going on at the church. Priority-wise, where does the work of the church stand in your family? Answering that question might explain why so many of our young people are leaving the church!

Meet Each Other Halfway When Disagreements Arise

Dale Hubbert preaches a sermon called, “*How to Fuss Fair in the Family,*” which has Ephesians 4 as its text. In that lesson, he stresses that we need to:

1. Quit lying and start telling the truth (v. 25).
2. Keep current. Do not keep dragging up the past (v. 26).
3. Attack the issue and not the person (v. 29).
4. Act, not just react to the issues (vv. 30-31).⁸

If there is no room for negotiations, then there will probably be no discussions. Remember that no one is always right!

Make Sure You Do Not Spend More Than You Make

Year in and year out, finances are the number one reason why homes break up. Before marriage, it is important to watch the person you are dating. If a young man or woman cannot handle money before they get married, what makes you think that getting married will solve that problem?

*Make Sure You Are On The Same Page
When It Comes To Disciplining Children*

The discipline of children is necessary. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Pro. 13:24). “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Pro. 19:18). “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Pro. 22:15). “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Pro. 23:13). Many homes have been destroyed because parents did not discuss discipline before having children. Do yourself a favor. Choose the discipline you are going to use prior to having children. Set limits and be consistent. You and your

children will be happier if they know they have limits. Undisciplined children have a tendency to make a home miserable. If parents are not careful they will find themselves in a struggle over the way their children are disciplined. Do not let Satan use someone as wonderful as your children to break up what could have been a happy home.

Watch Out For Outside Interference In Your Home

“Outside Interference” here is code for “in-laws.” I love my parents and my wife’s parents, but they do not run our home. A suggestion from anyone is welcomed, but I will not let it go beyond being a suggestion. This is why we are told to leave and cleave. Probably, the best advice I can give in regard to in-laws is: “Let your mate deal with their family and you be supportive of what he/she decides.” This will solve many problems before they even get started. Do not ever speak ill of your mate’s family. It might be okay for them to express their feelings, but you had better keep your feelings to yourself. The old expression, “Blood is thicker than water,” is true. Be careful what you say.

CONCLUSION

I hope the matters discussed here will be of value to us as we give due consideration to our homes. Remember, Satan is “a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). He will devour our homes if we are not careful.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1973), s.v. “home.”

³ *Ibid.*, “monogamy.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, “polygamy.”

⁵ Mack Lyon, *With This Ring I Thee Wed* (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs, Inc., 1994), 11.

⁶ H. Leo Boles, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1952), 386.

⁷ Randall Murphee, “Get away from it all,” *AFA Journal* Feb. 2003.

<http://www.afa.net/journal/february/2003/TV.asp>

⁸ Dale Hubbert, “How To Fuss Fair in the Home,” Sermon, 1971.

SATAN'S BIBLE ANALYZED

Michael Felder



Michael Felder was born in Sumter, South Carolina. He and his wife, the former Catherine Wilson, have three sons, four daughters and one granddaughter. Felder received his B.A. from the Theological University of America, and is a graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He began his work at the Chester congregation in South Carolina, and has preached in several states across the United States. Michael now works with the Kimber Road congregation in Syracuse, New York.

INTRODUCTION¹

Ever since Satan deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, there has been *sin*. Sin has been functioning within the fabrics of every society since then. For centuries, man has wrestled against the evil principalities of the world. Satan has done his job well. Vast numbers of people are continuously being deceived and discouraged from even trying to run the Christian race. Numerous religions and denominations are split on the issues of values and worship. Largely due to these divisions, man has designed churches which cater to his own desires. Life in this world has become more valued than God's promise of eternal life.

It is no surprise that a mere man, such as Anton LaVey, would choose Satan's principles as the foundation for his own religion, and for the establishment of his own church. Regarding the motive for men doing such things, God made it plain, saying: "[M]en shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:2). LaVey tried to use man's "instinct" as the basis for his claim that "unavoidable urges" are a part of human nature. In so doing, he attempted to bring doubt into the minds of others. God never said we would not sin, but every day we must bury that old man of sin and press forward.

A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF ANTON LaVEY

On April 11, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois, a son was born to Augusta and Joe LaVey. They named their new son Howard Stanton LaVey. LaVey spent much of his early childhood in California. At the age of seven, he started being interested in magic and the occult. He became particularly interested in hypnotism and the art of handwriting. Young

LaVey enjoyed hearing the stories found in dark literature and pulp magazines and he often fancied the mystical characters, such as one by Jack London.

As a youth LaVey kept to himself most of the time. He had many talents, but perhaps his greatest talent was the keyboard. The range of sounds one could make on the keyboard fascinated him. LaVey was viewed as an outsider among his peers. He often skipped school and followed his own interest. At the age of sixteen LaVey dropped out of school. After leaving school he joined the circus in search of acceptance and adventure. No one knows when LaVey changed his name to Anton Szandor LaVey, but it is by that name he is infamously known today.

LaVey enjoyed the art of observing people. While employed by the circus, he noticed that some of the men who attended indecent sideshows on Saturday nights also attended tent revival meetings on Sunday mornings. Seeing the hypocrisy exhibited by many “church goers,” LaVey abandoned “Christianity” to seek other avenues of religious satisfaction.

Involving himself in paranormal research, LaVey used his talents as an organist to support himself. On Friday nights LaVey held lectures on the occult. Those especially “in tune” with LaVey’s thinking on the occult became known as a “Magic Circle.” It was a member of his “Magic Circle” that suggested he had the basis for a new religion.

On April 30, 1966, LaVey declared and founded the Church of Satan. He proclaimed 1966 as year “One” of the Age of Satan. This gained a lot of media attention for LaVey. Dubbed the “Black Pope” by some newspapers, LaVey performed Satanic baptisms and funerals. He also released an album called the *Satanic Mass*. Concerning LaVey’s production of *The Satanic Bible*, one of his disciples, Peter Gilmore, writes:

By the end of 1969, LaVey had taken monographs he had written to explain the philosophy and ritual practices of the Church of Satan and melded them with all of his philosophical influences from Ayn Rand, Nietzsche, Mencken, and London along with the base wisdom of the carnival folk. He prefaced these essays and rites with reworked excerpts from Ragnar Redbeard’s *Might is Right* and concluded it with “Satanized” versions of John Dee’s Enochian Keys to create *The Satanic Bible*.²

With the publication of this book and the media attention it received, LaVey became increasingly popular. In 1969, a documentary was done on LaVey entitled, *Satanis: The Devil's Mass*.

Howard Stanton LaVey, alias Anton Szandor LaVey, became ill and died on October 29, 1997, in San Francisco, California. He died at St. Mary's Catholic Hospital of pulmonary edema. Following the Satanic funeral his family requested for LaVey, his body was cremated and buried. Later, under the assumption that they could be used for Satanic ritual magic, LaVey's ashes were retrieved and divided among his heirs. Unfortunately, his legacy continues with those who follow the ideas of Satanism.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

The Satanic Bible was written and copyrighted in 1969 by Anton LaVey. It was published by Avon Books in New York, in 1969. Few would deny that this book was written by one deceived by the stealthy influences of the devil. Satan, however, did not directly *inspire* LaVey to write as the Holy Spirit *inspired* the Bible's penmen to write (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21).

AN OVERVIEW OF *THE SATANIC BIBLE*

At first glance *The Satanic Bible* may appear to be just an average book. Giving it a closer look, one's attention is quickly drawn to the five-pointed star which is strategically located on the cover's center. No, this is not your ordinary star. This one serves as a trademark for the Church of Satan. This trademark has served as the symbol for Satanists since the nineteenth century. Called the Sigil of Baphomet, this star encompasses five pointed angles, one pointing downward and the other two upward, all enclosed by a circle. While the Sigil of Baphomet appears on its cover, it is not the only symbol present within *The Satanic Bible*.

There is a second symbol that occurs above the "Nine Satanic Statements," which includes the Cross of Lorraine preceded by the infinity symbol at the bottom. This sign represents brimstone, the element with which hell's fire is fueled.

The Satanic Bible is divided into four books: the Book of Satan, the Book of Lucifer, the Book of Belial, and the Book of Leviathan. These four books are named after the four chiefs of hell in *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. Each of the previously mentioned books corresponds to diverse core aspects in Satanism.

THE BOOK OF SATAN: THE INFERNAL DIATRIBE

The Book of Satan is one of the shortest books in *The Satanic Bible*. This book is closely associated with *fire*. LaVey uses wittiness to stir his readers' senses and prepare them for what is to come. The Book of Satan attacks the core elements of Christianity. It makes a mockery of the moral beliefs upon which our society was founded and places Satan in the position of being a victim of persecution. The Book of Satan sets forth LaVey's philosophies as pure truth and attempts to break down the binary opposition (good vs. evil) generally recognized by society. The Book of Satan takes what is right and endeavors to undermine it. Accordingly, the concept of something being *good* is no longer *right*, and *evil* is no longer *wrong*. The *truth* becomes a *lie*, and the *lie* becomes *truth*. Denying that the freedom of one's soul is found in Christianity's so called "God," LaVey avers that freedom is found in the devil's iniquities and in serving oneself. Instead of presenting Satan as an evil entity in the world, LaVey views him as one who has done no wrong and is rightly due his own justice.

THE BOOK OF LUCIFER: THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Book of Lucifer is closely associated with *wind*. This book characterizes religion's traditional values as hypocritical. Based upon a wrong interpretation of Isaiah 14:12, many professed "Christians" think Lucifer is Satan, the representative of evil and all lies. Building upon the fact that the word "Lucifer," in Latin, means "bearer of light," LaVey expresses, "The truth alone has never set anyone free, it is only doubt which will bring mental emancipation."³ This quote from *The Satanic Bible* highlights how LaVey would have men to believe the absurdity that doubt is the key to freedom. The Book of Lucifer is divided into twelve essays, each of which is designed to destroy the foundation of Christian morals.

ESSAYS WITHIN THE BOOK OF LUCIFER

Wanted-God Dead Or Alive

In this essay LaVey discusses how Satanist's view God as merely a balancing aspect in nature, not the superior being that He is, One Who concerned with human suffering. Satanists deny God's unconditional love and claim His omnipotence is a fraud. They argue that if God really is all-powerful, and if His love really is unconditional, then He would not allow people to endure pain, misery and sorrow. As LaVey

sees it, the responsibility for everything hinges on the way man and the universe act and react, and there is no other entity that cares.

The God You Save May Be Yourself

This essay continues the thoughts expressed in the previous one, trying in vain to develop them further. Satanists believe God is merely the creation of man's imagination, invented to give him the hope for something better. Sophistically, they then pose the question: "Why worship something that is of no less human origin than oneself?" Setting forth such questions, Satanists want to persuade people to conclude that they should be glorifying themselves, not a *humanized God*. By taking God out of the equation, that leaves only a man being responsible for himself. Holding such an egocentric view makes most Satanists self-centered and non-empathetic concerning the world around them.

Some Evidence Of The New Satanic Age

This piece displays Satanism as more than a philosophy. It contends that Satanism is the *religion* best suited to meet human needs. Here, LaVey expresses that the "Seven Deadly Sins" are instinctual and unavoidable. Basically, LaVey says such sins are the natural urges of human nature, that they are bound to happen and thus they should not be viewed as "sin." He views Christianity's prohibitions and restrictions against sinning to be a religious framework designed to assure that men and women will sin. Thus, having sinned, they have to beg God for His forgiveness. Moreover, he insists that this makes man dependent upon the church for spiritual salvation. LaVey offers Satanism as the alternative religion, which is supposedly built upon truth, not falsities like most other religions (especially Christianity).

Hell, The Devil, And How To Sell Your Soul

This article explains why LaVey has no real belief in God or Satan, or any gods or devils. He highlights the reason why he uses "Satanism" as the name for his self-indulgent religion. He points out that the term "Satan" means "adversary." According to LaVey, an adversary can be a supernatural figure or any opponent that one may face; therefore, Satan is the ideal symbol for a religion that partakes in iniquities.

Love And Hate

This section explains Satanists' perception of love and hate, and the roles they play in the lives of men and women. Satanism is admittedly

a religion in which self-satisfaction is the goal, and LaVey identifies it with what the individual truly wants for self. However, while he stresses that one must *first* always have his/her own interest at heart, the concepts of universal love and hate are viewed as impossibilities under the umbrella of Satanism.

Satanic Sex

Satanism's catering to man's carnal desires is an advertisement for promiscuous behavior. In this section, LaVey talks about a "free love movement." LaVey's "free love movement" would allow decisions regarding sexual appetites and activities to be "matters of the heart," i.e., left up to the individual. There are exceptions which limit the "freedom" allowed in the "free love movement." The rules in *The Satanic Bible* specifically state: "Satanism encourages any form of sexual expression you may desire, (*so long as it hurts no one else*) (emphasis added)."⁴ This prohibition includes any form of pedophilia or bestiality. LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* also forbids any type of illegal activity. LaVey and other hedonists fail to recognize that any sexual activity outside of monogamous marriage hurts someone (Heb. 13:4).

Not All Vampires Suck Blood

This part of *The Satanic Bible* is perhaps its most famous. It is within this section that LaVey defines what he calls the "psychic vampire." The phrase "psychic vampire" is used to describe those who mentally control others by articulately playing the role of a victim. Satanists view these people as mentally draining and they are advised to avoid "psychic vampires" at all costs.

Indulgence Not Compulsion

This exposition focuses on how Satanists should not abstain from things, but rather should release their inhibitions and throttle ahead *full force*. Satanism's doctrine that heaven is nonexistent means that earth is the only place one can find happiness and satisfaction. Although Satanism holds that one's own happiness is paramount, LaVey warns Satanists to beware of individuals who lack any sense of self-restraint. Is it not interesting that Satanists deny that individuals who participate in destructive behavior will fail to find fulfillment in this life?

On The Choice Of Human Sacrifice

LaVey uses this passage to expound the limits of human sacrifice. He authorizes "symbolic" but *not* "literal" human sacrifice. Further-

more, LaVey condemns animal sacrifices. If one wants to make a sacrifice, LaVey encourages him to use himself as a sacrifice, but again he does not condone suicide (except in the case of euthanasia). LaVey teaches that if one believes an individual deserves to die, then one has the right to place a curse on him. Then, if the cursed person dies, that is a human sacrifice which is acceptable.

Life After Death Through Fulfillment Of The Ego

This section displays how *life* and *living* are placed very high on the Satanists' priority chart. They are advised to take good care of themselves and preserve their lives. LaVey condemns the acts of martyrdom and suicide. When it comes to a man's natural inclination to defend his loved ones, one must always weigh the risks—preservation of "self" is primary. LaVey finds that suicide is acceptable in cases of a terminal illnesses when dying is preferable to living.

Religious Holidays

As indicated by the title, the bulk of this essay discusses important holidays for the Satanists. The holiday held in highest regard by the Satanist is his own birthday. This is not surprising seeing as how important one's own existence is to the Satanist. The next holiday discussed in the book is called "Walpurgisnacht." While Walpurgisnacht historically comes from a pagan spring observance, LaVey gave that name to the holiday which marks the birthday of his Church of Satan. The third holiday Satanists observe is Halloween. Summer and winter solstices, and spring and fall equinoxes are also celebrated. They mark the specific days in nature when the seasonal changes occur.

The Black Mass

LaVey uses this book to discuss the so-called "Black Mass." He discusses how this particular observance is a "literary invention" designed by the Catholic Church to instill the depravity of those accused of being witches. However, LaVey goes on to explain that Satanism has utilized the Black Mass as a motivational psychodrama and as an emotional channel.

THE BOOK OF BELIAL

This detailed portion of *The Satanic Bible* is closely related to the *earth*. Its sole purpose is to present in depth the whole concept of magic. LaVey expresses that there is power in magic and that it has

practical applications. Like the others before it, the Book of Belial is also divided into essays.

The Theory And Practice Of Satanic Magic

This article sheds light on LaVey's definition of magic. LaVey explains: "The definition of magic, as used in this book is: 'The change in situations or events in accordance with one's will, which would, using normally accepted methods, be unchangeable.'"⁵ LaVey also breaks magic down into two separate entities, distinguishing between "Lesser Magic" and "Greater Magic." "Lesser Magic" deals with any non-ritualistic or persuasive magic. Manipulation is perhaps one of the most important elements when practicing "Lesser Magic." "Greater Magic" encompasses all ritualistic and ceremonial magic.

The Three Types Of Satanic Ritual

In this passage, the three types of Satanic rituals are explained. First, there are "Lust Rituals." These are the rituals that involve sexually attracting the person of one's choice. In order for this ritual to be successful you have to have a particular person in mind. The second type of ritual is the "Compassion Ritual." The purpose of the "Compassion Ritual" is to increase wealth. It can be applied to loved ones or oneself. The third ritual is a "Destruction Ritual." "Destruction Rituals" involves placing a curse on one's enemy in order to destroy him. For any of the rituals to come to pass, one must first visualize and actually want his desires to come true. Satanists are warned to be mindful of the consequences of these rituals.

The Ritual, Or "Intellectual Decompression Chamber"

The "Decompression Chamber" is defined within this chapter. This ritual involves relinquishing all of one's pent up energy and entering into a state of mental suspension of disbelief. LaVey explains that this ritual may be practiced by an individual or by a group. Regarding the "Intellectual Decompression Ritual," LaVey says more can be achieved by "Group Rituals." He states that more can be achieved in the "Compassion" and "Lust Rituals" on an individual or personal level.

The Ingredients Used In The Performance Of Satanic Magic

This portion of *The Satanic Bible* names the five elements that are crucial for spells. The five elements are: 1) desire, 2) timing, 3) imagery, 4) direction, and 5) balance. LaVey provides a complete list of detailed instructions for the exact administration of rituals, giving

specifics as to how one must execute them. Items included in the rituals are: the Sigil of Baphomet, ritual wear, chalice, elixir, phallus, gong, sword, parchment, bell, candles, and the alter.

THE BOOK OF LEVIATHAN: THE RAGING SEA

This is the last book in *The Satanic Bible*. It is closely associated with the element *water*. LaVey gives Satanists explicit instructions on what they are to say and do in carrying out the rituals in this section. This book includes the so-called “Nineteen Enochian Keys.” These keys serve as alternating chants. *The Satanic Bible* ends with a stamp which says: “Yankee Rose.” Not even the Satanists know why LaVey chose this reading to end his book. Since LaVey is dead, the “Yankee Rose” mystery remains.

THE THRUST OF *THE SATANIC BIBLE*

Denying God’s existence and therefore His involvement in the affairs of men, *The Satanic Bible* focuses solely on self-gratification and controlling one’s own destiny. It also plainly plants seeds of doubt regarding God, Christianity, things spiritual, man’s eternal destiny, et cetera. In the Garden of Eden, Satan used doubt to his advantage in getting Eve to taste the forbidden fruit. God had strictly forbidden Eve to eat of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17). When Satan tempted her, she told him, “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3), but Satan planted doubt in her mind by saying: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Satan discarded what God had said and planted the seeds of doubt in Eve’s mind. Thus, Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and then gave it to her husband. God’s Word was validated. Consequently, Adam and Eve suffered spiritual and physical death.

The Satanic Bible also incorporates the nine Satanic statements. The nine Satanic statements are:

1. Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams!
3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit!
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates!
5. Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek!

6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires!
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!
9. Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years!⁶

THE SATANIC BIBLE: A WORK OF BLASPHEMY

The Bible teaches: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Satan is a great deceiver. He plays with the minds of individuals and leads them to believe that God is keeping something from them. LaVey uses *The Satanic Bible* to manipulate the minds of his readers and blaspheme against God's Word. We must be aware of Satan's evil devices, and be mindful that the devil knows the Scriptures, too. Satan's knowledge of the Scriptures can be used against the man who does not know what God's Word says.

LaVey truly is a follower of Satan in his use of doubt as a tool. This is especially so as he cultivates doubt in the minds of his many followers who find his brand of Satanism so inviting. Though he may not really believe there is a Satan, what LaVey fails to understand is that Satan is using him to lead others down the path of destruction. Satan does exist and hell is a real place! Since LaVey died in 1997, he knows that now, but, just like the rich man in Luke 16:19-31, he found it out too late. Once a man's life is over, and he has lived in such a way that his eternal home is with the damned, he cannot do anything to change it.

The Satanic Bible is full of lies. It denies the very fact that God lives. LaVey says: "Man has always created his own gods, rather than his gods creating him. God is, to some, benign and to others terrifying."⁷ To the Satanist, "God, by whatever name he is called, or by no name at all, is seen as the balancing factor in nature, and not as being concerned with suffering."⁸ Satanists may say what they will, but God says: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1). If one denies the existence of God, the reality of

Christ's resurrection, and the reality of heaven and hell, he is truly being foolish. The Scriptures clearly point out how foolish one is who refuses to believe in the Redeemer of his soul. In light of this, LaVey's philosophy and Satanic doctrines are clearly blasphemy. Yes, it is too late for LaVey, but it is not too late for us. We can still make the right choices, choices that will lead us to salvation and keep us in God's good graces.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we must be aware of Satan's evil devices. If we are not careful he may yet capture our souls. How much should one take in exchange for his soul? The answer should be: "Nothing!" Eternal life is ours if we will deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him daily. No one says the Christian life is going to be easy. Indeed, we are to be hard-fighting soldiers on the battlefield. Exposing God's enemies, such as Anton LaVey and his fellow Satanists, pointing out and refuting their blasphemous beliefs, and telling others of God's wonderful message, the Gospel of Christ, we will be victorious.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Wikipedia, "Anton LaVey."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Szandor_LaVey

³ Anton LaVey, *"The Satanic Bible"* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1969), 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*

SATAN'S CHURCH EXPOSED

David Harris



David Harris is a native Texan. He and his wife Joy have three children and three grandchildren. Harris is a graduate of Tarleton State University. He spent most of his adult life as a rancher. Harris filled the pulpit for different congregations over a period of years while serving as a deacon at the church in Rising Star, Texas. He worked with the Fourth and Stewart congregation in Brownwood, Texas for six and a half years, and currently is the minister for the Hillcrest congregation in Stephenville, Texas,

INTRODUCTION¹

The Church of Satan was conceived in the mind of one depraved man, Anton LaVey, and came into existence at the insistence of a circle of his friends, who suggested that he had the basis for a new religion. Much of LaVey's thinking and religion came from his "life experiences"—working in carnivals, reading "dark occult literature," his musical talent, and having supposedly worked as a "psychic investigator" for the San Francisco police department. As far-fetched as it may seem, the Church of Satan is "alive and well" today. According to the Church of Satan, there are many Satanists around the world. Although exact numbers have never been released, it has been estimated that the number of adherents is in the tens of thousands. In the exposition of the Church of Satan, we will see that what it espouses has no authoritative consistency. Instead, it engages in circular reasoning, which is often seen in ill-equipped, misguided peddlers of false doctrines.

THE HOW, WHEN, AND WHERE OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN

Satanism is a religion and philosophy founded in 1966 by Anton LaVey. Its ethical teachings are based on individualism, self-indulgence, and "eye for an eye" morality, with influence from Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand, while its rituals and magic draw heavily from occultists such as Aleister Crowley. Borrowing Crowley's terminology, its adherents define Satanism as a "Left-Hand Path" religion, rejecting traditional "Right-Hand Path" religions such as Christianity for their perceived denial of life and emphasis on guilt and abstinence. Unlike traditional

Satanism, it does not literally worship Satan, but rather uses “Satan” as a symbol for people’s natural inner desires.²

Peter H. Gilmore, who was appointed to the position of High Priest in the Church of Satan in 2001 writes:

Anton LaVey dropped out of high school to hang around with hoodlum types and gravitated towards working in the circus and carnivals, first as a roustabout and cage boy and later as a musician. His curiosity was rewarded through “learning the ropes” and working an act with the big cats, and later assisting with the machinations of the spook shows. He became well-versed in the many rackets used to separate the rubes from their money, along with the psychology that lead people to such pursuits. He played music for the bawdy shows on Saturday nights, as well as for tent revivalists on Sunday mornings, seeing many of the same people attending both. All of this provided a firm, earthy background for his evolving cynical world view.

When the carnival season ended, LaVey would earn money by playing organ in Los Angeles area burlesque houses. Moving back to San Francisco, LaVey worked for a while as a photographer for the Police Department, and during the Korean War, enrolled in San Francisco City College as a criminology major to avoid the draft. Both his studies and occupation revealed grim insights into human nature.

During the 1950’s, LaVey supplemented his income as a “psychic investigator” helping to investigate “nut calls” referred to him by friends in the police department. These experiences proved to him that many people were inclined to seek a supernatural explanation for phenomena that had more prosaic cause. His rational explanations often disappointed the complainants, so LaVey invented more exotic causes to make them feel better, giving him insight as to how religion often functions in people’s lives.

Through his “ghost busting,” and frequent public gigs as an organist, including playing the Wurlitzer at the Lost Weekend cocktail lounge, LaVey became a local celebrity and his holiday parties attracted many San Francisco notables. From this crowd LaVey distilled what he called a “Magic Circle” of associates who shared his interest in the bizarre, the hidden side of what moves the world. As his expertise grew, LaVey began presenting Friday night lectures summarizing the fruits of his research. In 1965, LaVey was featured on The Brother Buzz Show, a

humorous children's program hosted by marionettes. The focus was on LaVey's "Addams Family" life style—making his living as a hypnotist, psychic investigator, and organist as well as on his highly unusual pet Togare, a Nubian lion.

In the process of creating his lectures, LaVey was led to distill a unique philosophy based on his life experiences and research. When a member of his Magic Circle suggested that he had the basis for a new religion, LaVey agreed and decided to found the Church of Satan as the best means for communicating his ideas. And so, in 1966 on the night of May Eve—the traditional Witches' Sabbath—LaVey declared the founding of the Church of Satan as well as renumbering 1966 as the year One, Anno Satanus—the first year of the Age of Satan.³

If one adds the age of our Lord at His fleshly death upon the cross (i.e., 33), to the year LaVey established his church, we come up with the institution of the Church of Satan and the first year of the "Age of Satan," 2000 years too late to be of any significance. Of course, no religious organization would be complete without a source of authority, and soon the book used by Satanists was born.

By the end of 1969, LaVey had taken monographs he had written to explain the philosophy and ritual practices of the Church of Satan and melded them with all of his philosophical influences from Ayn Rand, Nietzsche, Mencken, and London along with the base wisdom of the carnival folk. He prefaced these essays and rites with reworked excerpts from Ragnar Redbeard's *Might is Right* and concluded it with "Satanized" versions of John Dee's Enochian Keys to create the *Satanic Bible*. It has never gone out of print and remains the main source for the contemporary Satanic movement.⁴

California, with all of its glitter, attention of the press, and television opportunities, was a fertile environment for the creation of such an institution as the Church of Satan.

LaVey began the dissemination of his philosophies with the release of an LP album entitled *The Satanic Mass*. This album featured a cover graphic named "Sigil of Baphomet:" the goat head in a pentagram, circled with the Hebrew word "Leviathan," which has since become the symbol of Satanism all over the world.

In addition to the actual recording of a Satanic ritual, side two of the LP had LaVey reading excerpts from the as-yet- unpublished

The Satanic Bible, over music by Beethoven, Wagner, and Sousa. His Friday lectures continued and he instituted a series of “Witches’ Workshops” to instruct women in the art of attaining their will through glamour, feminine wiles, and the skillful discovery and exploitation of men’s fetishes.⁵

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN

The Magic Circle / Order of the Trapezoid

Blanche Barton occupies a very strategic part of the Church of Satan in that she was LaVey’s “live-in-lover” and the mother of one of his children. She was appointed by LaVey as a co-conspirator and High Priestess. Barton, who succeeded as the head of the Church of Satan after LaVey’s death, writes:

From the early 1950’s, Anton LaVey explored some of these ideas, eventually gaining a reputation as a powerful black magician and San Francisco character. Others who felt aligned with his philosophy gravitated to him, gathering in his notorious Victorian “Black House.” In accordance with LaVey’s explorations of demonic geometry, they took to wearing an odd-shaped black and red medallion adorned with a bat-winged demon and formed a group called the *Order of the Trapezoid*, which later evolved into the governing body of the *Church of Satan*. Those who attended LaVey’s soirees always comprised an array of professions and pursuits: “the Baroness” Carin de Plessen—who grew up in the royal Palace of Denmark, Dr. Cecil Nixon—magician and eccentric extraordinaire, underground film-maker Kenneth Anger, as well as artists, attorneys, doctors, writers, and law enforcement officers. City Assessor Russell Wolden might share the room with anthropologist Michael Harner with writer Shana Alexander. A ship’s purser might be seated next to a deep-sea diver, a dildo manufacturer next to a plastic surgeon. A famous tattoo artist, the grandson of a U.S. president, the owner of one of the world’s largest collections of Faberge artifacts—all attended LaVey’s get-togethers. The field of fantasy and science fiction personages alone yielded the likes of Anthony Boucher, August Derleth, Robert Barbour Johnson, Reginald Bretnor, Emil Petaja, Stuart Palmer, Clark Ashton Smith, Forrest J. Ackerman, Fritz Leiber Jr. To name a few, into LaVey’s circle of magical compatriots.

LaVey wanted to establish something new, not strict doctrines awash with attitudes of blind faith and worship, but something which would smash all concepts of anything that had come

before, something to break apart the ignorance and hypocrisy fostered by the Christian churches. Something, too, that could free people to apply the black magic he and his Magic Circle were using. Anton became convinced he was learning methods to harness the dark forces which cause “a change in situations or events in accordance with one’s will which would, using normally accepted methods, be unchangeable,” as LaVey defines magic.⁶

His followers believe, as LaVey expanded and refined his formulas for the Magic Circle rituals, he began receiving precise results such as professional advances, unexpected rewards, monetary gains, sexual or romantic satisfaction, and the elimination of certain enemies. LaVey and his Magic Circle believed that he had indeed tapped into that “Mysterious Dark Force of Nature.”

There was the magic—and there was a workable philosophy to go along with it. It was a down-to-earth, rational, bedrock philosophy that emphasized the carnal, lustful, natural instincts of man, without imposing guilt for manufactured sins. To break apart the crust of stupidity and irrationality fostered over the past 2000 years, LaVey knew it was necessary to blast its very foundations. His ideas could not be presented as just a “philosophy”—that would be too easy to pass off or overlook. LaVey would blasphemously form a religion and, even more, he would call his organization a church, consecrated not in the name of God but in the name of Satan. There had always been a Satanic underground, centuries old, but there had never been an organized Satanic religion, practicing openly. LaVey decided it was high time there was.⁷

LaVey is called “The Black Pope” by many of his followers, and he was the High Priest of the Church of Satan. Barton became his helpmate, co-conspirator, High Priestess, live-in-lover, and best friend.

According to LaVey’s wishes, Barton succeeded him as the head of the Church after his death. In 2001 she passed the position to Peter H. Gilmore, who by then had been a longtime church administrator and member of the Council of Nine. In 2002, “Magistra Barton” exchanged her position as High Priestess with Gilmore’s wife, “Magistra Peggy Nadramia,” another veteran administrator who was serving as chair of the “Council of Nine.”⁸

The Department of the Army pamphlet NO. 164-13, has recognized the Church of Satan as an official religion and has a handbook for their chaplains. In it they give the requirements for leadership within the Church of Satan. The Department of the Army pamphlet instructs the following:

The Priesthood of the Church of Satan is not comprised of individuals who are necessarily adept in the performance of rituals, though pastoral and organizational abilities are not minimized. The rank of Priest is conferred on those who have achieved a measurable degree of esteem or proficiency and or success; one's level of membership within the Church is commensurate with his/her position outside the Church. Hence a respected career soldier or Commissioned Officer in the Army might qualify, though be totally uninvolved with group activity. This form of stratification determines the leadership and selects the governing body of the Church. Rituals are conducted by a de facto priest i.e., a celebrant member who has evidenced a working knowledge of and ability to conduct services and is authorized by the Central Grotto.⁹

Anyone can conduct a ritual, but a priest is required for group worship.

THE CHURCH OF SATAN AND ITS "WORSHIP"

LaVey said: "Every man is a god if he chooses to recognize himself as one."¹⁰ According to High Priest Gilmore: "We Satanists owe him [LaVey] our gratitude for symbolically opening the adamantine gates of Hell, by giving form and structure to a philosophy that names us as the Gods of our own subjective universes."¹¹

The practices of the Church of Satan involve "self-will-worship" and magic. This is thought to be something new and fresh according to Satanists, but this kind of worldly thinking has been going on since Genesis 3, where the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life took control of Adam and Eve.

As far back as the time before there were Kings in Israel, "[E]very man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jgs. 17:6; 21:25). This has been a problem with people since God gave instructions on how to live and please Him. Man has been obstinate in receiving instruction on how he must live and how he must worship the one and only true God. Man, through his own lusts and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5), has wanted to be free from any kind of restriction. The Church of Satan has the world's solution to the long-lived problem of submission

to God—religious organization where every member is his own god and can worship as he pleases, and to please himself.

The Satanic Bible states:

The highest of all holidays in the Satanic religion is the date of one's own birth. This is in direct contradiction to the holy of holy days of other religions, which deify a particular god who has been created in an anthropomorphic form of their own image, thereby showing that the ego is not really buried. The Satanist feels: "Why not really be honest and if you are going to create a god in your image, why not create that god as yourself?" Every man is a god if he chooses to recognize himself as one. So the Satanist celebrates his own birthday as the most important holiday of the year.¹²

There are two other major Satanic holidays. Walpurgisnacht (named after a nun who was the niece of St. Boniface), actually the spring equinox, is celebrated on April 30th. The other major Satanic holiday, Halloween—All Hallow's Eve, or All Saints' Day—is celebrated on October 31st. The solstices and equinoxes are also celebrated as holidays, as they herald the first day of the seasons. Five to six weeks after these days the legendary "Satanic revels" are celebrated.¹³

The Satanic Bible has a section on the "Theory and Practice of Satanic Magic." Readers are given the definition and purpose of this part of the religious practice. Explaining these, this text says:

The definition of magic, as used in this book, is: "The change in situations or events in accordance with one's will, which would, using normally accepted methods, be unchangeable." This admittedly leaves a large area for personal interpretation. It will be said, by some, that these instructions and procedures are nothing more than applied psychology, or scientific fact, called by "magical" terminology—until they arrive at a passage in the text that is "based on no known scientific finding." ... Magic is never totally scientifically explainable, but science has always been, at one time or another, considered magic.¹⁴

There is an attempt to show a difference between "White Magic" and "Black Magic." LaVey says that there is actually no difference at all except for the "smug hypocrisy, guilt ridden righteousness, and self-deceit of the 'White' magician himself." "White Magic" is supposed to be used for "good" purposes, and "Black Magic" is used for self-

aggrandizement, personal power, and “evil” purposes.¹⁵ LaVey continues:

Magic falls into two categories, ritual or ceremonial, and non-ritual or manipulative. Ritual magic consists of the performance of a formal ceremony, taking place, at least in part, within the confines of an area set aside for such purposes and at a specific time. Its main function is to isolate the otherwise dissipated adrenal and other emotionally induced energy, and convert it into a dynamically transmittable force. It is purely an emotional, rather than intellectual, act. Any and all intellectual activity must take place before the ceremony, not during it. This type of magic is sometimes known as “Greater Magic.” Non-ritual or manipulative magic, sometimes called “Lesser Magic” consists of the wile and guile obtained through various devices and contrived situations, which when utilized, can create “change, in accordance with one’s will.” In olden times this would be called “fascination,” “glamour,” or the “evil eye.”¹⁶

Apparently learning to effectively utilize the command “to look,” is an integral part of the witch’s or warlock’s training. The claim is made that in order to effectively manipulate a person, one must first be able to attract and to hold one’s attention.

There are three types of Satanic rituals or ceremonies incorporated in the practice of Satanic magic. Each one of these will correspond to a basic human emotion. According to LaVey:

The first of these rituals is called a “sex ritual.” This would be known as a love charm or love spell. The second type of ritual or ceremony is of a “compassionate nature.” the compassion, or sentiment, ritual is performed for the purpose of helping others, or helping oneself. The third ritual is “destruction.” This is a ceremony used for anger, annoyance, disdain, contempt, or just plain hate. It is known as a hex, or curse, or destroying agent.¹⁷

“A word of warning” follows the explanation of these ceremonies, which states: “To those who would practice these satanic arts—Concerning Sex or Lust: *Take full advantage of spells and charms that work.*”¹⁸ LaVey proceeds to instruct, with the composition of an accomplished pornographer, the lasciviousness that accompanies this “religion.”

“Concerning Compassion: *Be resolved that you’ll have no regrets at the expense of the help that you have given others ...*
Concerning Destruction: *Be certain you DO NOT care if the*

intended victim lives or dies, before you throw your curse, and having caused their destruction, revel, rather than feel remorse.

HEED WELL THESE RULES—OR IN EACH CASE YOU WILL SEE A REVERSAL OF YOUR DESIRES WHICH WILL HARM, RATHER THAN HELP, YOU!¹⁹

An unusual statement is made concerning this ritual called “destruction” or the curse. LaVey clouds the issue when he says: “[O]ne of the greatest fallacies about the practice of ritual magic is the notion that one must believe in the powers of magic before one can be harmed or destroyed by them. *Nothing could be farther from the truth* (emphasis added).”²⁰

It is indeed interesting that at this point in the Satanic Bible he would appeal to something called truth which only belongs to the Lord and not to Satan (Jn. 17:17). The truth (Word of God) teaches of Satan and his followers: “Ye are of your father the devil, 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” (Jn. 8:44). Truly, how could one know with assurance that he was doing anything correctly in this Church of Satan if the truth cannot be known?

Throughout the Satanic Bible, LaVey quotes and/or makes references to Catholic Church doctrines and practices with all their abuses. The worst part is that he ignorantly uses them as authoritative doctrines of the Bible and has the Catholic Church being the church of our Lord. Here is one example LaVey uses in trying to gain credibility for the Satanic Magic:

If religious faith and fervor can make bleeding wounds appear on the body in approximation to the wounds supposedly inflicted on Christ, it is called *stigmata* [Catholic tradition, DSH]. These wounds appear as a result of compassion driven to an emotionally violent extreme. Why, then, should there be any doubt as to the destructive extremes of fear and terror. The so-called demons have the power to destroy in a flesh rending manner, theoretically, as much as a handful of nails, long rusted away, can create blood-dripping ecstasy in a person convinced he is hooked upon the cross of Calvary.²¹

LaVey and his followers are fighting “straw men” that do not even exist. The Bible never endorses nor proclaims such actions as the Satanic Bible attempts to connect to Christ and His Word.

INGREDIENTS USED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SATANIC MAGIC

“*Desire*” is the first ingredient. He identifies this ingredient as “motivation, temptation, or emotional persuasion.” He advises that, “the Satanist performs his ritual to insure the outcome of his desires.” “*Timing*” is the next ingredient. It is explained: “In every successful situation, one of the most important ingredients is the proper timing. In the performance of a magical ritual, timing can mean success or failure to an even greater extent. The best time to cast your spell or charm, hex or curse is when your target is at his most receptive state.” Timing is followed by “*Imagery*” and it is stressed: “... the success of any ritual depends on it. Anything which serves to intensify the emotions during a ritual will contribute to its success.”²² Part of the uses of imagery consists in the creation of images. LaVey says:

To insure the destruction of an enemy, you must destroy them by proxy! They must be shot stabbed, sickened, burned, smashed, drowned, or rent in the most vividly convincing manner! It is easy to see why the religions of the right-handed path frown upon the creation of “graven images.” The imagery used by the sorcerer is a working mechanism for material reality, which is totally opposed to esoteric spirituality.²³

LaVey concludes with two additional ingredients: “*Direction*” and “*The Balance Factor*.” About “*Direction*,” he says: “One of the most overlooked ingredients in the working of magic is the accumulation and subsequent direction of force toward an effective end.”²⁴ “*The Balance Factor*,” says LaVey, “is an ingredient employed in the practice of ritual magic which applies to the casting of lust and compassion rituals more than in the throwing of a curse.”²⁵

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN

It is fairly simple to become a registered member of the Church of Satan. Application forms may be found on their website. They claim a few restrictions, but it is doubtful they would turn anyone away. They strongly urge anyone who wishes to become a member to defend the “satanic faith.”

We encourage each Satanist to take it upon himself to clear up misunderstandings of our religion wherever he sees them. You don't have to be a member to speak for yourself as a Satanist;

you need no authority beyond being offended by stupidity and hypocrisy. Understand that if you wish to speak as member of the Church of Satan, you are legally required to be a Registered Member. In addition, don't misrepresent yourself as being a spokesperson for the Church unless you achieve that status. But you can always defend Satanism as an avowed Satanist, proud of your religion.²⁶

To become a registered member, one must send in a one-time registration fee of \$200.00. For this the registrant will receive a crimson card declaring him a member of the Church of Satan. There is also the application for "Active Membership," and again the oxymoron is used concerning "truth." One is requested to answer all questions on the application form. Then, this statement is made concerning one's answers: "False answers are grounds for immediate termination of membership."²⁷ It is pure irony for the Church of Satan to request truth, when everyone is a god to himself. Satan, being the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), should encourage false statements concerning anyone's application.

MAKEUP OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN

Man has always wanted a leader, but seldom has wanted to be told what to do. The history of Israel, from Egypt to the promised land and beyond, points this out to us. People who would be members of the Church of Satan believe in all that is opposed to the "Christian Church," i.e., as they know it to be. Satanists openly blaspheme all that is true, holy, just, and righteous according to our Lord. Satanists claim that their members, particularly its older members, came out of an era when "Christianity" was taken a bit more seriously, and that they had some sort of "Christian Indoctrination" in their childhoods. No doubt, anyone who would be a Satanist and a member of the Church of Satan, is someone who is looking for freedom from restrictions. Certainly, the Christian life is not one of "freedom" to engage in sinful thoughts and actions—it is a life of submission to the Will of God (Eph. 5:24).

LaVey does know some Scripture from the Bible, but he loves to use it for the wrong reasons and to his advantage. He knows how the New Testament church of the Lord left the divine path and that denominationalism is not what we read about in the Bible. Giving his evidence for a "New Satanic Age," LaVey blasphemes:

Since man's natural instincts lead him to sin, all men are sinners; and all sinners go to hell. If everyone goes to hell, then you will

meet all your friends there. Heaven must be populated with some rather strange creatures if all they lived for was to go to a place where they can strum harps for eternity.

“Times have changed. Religious leaders no longer preach that all our natural actions are sinful. We no longer think sex is dirty—or that taking pride in ourselves is shameful—or that wanting something someone else has is vicious.” Of course not, times have changed! “If you want proof of this, just look at how liberal the churches have become. Why, they’re practicing all the things that you preach.”

Satanists hear these, and similar statements, all the time; and they agree wholeheartedly. But, if the world has changed so much, why continue to grasp at the threads of a dying faith? If many religions are denying their own scriptures because they are out of date, and are preaching the philosophies of Satanism, why not call it by its rightful name—Satanism?²⁸

Again we find LaVey fighting against “straw men.” The church of our Lord is still to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Ju. 3). Many people in today’s world have lost confidence in the “church” because denominationalism never did hold to the “one faith” of the Bible. Many people, like LaVey, read their Bibles and cannot see any denominational church which can be identified as being the church of the Bible. So, confidence is destroyed, people see the hypocrisy for what it is, and they leave what they know as “established religion.”

LaVey not only has done some research on denominational preaching, he is also familiar with some denominational practices and worship. Thus, about the worship done in some denominations, in his Satanic Bible, LaVey concludes:

Many churches with some of the largest congregations have the most hand-clapping, sensual music—also Satanically inspired. After all, the Devil has always had the best tunes.²⁹

Sadly, some of our misdirected brethren have fallen into this trap of the devil. LaVey said it right when he said the “Devil has always had the best tunes.”³⁰

Congregations of our Lord have been duped into believing that worship can be offered to God any way one pleases, as long as it pleases the one offering the worship. We must never forget Who it is the object of a Christian’s worship. It is God, not man. God cannot be

praised with hand clapping and sensual music, because that is not what he has authorized (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17). If we want to please God, we must worship Him as He pleases, i.e., in “*spirit and in truth*” (Jn. 4:24, emphasis added). That worship which is done sincerely, earnestly, and according to His Word.

LaVey mentions another unscriptural denominational practice. Concerning their collection of funds in the name of God, he contends.

The fund-raising adjunct to many church bazaars is commonly known as a carnival, which used to mean the celebration of the flesh; now a carnival is okay because the money goes to the church so that it can preach against the temptations of the Devil! It will be said that these things are only pagan devices and ceremonies—that the Christians borrowed them. True, but the Pagans reveled in the delights of the flesh, and were condemned by the very same people who celebrate their rituals, but call them by different names.³¹

It seems somewhat strange that the very things unfaithful brethren have been fighting to preserve (such as unscriptural worship practices) are shown to be what Satanists have openly proclaimed. Satanists have claimed freedom from restrictions in the same way some of our brethren have claimed “freedom in Christ.” The Lord has authorized collection of funds by freewill offering (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and yet some have decided to have “fund-raisers” as a means to an end. Denominational practices such as these are unauthorized and sinful.

We ask: “Who would want to be a member of the Church of Satan?” LaVey said; “Every man is a god if he chooses to recognize himself as one.”³² The answer to our question is found in the heart of anyone who refuses to submit to God’s will. When a person deviates from the will of God, and goes about to have a religion that suits himself, he has involved himself in “self-will-worship.” When Paul said such “things have indeed a shew of wisdom *in will worship*” (Col. 2:23, emphasis added), he was *not* being complimentary. About those who worship so, Jesus declares: “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9).

Paul does not mind taking dead aim on those who, like the Satanists, are carnal, worldly, and self-willed and refuse to acknowledge God. About such, he writes:

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made

like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:22-25).

No one should follow the course of Anton LaVey and his Church of Satan. Be forewarned:

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit (Ju. 14-19).

Jude was compelled to give warnings about leaving “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (v.3) and about “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 4). Jude was written to Christians, but, at least in principle, it also fits those who would be members of the Church of Satan. Neither those who leave the faith nor members of the Church of Satan will ever have peace with God.

No Christian would dare think about being a member of, or being associated with, the Church of Satan. This openly blasphemous religion, which rejects any responsibility and guidance from a standard of truth, would be laughable if it were not involving so many misdirected souls. This particular religion is different from other false religions, in that most false religions have ministers transforming themselves into “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). The Church of Satan openly boasts of their disregard of God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. This false religion is easy to identify and actually depicts the devil not as a disguised leader, but one openly opposed to all that is true and good. Satanism is so far removed from the revealed will of God that it is easy to see and to avoid. But does it really matter what denomination anyone belongs to, if it rejects God’s will?

Paul understood the great depth of God's love for us. Expressing the greatness of that love, he writes: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly ... For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:6, 10). Christ died for us when we were "without strength" (non-Christians), "ungodly" (in the grasp of Satan), and "when we were enemies" (hostile toward God and His Will). He loves and died, even for the Satanists—but they must be, as we all must be, justified by an obedient faith. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1969), Introduction.

³ Peter H. Gilmore, *Anton Szandor LaVey, a Biographical Sketch*, (2003). <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/LaVeyBiography.html>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Blanche Barton, *The Church of Satan,—A Brief History*, (2003). <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/CSHistory3COS.html>

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ LaVey.

⁹ Department of the Army Pamphlet. No. 165-13.

¹⁰ LaVey, 6.

¹¹ Peter Gilmore, *Opening the Adamantine Gates*. An introduction to the *Satanic Bible* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 2003), 17.

¹² LaVey, 96.

¹³ Ibid., 96, 97, 98.

¹⁴ Ibid., 110.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 111.

¹⁷ Ibid., 114, 115.

¹⁸ Ibid., 117.

¹⁹ Ibid., 117, 118.

²⁰ Ibid., 115.

²¹ Ibid., 116, 117.

²² Ibid., 125.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 127.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Application form, Church of Satan, Central Administrative Office.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ LaVey, 47, 48.

²⁹ Ibid., 49.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 96.

SATAN WORSHIP EXAMINED

Jim Nash



Jim Nash was born in Jacksonville, Illinois. He and his wife, the former Diana Duke, have four children, one daughter Rachel and sons, Caleb, David, and Zachary. Nash is a graduate of Southwest School of Bible Studies as well as Southwest Texas State University, Tarleton State University, and the University of Houston-Downtown. He has been preaching for fourteen years, and worked with the Lord's church in Highlands, Texas for eight years. Nash now preaches for the church in Marietta, Oklahoma.

INTRODUCTION¹

It has been said in various ways and in different contexts that the “best” and “biggest” lie Satan could produce for his own benefit is the lie that he does not exist. Strange as it may seem, this lie is believed among self-proclaimed Satan worshippers as well. Not all Satan worshippers worship Satan. Regarding this, Satanists themselves say:

Modern Satanists do not worship the devil; they do not even believe in this Christian-created being. However, some do. Theistic Satanists do believe in an entity known as Satan and Devil Worshipers also believe in Satan as a deity. Theistic Satanists see Satan as an actual dark pagan god. The difference between Satanism and devil worship is simple; Devil worshippers are nothing more than wannabe renegade Christians still drowning in the belief that to be a Satanist they must use dogma that is the reverse of Christian belief. Satanists are free thinkers, moving forward spiritually through self-exploration and spiritual stimulation. Strictly speaking, a devil worshipper is someone who worships evil as a moral absolute. Satanists, on the other hand, view Satanism as a religion and a philosophy ... Satanists are strongly opposed to devil worship or any hierarchal system which seeks to enslave the spirit and damage the individual or a community.²

It may be that this explanation is a self delusion, or even a purposeful untruth. However, it is certain that the information these groups present to the public is consistent. They do claim a substantive difference in philosophy between Satan worshippers that worship Satan as a being, as presented in the Bible, and those worshipping Satan as a

general philosophy (1 Pet. 5:8). The former are referred to as “Theistic Satanists.” While this distinction may be covered more fully in another chapter, a short explanation here is helpful to our study of who actually worships Satan.

Theistic Satanism is a general term for forms of Satanism which believe that either Satan/the Devil is an actual deity and/or force. Theistic Satanists are not atheists, and may believe in a conscious universe. Satan may be perceived as male and female, a Muse and the Bestower of knowledge. Believers may place a great emphasis on the Serpent in the Biblical tale of Genesis, whom they perceive to be one of the many emanations or incarnations of Satan. According to such teachings, Satan blessed mankind with the “forbidden” fruit of knowledge of good and evil. From this perspective, knowing both good and evil is the birth of wisdom. It is for this reason that Theistic Satanists may perceive Satan as a Force for good, which may also be used for evil. Devil worshippers reject this idea, and see themselves as the enemies of “Good” and the servants of “Evil” in the name of Satan, whom they see as the God of all that is Evil and in adherence with the Christian bible. Other Satanists refer to Devil worshippers as reverse Christians for that very reason.³

There is a great deal of confusion as to what Satanic worship is and who Satan worshippers are. All too often the subject of Satan worship falls into one of two extremes, either those who see disturbing mutilations and murders by Satan worshippers behind every bush, as popularized by Geraldo Rivera in the ‘80s,⁴ or those who see Satan worship as a joke, something that rebellious teens claim as they kick over a few gravestones at the local cemetery. Let us examine who Satan worshippers are and then examine their rituals. We also want to see what the Bible says about worshipping Satan or anything or anyone other than Jehovah.

WHO ARE SATAN WORSHIPPERS?

Concerning Satanism, “Some people see its followers as sociopaths who are only seeking attention; others see them as serious sources of evil in the world. Even among its own adherents, there can be a lot of confusion. There are several types of Satanists that exist.”⁵ It seems that Satanists range all the way from serious practitioners to obnoxious pretenders.⁶

Indeed there is much confusion, but then again, is that not the way the Devil would want it (1 Cor. 14:33)? If unity in Christ would convince the world that Jesus is from God and that He is who He says He is (Jn. 17:21), then would it not work to Satan's benefit for there to be confusion as to his means, motives and movements in the world through others? Evidently recognizing their own confusion about Satan, Satanists say: "And whether we believe in or worship the Old Dragon or not is inconsequential to Him; in fact, it serves His purposes all the more smoothly if we do not. Some of us just can't help ourselves."⁷ However, God does not want us to be "ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11), but to be aware and alert concerning our "adversary the devil" (1 Pet. 5:8).

There is a multitude of sources which describe the different perceived categories of Satanists. The following information was gleaned from a website urging religious tolerance toward Satan worshippers. While the information does definitely have a positive spin, it is a good breakdown of those who have claimed to be, and are seen by many as Satan worshippers, but who the website authors claim are not genuine:

Types of pseudo-Satanism:

The following are five essentially unrelated beliefs and activities that have been referred to as "Satanism:"

1. *16th century Satanism:* This is an imaginary, profoundly evil religion that was invented during the late Middle Ages by the Christian church. The Church taught that Witches worshiped Satan, ritually killed children, boiled down their bodies to make magical implements, sold their soul to the devil, broke crucifixes, conducted black masses, created hail storms to damage crops, caused disease in farm animals and humans, etc. They were said to totally dedicate their life to harming others.

This form of Satanism never existed in the past as an organized entity. It does not exist today, except in the imagination of the public, and in horror movies. Belief in the reality of Satan-worshiping witches remains widespread in North America today, particularly among religious conservatives.

Sometimes, this imaginary form of Satanism is referred to as *Gothic Satanism*. We recommend against this term, because it might be confused with the Goth sub-culture. The latter is a philosophical, musical, cultural group that is not directly

related to Satanism. However, a larger percentage of Goths are Satanists, than are found in the general population.

2. *Serial murderers*: Occasionally, a serial murderer will claim to be a Satanist in order to justify his horrendous activities. This is “*the Devil made me do it*” defense. The perpetrator admits guilt, but says that he was not responsible for his crimes because he was under the control of Satan.
3. *Psychotic murderers*: Occasionally, news of a Satanic ritual murder will surface, complete with Satanic rituals, symbols, etc. But, after investigation, the prime cause of the murder will be found to be severe mental illness on the part of the perpetrator(s). A case in Germany hit the newsstands during 2002-JAN. The accused couple, the Rudas, talked about glowing eyes, a glowing knife used as a murder weapon, a glowing victim, “*Several witnesses have testified that the couple suffered from personality disorders. They could both face long terms at secure psychiatric institutions.*”
4. *Child molesters*: A small percentage of abusive pedophiles and other child molesters have been known to abuse children in a Satanic setting as a means of controlling the victims. The molesters are pretend Satanists; they are simply using the facade of Satanism to further their criminal acts. They figure that if one of their child victims complains to authorities, their disclosures will not be believed.
5. *Heavy metal rock bands*: Some musicians pretend to be associated with Satanism. Their main motivation is to gain notoriety and capture free publicity. The suggestion of Satanic involvement increases record sales. Few bands are actually formed from sincere Satanists.
6. *The Temple of Set*: In 1975, a member of the Church of Satan, Michael Aquino, left the Church after a disagreement, and organized the *Temple of Set*. This follows the religion of Setianism. Members recognize a pre-Satanic deity, the Egyptian God Set as a living entity who stands separate and apart from the forces of the natural universe. He was typically portrayed as a man with the head of an animal (perhaps a hyena). Set was copied by the Chaldeans who called him Had or Hadit; this later became Shaitan, and still later the Satan of Christianity and Islam. The media have linked the Temple of Set with the Church of Satan and called both forms of Satanism. Leaders of both religious groups deny that they are related.⁸

It would be foolish to assume that all of those who claim to be Satan worshippers, who do evil, violent things, are not Satan worshippers just because other Satan worshippers claim they are not. This is much like the Baptist debater claiming “Once Saved Always Saved,” saying those who fall away from the Baptist Church were never really converted in the first place, trying to escape the force of the passages teaching “Once Saved Always Saved” to be false. In the same light, if I were an advocate of Satan worship, I would certainly play down the infamous convicted murderer Charles Manson who screamed “Hail Satan” as he was dragged from the courtroom.⁹

It is interesting that the Catholic Encyclopedia states, “Many charges of this kind are false or grossly exaggerated,” concerning genuine Satanic Worship circa 1900.¹⁰ However, the problem of who really is or is not a Satan worshipper is further complicated by the fact that Jesus said: “Ye are of your father the devil, 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” (Jn. 8:44). The dilemma is, how could I ever believe anything a Satan worshipper said if their father is the father of lies? While there are distinctions among Satan worshippers, and even categories of pseudo-Satan worshippers, there are those who willfully, seriously and with purpose, worship Satan.

SATAN WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED

Even though it may not always be clear who the true Satan worshippers are, one thing is clear—Satan wants to be worshipped.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Mt. 4:8-10).

What was the Devil trying to do? Was he offering something that was not his in the first place? The Devil was doing what he always does, tempting others with the ease of instant gratification, when in most cases those who are tempted can have what is offered if they will only submit to God’s plan and attain it God’s way.

Jesus created all things, by right of creation the world was His (Jn. 1:1-3, 14). However, at the time Satan tempted Him, Christ was not in heaven, but on earth serving the Father. Of course, He would soon return to heaven after He accomplished what He was sent to do—redeem mankind by sacrificing Himself. This analysis may seem overly simplistic, but look at the parallels to man today. In how many areas does the Devil use this form of attack? Consider sexual gratification. God has a plan for man's sexual fulfillment in marriage, which fulfills not only man's physical desires, but his emotional needs as well. When following God's plan in marriage, lives are not destroyed, children are not emotionally scarred, diseases are not spread, sexual intimacy is not cheapened and society is strengthened through family. When accepting Satan's offer for sex "now" at any cost, he is offering something God has already given, but instantly and with strings attached. Were there strings attached to Satan's offer to Jesus? Yes! Had Jesus worshipped Satan, we would not have a Savior. Yet, while there are Satan worshippers who claim Satanism precisely for instant gratification in the flesh, how many more Christians are there who routinely worship Satan, not overtly, but still worship him by choosing Satan's offer rather than God's Way?

Make no mistake, Satan desired worship from the Son of God and he desires our worship as well. Do not give it to him, either as a serving Satanist or a compromising Christian.

THE BIBLE AND SATAN WORSHIP

The Bible does not specifically deal with modern Satanic worship as seen in the Church of Satan in San Francisco or groups that have split off from them, but the Bible does address Satan worship in general.

Jesus is our example. It is clear that He refused to worship Satan (1 Pet. 2:21-22). "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mt. 4:10). In addition to learning *not* to worship the Devil, we also learn that man is to serve God only. Jehovah has never wanted man's divided devotion. That is why Jesus commands: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mt. 6:33). Furthermore, Jesus teaches that we are to serve God with our complete being when He says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Lk. 10:27).

God has always forbidden man to worship and serve other “gods.” As the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, they heard Moses’ warning:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer (Deut. 18:9-11).

God’s children are never to put anything between themselves and their devotion to the Most High. The wise man succinctly says: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Man cannot serve both God and “mammon” (Mt. 6:24). Choices have to be made. Not even family conflict should cause the Christian to compromise. Jesus states:

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mt. 10:35-37).

May God help us to not only keep away from Satan worship, but to realize that if we are not with Jesus we are against Him (Mt. 12:30). Not putting Christ first does not make one a Satan worshipper, but it does make one “against Christ.” God’s kingdom is truly a “pearl of great price,” one worthy of any sacrifice necessary to attain it (Mt. 13:46).

THE “ACTS” OF SATAN WORSHIP

The “acts” or rituals of Satanic worship are almost in as much dispute as who the real Satan worshippers are. However, presented below is a culmination (from various “seemingly” reputable sources) of what is found in Satanic prayers, songs and rituals.

The “Black Mass” is an example of an area over which there is much controversy. Some claim the Black Mass, being a purposeful

opposite of the Catholic Mass, is very real and very dangerous. It is claimed that stolen emblems from a Catholic Church are used and that sex orgies and animal or even human sacrifices can take place in this Satanic worship. While many adamantly deny that human sacrifices would ever take place, it is interesting what Anton LeVay, author of *The Satanic Bible*, says: “The only time a Satanist would perform a human sacrifice would be if it were to serve a twofold purpose; that being to release the magician’s wrath in the throwing of a curse, and more important, to dispose of a totally obnoxious and deserving individual.”¹¹ He may be speaking tongue-in-cheek, but even if this is the case, his comments are still unsettling.

Concerning the Black Mass, it is a “parody of the Catholic Mass sometimes practiced by wealthy opponents of the Church in the Dark Ages. Some so-called ‘black masses’ were performed by priests to curse enemies ... Modern Satanists sometimes perform a ‘black mass’ for theatrical effect, but it is not a standard practice in Satanism or modern witchcraft.”¹² This type of ritual may be done seriously by some. However, it is widely claimed to be rarely done and, when it is, it is done as a publicity stunt to mock Catholicism.

Beyond the Black Mass, there are three different types of magic rituals. They include: Lust rituals which include masturbation, Compassion rituals for healing or happiness, and Destruction rituals which may include sticking pins in a doll; or writing a description of the victim’s death. Destruction rituals are often performed by a group.¹³

In these rituals male Satanists sometimes wear full-length black robes, with young women generally wearing sexually suggestive clothing and older women wearing all black. Many Satanists from different traditions wear amulets carrying the symbol of Baphomet. This symbol is an inverted pentagram containing a goat’s head, surrounded by two circles, between which appear five Hebrew characters. Although there have been many similar symbols involving the head of a goat and an inverted pentagram in a circle, this particular configuration is a registered trade mark of the Church of Satan.¹⁴

When *The Satanic Bible* was written in 1969, a nude woman was customarily used as an altar since Satanism is regarded as a religion of the flesh, not of the spirit. She reclined on an altar that was trapezoidal in shape, about three feet high and six feet long, placed against the west wall of the room. Her head pointed south. It is claimed by the Church of Satan that live altars are rarely used today.¹⁵

One white candle is placed to the right of the altar; symbolizing the belief of Satanists in the hypocrisy of “White Magicians” and Wiccans because of the latter’s insistence on avoiding doing harm to others. At least one black candle, representing the powers of darkness, is placed to the left of the altar. These powers represent sources of energy which are currently unknown and hidden. Additional black candles are used as needed to provide enough light.¹⁶

The language used during the magical ritual is Enochian, whose words sound similar to Arabic, Hebrew or Latin. This language was created by John Dee, court astrologer and metaphysician to Queen Elizabeth I, with the help of Edward Kelley who claimed to be in contact with the angels described in the apocryphal book of *Enoch*.¹⁷

A simple Satanic ritual can be performed with a single candle and a Baphomet. However, more elaborate rituals may include a bell rung nine times at the beginning and end of the ritual (as the Satanic priest rotates counter-clockwise) and a chalice preferably made of silver, but not gold. Other ritual tools may include a gong, a sword, an elixir (usually wine), a phallus, and parchment.¹⁸

For further reading on the subject of Satanic rituals from a Satanist’s point of view, let me suggest *The Satanic Rituals*, by LaVey. Chapter titles in this book of rituals include: The Original Psycho-drama; Le Messe Noir, L’Air Epais; The Ceremony of the Stifling Air, The Seventh Satanic Statement; Das Tierdrama, The Law of the Trapezoid; Die elektrischen Vorspiele, Night on Bald Mountain; Homage to Tchort, Pilgrims of the Age of Fire; The Statement of Shaitan; The Metaphysics of Lovecraft; The Ceremony of the Nine Angles and The Call to Cthulhu (written by Michael Aquino), The Satanic Baptisms; and Adult Rite and Children’s Ceremony, The Unknown Known. I *do not* endorse this book, but it might be helpful if you suspect a loved one or friend is dabbling in Satanic worship.

Consider the following abridged example of a Satanic worship service. One cannot help but be stricken by the sad ignorance of the performer of this Satanic service, because most of what they are seeking in Satan can only come through obedience to the Gospel of Christ. The Bible teaches where true freedom and happiness can be found (Jn. 8:32; Rom. 6:17-18; Ps.1).

Things needed for the Ceremony:

1. Altar/table/some kind of raised platform (facing North)

2. Athame/sword/pointer of some kind
3. Black clothes (or, if you prefer, you can do the ritual naked)
4. At least one black candle (to be placed on the altar/table)
5. Some kind of image that represents the Prince of Darkness to you, to be placed on the altar/table

Stages of the Ceremony:

1. Banishing
2. Invocation
3. Act of Worship
4. Sacrificial Offering
5. Recital of Prayers and Requests
6. Giving of Thanks
7. Closing Hymn

Timing

This ceremony is best conducted during the night, particularly right at midnight.

Stage One—Banishing

Eyes closed, facing North, repeat nine times “I focus my mind and my Will upon the Prince of Darkness.”

Stage Two—Invocation

“Hail unto my Master, the Devil, the Lord of this World and Prince of Darkness! The Red One of darkest brilliance, whose eternal Shadow is the light of my life. Surely I belong to Thee in both body and spirit; I have taken Thy name as a part of myself, and I rejoice in Thy spirit. For in the Shadow of Lucifer there is love and warmth, and in the midst of His darkness there is undying light. O mighty Black Goat of the Wilderness! O mighty Serpent of Eden’s Demise! To Thee I give praise forever and ever, Amen.”

“Master, I call Thee forth from the bottomless abyss. Master, I call Thee forth from the ends of the earth. Master, I call Thee forth from the nighttime sky. Come forth from within my flesh and my spirit, and greet me as Thy humble servant and friend. I wish to worship and honor Thee, to commune with Thee and to be still and know that Thou art my God.”

Take your athame and point it in the air, toward North:
“Oh hear the names of the mighty Prince of Darkness!”

Trace a point-down pentagram in the air as you recite the Aspectual Invocations:

“Hail to Thee, Belial, God of This World! Lord of the Earth and Spirit of the Flesh. He whose strength is in the mountain. Help me to be strong and to embrace the pleasures and pains of earthly existence. All praise unto Thee, Lord Belial! Hail Belial!”

Turn northwest, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Behemoth, Beast of the Earth! Lord of the Waters and the Earth, Great Beast of Revelation! He whose voice is the Call of the Wild. Help me to be the best and most successful animal that I can be. All praise unto Thee, Lord Behemoth! Hail Behemoth!”

Turn west, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Typhon, Beast of the Sea! Lord of the Waters and Creature of the Depths. He who is the heart of the thunderous Hurricane. Help me to understand the deepest regions of my Self, and to be a raging storm against all that would oppress me. All praise unto Thee, Lord Typhon! Hail Typhon!”

Turn southwest, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Set, Great Red Dragon! Lord of the Flame and the Waters, Outsider-God. He who roams the lonely Wilderness. Help me to stay true to my Self, and to overcome all that would infringe upon my Selfhood. All praise unto Thee, Lord Set! Hail Set!”

Turn south, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Shaitan, Adversary! Lord of the Flame and Supreme Enemy of the God of Abraham. He who left the Kingdom of Heaven in flames. Help me to always remain strong in the face of the Tyrant God, and to prevail over my enemies! All praise unto Thee, Lord Shaitan. Hail Shaitan!”

Turn southeast, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Samael, Serpent of Eden! Lord of the Air and the Flame, Venomous One. He who tempted Adam and Eve with the Fruit of Knowledge. Help me to find and maintain the strength to think for myself, and to do what I know in my heart is right. All praise unto Thee, Lord Samael! Hail Samael!”

Turn east, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Lucifer, Bringer of Light! Lord of the Air and Morning Star. He who destroys ignorance with the calling of Dawn. Help me to pierce through my own blindness and to find the light of understanding. All praise unto Thee, Lord Lucifer! Hail Lucifer!”

Turn northeast, and trace another point-down pentagram in the air:

“Hail to Thee, Azazel, Scapegoat! Lord of the Earth and the Air, Dark Horned God. He whose celestial knowledge is drawn to the earth by worldly lust. Help me to achieve knowledge and happiness here on earth and in the flesh. All praise unto Thee, Lord Azazel! Hail Azazel!”

Turn north; put down your athame and raise both your hands into the air in the Sign of the Horns: “Hail to Thee, Prince of Darkness! Lord of the Elements, beloved Master! He who is of the Darkness, but who brings the Light. Help me to serve You in as many ways that I can. All praise unto Thee, my Prince of Darkness! Hail Satan! Hail Set!”

Stage Three—Act of Worship

This stage is perhaps the most personal, next to the Sacrificial Offering. When it comes to the Act of Worship, I usually get down on my knees and bow my head to the North, remaining silent while I do so. After bowing on my knees, I will usually recite a Declaration of Faith like the one below:

“Master, I believe in Thee. Master, I pass near to Thee! Thou art in my flesh, Thou art in my blood, and Thou art in my very soul. Thy spirit giveth refreshment to me when I am thirsty; Thy spirit healeth me when I am sick. Thou makest me to search for the hidden answers, Thou makest me to be wise. Forever am I indebted to Thee, my Lord and Muse. I live for Thee and I breathe for Thee; I pass into being for Thee. Hail Lucifer, the Lord and Prince of this World!”

Stage Four—Sacrificial Offering

Blood sacrifice, whether it be from an animal or human, is in my opinion un-Satanic. It is far better and far more Satanic to sacrifice energy from your own body—by means of a simple orgasm, rather than by bloodletting—than to sacrifice the life of any innocent creature. Animal sacrifice may be appropriate in Voudon or some form of paganism, but it is not appropriate in Satanism as far as I am concerned.

Another method of sacrifice is to choose an enemy of yours, like someone who has gone out of their way to hurt you or someone you love, and to symbolically sacrifice them by means of sticking a pin into a doll or lighting a photograph of the person on fire. Some Devil Worshipers like to cut themselves and write prayers to Lucifer in their own blood. Although I personally dislike this method, I don't have any real qualms against it as long as the Satanists in question are knowledgeable enough to do this without accidentally slashing an artery or giving themselves some kind of infection.

Stage Five—Recital of Prayers and Requests

If you have any particular prayers or requests that you would like to make to the Dark Prince, this is the part of the ritual in which you make them. Unless there is something specific that I want to pray to him about, I usually just say a generic prayer for myself and for all of my loved ones, asking that we all be able to find peace and happiness. I find that this part of the ritual is best improvised. Some Satanists then like to burn their prayers in the flame of the black candle(s). Whatever works for you is best, but just make sure that you do not attempt to “boss” the Master around. Always make sure to word your requests as politely and respectfully as possible.

Stage Six—Giving of Thanks

At this point in the ritual, it is time to give thanks to the Prince of Darkness for all that He has done for you. You may write your own thank-you prayer if you like, and sometimes it is best to improvise; but below is an example of a short and to-the-point thank-you prayer:

“I give thanks unto Thee, Prince Lucifer my Master, for all that Thou hath done for me. I give thanks unto Thee for guiding me, for giving me strength in my hour of darkness, and for never leaving my side. Thou art truly a most noble and loving God, and to Thee I am forever devoted in both spirit and flesh.”

Stage Seven—Closing Hymn

After giving thanks to the Prince, it is important to close the ritual with a hymn or hymns. I would suggest the following:¹⁹

Poor, downtrodden goat of sin, Sent out into the wilderness
To drive away the strange within, And overcome their godless-
ness.

All alone in desert sands, Spirit of profanity.
Foreigner in foreign lands, Who overcame insanity.

Uplifted by the light of pride, Strengthened by Desire's flame.
 Immortal of the Dark outside, Whom no god nor gods can tame.
 Azazel of enlightened view, Beloved Prince of Darkness, true
 How can you stand the loneliness? Grant me, Thy son, Thy
 consciousness.

The quest for sight is wrought with pain, And heaven's light is
 not to gain; But like a Demon god earth-born, I embrace both
 rose and thorn.

And so the wisdom of the Goat, Is made for us to see, so mote!
 Thus spake the Nightspirit to me, The words of immortality.²⁰

SATANIC RITUAL ABUSE TODAY

Are there Satan worshippers that abuse others? Do they do violent and harmful things to others in their worship? If they do abuse others as a part of their worship of the Devil, is this a widespread problem? I do not know. For every claim you hear of abuse or murder, you can find a Satanist who claims that it did not happen, or, if it did happen, that the person(s) involved were crazy and not real Satan worshippers.

So many allegations have been made regarding Satanic ritual abuse, one can only wonder—are they merely the inventions of creative imaginations or are at least some of them true? Accusations of Satanic ritual abuse include: shocking and disgusting behavior, inappropriate and violent sexuality, ritual sacrifice of animals and people of all ages, cannibalism (including forced cannibalism), keeping people naked in snake-filled cages, inflicting spider bites, urinating on victims, burying people alive, crucifixion, electric shock, chemical injections, forced use of drugs, sleep deprivation, use of sensory deprivation tanks, Black Masses, mock marriages, forced pregnancies, use of pornography, brainwashing, kidnapping, sexual abuse (including ritual sexual abuse of children of all ages), murder, necrophilia, rape and the infiltrating of politics, the police, and the legal and medical profession by Satanists to cover up abuse by Satan worshippers.²¹

WHY MEN WORSHIP SATAN

Why would anyone want to worship Satan? In studying this issue, although there are certainly others, three reasons readily present themselves. They are: 1) Simply to mock Christianity, 2) Hedonism, the practice of pleasing the flesh first and foremost, and 3) A simple rejection of authority. We have already seen that one of the purposes of the Black Mass is to mock Catholicism. Actually, those involved think

they are mocking Christianity, because they do not see the difference between the two. Just think, we live in an age when every opportunity to belittle God, believers and truth is taken, whether it be on network television shows, the news, movies or other media. Satan worship can merely be an extension of this attitude. There are those who claim Satanism just to mock Christianity and rebel against it.

Certainly, Hedonism and putting the flesh first is a part of Satan worship, but would someone become a Satan worshipper for this reason? Satanism does cater to the Hedonistic crowd. Notice how many of LaVey's "Nine Satanic Statements" cater to the idea of pleasing the flesh and acting on impulse. His "Nine Satanic Statements" are:

1. Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams!
3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit!
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates!
5. Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek!
6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires!
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!
9. Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years!²²

Actually, all three of the motives mentioned—mocking God/Christianity, hedonism, and rebellion against authority in general—can be seen in the above "Statements." Simply stated, "self-fulfillment, self-indulgence and self-gratification are the goals of the contemporary Satanist."²³

As might be expected, Satan worshippers are not strong adherents to an objective moral authority. Satanists are assertive in their view that "good" and "evil" are subjective. They say:

The definition of good and evil is subject to change because it exists only as a perception ... “Good” are the things we like. “Evil” are the things we dislike. It often depends on who or what you are. As Diane Vera says, if you’re a mouse, cats are evil, but to the pet owner, cats are heavenly. Therefore, evil is not an essence—it is a value judgment ... Our objective? ... Bringing flesh and spirit together. The establishment of a New World Order, free of guilt, self-loathing and shame, where every man and woman is the god of his or her own life.²⁴

Truly, Satanism is a religion where everyone can do that which is right in his own eyes (Jgs. 17:6).

CONCLUSION

Yes, convincing the world that he does not really exist is the “best” and “biggest” lie Satan has produced for his own benefit. Yet, Satan is real and there are those misguided souls who worship him. Some of the things they do in their Satan worship may be physically dangerous to them, even costing them their lives. All they do in their Satan worship is fatally dangerous to their souls. It should not escape us though, that one does not have to be a Satan worshipper to spend eternity with the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41). Anything we place before God in our lives can become our idol and a danger to our souls (Col. 3:5).

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² “Do you worship the Devil?” *Satanism: Frequently Asked Questions*, (25 July 2007). <http://churchofsatan.org/faq.html>

³ “Theistic Satanism,” (15 July 2007). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan_worship

⁴ Geraldo Rivera: “Satanic Ritual Abuse and Recovered Memories,” (15 July 2007). <http://www.religioustolerance.org/geraldo.htm>

⁵ “Do you worship the Devil”.

⁶ Greg Harmon, *Dispelling the Darkness: Misconceptions Concerning Satan, the Occult and the Dead* (Bushnell, FL: Harmon Publishing House, 1999), 33.

⁷ “The Old Dragon,” (25 July 2007).

<http://www.theisticsatanism.com/geifodd/dragon.html>

⁸ “Satanism: Six forms of pseudo-Satanism,” (15 July, 2007).
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/satanis6.htm>

⁹ Harmon, 35.

¹⁰ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, s.v. “devil worship.”

¹¹ Anton LeVay, *The Satanic Bible* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1968), 88.

¹² “The Black Mass,” (15 July 2007).

http://www.satansheaven.com/black_mass.htm

¹³ “About the Church of Satan,” (20 July 2007).

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/satanis1.htm>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “A Standard Rite to the Prince of Darkness,” (20 July 2007).

<http://www.theisticsatanism.com/geifodd/luciferrite.html>

²⁰ “Hymns to the Prince of Darkness,” (15 July 2007).

<http://www.theisticsatanism.com/geifodd/luciferhymn.html>

²¹ “Satanic Ritual Abuse,” (20 July 2007).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satanic_ritual_abuse

²² “The Nine Satanic Statements,” (20 July 2007).

<http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>

²³ Bob and Gretchen Passatino, *Satanism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 72.

²⁴ “Do you worship the Devil”.

WITCHCRAFT, HOROSCOPES, TAROT CARDS, ETC.

Don Underwood



Don Underwood was born in Yreka, California. He is married to the former Linda Hernandez. They have three children and five grandchildren. Underwood received an A.A. degree from Treasure Valley Community College, a B.S. degree from Southern Oregon University, and an M.S. degree from Troy State University. He has publicly debated a Reformed Baptist preacher, and is an instructor with the *Online Academy of Bible Studies*. Underwood works with the Oildale Church of Christ in Bakersfield, California.

INTRODUCTION¹

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

Each person has the choice of whom he will serve. However, there are only two options. Those two options are: 1) Being a servant of sin or, 2) Being a servant of righteousness. To be a faithful Christian as a “servant of righteousness,” one must reject witchcraft, horoscopes, tarot cards, et cetera, and refuse to serve the ungodly philosophies connected to them. The world offers many avenues of worship and adoration, contrary to truth.

The occult is an ancient alternative to truth.

Fetichism, the worship of stocks, stones, the bones of animals, shells, pieces of wood, planets, etc., in the belief that they are endowed with life and a sort of divinity, has been regarded as the lowest phase of religious worship which man has exhibited.²

Fetichism leads one into the practice of world religions and the occult.

When people consider the history of the Europeans, we see they were very superstitious concerning life and the afterlife. Expressing his thoughts at the turn of the twentieth century, William Lecky writes:

Men were still profoundly superstitious, but they resorted to each new religion as to a charm or talisman of especial power, or a system of magic revealing the future. There were multitudes who, declaring that there were no gods, or that the gods never interfered with human affairs, professed with the same breath an absolute faith in all portents, auguries, dreams, and miracles. Innumerable natural objects, such as comets, meteors, earthquakes, or monstrous births, were supposed to possess a kind of occult or magical virtue, by which they foreshadowed, and in some cases influenced, the destinies of men. Astrology, which is the special representative of this mode of thought, rose to great prominence. The elder Pliny notices that in his time a belief was rapidly gaining ground, both among the learned and among the vulgar, that the whole destiny of man is determined by the star that presides over his nativity ... One of the later historians of the Empire [Roman Empire, DZU] remarks that numbers who denied the existence of any divinity believed nevertheless that they could not safely appear in public, or eat or bathe, unless they had first carefully consulted the almanac to ascertain the position of the planet Mercury, or how far the moon was from the Crab.³

Paul came in contact with such philosophies in Greece. Speaking to those on Mar's Hill, he declared: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious" (Acts 17:22). Hence, the occult has had a prominent place in history. As the church of Christ, we, like Paul, need to present the truth concerning Christ and who He is, what He has done for us, and our responsibility to Him. In doing this, the workings of Satan via the occult will be confronted and challenged.

THE OCCULT IS COMMONPLACE WITHIN SOCIETY

The occult has become commonplace within our modern society through television programs like *Bewitched* and its spin-offs, movies and books (does Harry Potter come to mind?), local newspapers that tell people their future or fortune via horoscopes, and neighborhood Asian restaurants that offer fortune cookies to their patrons. Halloween is becoming more popular throughout the world. In addition, we see how the influence of Native American culture is advancing occultism through shamans, fetishes, religious folklore. Our society is saturated with the occult and its promotion. Today, millions, if not billions, of souls have embraced the occult and its variations throughout the world.

Moses revealed to God's people various aspects and workings of the occult when he said:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do (Deut. 18:9-14).

Sadly, the children of Israel turned to the occult and became an abomination to the Lord. Perhaps with little variation, the occultic practices condemned in Deuteronomy 18 are still being practiced. A few of these should be considered.

What about the killing of children? Today, a man may not literally "maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire" (v. 10), but children are being murdered. The occult does not distinguish between children being offered in ceremonial rites and those being sacrificed by the secular materialistic world to satisfy personal or cultural desires. In most countries abortion or infanticide is legal and promoted. Sadly, Israel and Judah suffered under leadership which was influenced by the occult and caused their own children to be needlessly murdered by passing them through the fire (2 Kgs. 21:1-6).

Divination is now commonly referred to as "fortune telling." Palm and tarot card readers are popular "fortune tellers" in carnivals and circuses, and their signs are even found in local neighborhoods. Fortune tellers will charge outlandish prices for their "readings." In preparation of this lesson, I went to the homes of diviners to collect firsthand information concerning their practices. Most of these charlatans were unwilling to discuss their trade, let alone answer simple questions regarding it. One lady, when I knocked on her door, asked me: "Why are you here?" I wanted to humorously reply: "You already know." But, I contained my humor and explained to her why I was at her door. I was able to ask her: "How prevalent is your practice in the United States?" She said: "I do not know." I also asked: "Do you have special

training for your ability?” She responded: “Everybody’s journey is different.” I then asked, “How much do your services cost an inquirer?” She answered: “\$65.00 per reading.” Keep in mind that a reading may last a few minutes or hours. The amount of time is determined by the fortune teller.

An astrologer is a person who is an observer of times and a practitioner of the spiritualist religion or the so-called “New-Age Movement.”

Spiritualist religion that believes stars cause events to happen. Astrologers say, “The stars don’t only forecast our future, but they also guide us to the coming of a new Spiritual Master.” A person’s future is charted by plotting the position of the stars and planets at the time of his birth using the *Ephemeris*. [This is a reference book for astrological signs, DZU] The resulting chart is called a horoscope. Jesus is seen as a super psychic human being, not God. Astrology was developed in Mesopotamia about 3,000 B.C. Babylonian ziggurats were temples built for worship of the moon, stars, and planets. Modern astrological practice is based on this centuries-old understanding.⁴

In essence, the astrologer deceives people by telling them some secrets or hidden things or events in their lives, when the secret things belong to God (Deut. 29:29). The Roman emperor Tiberius was addicted to astrology and lived his life by the directions of such thinking. Unfortunately, astrology has many faithful followers today who are blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:1-7).

An enchanter is involved with magic spells and potions. Moses had first-hand experience with those imitators of truth.

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments (Ex. 7:10-11).

Enchanters can be witches, wizards, or anyone who is involved with all kinds of magic. In other words, the enchanter is a trickster, a genuine imposter. A Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Kern County, California is promoting a summer camp by using the theme from Harry Potter. Members in that group think the books and movies promoting Harry Potter are good and healthy for children. In this camp, they will

teach the children about magic and how to make a potion. Included in the Harry Potter camp, lifestyles as seen and read in the Harry Potter materials, will be promoted. Of course, there is no mention of God, the true source of goodness, in the Harry Potter materials. Generally speaking, those involved in the occult deny the Deity of Christ. However, they do recognize that Harry Potter can be used as a truly persuasive tool in getting others to accept the occult.

Witchcraft is an ancient work of Satan. Therefore, Moses gave ample warning to the children of Israel not to associate with and practice it (cf. Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10-12). Watson says:

Witches worship gods and goddesses, claiming that their power comes from them. They practice what they call *white magic* as opposed to Satanists *black magic*. They meet for regular semimonthly services called esbats and for the eight major solar festivals called sabbats. Rituals, spells, and charms in grimoires are followed to include sexual rituals and drug use. Reincarnation and lycanthropy [The belief that people can become some kind of an animal, most of the time a wolf. Hence, the belief in werewolves, DZU] are taught.⁵

Today, witchcraft is glamorized via the books and movies about Harry Potter. It should be observed that Harry Potter subtly introduces the world of the occult, making it look harmless and entertaining. Remember, Satan was subtle in his deception of Eve (2 Cor. 11:3).

A “consulter” with the dead is someone who claims to have the power to communicate with a dead friend or family member. This involves “familiar spirits” or “necromancy.” Native Americans once commonly believed in communicating with the dead and with spirits beyond this life. Some still do. Common to my heritage, the Shastas and Karuks held the idea that spirits helped or hindered one’s life.

Central to the Shastan people’s religion was their belief in spirits who inhabited trees, riversides, mountains, rocks, all the celestial bodies, and many animals. They called the spirits *axaiki* (or *aheki*). They were conceived as similar to humans in form (though much smaller) and in personality, being helpful, contentious, greedy, and capricious in turn. The *axaiki* lived in houses and quarreled amongst themselves over who was most powerful, though they never engaged in the humanlike competitions that, for example, Greek and Roman gods did. These spirit people bear a strong resemblance to the race of animal-humans

that some of the sacred Shasta myths describes as living on the earth before the Indian race was created.⁶

It would be these spirits that Native American shamans would consult with frequently.

A wizard or sorcerer is another classification among those engaged in the occult. If one is a wizard he is a male witch. Wizards or sorcerers elevate themselves above others by claiming to know the unknown. In essence, they dabble in a profession designed to fool the audience. The hand is faster than the eye.

The occult is common throughout the world. Via the Internet, spiritualism is 24/7. People can access an online quija board, buy potions (for \$25.00), get readings of their future, put curses on their enemies, and find instructions in the practice of the occult. Every culture has some aspect of the occult which, at least to some degree, influences the lives of its people.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SORCERY?

The Bible is clear and informative about sorcery. It is a work of the flesh and it is sinful. About the works of the flesh, Paul states:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Witchcraft and sorcery do not lead to an eternal home with God. The occult is a work of the flesh. Somehow, it pleases those who involve themselves in it to a sinful fault. However, those who are consumed with this work of the flesh, like all other carnal works, can be saved. They do not have to be lost. But, if they are to be saved, Christians will have to speak up, show the occultists the error of their way, and present the truth. Truth will stand on its own merits, if we will just present it.

Sorcery is a work of the devil. About Elymas and Paul's confrontation with him, Luke records:

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all

mischief, *thou child of the devil*, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? (Acts 13:8-10, emphasis added).

Elymas was a *child of the devil*, and as such he was an enemy of truth and righteousness. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the occultic beliefs and practices are evil, no matter how appealing the world markets and advertises them to be.

In Acts, we read of the conversion of Simon who was a sorcerer by profession. His conversion serves a good example. People in the occult can be taught the Gospel of Christ and be saved. Luke states:

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them ... But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done (Acts 8:5, 9-13).

Philip preached Christ to the people of Samaria, i.e., he proclaimed the “word” (Acts 8:4), the truth that would set them free (Jn. 8:31-32). The focus of Philip’s message was the Gospel as it is revealed in the Scriptures. It is the Scriptures that testify of Christ (Jn. 5:39); and, it was the Word of God that saved Simon, a practitioner of the occult.

God’s Word, the Gospel, is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). His Word is able to change the workers of *curious arts* and motivate them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. About the conversions of those in Ephesus who practiced such things, inspired history reports:

And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 19:18-20).

The Ephesians demonstrated they had changed.

What the Bible teaches about the conversions of sorcerers and those who used the curious arts gives us hope that people consumed with the occult can be won to Christ. They can change and become faithful Christians, but, we must go and preach the good news of Christ to them.

WHY IS THE REALM OF SPIRITUALISM SINFUL?

So-called “spiritualism” is sinful because, as a creation or philosophy of this world it takes people away from God, it violates God’s law. It denies that God is the one Who is all-powerful and in control of all things. Psalm 135 declares:

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them (Ps. 135:15-18).

Hence, the ouija board or crystal ball or tarot cards or the reading of tea leaves or lines on your hands are all creations of the imaginations of people. Those methods certainly did not come to this world through the inspiration of Deity via the Holy Scriptures. Contrasting man’s way with God’s way, Isaiah exhorts:

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:6-9).

All souls that have turned to the occult for the answers of life have turned to the opinions of man. The thoughts and ways of spiritualism lead people down a wide road to eternal destruction. It is trusting in man, not trusting in God (Pro. 3:5-7). The spiritualists are wise in their own conceits and misled by their made-up ideas (Rom. 12:16).

King Saul had recognized that witchcraft was sinful and wrong. He had despised and warred against it. Yet, when Samuel reprimanded him for disobeying what God had told him to do to the Amalekites, Samuel said:

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

The sin of rebellion is just as wrong as the sin of witchcraft. They both separate the soul from God. Interestingly though, later, after Samuel had died, Saul would turn to witchcraft when he felt threatened by the Philistines and abandoned by God. Seeking counsel from the dead Samuel, Saul commanded his servants: “Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” (1 Sam. 28:7). Disobedient, rebellious, stubborn Saul had become God’s enemy and was now engaging the services of the so-called “Witch of Endor.” She did call forth Samuel who told Saul: “[T]o morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 28:19). In other words, Saul would be dead! More will be said about this later in this chapter.

Playing with spiritualism is like playing with fire. The prophet of old wrote:

Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it (Isa. 47:13-14).

God will destroy those doers of the occult. He will destroy them because they transgress His law (1 Jn. 3:4).

We should not learn of the ways of spiritualism and the occult. In essence, Christians must leave the ouija boards, horoscopes, crystal balls, tarot cards and other such objects alone. “Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them” (Jer. 10:2). The Old Testament was written for our learning and understanding; may we heed the warning of the prophet Jeremiah.

The occult is filled with the darkness of this world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gave us the positive admonition:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:19-24).

May nothing distract our service of God in this life. May we walk in the pathway of God's light (Ps. 119:105; 1 Jn. 1:7), not in the occult's way of darkness (Eph. 5:11; 1 Jn. 1:7).

King Josiah removed the things that represented the occult from Judah (2 Kgs. 23:5). As Christians, we need to remove the occult from our lives and help others to cleanse themselves of such worldly influences.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE DEAD?

Channeling is the modern term for communicating with the dead. Today, some people claim to have contacted and communicated with the dead, animals and people alike. Luke clearly shows that channeling does not work. He quotes Jesus saying:

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou

wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Lk. 16:22-31).

Within the text we read of an unnamed rich man who becomes evangelistic on the other side of life. He pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his brethren about the fate awaiting them. Abraham told the rich man they have the Word of God, let them hear His Word. The rich man continues to plead with Abraham to send someone from the dead to communicate to them. However, the rich man's destiny is sealed. Now, he waits for the day of separation into eternal hell. Attempting to communicate with the dead is destructive to one's faith in the Scriptures. Trying to communicate with the dead is endeavoring to "walk by sight" and not "by faith," especially since the Scriptures imply its impossibility.

The "Witch of Endor," already mentioned, is probably the best known "consulter" or "channeler" with the dead in the Bible. In the situation described in 1 Samuel 28, God has cut off communication with King Saul (1 Sam. 28:6). Wishing to have counsel from Samuel who has died, Saul turns to a witch for help (1 Sam. 28:7). At first, she tells Saul what he already knows. However, he wants her to be the medium between himself and Samuel. She asks Saul who he wants her to bring up and he says, Samuel (1 Sam. 28:11). From the text, it appears that she can see Samuel, but Saul cannot. King Saul had been disobedient to the Lord on more than one occasion before, and at this meeting he was being disobedient on the eve of his death. Saul entered the doorway of *sheol* as an unfaithful servant of God. Let us learn not to engage in vain attempts to consult with the dead through so-called "mediums" or anyone else. Remember, God does not permit those now living to communicate with the dead in this manner.

God's people of old were told not to consider or desire the occult. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31). If we hold to this wisdom, it will keep us from sin (Ps. 119:11).

The Hebrews were warned not to turn to such philosophies as the occult. “And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Lev. 20:6). If God’s people turned to such foolishness, they would be a *whoring* themselves on the broad way.

To try to contact the dead is vanity.

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun (Ecc. 9:5-6).

The dead have no responsibility concerning people that are alive and can do nothing relative to the current issues of this world. Remember, the unnamed rich man could not communicate with the living. Giving us information concerning this matter, Isaiah 63:15-16 says:

Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, *though Abraham be ignorant of us*, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting (emphasis added).

Abraham does not know us. If taken literally, those who have died do not know those who are alive.

To crossover into discussion with the dead using a medium is impossible. The Bible is our only source of insight for understanding where the dead have departed. To turn to someone or something to communicate with the dead is demonstrating a lack of faith in God and truth. As Christians, we know why we are here and we know what we have been promised. Hence, we must have “respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb. 11:26).

THE DANGERS OF THE NEW AGE PHILOSOPHY TO THE LORD’S CHURCH

The New Age philosophy incorporates the occult and is an avenue in which spiritualism is promoted throughout the world.

The New Ager gives a different slant on the concept of reincarnation than does Hinduism. To the New Ager, reincarnation is the doctrine of

the second (and third, and fourth, etc.) chance. New Agers are attracted to the doctrine of reincarnation because they see it as a form of justice and as a way to escape the distasteful Christian doctrine of a God who judges a person after one lifetime. Reincarnation in that sense sounds like good news. We are on a spiritual evolution to perfection.⁷

Reincarnation is an idea that has its roots in Hinduism, the mother of virtually all Eastern Religions. It is a philosophy which promotes the concept that when we die, we will come back as “someone” or “something” else. Reincarnationists teach:

We are reaping in this lifetime the consequences of the deeds we committed in previous lifetimes. A person’s karma determines the kind of body—whether human, animal or insect—into which he or she will be reincarnated in the next lifetime.⁸

But, the Bible teaches: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Truth tells us that we live life on this earth one time, not many times. As servants of the Most High God, we offer a positive message to all people, even those caught up in spiritualism or the occult.

When I was door knocking in San Diego, we came to the door of some Buddhists. I asked them where they went to worship. They said they worshipped at the Buddhist Temple. I then asked them, how they became Buddhists. They said their parents were Buddhists. Two of the three at the door stepped behind the door, but they were still listening. When I asked: “What life are you on?” The one remaining at the door answered: “I am on my third life.” “What were you before?” I asked. She replied, a princess. I responded: “Isn’t that the way reincarnation works; you are always something better before.” She replied: “Yeah.” I presented her with an offer of living life one time, in contrast to living and dying thousands of times through a pessimistic cycle of life and death with no hope. I asked her: “Would you like to live life one time to have Nirvana or heaven?” She said: “Yes.” At this point, her friends said they had heard enough. We did leave them one of our tracts. The point is, we need to offer those in the occult the positive message from heaven and allow them to reject or accept the truth. But, we must speak up.

We need to realize the wisdom Jeremiah recorded for all to follow concerning spiritualism when he penned:

Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners,
nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanter, nor to your

sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish (Jer. 27:9-10).

Those in the occult will *lie to you!* We need to understand that. They do not teach the truth regarding the future. If they did, they would realize we serve a God who is coming back for His kingdom. Thus, the church of Christ is a people with a future (1 Cor. 15:24).

People caught up in the fantasy of spiritualism will be judged to hell along with the murders and whoremongers. Revelation 22:14-15 states:

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Those who do the commandments of God will live (Pro. 7:2). They will not be separated from God and spend eternity in hell. Every facet of the occult is extremely dangerous to one's soul. The way of witchcraft, horoscopes, tarot cards, etc. will cost you heaven. In Matthew 16:26, the question is asked: "[W]hat shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The New Age Philosophy supposedly gives the occult the status of being a legitimate spiritual option for the people of this world, but it does not. In essence, it is just another ploy influenced by Satan to hide truth from souls. We can help people overcome this philosophy of wickedness by proclaiming the truth to them and to those they might influence (Mk. 16:15-16).

CONCLUSION

The Christian follows truth, not the ways of this world. Since the occult is an evil way of the world, the faithful Christian most certainly will not follow after it. In 1689, John Locke said:

How many men have no other ground for their tenets than the supposed honesty, or learning, or number of those of the same profession? As if honest or bookish men could not err; or truth were to be established by the vote of the multitude! ... A man may more justifiably throw up cross and pile for his opinions, than take them up by such measures. All men are liable to error; and most men are, in many points, by passion or interest, under

temptation to it. If we could but see the secret motives that influenced the men of name and learning in the world, and the leaders of parties, we should not always find that it was the embracing of truth for its own sake that made them espouse the doctrines they owned and maintained. This at least is certain, there is not an opinion so absurd which a man may not receive upon this ground. There is no error to be named which has not had its professors: and a man shall never want crooked paths to walk in, if he thinks that he is in the right way, wherever he has the footsteps of others to follow.⁹

Thus, the Christian walks by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). He follows the way of truth in this life, not the speculations of the occult, which are nothing more than the opinions of men.

God is superior to any and all of the workers of the occult. There is not one magician nor one astrologer or witch that can lead one soul to heaven with his or her occultic doctrine. Daniel writes of God's superior way, noting:

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king ... And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh ... Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these (Dan. 2:2, 11, 27-28).

In our lesson, we have learned several truths regarding *Witchcraft*, *Horoscopes*, *Tarot Cards*, *Etc.* First of all, modern society is saturated with the occult. People have an infatuation with the unknown. Second, the Bible condemns the occult. Hence, we have a very serious responsibility to teach what God says about witchcraft, horoscopes, tarot cards, and the like. In addition, the realm of spiritualism is sinful. Furthermore, communicating with the dead destroys faith in God and His truth, not to mention that it is futile. Finally, the New Age Philosophy denies the Deity of our Lord and Savior. They would profane the only way to eternal life. Remember, heaven is worth it all.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² D.M. Bennett, *The Gods And Religions of Ancient And Modern Times* (New York, NY; Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, 1880), 9.

³ William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of European Morals From Augustus to Charlemagne* (London, UK: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910) 1:170-171.

⁴ William Watson, *A Concise Dictionary of Cults & Religions* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁶ Elizabeth Renfro, *The Shasta Indians of California and Their Neighbors* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, Inc., 2002), 69.

⁷ Dean C. Halverson and William Honsberger, *The Compact Guide To World Religions*, ed. Dean C. Halverson (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 165.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹ John Locke, Gent., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, UK: George Routledge and Sons Limited, circa 1800), 606.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TODAY'S EXORCISTS

Preston Silcox



Preston Silcox was born in Pensacola, Florida. He and his wife, the former Tanya Brantley, are the parents of Rice Paul-Travis and Curry Christine. A graduate of Memphis School of Preaching, Silcox earned a B.A. degree from Southern Christian University. He has worked with churches in Tennessee and Oklahoma, and was the Director of *Speaking as the Oracles of God Lectureship*. Silcox currently preaches for the Margaret Street Church of Christ in Milton, Florida.

INTRODUCTION¹

One of the deadly tools in the arsenal of our adversary is deception. 2 Corinthians 11:3 speaks of the devil's craftiness; John 8:44 declares him to be a liar; and, 2 Corinthians 11:14 notes his ability to transform himself into an angel of light. A prominent arena wherein he has used this weapon of deception is the modern media. The 1973 movie, *The Exorcist*, led to an over-abundance of articles dealing with the subject of exorcism in every way but the right way. Along with the film, the writings that appeared in publications like *Newsweek*, *Christianity Today*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *New York Times Magazine* heaped more ignorance on the masses and created all kinds of strange ideas about demons and exorcism. Such lies and deceptions of the devil did not die out in the early 70s, but with additional films, news stories, articles, and religious propaganda, they continue to produce an array of false ideas regarding this much misunderstood subject. With such in mind, consider the following material regarding "The Truth about Today's Exorcists."

THE BIBLICAL RECORD

Obviously, when desiring to know the truth about a spiritual topic, God's inspired Word is the sole and supreme source of such information (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). As for the subject at hand, the Bible does indeed use the word *exorcist* and also provides numerous accounts of demons being cast out of individuals.

The Term

Note the words of Luke in Acts 19:13—“Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.” While these men were unable to perform their desired task (Acts 19:14-16), the text reveals the term *exorcist* to be a Biblical word and one worthy of consideration. According to Vine, *exorcist*, from *exorkistes* “denotes (a) ‘one who administers an oath’; (b) ‘an exorcist’ (akin to *exorkizo*, ‘to adjure,’ from *orkos*, ‘an oath’), ‘one who employs a formula of conjuration for the expulsion of demons.’”² In defining the occupation of the exorcist, Youngblood observes: “The people of the ancient world believed in spirit powers and that a person could be taken over by an evil power. Many methods were used to cast out the demons. These included potions, spells, and chants.”³ While Jesus and other divinely empowered individuals did not invoke mysterious occult-like formulas to expel demons, they did “cast out” such beings.

The Accounts

The New Testament records several cases of demon possession and expulsion. Jackson lists the accounts that involve Jesus’ casting out these evil spirits as follows:⁴

- The demoniac in the synagogue (Mk. 1:23; Lk. 4:33-36).
- The Gerasene demoniac (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39).
- The Syrophenician girl (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30).
- The epileptic boy (Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43).
- The mute demoniac (Mt. 9:32-34).
- The blind and mute demoniac (Mt. 12:22ff; Lk. 11:14-15).

Besides the cases where Jesus ordered demons to exit their victims, there are other instances where individuals possessed this power and used it with God-given authority. For example, when Jesus issued the “limited commission” to His apostles, among other abilities, “he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out” (Mt. 10:1). He also empowered the seventy with the same gift, who upon their return, exclaimed: “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (Lk. 10:17). Most likely, it was one of these seventy disciples whom John witnessed “casting out devils” in the name of Christ (Mk.

9:38). Additionally, Jesus promised the early church that one of the signs that would confirm the Gospel message would be the ability to “cast out devils” (Mk. 16:17). Finally, the book of Acts notes occasions of demons being cast out by the apostles (5:16; 16:18; 19:11-12).

The Bible record does indeed note the factual nature of demon possession and expulsion. But, how do modern, so-called exorcisms compare to the inspired accounts noted above? In hopes of learning the truth about today’s exorcists, it is necessary to examine current ideas and claims of exorcism.

THE MODERN CLAIMS

Michael Cuneo, a sociologist at Fordham University and the author of *American Exorcism*, told ABC News, “the Catholic Church has at least ten official exorcists around the United States.”⁵ He also pointed out: “By conservative estimates, there are at least five or six hundred evangelical exorcism ministries in operation today, and quite possibly two or three times this many.”⁶ Consider the following material relative to these groups’ activities in the realm of modern exorcism.

Catholicism

When it comes to exorcism and the protocol for such, the Catholic Church turns to the tenth title of the *Rituale Romanum* for its general rules in performing exorcisms.⁷ While this document is their official source of ceremonies and prayers for various administrations, exorcisms vary one from the other.⁸ Generally, however, there are a few matters that every Catholic exorcism has in common: the people, the place, and the process.

Besides the victim and the exorcist, three additional people are usually present at the ceremony: a junior priest trained in exorcism, a physician, and a family member.⁹ Concerning the place, former Jesuit professor Malachi Martin says the event is to transpire “in a location where there is a definite connection between the demon and the victim.”¹⁰ And as for the process, Martin lists the usual stages involved in each exorcism as follows:

- *The Presence*: The exorcist and his assistants become aware of an alien feeling or entity. Attempts or actions of the evil spirit appear to be the victim’s. The exorcist’s first job is to break this Pretense and find out whom the demon really is. Gaining the entity’s name is most important.

- *The Breakpoint*: The moment when the devil's Pretense finally collapses. This is usually a moment of complete pandemonium. There evolves a scene of panic and confusion, accompanied by a crescendo of abuse, horrible sights, noises, and odors. The devil then turns on the victim, speaking of the person in the third person.
- *The Voice*: Also a sign the Breakpoint, the Voice (of the demon) becomes "inordinately disturbing and humanly distressing babble." The demon's voices must be silenced for the exorcism to proceed.
- *The Clash*: As the Voices die out there is both a spiritual and physical pressure. The demon has collided with the "will of the Kingdom." The exorcist is now in direct battle with the demon, urging the entity to reveal more information about itself so it can be controlled. As previously mentioned, there is a connection between the entity and the victim's resident. The entity wants a place to be in, or it must return to Hell. An existence out of Hell is what the devil or demon is fighting for.
- *Expulsion*: In the supreme triumph of God's will, the demon or spirit leaves in the name of Jesus. All present feel the Presence dissipates, occasionally with receding noises and voices. The victim may remember the ordeal or may not recall anything that has happened.¹¹

Numerous other matters are involved in Catholic exorcisms. For example, Catholic priest Cliff Graham, in "The Ritual of Exorcism," speaks of using the sign of the cross over the victim, mentions the exorcist's attire, and writes of the role of crucifixes.¹² John A. Hardon also emphasizes the multitude of matters involved in this ceremony, saying:

The full ritual for exorcism is some five thousand words in length. It consists of the recitation of psalms, readings from the Gospels, and lengthy prayers asking God to deliver a possessed person or place from infestation by the devil.

Before beginning to exorcise the priest is instructed to go to confession, offer the sacrifice of the Mass and implore God's help. He is to be vested in a surplice and stole. He is to bless himself and the possessed person or persons, using holy water, pray on his knees, recite the Litany of the Saints, and only then begin the formal exorcism.¹³

Needless to say, there is much ceremony involved in exorcisms performed by the Catholic Church.

Denominationalism

In denominationalism, the casting out of demons is predominately an activity of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. In these religious bodies, the work of exorcism is a major component of what is commonly known as *deliverance ministry*. “Deliverance ministries are activities carried out by individuals or groups aimed at solving problems related to demons and spirits.”¹⁴ These “problems” include “illnesses, psychological disorders, and sin patterns” that afflict Christians.¹⁵ To illustrate, in an internet advertisement for his book, *Deliverance from Demonic Power*, Steven Lambert asks:

- Are you being constantly vexed with chaos, confusion, mental and emotional assaults, inordinate stress, and unwarranted attacks and mistreatment from other people?
- Do you frequently feel like there is no hope for you and your life, or experience overwhelming attacks of evil forces upon your mind with thoughts that the only way out is to end it all?
- Do you ever feel like there is an evil force assigned to your life whose mission is to utterly destroy you and keep you living in failure and defeat your whole life?
- Do fears, phobias, and acute anxiety dominate your life?
- Are you battling destructive addictions from which you are never able to break free?¹⁶

Following his list of questions, Lambert affirms that such experiences “are often caused by demons” (and, of course, he promises that reading his book will help one be delivered from such).

Deliverance ministries can be divided into at least two main branches. “There are those who advocate ‘power encounters’ and those who advocate ‘truth encounters.’”¹⁷ The former would include individuals such as Benny Hinn who “shouts, rebukes, and binds the demons sending them to the pit of hell, while the subject is usually exhausted from the protracted event.”¹⁸ The latter would include the likes of Neil T. Anderson, president of *Freedom in Christ Ministries*, who uses a “clinical approach” involving seven steps to deliverance, which he says are:

1. Renounce involvement in any and all demonic activities.

2. Readjust thinking to align with truth.
3. Forgive offenders.
4. Confess the sin of rebellion.
5. Confess the sin of pride.
6. Confess sins one to another.
7. Renounce the sins of one's ancestors to escape "generational curses."¹⁹

While exorcism in the Pentecostal/Charismatic world is not as ceremonial and mysterious as it is in Catholicism, it is definitely popular among those affiliated with this religious segment and seemingly profitable to those marketing their books and seminars on the subject.

Other Religions

Before closing this section, it seems important to mention that exorcism is, or has been, present in other religions as well. For example, Jackson says: "The ancient world abounded with superstition relative to demons."²⁰ These superstitions also brought along a number of tall tales of exorcisms. Consider the following material on other world religions:

- *Judaism*: Jewish folklore and Kabbalah teachings tell of a malevolent spirit called a *dybbuk*. This spirit is the soul of a dead person that has come back to address unfinished business, and it inhabits the body of a living person in order to carry out its goals. The dybbuk can be expelled through a rite of exorcism and leaves the body through the toe.
- *Islam*: Islamic belief tells of a *jinn*—an evil spirit and servant of Satan—that can invade the human body and cause illness, pain, torment and evil thoughts. This jinn can be expelled by the possessed person by reciting particular passages of the Qur'an.
- *Hinduism*: In Hinduism, the *Vedas* scriptures tell of an evil spirit that can not only harm humans, but can also stand in the way of the will of the gods. A traditional Hindu exorcism includes such rituals as burning pig excrement, reciting prayers and offering sweets to the gods.²¹

Of course, dealing with supposed demons, spirits, or ghosts by means of various forms of exorcism is a part of numerous other man-made religions, tribal cultures, and the occult.

Obviously, there are great differences between exorcisms in Catholicism, Denominationalism, and other religious systems. Still, when it comes to the topic at hand, the numerous groups do have one thing very much in common: their beliefs and actions are completely foreign to the Scriptures.

THE NOTABLE DIFFERENCES

When it comes to modern, and even ancient, claims of exorcism, events recorded in the Bible are quite different in nature than the events and ceremonies noted in the previous section. While not every difference can be detailed, a brief overview of the contrasts should help one reach some important conclusions regarding the truth about today's exorcists.

Some Contrasts

Specifically regarding the claims of the Catholic Church, Jackson lists a number of notable differences between their exorcisms and those recorded in God's inspired Word. He states:

1. The "exorcisms" of today are performed almost invariably in dark, secluded environments, only to be publicized later. When Jesus cast out demons, the episodes were public, and therefore subject to critical examination (cf. Luke 4:31-37).
2. The Lord could expel evil spirits with but a word, and the effect was immediate (Luke 4:36; Matthew 17:18). The Jesuit Priest who supposedly "exorcised" a demon from the youngster who served as the subject of Blatty's book, *The Exorcist*, confessed that it took him two months of preparation (fasting on bread and water), and twenty ritual ceremonies to purge the child.
3. The demoniacs of the New Testament era were afflicted, either physically or mentally, by a malfunction of what were otherwise normal human traits. Those cases involved no grotesque details. However, according to Roman Catholic priest Luigi Novagese (the official exorcist for the papal diocese in Rome), "A man's skin turned white like paper, his teeth became transparent, his eyes bulged with balls of flame and fire issued from his mouth." One priest claimed that a demon took a bite out of his sandwich. The February 11, 1974 issue of *Newsweek* magazine carried a photo of the burglarized delicacy, displaying perfect, human-like teeth prints! Do demons get cavities?

4. Modern demoniacs frequently are described as uttering “fierce curses” and “bursts of blasphemy.” In the New Testament record, demons always were very respectful of deity (Mark 1:24; 3:11). There is not a solitary case of a demon blaspheming either God or Christ in the biblical narratives.
5. Two cases of demon possession in the New Testament reveal that the unclean spirits could empower their hosts with supernatural strength (Mark 5:1-20; cf. Acts 19:13-16). The demoniac described in Mark 5 could not be bound even with a “chain.” A respected university professor posed this interesting query: “If we have demon-possessed people today, why in my travels in over forty countries of the world have I never seen a person who is so strong that you can’t bind him with chains (cf. Mk. 5:3)?”²²

As for the “deliverance ministries” of the Pentecostal/Charismatic world, their activities are likewise vastly different than the New Testament record of casting out demons. In fact, the differences really begin with the supposed activities of the demons themselves. Remember, proponents of this system claim, among other things, that the source of sin problems are evil spirits from which individuals need to be delivered rather than one’s habitual submission to temptation. However, the repeated emphasis of the New Testament is on repentance of sin, not on deliverance from demons (cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 6:12; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30). Consider the Corinthians. The Bible says nothing of Paul’s implementing a “deliverance ministry” in that city. It does, however, say that many heard the Gospel, believed it, and were baptized (Acts 18:8). How then were the Corinthians who had previously engaged in fornication, idolatry, homosexuality, adultery, stealing, covetousness, drinking, revelry, and extortion washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor. 6:9-11)? Not by “power encounters” or “clinical deliverances,” but by compliance to the commands of Christ.

Don Matzat, a denominational minister previously involved with deliverance ministries, writes of another contrast between modern exorcisms and those of the Biblical record. He explains:

When Jesus and the Apostle Paul cast out demons, they were not having a clinical, counseling experience involving the diagnosis and treatment of those possessed. The Bible defines their experiences with demons as spontaneous, impromptu events. The Apostle Paul did not sit down with the young woman in

Acts 16, advise her that he believed that her particular problem was caused by demon-possession, and proceed to bind and cast out the demon. It was a spontaneous event. The demons spontaneously reacted to Jesus and, for that matter, to the Apostle Paul.²³

Matzat suggests that the power of modern exorcists and the experiences of modern victims reside in learned behavior rather than mysterious spiritual forces. He believes that victims learn from books, television, and other sources how “the demonized” act, and accept the authority of so-called exorcists or deliverance ministers. He does not question the sincerity of such victims, but describes these individuals as “primed for deliverance” and possessed not by demons, but by “the idea of having a demon.”²⁴

Whether in Catholicism, denominationalism, or other religious traditions, the actions of modern exorcists are vastly different than the activities of Jesus, the apostles, and other divinely empowered individuals described in the New Testament. Such an observation should move honest souls to replace man-made religious rites and emotional experiences with objective, Biblical truth.

An Observation

Though dealt with in greater detail in another chapter, it is worthwhile to note here the cessation of demon possession. Cliff Goodwin writes:

After the miracles of the first century (including demon expulsion, Mk. 16:17) had accomplished their purpose of confirming the revelation of God through Jesus Christ (Mk. 16:15-20), they were done away, stopped, and ended (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-10). Hence, no one since the apostolic age has possessed miraculous power.²⁵

Goodwin logically concludes that since demon possession was a miraculous occurrence requiring a miraculous remedy, possession and expulsion no longer happen.²⁶

CONCLUSION

Indeed, the devil is the adversary of mankind. His treacherous tool of deception has fooled multitudes into believing a load of lies. Buying into the unscriptural belief that demons still possess people today lends dangerous credibility to teachers of error who claim they can cast out evil spirits from helpless souls. The good words, fair speeches, and far-out demonstrations of these false teachers who serve their own bellies,

deceive the hearts of the simple (cf. Rom. 16:17-18). May their mouths be stopped and their actions abated.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

³ Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary: An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations [computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

⁴ Wayne Jackson, "Demons: Ancient Superstition or Historical Reality?" *Christian Courier*
http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/demons_ancient_superstition_or_historical_reality

⁵ "Exorcism Thriving in U.S., Say Experts"
<http://abcnews.go.com/US/Story?id=92541&page=2>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Alan G. Hefner, "Exorcism." Found at
<http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/e/exorcism.html>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cliff Graham, "The Ritual of Exorcism." Found at
<http://www.stmichael.pair.com/ritualofexorcism.htm>

¹³ John A. Hardon, "What is Exorcism and How is it Performed?" Found at
<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/1620834/posts>

¹⁴ "Deliverance Ministry" in *Wikipedia-The Free Encyclopedia*. Found at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliverance_ministry

¹⁵ "Angels and Demons" on *Realms of Faith: Christian Authors Database Glossary*. Found at
www.propadeutic.com/faith/authors/g.html

¹⁶ Dr. Steven D. Lambert, advertisement for *Deliverance from Demonic Powers*. Found at
www.slm.org/pubs/dlvrman.html

¹⁷ J. Beard, "Neil Anderson: General Teachings/Activities." Found at www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/anderson/general.html

¹⁸ J. Beard, "Neil Anderson: Demon Possession and the New Clinical Deliverance." Found at www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/anderson/demon.html

¹⁹ Doug Mallett and Debra A. Read, "The Fraud of Deliverance Ministries." Found at www.oaim.org/deliverance.html

²⁰ Jackson.

²¹ Julia Layton, "How Exorcism Works." Found at <http://science.howstuffworks.com/exorcism.htm>

²² Jackson.

²³ Don Matzat, "Possession or Suggestion?" Found at <http://www.issuesetc.org/resource/journals/v2n2.htm>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cliff Goodwin, "Demon Possession and Satan" *Satan: Diabolical Ruler of the World and Enemy of God and Man*, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2002), 407.

²⁶ Ibid.

SATAN'S HEAD BRUISED

Neal Pollard



Neal Pollard was born in Oxford, Mississippi. He and his wife, the former Kathy Gillaspie, have three sons. Pollard was educated at Faulkner University, Freed-Hardeman College, and Bear Valley Bible Institute. He has done local work in Alabama, Virginia, and Colorado. Pollard has preached in France, Tanzania, and the Ukraine. He recently published a book entitled *Rise Up And Build*. Pollard serves as the pulpit minister for the Bear Valley Church of Christ in Denver, Colorado.

INTRODUCTION¹

In Paul's last charge to the church in Rome, he seems to be trying to accomplish three things (Rom. 16:17-20). First, he gives them a *caution* (vv. 17-18). He warns them about the divisive teachers and tells them to avoid such. They serve their own bellies rather than the Lord, and they deceive those simple of heart. Such individuals fail to do what Paul urges at the beginning of the practical section (Rom. 12-16). Through transformed, sacrificial lives they were to practice brotherly love, protect the faith, and bear the infirmities of weak brethren. Then, he provides them *counsel* (v. 19). Specifically, he tells them to be wise in what is good and be simple concerning evil, not simple in the way those deceived were, but to do similar to what he told the church at Corinth and "not be children in understanding ... in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature" (1 Cor. 14:20, NKJV). That is, Paul urges them to mature in Bible knowledge and Christian living but to be uninitiated and uninformed about the ways of sins. Finally, he offers them *consolation*. Whereas verses seventeen through nineteen were to help them cope with the present, Paul's words in verse twenty seem to provide hope and incentive regarding the future. He promises that Satan will be defeated and reminds them of God's wonderful grace. Notice the way Paul words his solace concerning Satan—"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

THE THIRD PARTY

Taken alone, these words give a graphic, figurative image depicting the sure defeat of the devil. Viewed in the larger context of Scripture,

the meaning enlarges and seems to allude to God's eternal scheme of redemption. At the beginning, God created man and desired to be in fellowship with him. Yet, there at the dawn of time in paradise, man chose to sin thus severing fellowship. A need existed for all mankind, since all sin (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12). Yet, the Bible makes it clear that there is a third and very interested party involved in the matter of man's salvation. He is depicted throughout Scripture as one who stands against the people of God (1 Chron. 21:1), fills man with evil (Acts 5:3), tempts man (1 Cor. 7:5), takes advantage of man (2 Cor. 2:11), can get a foothold in man's life (Eph. 4:27), hinders man (1 Thess. 2:18), leads man (1 Tim. 5:15), can take man captive (2 Tim. 2:26), is capable of devouring man's soul (1 Pet. 5:8), and even persecutes man (Rev. 2:10). He is Satan. He has had the power of death within his grasp (Heb. 2:14).

THE TRANSGRESSION

The Bible makes clear that Satan has been practicing his beguiling, dishonest, and destructive ways since "the beginning" (Jn. 8:44). In Genesis three, a serpent uses his cunning to deceive Eve (3:1, 14), who disobeys God along with her husband, Adam (3:6). They had been warned and were fully aware of the ramifications of such disobedience (Gen. 2:17; 3:3). Whether the warning was concerning both spiritual and physical death or only spiritual death,² spiritual separation from God occurs as the result of Adam's and Eve's transgression of God's law. What was Satan's role in the Eden events that brought about spiritual death and necessitated a Savior to suffer a vicarious death to atone for sin? How does the "head bruising" of Genesis 3:15 relate to the crushing of Satan in Romans 16:20? Who is the serpent's seed and who is the woman's seed in Genesis 3:15? How does Genesis 3:15 fit into God's grand scheme of redemption?

THE CURSES AND SEED

God pronounces curses upon the man, the woman, and the serpent for their roles in the disobedience of Genesis 3:6. In speaking to the serpent, God says:

Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall
go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will
put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed

and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise
His heel (Gen. 3:14-15, NKJ).

Many consider this the *Protoevangelium*. Leupold simply defines this as “the first gospel proclamation.” He decries what he calls a “rationalistic exegesis” that reduces this to only a conflict between men and snakes, saying: “Such a trite platitude would not have been worthy of recording.”³ What can be known from the text, and what do subsequent texts reveal about the meaning of Genesis 3:15?

Dogmatism Should Be Avoided

First, dogmatism concerning any particular details of the verse should be avoided since no New Testament writer follows the formula normally associated with Messianic prophecies. Philip takes Isaiah 53 and applies it to Christ (Acts 8:32-33). Peter takes Joel 2:28-32 and applies it to Christ's church in Acts 2:16-21. This is how Messianic prophecy is handled regarding His birth (Mic. 5:2; Jn. 7:42), His name (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23), His parabolic teaching (Ps. 78:2; Mt. 13:35), many aspects of His suffering and death, His resurrection (Ps. 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-28), and much more. Writers of the epistles regularly look back to the Old Testament to show fulfillment or to clarify that certain Old Testament passages were to be applied to Christ. This is not done anywhere regarding Genesis 3:15. The closest is Romans 16:20, where some of the terminology is borrowed.⁴

What about the “seed” of woman and that of the serpent? Is the mentioning of the seed of woman of such significance that Genesis 3:15 must be a prophesy of the virgin birth? Lewis shows that the Hebrew word *zera*, used in Genesis 3:15, as a “feminine possessive suffix” is also used to speak of Hagar's (Gen. 16:10) and Rebecca's (Gen. 24:60) descendents, though they were to have men of earth as “joint ancestors” with them of the children.⁵ Further, the earliest record one finds interpreting this passage as pertaining to the virgin birth is among the early church fathers (cf. Justin, Irenaeus) and not New Testament writers. To say that Genesis 3:15 does not predict a virgin birth in no way denies the virgin birth. Such serves merely as a caution against trying to prove from a passage what the passage does not claim for itself.

Though the curse God pronounces on the serpent may not have signaled to Adam and Eve an explicit promise of a coming Messiah, several things should be noted. First, there seems to be more to this

pronouncement than a mere warning to a “morally irresponsible” animal of a perpetual hostility between his descendents and humankind. It seems more logical to suppose that Satan uses the serpent to “accomplish his purposes.”⁶ Genesis 3:14 is undoubtedly applicable to the serpent and is literal. There also seems to be a literal curse of a serpent involved in Genesis 3:15, an enmity that is felt by most human beings toward snakes. The philosophy of many throughout the world seems to be that “the only good snake is a dead snake.” This writer *certainly* concurs!

Yet, is there not more in Genesis 3:15? Again, Willis writes:

Apparently the biblical author uses the physical hostility between snakes and people as a symbol for the spiritual hostility between mankind and the devil. The devil dealt a telling blow against man by persuading the man and his wife to sin against God, and he will continue to tempt man to sin. But ultimately man will prevail, and the devil will be conquered. This is as far as the text goes.⁷

Though Genesis 3:15 gives no explicit reason to assume from it Messianic interpretation and Satanic involvement, texts in addition to Romans 16:20 imply such. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3 says:

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Paul goes on to connect Satan to deceit and falsity (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-14). Additionally, Harris writes:

In Jewish thought the snake, as the archetypal unclean animal, symbolized opposition to God and so naturally came to be identified with the epitome of such opposition, namely, the devil or Satan. But Rev. 12:9 and 20:2 are the only explicit biblical identifications of the Edenic snake with the devil or Satan.⁸

Those Revelation passages call Satan a “serpent,” an intriguing description that inevitably leads the reader to think back to Eden. That is not to say that the serpent was Satan, but it causes one to deduce a connection or cooperation there. The implications of this part of God’s curse on the devil opens the door for the reader to anticipate the solution to this most serious of problems.

God's Intervention Necessary

Second, there is the question of how this tension and conflict will be played out and ultimately resolved. Every accountable person throughout the ages will have lost the battle with sin somewhere along the line (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12). In fact, sin is a struggle with which all mankind deals as long as we are in the flesh (cf. Rom. 7:14ff). Man cannot provide the solution to the sin problem. God has to intervene. In this sense, the curse pronounced on the devil (as seems implied) does point the way ahead to Calvary. Adam and Eve may not have understood it in this way. Moses and his peers may not have fully grasped it or applied it to Christ. Yet, looking backward to Eden and having benefit of the full revelation of Scripture, one can see this golden thread from Eden to Calvary to eternity.

Victory In Jesus

Third, there are several practical applications that can be made as Genesis 3:15 is viewed through the lens of all Scripture. There is the matter of confidence that “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). This confidence is rooted in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because He lived on this earth as a man, died for the sins of all men, and arose again to live forevermore. Ultimately, all faithful Christians will gain the victory through their obedient faith in Christ (1 Jn. 5:4; Rom. 16:25-27). Because Jesus was victorious over sin (Heb. 4:15ff), those who become His disciples and live faithfully unto death will share in that victory (Heb. 5:8-9). Then, there is the matter of the efficacy of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. The writer of Hebrews declares:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:14-16).

Jesus’ atoning work at Calvary and triumphal defeat of death on the resurrection morning simultaneously destroyed and delivered. Christ’s coming to this earth in the likeness of man (Phil. 2:7; cf. Jn. 1:14; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:17) served to “render [the devil] powerless” (Heb. 2:14, NASU). Satan’s death grip over death and, consequently, man

was broken by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, that same atoning sacrifice delivers man from Satan's bondage. This is only possible because God became flesh.

Finally, Christ's victory over Satan benefits sinful man. Man, without God's help, would be powerless to fight the devil. Without Calvary, man would be utterly hopeless. Further, Christ's atoning work allows Him to serve as our High Priest. He represents Christians as He continually serves in heaven at God's right hand. In Christ, man has the best representation and sacrifice possible.

CONCLUSION

God sent forth His Son, born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). Thus involves one of the great mysteries of all, that in Jesus is One who is fully divine and fully human. Yet, more than mysterious, Jesus' unique identity allowed Him to provide a sacrifice that satisfied God's justice, saves man's soul, and surmounts the devil's power over death. The devil's obvious contempt for God's position and authority and his active work to separate man from God seems at least a part of the Eden story in Genesis three. The facts unfolded in that chapter set in motion God's eternal plan that eventually lead Jesus to the cross, then up from the grave to live forevermore. Satan was handed a defeat from which he can never recover, and certainly: "This passage, almost in the very beginning of the Bible, would lead us to expect a virgin birth—a woman to conceive and bring forth a child without the agency of a human father."⁹ Even without Genesis 3:15 and the mention of "seed" pointing to that conclusion, the unfolding scheme of redemption reveals the factuality of it. Most important is the truth and implications that arise because of Jesus' defeat of Satan through God's eternal plan.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scriptures references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Rex Turner, Sr., for instance, believed that God meant physical death in His warning in Genesis two and that the animal wherewith they were clothed constituted the first animal sacrifice and had atoning implications ("The Vicarious Suffering And Death Of Christ"), 8.

³ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942), 1:164. Oswald T. Allis defines it as "the first gleam of hope for mankind" in *God Spake By Moses: An Exposition of the Pentateuch* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presby. & Ref. Pub. Co., 1951), 19.

⁴ Reyburn and Fry caution against seeing Genesis 3:15 as the Protoevangelium for two reasons. “(1) The text speaks of the descendants of both the snake and the woman. Their meanings should both be kept parallel. (2) The context is that of a curse or punishment, and there is no suggestion of a promise or prophesy in it.” W.D. Reyburn, and E.M. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*. (New York, NY: UBS Handbook Series, 1997), 91. While no New Testament text may overtly show this verse as a fulfillment of prophesy and no explicit promise may be detected when Genesis three is isolated, this writer will show later that there seems to be an allusion to God’s scheme of redemption when this verse is viewed in light of the whole Bible.

⁵ Jack P. Lewis, “Genesis 3:15, The Woman’s Seed,” *Gospel Advocate* (April 2, 1987): 209.

⁶ John T. Willis, *Genesis* (Austin, TX: Sweet Pub. Co., 1979), 128.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

⁸ M.J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, A Commentary on the Greek text*. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), n.p.

⁹ Thomas B. Warren, *Jesus The Lamb Who Is A Lion* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, n.p.), 28.

SATAN'S ATTACK ON THE BIBLE, GOD'S WORD

Robert Taylor



Robert Taylor is a native of Bradford, Tennessee. He and his wife, the former Irene Crump, have two children and four grandchildren. Taylor holds degrees from Freed-Hardeman University, Lipscomb University, and George Peabody College for Teachers. He has done local work for fifty-three years. Taylor has worked with the Lord's church in Ripley, Tennessee for thirty-three years. He has served as an instructor for the *Online Academy of Biblical Studies* for the last eight years.

INTRODUCTION¹

A serious study of Satan, our Arch Enemy, is an idea whose time has come. God is light, life and love; Satan is darkness, death and hatred. God is good; Satan is evil—its very essence. God's throne is in heaven; Satan is enthroned in the hearts of evil men and wicked women. God wants all to be saved as per 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and 2 Peter 3:9. Respectively, they read:

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The devil is always on the pernicious prowl seeking the destruction of all (1 Pet. 5:8).

The Bible is God's scheme of human redemption. Satan hates the Book Divine with passion. He hates God. He hates Christ and despises the Book that sets Him forth. He hates the Holy Spirit and His Divine Revelation. Satan is not only the Arch Enemy of Deity and humanity but also the Arch Enemy of this bright, blessed and beautiful Book, which we call "The Holy Bible." He fights it on every front—its reliability, its correctness, its inspiration, its authority, its all-sufficiency, its power, its profit, its eternal nature and its exclusive character. He hates the Bible as much as he does the Godhead Three.

SATANIC ASSAULTS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE BIBLE

His hatred of God's Word goes back to a time subsequent to his creation. This is why he and his cronies in crime fell in the first place. His pride led to his condemnation. Had he respected and loved God's Word, he would not have fallen from his exalted position.

Early in the book of Genesis we see him in assaulting action upon God's Word. In clarity of command, Jehovah God told Adam: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). God said: "Eat and die," but Satan said: "Eat, be wise and not die." This is the way it developed. Satan tested and tempted Eve. Satan asks her a question about this in Genesis 3:1, saying: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" That she understood God's positive, divine law, something right because God prohibited it, is crystal clear in Genesis 3: 2-3. Then, we have the proverbial "not in the devil's tale." He stated the opposite of what God said in Genesis 2:17. Five words declare it in our English translation: "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). He polished up his temptation in the subsequent verse (Gen. 3:5). Eve bought the temptation hook, line and sinker! She ate; so did Adam. Innocency promptly vacated the sinful scene. Now, they stood in sinful disobedience to their heavenly Benefactor. No longer was there the sweetness of daily fellowship between the human couple and their Maker. They died that very day spiritually; they were separated from God. As per Isaiah 59:1-2, this is what sin does. This premier prophet of the Old Testament said:

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities
have separated between you and your God, and your sins have
hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Sin still separates man from God. This is one of its real tragedies. Because they were separated from the tree of life, they both died physically in later years. Adam was 930 at his demise. Eve's age at death is not given.

The die had been cast. God had voted for their remaining faithful to His Word. Satan had voted for their rejection of that powerful Word. They had now cast the deciding vote in Satan's favor. The devil won; the human couple lost and great was their loss. Their guilt of such has not passed on to their descendants in the form of Adamic or original

sin, Calvinism to the contrary notwithstanding. However, the consequences do, and they reach us many centuries later. Babies, sunset citizens and all in between die physically. Why? We all are separated from the tree of life. Only two of the multiplied billions who have lived on planet earth have escaped nature's final debt—Enoch in Genesis 5 and Elijah in 2 Kings 2. "And he died" occurs repeatedly in the Bible's longevity chapter—Genesis 5.

The devil has never gone out of business in attacking or assaulting the Word of God Almighty. This is observed in both testaments and in the intervening centuries since John laid down his pen with a weary hand at the close of Revelation 22:21. Satan surely is not passive in such attacks or assaults today. He has plenty of help from his duped devotees throughout the earth and even in religious circles of all places.

HIS ATTACKS PERMEATE THE OLD TESTAMENT

Satan was in assaulting action in the very next chapter after man's fall. Both Cain and Abel were informed fully relative to approved sacrifices. Abel acted by faith as we see affirmed in Hebrews 11:4. Be it recalled that faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). Both were told what to offer. Abel was submissive; Cain disobeyed. We are not left in the dark about Satan's link with Cain in all these unholy actions in Genesis 4. John wrote: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). Cain paid dearly for allowing Satan to be on the throne of his hateful heart. So did the line of his descendants who walked in his ways of wickedness. Jude 11 makes mention of the "way of Cain."

Satan had a large family here on earth during the time of Noah. His children were the contemporaries of Noah and his righteous family. Noah preached righteousness to them for a long, long time (2 Pet. 2:5). This corrupt company listened to the wrong message—their father's—the devil. He owned their souls in outright fashion.

Satan's family continued into the era of Abraham. Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim were all in tune with Satan—their father—and out of tune with God and His Word. Genesis 19 tells us how they were destroyed. The devil even influenced Lot's wife. She disobeyed angelic instructions forbidding a backward glance as they vacated the doomed city. She was turned into a pillar of salt while Lot

and two daughters continued to look ahead. Jesus did not want us to forget Lot's wife (Lk. 17:32).

Joseph's ten older brethren allowed the devil to turn them into men of hatred, insensitivity and darkness as they sold the totally innocent Joseph into Egyptian captivity. Then they lied to a grieving Jacob about their dastardly deed in Genesis 37. All honor had forsaken them. They gave a new dimension to the word dishonor.

In early Exodus the devil had a willing accomplice in an adamant Pharaoh who made fun of God's command that he allow Israel's departure from the land of their tyranny. It took ten grievous plagues for him to change his malicious mind.

In the forty years of wilderness wandering the devil influenced wayward Israelites far more than did Mosaic mandates that came straight from God. Nadab, Abihu, Korah, Abiram, Dathan and Balaam illustrate this in fullness of fury.

Hophni and Phinehas were agents of Satan in the early chapters of 1 Samuel. King Saul was in the later chapters of 1 Samuel.

Satan had David in his corner during the Bathsheba/Uriah affair of adultery and cold-blooded murder. In all of this, David broke commandments six, seven and ten. Satan held the deed to Solomon's soul as we observe in the latter years of this king's life. 1 Kings 11 is one of the most tragic chapters in the whole Bible.

All kings of Israel and most monarchs of Judah were puppets of Satan doing his bidding as they rejected the prophets, God's servants, sent to them. Elijah and Elisha felt their sting in the Northern Kingdom. So did the major and minor prophets in both kingdoms.

Jeremiah surely did. He did his prophetic work under the just Josiah and the four malicious monarchs of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin (Coniah) and Zedekiah. Josiah respected deeply the Word of the Lord. His subsequent successors despised Jehovah, His Word and the faithful prophet, Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 36, God's Word, as given by Jeremiah, was read before wicked Jehoiakim. The irreverent king took his infamous penknife and cut Heaven's inspired Message to pieces. Not content with this dastardly deed, he even took the cut pieces, casting them into the fire burning on the hearth before him (Jer. 36:21ff). In so doing, he was the puppet of Satan who hated God, His Word and His prophet.

Such attitudes and actions fill the pages of the Old Testament. Such was inexcusable, yet *devilishly* became the case.

HIS ATTACKS CONTINUED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Herod the Great never had built his life upon the Word of God. Micah's prediction about Christ's birth spot in Bethlehem registered no reverence in Herod's heart (Mt. 2:1ff). Hatred burned in his unholy heart. He sought the death of the newborn *King* and had the innocents of Bethlehem executed. In all of this he was as bad as the old devil was. In every sense of the term, he was a son of Satan fully bent on doing Satan's work on earth.

In his temptations of the Lord in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, Satan, at one point, quoted Scripture from Psalm 91 but left out a key expression—"to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11; cf. Mt. 4:6; Lk. 4:10-11). His duped devotees on earth still subtract from God's Word at will (theirs, not God's).

The Pharisees were devotees of Satan as they preferred their hand-me-down traditions to the Word of God (Mk. 7:7ff). If anything, the Sadducees were even worse. They rejected all God had said in the Old Testament about man's immortality, the reality of resurrection and heavenly hope. They were the modernists and the theological liberals of the first century. They were willing accomplices of Satan. They and the Pharisees cooperated in getting Christ arrested, tried, convicted and crucified. Both fought the new Gospel and the church in the book of Acts. Examples of this are seen in Acts 4-5.

Judaizers fought apostolic preachers despising New Testament revelations from heaven. So did the Gnostics in later New Testament times. So did pagans wherever the Gospel was taken. They were Satan's agents in assaulting and attacking the precious Word of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

HE MAJORS IN THIS IN PERVERTED BIBLES

In the closing portion of Ecclesiastes, Solomon, wisest of the ages, observed: "[O]f making many books there is no end" (12:12). Were Solomon here today, he might well say the same thing relative to the flowing forth of English versions and translations. In fact, they continue to flow forth furiously! There is *no* end to such.

Translations are an essential. The Old Testament was penned in Hebrew and small portions in Aramaic. The New Testament was penned in koine Greek. Few read any of these ancient languages. Bible translations became an intense imperative. For many years the beloved KJV was *the* Bible of English reading and English speaking people.

This changed drastically in the twentieth century and is now far more evident in the twenty-first century.

Attitudes toward the Scriptures changed and then translational philosophies changed even more rapidly. The Revised Standard New Testament came out in 1946. The Revised Standard Version Bible came out in 1952. It was put out by modernists and for modernism. Harry M. Orlinsky was one of the translators of the Old Testament. He rejected the Deity of Christ and said the New Testament ought not to be in the Bible. To him, Malachi was the end of God's Bible. He is on record as declaring that the RSV is the official, *official mind you*, Bible of the liberal Protestant community. He said the RSV had been adopted by the liberal Protestant community in both the USA and Canada. He said what many of us knew before he gave these comments in a group of speeches on the West Coast in 1978. I listened to those tapes soon after he gave the speeches. Orlinsky knew his product well and gave it an accurate assessment. Why so many of our professors, preachers and pew packers decided on its usage is a puzzle to me. It has been unworthy of the respect given it.

The RSV brand of modernism showed in Psalm 45:6-7 when they removed the reference to Christ as being God and left Him with only a "divine throne." David and Solomon sat upon the throne of the Lord as we see in 1 Kings 2:12 and 1 Chronicles 29:23. They were not God, but Christ was. The RSV should not have tampered with the precious passage in Psalm 45. But they did and it was inexcusable. The RSV is clearly out of harmony with their quotation of Psalm 45:6-7 in Hebrews 1:8-9, where they have Him as God. What astonishing ineptitude as so-called Bible translators.

More of their modernism appears in Isaiah 7:14 when they remove "virgin" from the passage and replace it with a "young woman." They get Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 clear out of translational harmony. In the latter passage they have Mary a virgin. They should have translated the Hebrew expression *ha almah* as "virgin," as reliable Bibles have always done. Isaiah 7:14 is *not* a dual prophecy. It is a straight-line prophecy with only Mary and Christ in mind. There have not been two virgin conceptions and two virgin births—once in Isaiah's era and once in the case of Mary and Jesus. They did not do much better with another 7:14 passage in Amos. They have him to say: "I am no prophet," when he was *prophesying* at that very moment! Why did they

not stay with, "I was no prophet," as we have in our older versions. In the past he had not been a prophet, but *now* he was.

What they did initially to Mark 16:9-20, a full dozen verses, was inexcusable. They left all this section out of the text—some 160 Greek words according to my count. With pride they sought its justification, but there was no justification. It was highhanded.

Satan must have been much pleased when the RSV was completed, that is, as much as they decided to leave in, and placed before the naive Bible buying market. People who have relished and made it their study Bible have aided the cause of modernism and theological liberalism. Satan is the father of religious modernism and theological liberalism minus any question or quibble to the contrary. The RSV set the tone and established the tenor for the perverted Bibles that have followed it the last five to six decades.

The Jehovah's Witnesses put out their own translation in the early 1960s. They reject the Deity and eternity of Christ, claiming He was/is a created being. They left Psalm 45:6 in translational shambles. They do no better in Hebrews 1:8-9. They make Him a little "god" in John 1:1. Yet, they have Thomas to confess Him as, "My Lord and my God," and they even capitalize the word "God!" This is rather surprising! The way they treat Revelation 3:14 fits their corrupted concept of Him, claiming He is just God's creation.

During the 1950s, J.B. Phillips put out his *The New Testament In Modern English*. His translational philosophy began to manifest itself in his Foreword. He stated:

For the most part I am convinced that they had no idea that they were writing Holy Scripture ... Paul, for instance, writing in haste and urgency to some of *his wayward and difficult Christians*, was not *tremendously concerned about dotting the "i"s* and crossing the "t"s of his message. I doubt very much whether he was even concerned about being completely consistent with what he had already written.²

No wonder he dealt with Acts 8:20 as he did, employing slang language of the street, and tampered greatly with 1 Corinthians 14:22. Satan did some work through him.

In the 1960s, *The New English Bible New Testament* came out. It joined forces with the RSV in promoting modernism and theological liberalism. The NEB presents Genesis 11:1 as though it is a fairy tale being repeated. Isaiah 7:14 has "virgin" removed and "young woman"

in its place. Were I a Roman Catholic, I would hail the hatchet job it did in Matthew 16:18 as it "out-Poped the Pope and out-Romed Rome." In Acts 20:7, they have the *Troas* assembly occurring on Saturday night—not the first day of the week. It has "Whitsuntide," in 1 Corinthians 16:8, instead of "Pentecost." In Acts 20:19, it has "machinations of the Jews" while the ASV has "plots."³ The KJV has the Jews lying in wait for Paul. Did a proponent of the new Bibles say they are more simple of understanding? Believe it who can! More of these big words can be observed in 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

The average word in the KJV consists of five letters! Yet, some among us, who profess to be so well-educated, tell us no one today can understand the archaic and *obsolete* KJV. I guess confession of ignorance is good for their soul! But, when they produce such prattle, they are not speaking for me and I am sure you feel a similar sentiment. It is too bad their education with such simple words is so limited!

TRANSLATIONAL CHANGE AGENTS

In 1 Corinthians 11:23, relative to the Lord's Supper instructions, Paul *received* of the Lord and *delivered* what he had been tendered. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, relative to resurrection matters, he *delivered* what he had *received*. These principles should have been translational perimeters for all the new Bible makers—they should have delivered what they received just from the originals in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. But alas, they have not done this in thousands of instances. They have majored in changes with each one triggered by old Satan himself. He is the Chief Change Agent of all time.

Robert Bratcher, in *Good News For Modern Man*, a misnomer of a title if ever there was one, had Mary a "virgin" in Luke 1:27 in edition one. By edition two, a very short time later, he changed her to a "girl." The NEB also has Mary a "girl" in Luke 1:27. Both of these translations make changes in Acts 20:7, as they have Troas saints meeting on Saturday—not Sunday. Bratcher has them gathered for a fellowship meal. Their meeting time was changed and the purpose of their assembling was changed.

Justification by faith, which I accept fully and firmly, has been changed to "faith only." Article Nine of the *Methodist Discipline* did this before so many of the new Bibles did, declaring it to be a wholesome doctrine and filled with comfort, neither one of which is true. The RSV (1946) has been doing this for more than sixty years in Romans

11:20. In Bratcher's perverted work, he uses "faith alone" and "only through faith" in Romans 1:17; 3:28 and Galatians 2:16. Bratcher contradicted himself by the time he got to James 2:24, saying it is not by faith alone. Now when is he right—what he taught in Romans 1 and 3 and Galatians 2, or what he says in James 2:24? Here is a case where he cannot be right without being wrong or wrong without being right! What a predicament for a Bible translator! The NIV is tinctured with "faith only" in Romans 1:17, as it has "faith from first to last." The Gospel is a system of faith that leads to faith (an obedient one) on our part.

Changes have been made in Ephesians 5:19. *The Amplified New Testament* moved instruments by the side of *voices*. It makes no difference that instruments are in brackets for they say what they put in brackets clarified and was justified! Hence, it endorses both vocal (the voices) and mechanical (the instruments) music. Beck's Bible has "play music" which pleases the people that have opted for mechanical instruments in Christian worship. The NIV is no better having "make music." Music can be made vocally, mechanically or a combination of both. Melody is to be made in the heart—not upon a harp, piano, an organ or with a ten-piece brass band. The heart is the supplied instrument in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. The devil is back of all such for a surety.

Changes have been made to favor Adamic or original sin. Kenneth Taylor, in *The Living Bible Paraphrased*, has David a sinner both at conception and birth. The NIV is no better teaching the same false doctrine Taylor did in LBP. Yet, the NIV has become the darling translation among members of the church en masse. The *why* is beyond me. I agree with brother Guy N. Woods who told me right after it came out in the 1970s that it is "shot through with error." And it is!

Changes have been made in the Gospel plan of salvation. Look at what the NIV has done in this. It has people *included* in Christ at the point of hearing (Eph. 1:13). It has people justified at the point of belief (Rom. 10:9-10). It has people saved at the point of confession (Rom. 10:9-10). However, in Galatians 3:27, it has people baptized *into* Christ—yet, they have been included, justified and saved prior to their immersion. What a jumbled up mess! I suppose people included in Christ at the point of hearing have to become lost subsequent to hearing in order that they may be justified when they believe! But then, they would have to become unjustified subsequent to faith in order to be

saved at the point of confession! But, in order to be in position to come *into* Christ at baptism they would need to become unsaved subsequent to the confession in order to come *into* Christ by an immersion. Yet amazingly amazing, some tell us that we can take any version and learn how to be saved from it! I, for one, do not buy that allegation for a moment. How can error-filled *versions*, that do not deserve to be called "Bibles," teach men what to do to be saved, how to live, how to worship and how to make proper preparation for heaven at last? "Faith only" Bibles and Calvinistic versions cannot do so for people will accept their errors even over passages in which they do teach the truth. Satan must be pleased with so many pseudo versions now in the hands and upon the hearts of men and women en masse. For a surety, he is at work in all of the perverted Bibles—none of them *exempted*.

ADDITIONS AND SUBTRACTIONS AD INFINITUM

By the title I mean they are without end. *The Amplified New Testament* and *The Reader's Digest Bible* exemplify what is in the title of this section. Relative to the former, with all the additions it has, Billy Graham is on record as saying it is "the best study Testament on the market. It is a magnificent translation. I use it continually." Scriptures have never been safe with Graham. Be it recalled that this same internationally known preacher gave Taylor's LBP its single greatest impetus by buying it en masse for his crusade work. The Amplified will take a verse and just add, Add, ADD. John 3:16 has 25 words in the KJV and the ASV. The Amplified has 44 counting what they put into brackets. This version takes the simple, yet sublime, beatitudes in Matthew 5:3ff and makes them top heavy with verbiage. In countless verses it is difficult to distinguish between the actual text and the extra verbal baggage they inject. Paul has two words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 in the Greek text and there are but two in the KJV. They have six times as many with a total of 12. They triple Paul's Greek words in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. He has two; they have six. There are three in the KJV. Be it recalled that Satan added that fatal "not" in Genesis 3:4. He is still in the business of adding with many cohorts aiding him.

Any number of the new Bibles have added by putting denominational creeds into the very text of the Bible. Human creeds were dangerous enough when they were in separate books. They became even more dangerous when they became footnotes at the bottom of pages in Catholic-produced Bibles. Now they are infused into the very

text itself. "Faith only," Calvinism, modernism, theological liberalism, sectarianism, premillennialism, Pentecostalism, Judaism, Romanism, emotionalism, et cetera, all have been brought into the new Bibles.

The Reader's Digest Bible should have been called *The Reader's Subtraction Bible*. Its makers, including Bruce Metzger, cut out about 50% of the Old Testament and some 25% of the New Testament by their own admission. This makes for about a 40% reduction. They left out over 300,000 words of the almost 775,000 words that should stay in the Bible. By their own admission, they operated from the RSV base, which was a monumental mistake of Herculean proportions. But, they were not the first to engage in such. The RSV had left out *about* 161 words in Mark 16:9-20, which is over half the chapter. Yet, I have heard people say: "One of the reasons I love the new Bibles is because they contain so much more truth than do the older ones." How utterly naive such an assessment is! The truth of the matter is that they, the new Bibles, get shorter and shorter. Like sermons, many people prefer shorter ones than longer ones! The devil surely votes for shorter ones. The shorter the better for him. It cuts his corrupting procedure considerably!

TAMPERING WITH TRUTH

Many years ago I was in a capital city of a northern state to preach. Before I arose to speak that Sunday morning, one of the elders of the congregation, a practicing attorney in the city, led the prayer. One of his well expressed petitions was: "Lord, may we never tamper with Thy Word." If modern translators en masse ever prayed such a petition before beginning their translational work, it has not been exhibited in their perverted products. They have tampered with truth all the way from Genesis to Revelation.

They have tampered with it by addition, reduction, modification, alteration and substitution. They have tampered with it when they left their posts as translators and became interpreters. Many times, they want to tell us what they *think* it means—not what it says in actuality in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Let them tell me what it says precisely and I will do my own interpreting. The late and lamented J. Noel Merideth is remembered for having said this again and again.

They have tampered with it by making it contradict itself. Any number of them, including the highly heralded English Standard Version, will have Christ declare in Matthew 5:17 that He did not come

to abolish or annul Mosaic law and yet have Paul affirm in Ephesians 2:15 that He did abolish or annul it. Are they that messed-up on covenant change?

They have tampered with the marvelous Greek word, *monogenes*, of John 1:14,18; 3:16,18 and 1 John 4:9. Older translations, like the KJV and the ASV, retain "only begotten" in these five passages. So does the New King James, which is a fairly new version. As a rule, the newer ones will have Jesus as the "only" Son or the "one and only Son." The ESV follows the rest of them in this. In so doing they deal with just half the term or the *mono* part. *Mono* means "one" or "only." Look at *monologue*, *monogamy*, *monograph*, et cetera. But what does *genes* mean? It has to mean something else or it would not have been used. I have carefully traced and researched this wonderful word's use in the first century, among the anti-Nicean fathers, the Nicean fathers, the post-Nicean fathers, the Reformation greats, the Restoration scholars and the best scholars among us currently. "Only begotten" has received the favorable vote of countless hundreds of such Bible students. Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son but He is not God's *only* Son. John 1:12 tells us how we may become the sons of God. The apostle John, in 1 John 3:1, calls the saints of God the "sons of God."

When men tamper with the Word of God, Satan is highly pleased and God is signally displeased. Satan must be highly pleased with all the tampering that is being done with God's Divine Volume. It is amazingly amazing that Satan has a vast army ready to do his bidding in tampering with the Word of the Lord. How Deity must be grieved at heart!

Old Testament prophets of faithfulness did not tamper with God's Word of truth. John the Baptist did not; Jesus did not. His meat was the doing of God's will (Jn. 4:34). This is why He came down from heaven (Jn. 6:38). This was His intention in Gethsemane's garden in Matthew 26:36-42. His apostles did not tamper with it in teaching men how to become saved, how to live well the Christian life in work, worship, watching, waiting and in soul winning. May we all pray and practice the precious and very relevant petition: "Lord, may we never tamper with Thy Word."

Satan has attacked the reliability of Genesis 1-11. Through theistic evolution, which is devilish through and through, he has attacked the clear truths of Genesis 1-2. He has convinced many that evolution is the mechanism producing all forms of life instead of divine *fiat* or a thus

saith the Lord. "And God said" permeates Genesis 1 with admirable repetition. He spoke and things happened. The gap theory is confusing as it has enormous amounts of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. There is no long lapse of time here. "Days" of long "eons" or "ages" have replaced what God did in the six regular, solar days in Genesis 1. Exodus 20:8-11 tells us how long these days were and what God did in that week of creation—six days of creative activity and one day when He rested or *ceased creation*. Adam and Eve have been denied. The universal flood in Noah's day has been denied. Some have tried to make it a local flood and called it a valid alternative. I call it infidelity! Building the tower of Babel has been denied as the breeding background for multiple languages and dialects. Jesus *endorsed* creation, marriage of the earth's first couple and the salvation of Noah's family by means of the ark. Indirectly, He endorsed what happened at Babel by equipping, through the Holy Spirit, His apostles and others powers to speak in languages never mastered. Modern mind-sets are confused with the opening eleven chapters of Genesis. Satan prompts this confusion and does it gladly.

He has attacked the miracles of the Bible whether they reference crossing the Red Sea or the Jordan River, miraculous healings or resurrections. Many are infidelic relative to all these miracles yet claiming to be of a religious mind-set.

He has attacked the sole authority of Scripture. Thus, his puppets are left unsure which religious standard to accept and defend.

He has attacked the infallibility of Scripture. Those influenced by him in this speak of Biblical contradictions, discrepancies and jarring disharmonies. Many in the religious realm do not believe the Bible is right as the book of Psalms affirms it is in Psalms 19:8; 33:4; 119:128, 172. The late and lamented Marshall Keeble knew the Bible was right and often referred to such in his powerful proclamation of the Word. When he said so eloquently and fervently, "The Bible is right," no one believed it more strongly than the inimitable Keeble.

He has attacked the all-sufficiency of the Bible with the end result that Satan has sold people en masse on the necessity of human creeds, modern revelations, subjective feelings, ancestral religions, and the like.

No fundamental of the faith is immune to the devil and his devotees. All fundamentals are subject to his relentless assaults. This is not open to question or quibble!

HIS ATTACKS AND THE DAMAGE HE HAS DONE THE LORD'S CHURCH

Peter warned his fellow saints that Satan walks about as a roaring lion perniciously prowling for the souls of men that he can destroy (1 Pet. 5:8). He has never retired from such poisonous pursuits—and never will prior to his being cast into Eternal *Gehenna* (Rev. 20:10).

He attacks through the lust of flesh and eyes (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Immorality, in the forms of fornication and adultery, are ever present threats. Scandal has touched people in the pulpit, in the eldership, among deacons, Bible teachers, editors, youth directors, adult people in the pews and far too many among our youth.

He attacks through the pride or vainglory of life (1 Jn. 2:15-17). People get full of pride and allow their egos to be carried to dangerous heights. They forget about Romans 12:3 and begin to think more of themselves than they should.

He attacks through the party spirit, even as he did in 1 Corinthians 1, 3-4. A few set up themselves as party bosses, and all they can influence hew the party line with no independent breaks. Some of this disposition forget how to *think* for themselves.

He attacks through anti-ism on the right and liberalism on the left. The former binds where God has loosed; the latter looses where God has bound. In countless ways, we have seen the fruits of both in our lifetime.

He attacks through false or fatal doctrines. Judgment or opinion differences sometimes are styled as false doctrine. Paul and Barnabas differed over taking John Mark on the second journey in Acts 15, but neither was a false teacher over this matter. They did not bite and devour each other as some do today (Gal. 5:15).

He attacks through Change Agents agendas. These people want to change the bright and beautiful basics of the Bible, the church and the Gospel. They bash the church—the beautiful Bride of Christ while praising to the high heavens those in sectarian and denominational bodies. They make no effort to change them!

He attacks worship patterns with hand clapping, praise teams of both men and women, the Lord's Supper on Saturday, the entrance of mechanical music in worship assemblies and little or no Bible in lessons delivered.

He attacks each member of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have those who contend for the direct operation of the Holy

Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit for today and that grace *does it*, with man totally passive in the salvational process.

He attacks Gospel preachers for employing book, chapter and verse lessons. We are five steppers to them when we give the Gospel plan of salvation.

CONCLUSION

The devil is out to corrupt the Bible, the Gospel and the church. Sadly, he is succeeding with far too many of our own brethren.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scriptures references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament In Modern English* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1958), viii, ix.

³ *The New English Bible New Testament* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 237.

CARICATURES OF SATAN

Sam Dilbeck



Sam Dilbeck is a native of Midwest City, Oklahoma. He and his wife, the former Julie Mitchell, have two sons, Jason and David. Dilbeck graduated from Southwest School of Bible Studies, in Austin, Texas and Regions University. He has worked with churches in Granite, Oklahoma and Leonard, Texas. Dilbeck spent almost two years as the graphic artist for *The Gospel Journal*. He currently preaches for the Westhill congregation in Corsicana, Texas.

INTRODUCTION¹

Her head spun around and faced backwards. That is the only scene I know from the 1973 Academy Award winning film, *The Exorcist*. I never saw the movie, but according to reviews, it portrays a young girl possessed by Satan exhibiting supernatural abilities. A cadre of priests attempt to drive Satan out of her. During the ordeal she screams, curses, vomits and spins her head around. *The Exorcist* is only one in a host of Hollywood embellishments that turn truth into fairy tale.

However, Hollywood did not invent caricatures of Satan. History is filled with images of the devil ranging from cute and impish, to sultry and sexy, to vicious and scary. The devil has appeared in other Tinseltown features as a red scaly monster, an overbearing, self-absorbed, demanding boss, and George Burns. Modern ideas about the devil's appearance are shaped by art, music, and literature from the middle ages and beyond.

Where do the caricatures of Satan come from and how do they impact our perceptions of that Ol' Serpent? How does God see Satan? How does the Bible present the devil? First, we will consider some common caricatures about Satan and their history. Then, we will focus on how those caricatures manipulate our perceptions of Satan, and how those deceptions can be dangerous. We will conclude by considering some of the images of Satan given in the Bible.

HISTORIC CARICATURES OF THE DEVIL

A caricature is "a representation, especially pictorial or literary, in which the subject's distinctive features or peculiarities are deliberately

exaggerated to produce a comic or grotesque effect.”² Caricatures of Satan exaggerate or distort his features in an effort to either make him comedic or horrific. Modern media and arts have successfully molded our perceptions of him. Today, many people share the same idea about Satan’s visage.

Pan

Many historians believe that the popular medieval image depicting Satan as half-man half-goat has its origins in the legend of Pan (Powell).³ According to William Smith, Pan is “the great god of flocks and shepherds among the Greeks.”⁴ Pan is the offspring of Zeus or Hermes (accounts regarding this differ) and has an insatiable lust for female nymphs. He is associated with sexuality, revelry, and playfulness. Pan worship thrived around the region of Arcadia; however, a temple used in Pan worship stood near Acacesium and was particularly notable for its perpetual fire.

Though sensuality and fleshly lusts were Pan’s most widely known traits, he also used his “power” to strike fear in the hearts of those going through his forests. At one time he supposedly made a pact with the Athenians to discombobulate the Persians during the war between the two nations. This technique of invoking fear became known as “panic,” named after Pan and his paniskoi (smaller, impish Pans).

Pan’s horrific nature was later connected with the horrific nature of Satan. At first, the connection was more literary because the Jews rarely depicted Satan in their art. This tradition grew out of God’s prohibition of graven images, the fear of Satan himself, and the lack of any physical description of Satan in the Old Testament. When ancient Hebraic art did render the devil, he nearly always appeared as a snake, the only tangible form the devil held in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:1-2).

However, after the emergence of the church, as its members moved away from the Bible’s teaching they began assimilating other religious cultures. Naturally, pagans began to see similarities between their new-found religion and their old traditions. Roman and Greek converts linked their legend of Pan with Satan. Religious art and imagery began to follow the perceived similarities between the two as old images of Pan served as “models” for the devil.

Animal

Another common historical practice was to paint Satan as an animal. During the middle ages, before the invention of the printing

press, all copies and translations of the Bible were done by hand. While copying the Scriptures was not new, many scribes of the middle ages began to illustrate the copies of the Bibles they made. Today, these are called “illuminated texts.” Many Latin and Greek Bibles made between A.D. 1100 and A.D. 1400 were illuminated, and most contained images of Satan.

Obviously, some of the illuminations of the devil followed the Pan traditions, but some made the devil look like a wild animal. One exquisite example is the early thirteenth century Latin Bible, *Codex Gigas*. This is the largest manuscript of the Bible that survives today (and probably the largest ever made). It measures about three feet tall and one-and-a-half feet wide, and weighs about 165 pounds. On folio 290, the scribe drew a picture of the devil measuring about 17 inches tall. He resembles a heavily bearded man with horns (a holdover from Pan), but instead of the goat-like hooves, he has bird-like talons for his feet and hands.⁵ He is squatting down and wears only a loin cloth, the common garb of deranged people at that time.

The symbolism of an animalistic devil is obvious. The artist sought to show the vicious nature of the devil. His menacing fangs and claws were drawn to elicit fear in the hearts of readers and to mimic the features of a dragon. His lunatic appearance was a warning that the devil is irrational and could attack anyone at any time.

Angel

Another common historic image of the devil is as a man with wings. This concept grows out of historical depictions of angels. Traditional ecclesiastical art consistently featured angels as men and women with large white-feathered wings. This ideal is actually a corruption of the Bible’s description of heavenly beings. The Bible describes three forms of heavenly beings. The first is the cherub, which has one set of wings. While they are described as having faces and bodies, nothing in the Bible specifies that their bodies resemble humans. Cherubim were used to guard the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24), and to sit atop the Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:18-22). The second group of beings is the seraphs. These beings had three sets of wings (Isa. 6:1-2). The third group consisted of those who took human form and moved upon the earth (Gen. 18:2; Lk. 2:9-15). Only beings from the third group actually interacted with humans, and their form was human—without wings.

The image of Satan with wings assumes that he is a fallen angel. In addition, it assumes that angels look like men with wings. Much of this imagery derives from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which he chronicles the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, as well as Satan's fall from heaven as a presumptuous angel. It is possible that Satan is a fallen angel, but this does not mean that he looks like a man with wings.

Red Creature

By far, the most recognizable caricature of the devil is the red skinned creature with grotesque facial features and horns. Often he carries a trident and wears a red cape. A stiff black goatee adorns his chin and is accented by a sharp widow's peak hairline. He has a tail that ends in an arrowhead-like point. His elongated face is associated with sinister characters like Snidely Whiplash and Count Dracula.

The red color of his skin symbolizes the danger he presents to people. It is thought by some to be a reflection of his hellish environs. Others believe the redness was added as a way to make him more comical, something to be mocked and chided. It was common in the middle ages to mock and deride what was feared. When murderers were sent to the gallows or guillotine, crowds would gather for the execution spectacle. Often, rotted food would be thrown at the offender to disgrace and mock him. Similarly, drawing Satan as a character to be mocked disgraced him. At other times, the red skin covered horrifying features. These scary images of the devil were used to teach kids how vicious he was.

Besides the redness of Satan's skin, sometimes it is also portrayed as scaly. No doubt this detail is derived from Satan also being called a serpent (Gen. 3:1-2), and a dragon (Rev. 12:9). Both creatures are reptilian and have scales.⁶

In modern times, the devil follows the image of a red creature and incorporates some or all of these features. In fact, the image of the devil as a red man is a universal symbol of evil, deceit, and destruction.

Activity

One final caricature of the devil is not found in his image, but his activity. In the mid-sixteenth century, a story was spread which told of an imperiled Johann Faust, who sold his soul to the devil for a bit of fortune. This old German story, the *Legend of Faust*, has been retold, edited, and rewritten throughout the centuries since. *The Devil and Tom*

Walker and *The Devil and Daniel Webster* are two examples of Americanized Faustian tales.

The *Codex Gigas* has a devil-pact tradition attached to it as well. The legend claims that a monk broke monastery rules and was sentenced to death. Pleading for his life, he offered to make an entire copy of the Bible in one night in exchange for a pardon. The monastic counsel agreed. He went straight to work, but by midnight, the scribe realized the futility of his task. Then, the devil appeared and they made a pact. The devil would finish the tome in exchange for the monk's soul.

The bargain-with-the-devil legend has been found in song (*The Devil Went down to Georgia*), movies (*Bedazzled*, *Ghost Rider*), and television (*The Twilight Zone*, *The Simpsons*, *The Collector*). Its popularity in various art forms has mainstreamed the idea. Most people have encountered some form of this outlandish tale.

DANGERS OF CARICATURES OF THE DEVIL

Many dangers can grow out of these typical images of Satan. We will consider two. These caricatures of the devil are deceptive and disarming.

Deceptive

Images of Satan are intrinsically deceptive as they are always, without fail, a figment of someone's imagination. Other than the Edenic representation of the devil as a serpent and the figurative picture painted in Revelation of the devil as a dragon, there is no physical description of the devil in the Bible. However, a lack of description has not stopped hoards of artists throughout history from trying to capture his likeness on canvas. This has produced a wealth of art indicating artistic inbreeding where one image becomes the basis for another image. The same plagiaristic spirit gave rise to the plethora of Jesus pictures as well. We simply do not have a physical description of Jesus or Satan in the Bible.

The deceptive part is that many people think they know what the devil looks like and how he behaves. A few years ago, I had a cousin who wanted to discuss religion. He had recently seen the movie, *Stigmata*, a film about a highly doubtful religious phenomenon where people's wrists and hands burst into spontaneous bleeding. I was all too happy to talk with him about the Bible, however, all he wanted to do was discuss the "evidence" and "Bible accounts" of the stigmata which

are not founded in the Bible. At that time in my life I had never heard of the stigmata. He spoke with great interest, referencing esoteric and obscure religious events and doctrines. Later, I studied the stigmata issue and found no evidence supporting its veracity. Yet, because my cousin had seen the movie/art, he was convinced the phenomenon had validity.

Many people treat the devil the same way. Because they saw a Tom and Jerry cartoon that found Tom in the fiery caves of hell taunted by Satan to go back and get forgiveness from Jerry, they think they know what Satan and hell are like. In fact, they fancy themselves as experts on hell and Satan. Yet, this cartoonish devil is far removed from the ferocity of the real devil. However, entertainment outlets notoriously obscure the truth by embellishing it with human perceptions.

To understand the far-reaching nature of this deception, we only need to ask the nearest six year old child what the devil looks like. He will proceed to say that the devil is a red, scary man with a pitchfork.

Disarming

Deceptive images of Satan disarm a lot of people. To some the pictures are so outlandish and ridiculous that they conclude the devil does not exist. They let down their guard and fall into his trap. Of course the devil loves it when people stop believing in him—it makes his job easier.

Some fall in love with the cute and cuddly images of little red devils. Satan rarely gets happier than when we put a happy, cute, or smiling face on evil. How could such a cute imp like Hot Stuff, the little devil from *Harvey Comics*, be bad? While his mischievous ways and white diaper humored readers for over forty years, the monster upon which he is based has devastated souls since the Garden of Eden. The real devil is not cuddly and peevish, he is powerful and dangerous.

Other people disarm themselves by thinking that Satan will appear or act in a certain way. They feel secure as long as a red skinned human-like creature does not appear to them and offer to make them prosper in exchange for their soul, then they are living righteously. While they look out for this character, they miss the fact that the devil appears in many forms, and never brings a contract to sign.

We must face the reality of Satan, not a watered-down image. All the images, stories, movies, and songs tend to desensitize us to his reality. We know Linda Blair was just an actress in *The Exorcist*, and

the events of the movie were not real. However, the dangerous Satan portrayed in the film is real. We know Mia Farrow did not give birth to the devil's child in *Rosemary's Baby*, but the terror of evil is real. We simply do not have the luxury to toss out the truth with the fiction. However, many people do just that, and are not ready to face the real devil.

BIBLE VERSUS CARICATURES OF THE DEVIL

Though the Bible does not give us a definite physical description of the devil, it gives us plenty of clues on how to spot him and his influence in this world.

Sin

Wherever we see sin, Satan is present. Jesus identified the Jews as children of the devil based upon their sinful actions (Jn. 8:44). Paul withstood Peter to the face because Peter fell under the influence of the devil (Gal. 2:11-14). Later, in the same book, Paul sought to spur the Galatians to break ranks with the devil and return to Jesus (Gal. 5:7-8). The Bible shows that Satan embodies sin.

Paul also wrote: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The devil's "wiles" are his methods of luring souls into his clutches. Satan has individual plans tailored to each person's weaknesses. So, where temptations arise and sin is committed, the devil is there. Beaches filled with immodest people to tempt the eyes; bars packed with patrons in the process of getting drunk; CPAs with "creative" accounting methods; and the list goes on-and-on as the devil devises new ways to tempt us to sin.

Once people have obeyed the Gospel, they walk in a new life—a life that has put off sin and gives no place for the devil to reign in their heart (Eph. 4:27). However, when the old ways are enjoined again, the devil is there.

To And Fro

In Job 1:7, Satan admits that he walks to and fro on the earth. Peter further reveals his purpose, saying: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). While the devil is on a short leash, he does have influential power. This power reveals itself through lust and temptations. His minions come in the form of carnal vices and worldly

examples. As these walk about the earth, Satan's power walks with them.

The devil is the seduction in a loose woman's stare. He is the violence in a man's anger. He is the rebellion in a teen's attitude. We sign his contract when we pop the top of a Bud, or when we open the mouth of gossip. Sin is sin, and every single sin is enabled by the devil and accompanied with our desires.

Angel Of Light

The devil's appearance does not follow man's imaginations. In fact, he is so good at deceit that he disguises himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). This means he works through people who appear to be doing good, like the Salvation Army and members of other denominational churches. They serve. They preach. They teach. They minister. They do it all "in the name of Jesus," but because they do not follow Jesus' will, they actually do it as the ministers of Satan (Mt. 7:21-23). The cunning nature of the devil lures millions of people into spiritual death.

CONCLUSION

Humanity has overloaded itself with caricatures, images, and thoughts about Satan, most of which are not founded in the Bible. Rather, they have been conjured from the ether of our collective minds. The devil reeks of sin, not sulfur. He appears as an angel of light, not the lord of darkness. He has hooks, not horns. He will not announce his appearance with sinister laughter and contracts written in blood on aged parchment. The devil slips in unannounced and patiently watches ... waiting ... waiting until he can pounce and devour.

Our goal is to steel ourselves against his temptations. We must always search for God's way of escape and take His offer of victory over the devil. An image of the devil may be comical or even horrific. However, do not let these caricatures lull us to sleep in the midst of the war between sin and righteousness. The image, no matter how terrifying, does not measure up to the reality of Satan's viciousness and ferocity.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. "caricature," from Dictionary.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/caricature> (19 July 2007).

³ For a fuller description of Pan's appearance see *Classical Myths*, 4th ed., by Barry Powell, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004).

⁴ William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1876), 3:106-107.

⁵ Wikipedia contributors, "Codex Gigas," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Codex_Gigas&oldid=145001959 (accessed July 24, 2007). [Though generally not accepted as scholarly, Wikipedia is helpful in areas of low importance. The information concerning the *Codex Gigas* and its massive size was corroborated by several news sources covering the pilgrimage of the massive tome to Prague in the spring of 2007.]

⁶ Job 41 contains a description of the leviathan that closely resembles the description of a dragon. Scholars disagree over whether or not it is a dragon, but several key features would have to be overlooked to make it fit a crocodile or other reptile.

DEMON POSSESSION TODAY

Darrell Beard



Darrell Beard was born in Kimmundy, Illinois. He and his wife, the former Betty Sue Faught, have four children, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Beard attended Freed-Hardeman College and Harding School of Bible and Religion. He preached in North Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, and Mississippi. Beard retired in 2006 after forty-nine years of full time work with local congregations. He now speaks in lectureships, Gospel meetings, and directs the telecast of *Give Me The Bible*.

INTRODUCTION¹

Does demon possession exist today? Some dismiss the whole subject of demon possession as mere superstition and myth. To them, there never has been such a thing as actual demon possession. To others, demon possession not only existed in New Testament times, but it continues to be a bane upon modern society. Today, there are even those who claim to be qualified and experienced in identifying and exorcizing demons.

Based on the Bible's teaching, we are convinced that demon possession existed in the days of Jesus and the early church, but that it fulfilled its God-given purposes and ceased to be, as did all the other supernatural powers mentioned in the Bible. More will be said on that at the appropriate time, but first a few preliminary considerations need to be made.

DEMONS IN LIGHT OF BIBLE TEACHING

The New Testament Greek word translated "demon" is *daimon*. This is the word found in Matthew 8:31—"And the demons besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." The King James Version normally translates this word as "devil" or "devils," but the translation of "demon" or "demons," as in the American Standard Version of 1901, is to be preferred. The word to be translated "devil" is another term, *diabolos*, in the original language of the New Testament. Thayer defines the word "demon" as "A spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men."² Synonyms used in the New

Testament to describe demons are “spirits” (Mt. 8:16), “evil spirits” (Lk. 7:21), or “unclean spirit” (Mt. 12:43).

Demons were very real and powerful adversaries of man. Guy N. Woods wrote: “Demons were wicked spirits under the direction of Satan, opposed to God, and capable of causing much misery to man (Mt. 8:28-34; 12:24).”³ There are many things we do not know about demons, because God has not chosen to reveal them to us. Moses wrote: “The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). Some things about demons God has chosen to reserve for Himself. Other things, however, belong to us. These are the things God has revealed in Scripture about demons. We should study the Word of God in order to know, understand and make use of the information given to us.

Demon possession, although long believed in by many cultures, made an appearance in the general time period of Christ and His apostles. Evidently, God allowed such in order to demonstrate the authority of Christ and to verify His message. While the Old Testament uses terms like “demons” and “evil spirits,” it is doubtful if the use of these terms is parallel to the casting out of demons by Jesus, His apostles, the seventy, and certain others in the early days of the church who had received miraculous gifts by the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

From what is revealed to us, we can understand that demons were spirit beings, without flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39); spirit beings who possess intelligence, knowledge, and will (Mk. 5:7-9); spirit beings who knew the truth about God, Christ, and the Gospel as the way of salvation (Mk. 1:24; Acts 16:17); spirit beings of great wickedness, bringing disease, discomfort, and misery to the bodies of their unfortunate hosts; spirit beings who knew that a time of torment and judgment awaited them and who lived in dread and fear of such; and, spirit beings who had none other than Satan as their chief (Lk. 11:18).

What is the origin of demons? Since God has not given us a definitive answer in the Bible to this question, some have advanced opinions or theories based on their surmising of information in the Word of God. Some of these ideas must be rejected because they are unreasonable and clearly manifest a reckless and irresponsible handling of the Word of God. For example, some are of the opinion that demons arose from a fallen race that existed in a supposed “gap period”

between Genesis 1:1 (when God created the heavens and earth in the beginning) and Genesis 1:2 (when the earth was waste and void and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters). There is neither such a “gap” mentioned in the Bible nor is there the mention of any supposed race of fallen people whose evil spirits became the demons we read about in the Bible.

Another view that must be labeled false is that demons are the result of unions between some of God’s angels and the daughters of men. Genesis 6:1-4 is usually given in support of this view. However, a responsible study of this passage in its context shows that the “sons of God” were not angels, but simply the descendants of godly Seth. They were followers of God. On the other hand, the “daughters of men” were the children of Cain and those who did not worship and serve God. The result was a humanity who began to grow more and more wicked.

Two more responsible and plausible theories must be considered. They do have some Bible teaching which gives them some support. One suggestion is that demons may be identified with some of the fallen angels who followed Satan into rebellion against God. Revelation 12:7-9 records:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

Jude 6 states: “And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Agreeing with Jude, Peter declared: “God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4). In the judgment scene pictured by Jesus, He tells those on the left hand to depart into eternal fire, “which is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41).

It is possible that some of these disobedient and wicked angels were allowed to temporarily leave the “pits of darkness” and possess the bodies of certain individuals as demons, giving the Lord the opportunity to demonstrate His power over the wickedness of an

unseen world. This view was held by many early “Christian” writers, and is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church.

A second view as to the origin and identity of demons is that they are the disembodied spirits of wicked men. Guy N. Woods noted: “These considerations have led thoughtful men to conclude that they were disembodied spirits of wicked men who in some way escaped from Tartarus of Hades and afflicted persons whom they seized.”⁴

Alexander Campbell strongly advocated this view, saying in his *Lectures and Addresses* that there was nothing, in his view, that weighed against the evidence for it.⁵ This theory is also widely held by other scholars, both in and out of the Lord’s church.

Both of the above views deserve careful consideration, but the Bible does not clearly tell us how demons came to be. Possibly, one of the two above ideas would accurately explain it, or there may be a completely different answer. We simply do not know. Be that as it may, we do know that demons were active in the first century, that they possessed the bodies of living people, and that they were cast out of those they possessed by divine power.

WHAT IS MEANT BY “DEMON POSSESSION”?

The Greek word translated “demon possession” is *diamonizomai*. Vine defines the word: “to be possessed of a demon, to act under the control of a demon.” He further explains: “Those who were thus afflicted expressed the mind and consciousness of the ‘demon’ or ‘demons’ indwelling them.”⁶ Demon possession, therefore, was the act of a demon or demons taking habitation in the body of a person, controlling his speech and actions, and, frequently causing a number of afflictions to the tormented host. Demon possession was a major factor in diseases and ill health, but the New Testament clearly distinguishes between organic diseases and the consequences of demon possession. Mark 1:32 says: “And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons.”

Why did God allow demon possession? Despite the fact that the Bible does not reveal all that was in the mind of God for permitting demons to enter people, we can infer much from what is revealed regarding the purposes for casting out demons and other miracles. First, the casting out of demons manifested in a striking manner God’s power over both the earthly and supernal realms. This confirmed Jesus’ claim—“All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth”

(Mt. 28:18). Seeing Jesus cast out demons, people were amazed and said: “What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out” (Lk. 4:36).

By casting out demons, Jesus showed His ability to enter into “the house of the strong man” (i.e., the devil), bind him, and spoil his goods (Mt. 12:29). In connection with the casting out of demons by the seventy disciples on their “limited commission,” Jesus said: “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven” (Lk. 10:18).

Second, demon exorcism showed that the message of Christ was valid and of divine origin. Jesus preached: “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 4:17). Discussing the divine origin of demon exorcism, Jesus said: “[I]f I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you” (Mt. 12:28). Thus, His preaching was confirmed as being true. Our Lord urged the Jews of His day to believe the works He did so they could know and understand that the Father was in Him and that He was in the Father (Jn. 10:38).

As the apostles went out on the “Great Commission,” they were enabled to perform “signs,” which included casting out demons (Mk. 16:17). Mark’s final words regarding the apostles are: “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen” (Mk. 16:20).

Third, those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and who walk according to the course of this world, are walking according to the prince of the powers of the air (Eph. 2:1-2). Since our struggle is “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12), it was necessary for Christ’s power over those wicked powers in heavenly places to be shown. Those powers must be subjected before we can have assurance of overcoming the devil and living for Christ. Exorcism of demons demonstrated the power of Christ over those dark powers.

A SURVEY OF DEMON POSSESSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel accounts record six specific events in which Jesus dealt with possessed individuals. These are: 1) the man with an unclean spirit (Mk. 1:23; Lk. 4:33-36), 2) the two men (Mark and Luke mention only one of the two) who were afflicted with many (“Legion”) fierce and violent demons, which could not be restrained even with strong chains,

and which requested to be cast into a herd of swine (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39), 3) the Syrophenician woman who interceded in behalf of her “young daughter” who was grievously vexed with a demon or unclean spirit (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30), 4) the epileptic boy afflicted with a demon from his childhood, but from whom the apostles were unable to cast out the demon (Mt. 17:14-21), 5) the mute man possessed by a demon who was brought to Jesus (Mt. 9:32-33; Lk. 11:14), and 6) the demon possessed man brought to Jesus who was blind and mute (Mt. 12:22).

In addition to those specific incidents, the Gospel records also show: 1) that Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 8:2), 2) the casting out of demons in connection with other miraculous deeds (Mt. 4:24), and 3) that Jesus gave the twelve and the seventy power to cast out demons, which they did on a number of occasions (Mt. 10:1, 8; Mk. 6:7, 13; Lk. 9:1; 10:17). More instances when the apostles and other miraculously endowed men dealt with demon possession are found in Acts 5:15; 8:6-7; 16:16-18.

Indications of demon possession were evident in those so possessed. Some were blind, mute, or deaf. Others suffered from uncontrollable violence, seizures, self-mutilation, and anti-social behavior such as nakedness or the refusal to live in a house.

The New Testament shows that there were some who falsely claimed to cast out demons in the first century. More than once Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. In response, Jesus asked: “[I]f Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges” (Mt. 12:26-27). Thus, at least some in the Pharisee sect were claiming to have the ability to cast out demons.

An interesting happening regarding Paul’s work in Ephesus on his third missionary journey is worthy of note. In Acts 19:11-16, Luke states:

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the evil spirits went out. But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there

were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:11-16).

CLAIMS OF DEMON POSSESSION TODAY

Some early Christians, following the New Testament era, seemed not to have understood the temporary nature of demon possession. In a time of growing departure from the New Testament pattern, “exorcistic formulas found their way into baptismal liturgies, and those who experienced that rite were thought to have been freed from demonic powers and influence.”⁷ History traces the departure of the church of Bible times into what has become the Roman Catholic Church. Demon possession and exorcism continue to be a concern in that group. They make the claim today that the powers of Christ were transmitted to the apostles, and then to those they regard as the successors of the apostles. Their ordination of the priesthood contains the Order of Exorcist, in which the claim is made that those who obtain the Order of Exorcist have the power to place their hands on others for the purpose of driving evil spirits out of the bodies of the possessed.⁸

There have been a number of modern cases of exorcism at the hands of Catholic officials. As a child, I remember hearing about a famous case of exorcism in St. Louis during the 1940s. Wayne Jackson wrote about the exorcism performed upon “Mother Teresa” shortly before her death in 1997.⁹

Catholics are not alone, however, in the claim of demon possession. From a Bible dictionary comes this:

Pastors and foreign missionaries testify to demon possession among many peoples of the world today ... In numerous cases those who commit mass murders or suicide seem to have been impelled by wicked demons. It is urgent that Christian workers take seriously this doctrine and learn to exercise the authority of Christ to set free those who are demon oppressed or possessed.¹⁰

Christianity Today carried this comment:

Whether Christians use the formal rites of Roman Catholicism or the vigorous prayers of charismatic and Pentecostal believers, exorcism is God’s good gift to the church. Through exorcism, God graciously delivers people from demonic powers, which

seek a person's total physical and spiritual destruction ... So long as we live in this fallen world, we may be sure that demons not only exist, but will make bullying and presumptuous challenges to God's authority.¹¹

An unidentified author of an internet article claimed:

... having expelled demons out of several Christians during my years as a prayer minister helped confirm to me that Christians can have demons ... Through Jesus, God has given every believer the authority and power to expel demons and live free of demonic oppression. This freedom can come through self or group deliverance ministry, depending on the person and the situation.¹²

Similar fantastic claims—people saying they have had great success in casting demons from people in connection with some kind of religious ministry—can be found in abundance. One man claimed he had conducted about 175 exorcisms in eight years, to great success.¹³

NO DEMON POSSESSION TODAY!

There is no doubt that demon possession actually existed in the first century, and that God allowed it in order to demonstrate the power and authority of Christ and His message over the devil and his powers. Demon possession is claimed by some in this day, but there is a dramatic contrast to be seen between the real evidences of demon possession and the genuine casting out of demons in the first century, and what is done today under the false banner of exorcism. The unfounded claims of modern day “exorcists” are to be contrasted with the confirmation of the genuine cases of casting out of demons by Christ, the apostles, the seventy disciples, and those on whom the apostles laid their hands in the early days of the church. Those today who falsely use the name of Christ to practice “exorcism” have no more right to do so than those “strolling Jews” mentioned before, and they are no more successful than those “strolling Jews” either.

Those who witnessed the casting out of demons in the first century knew that they were seeing a miracle. Some today have occasion to see a long, drawn-out, “tug-of-war” between a delusional victim and a self-professed “exorcist,” trying to get a non-present demon to come out of the subject's head by calling the name of Jesus over the individual.

No one today has any authority to try and cast out demons by the name of Christ. Because one *says* he is doing something in the name of

Jesus does not mean that he is. In the first century, Jesus did not authorize every Tom, Dick, and Harriot to expel demons from people. Such authority was not extended to anyone beyond the first century. Jesus empowered the apostles, the seventy disciples, and a few in the early days of the church (upon whom the apostles laid their hands) to cast out demons. Never again can one properly and Scripturally claim to be casting out demons in the name of Christ.

There can be no genuine casting out of demons today for two reasons—the purpose of miracles has been served, and there is today no access to the ability to perform miracles. Let us notice the first of these two considerations.

As previously noted, the casting out of demons, along with other miracles, was to prove the deity of Christ and His message. On one occasion, when the multitudes saw Jesus cast out demons from a man who was blind and mute, they “were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David?” (Mt. 12:22-23). They concluded, as did Nicodemus, that no one could do such things unless God was with Him (Jn. 3:2). Now, we have the inspired record of these confirmed miracles that can produce faith in those of us who read them. John declared:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name (Jn. 20:30-31).

Miracles performed by Christ and His apostles were signs that their message was by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 2:3-4 reveals:

[H]ow shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

Miracles were an indication of the partial, temporary, and incomplete state of the revelation of God’s will, then existing. The Word of God could be communicated only through partial means by those who could preach or teach with the aid of a miraculous gift of the Spirit, such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, *et cetera*. Paul explained that, when that which is perfect is come, then the partial and temporary measures would be done away. See 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

The partial would give way to the full (complete, final) revelation of God's will to man. Inspired men, such as James and Peter, anticipated the time when people could read what they and others would write by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. James described the ability to look into "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25), and Peter explained that God's divine power "hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Why would one want to hold on to the partial, incomplete, and imperfect when the perfect, full, and complete is at his disposal?

In the second place, miracles are impossible today because the methods by which miraculous powers were bestowed have ceased to be available. It is evident that, after the personal ministry of Jesus, people in the first century received miraculous gifts through one of two means: the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Jesus promised that He would provide miraculous powers to His apostles by means of their being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Before His death, Jesus told His apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit upon them to guide them into all truth (Jn. 16:13). Later, Jesus met with these men just before His ascension into heaven and promised them, "ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). He went on to say: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (v. 8).

That promise of the Holy Spirit to the apostles was fulfilled a few days later when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). Only two instances of Holy Spirit baptism are recorded (a third is implied in the case of Saul of Tarsus). In Acts 2:4, the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, and, in Acts 10-11, Cornelius and his kinsmen were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Some good brethren do not accept the idea that the record in Acts 10-11 is a case of Holy Spirit baptism. I believe that it was a special, never-to-be-repeated case of Holy Spirit baptism, based on Acts 10:47; 11:15-17; and 15:8. In either respect, it does not change the effect of what we are saying here.)

At the time under consideration is Acts 2 and Acts 10, there were two baptisms in effect: the command to be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a promise given only to the apostles and the special case of Cornelius in

Acts 10-11. Later, Paul wrote: “There is ... one baptism” (Eph. 4:4-5). By that time, some 30 years had passed since Pentecost, and Holy Spirit baptism had ceased. No one today can receive miraculous powers through Holy Spirit baptism, the claim of Pentecostals notwithstanding.

The second avenue through which spiritual gifts were given was through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. In Acts 6, seven men were appointed to look after the needs of the Grecian widows. They were set before the apostles who laid hands on them and prayed (Acts 6:6). Whether all received miraculous power, we do not know. However, two of them were given miraculous gifts. Immediately, we learn that “Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people” (v. 8). In Acts 7:55, Stephen was “full of the Holy Spirit” on the occasion of his defense before the Sanhedrin and his death by being stoned.

Another of the seven men was Philip, who became an inspired evangelist. Acts 8:5-7 records:

And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed.

Simon, a former sorcerer, was converted and was amazed at the “signs and great miracles” wrought by Philip (Acts 8:13). Although Philip could perform miracles, he could not bestow the gift of miracles on others, i.e., give others the ability to do miracles. Therefore, Peter and John were sent to Samaria. When they arrived, they “prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit” (v. 15). Those two apostles laid their hands on those who had been baptized and they received the Holy Spirit (v. 17). Furthermore, from Acts 8:18-19, we learn:

Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.

Peter sternly told Simon: “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God” (v. 21).

Paul had an intense desire to visit with the Christians at Rome. Explaining the reason why, he told them: “I long to see you, that *I may*

impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established” (Rom. 1:11, emphasis added).

This avenue is also closed to those living today. The apostles are no longer with us. Those to whom the apostles imparted spiritual gifts, by the imposition of their hands, could not pass miraculous gifts on to others. Thus, when all those people died, i.e., those upon whom the apostles had laid their hands, no one had the power to perform miracles.

The Bible reveals no other ways by which miracles were given to man. Beware of the man or woman who claims power to cast out demons or to heal miraculously! At worst, they are liars and deceivers, and at best, they are self-deceived and deluded.

Even in the first century, the claim to cast out demons in the name of Christ was not necessarily a sign of genuineness. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus, explaining what will happen with some on the day of judgment, says:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The purposes of miracles have been served. The word of God has been confirmed and fully revealed in the Bible. The avenues though which people once received miraculous powers have been closed. The Messianic prophecy of Zechariah has been fulfilled. He wrote:

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land (Zech. 13:1-2).

HOWEVER, THE DEVIL IS STILL OPERATING TODAY!

Although Satan and/or his demonic followers cannot literally and directly overpower people, “move in” and possess them against their will today, he and his agents are still alive, seeking diligently to ruin the lives and souls of men. It is still possible for Satan to get an advantage over us through the “devices” he uses (2 Cor. 2:11). He is still our adversary, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Guy N. Woods

wrote: “Today, the devil’s power over men is limited to deceit and temptation both of which may be resisted with the help of God and the sword of the Spirit.”¹⁴

The devil can use human interests and weaknesses to entice people into sinful deeds. Satan tempted Judas to betray his Lord (Lk. 22:3-5). Those who are “minded” to be rich can fall into temptation (1 Tim. 6:9). Paul warned married couples lest Satan tempt them through a lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:5). The devil has tempted Christians to lie (Acts 5:3). A novice, trying to function as an elder, can be lifted up with pride and fall into the same kind of condemnation as the devil did (1 Tim. 3:6-7). A child of God can be overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1). The devil can use other “devices” such as discouragement, desire for social approval, distractions, and outward circumstances to hinder the Lord’s work.

In view of Satan’s determined and constant efforts to bring sin into our lives, what are we to do? Although the devil can throw up strong temptations, God provides a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). The devil cannot force us to do anything. He is no stronger than we allow him to be. We must look for the appropriate way to escape any given temptation. The Bible shows that a number of things might be involved in taking an escape route from Satan’s advances. Recognizing the weakness of the flesh, we are to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation (Mt. 26:41). No room must be left in our lives in which the devil can operate (Eph. 4:27). The child of God must fully equip himself with the armor of God so that he can withstand the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). If Satan is stoutly resisted, he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7). Christians must flee from lust and follow after righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2 Tim. 2:22).

People must be mindful of the various avenues through which the devil can do his evil work. Be on guard against the wrong kind of movies and television shows, commercials which feature sex appeal, music with lewd lyrics, advertising from clothing stores which picture attractive models in undergarments, swim suits, or any other immodest apparel.

The devil can make use of false teachers and false teaching to deceive people. Paul foretold that “deceitful spirits” and “doctrines of demons” would cause some to depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). We are living in those “times” today—times in which some of our most dangerous enemies are those who are supposed to be our brothers.

Finally, the apostle Paul wrote:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

CONCLUSION

Our study has been a challenge. Some things have been beyond our comprehension because God has not fully revealed them to us. However, we have tried to be responsible and careful in seeking to set forth the things that have been revealed so that we might understand and profit somewhat from a better understanding of demon possession. It is comforting to know that, as strong as he is, the devil can be resisted and will have to flee from us!

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1889), 124.

³ Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers - Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), 231.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. Merrill F. Unger and William White (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 158.

⁷ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Company, 1992), 1:923.

⁸ Celestine Kapsner, "Begone Satan!"
<http://222.ewtn.com/library/newage/begonsa.htm>

⁹ Wayne Jackson, "Teresa's Exorcism," *christiancourier.com* (8 Oct. 2001).
http://www.christiancourier.com/artucles/print/teresas_exorcism

¹⁰ *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Pfeiffer, Rea, and Vos (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), s.v. "demonology."

¹¹ Wayne Jackson in "The Demon Frenzy," *christian.com* (11 Dec. 2000).
http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/print/the_demon_frenzy

¹² “Can a Christian Have a Demon?”

http://www.porn-free.org/answer_Christian_with_demons.htm

¹³ Jerry Johnson, *The Edge of Evil* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1989), 203.

¹⁴ Woods.

SATAN'S POWER OF DEATH

Clay Bond



Clay Bond is a native of Abilene, Texas. He is married to the former Carlie Brown, and they are the parents of three daughters and one son. Bond is a 2003 graduate of the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. He speaks in Gospel meetings as well as participating in evangelistic campaigns in his home state and abroad. Bond has been preaching the Gospel for the Johnson City Church of Christ in Johnson City, Texas for the past five years.

INTRODUCTION¹

A lot of people in the world, and even in the Lord's church, have a misconception of Satan. They see him as a man dressed in red with a pitchfork in his hand. They fail to understand that Satan is a murderer (Jn. 8:44), and that he is the one who deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9). Satan spends all of his time and effort as a soul seeker/soul winner, and he is very good at what he does! Peter describes him as a hungry lion which, "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). This is what Jesus wanted Peter to realize when He said: "Satan hath desired to have you" (Lk. 22:31). Satan won a battle with Peter when he denied the Lord, but he won the war with Judas.

Satan is good at what he does. If we allow it, he will take advantage of us (2 Cor. 2:11). We need to know our adversary, our opponent in this spiritual warfare. This is the only way that we can keep from giving him an opportunity to work in our lives (Eph. 4:27). The tragedy is that so many are under Satan's dominion and they do not even know it.

"Satan's Power of Death" will be dealt with in this study. We will consider how and when Satan brought death into this world. We will also consider Satan's power and how he manages to use God's law to his own advantage. Finally, we want to discuss how and when Satan was defeated and lost his power.

SATAN'S CONQUEST

Death Enters The World

After God created man, He placed him in the Garden of Eden. Regarding the garden, God gave man the task "to dress it and to keep

it” (Gen. 2:15). God informed Adam that he could eat from every tree in the garden, except “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17). God made it clear to Adam that the day he ate of the forbidden tree, a horrible thing would enter the world—DEATH (Gen. 2:17).

Eve disregarded the Word of God, ate of the forbidden tree, and encouraged her husband to do so as well (Gen. 3:1-6). Both, Adam and Eve, violated God’s Law; therefore, they committed the first sin. Do we really understand why sin is so serious? God made clear in His instructions to Adam that death is the result of sin. Paul emphasizes the same thing to us, the only thing sin has to offer you is death. He penned: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Death entered the world through sin. Sin entered this world through Satan. We see that man’s propensity to sin is the result of Satan’s direct or indirect influence. There is no Scriptural indication that either Adam or Eve were inclined to defy the Word of God until Satan tempted Eve. It was Satan who instructed her to ignore God’s warnings; it was he who enticed her to eat from the forbidden tree; it was he who tempted her to do that which her Creator had forbidden. How appropriate it is that our Lord described him as “the tempter” (Mt. 4:3). Since Satan introduced sin, he is characterized as the “murderer” of the human family (Jn. 8:44). Every time man sins we can be assured that, in one way or another, Satan has a part in it.

Satan brought sin into this world knowing full well that death would follow for man. He tempted Adam and Eve to violate God’s Law knowing that, if they would succumb to his temptation, death would pass upon all men and that God’s creation would be forever changed.

What is the nature of this death that Satan has brought about? Is it *spiritual* death or *physical* death? Does Genesis 2:17 and Romans 5:12 refer to the breach of fellowship between the Creator and His creation, or the physical decay which was brought about by man’s fall? Or, perhaps, both are indicated. Some brethren have written very well worded conclusions on this very subject.

Regarding Romans 5:12, Tom Wacaster says:

It would seem in view of the context here, spiritual death is under consideration. We do not deny that physical death is included among the consequence of Adam’s sin. But the context

points most definitely to spiritual rather than physical death. This conclusion is strengthened by the following clause. "Death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Spiritual death passes unto all men for the simple reason that all men have sinned, this truth having been established in Romans 3:23.

It was through Adam that death entered, or was introduced to the world. He then clarified precisely how it is that men thus die: "for that all sinned." The inescapable conclusion is Adam only introduced sin into the world and his descendents merely participated in the same. They were not guilty of his sin, they only had the opportunity to sin themselves because sin had now been introduced to them. Each man had to make the choice as to whether he would or would not sin. But Paul has already proven that all men sin (Rom. 3:23).²

Commenting on Genesis 2:17, Billy Bland writes:

The death indicated here would be separation from God's fellowship. Sin is that which separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Those who live in sin are said to be "dead" while they are alive (1 Tim. 5:6). The Ephesians had been those who were dead, but had been made alive (Eph. 2:1-3). Paul states that death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). Some, however, have died physically who have not sinned (i.e. babies). Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The death in this passage is in contrast to eternal life (spiritual), therefore the death must be spiritual. Some hold that God meant physical death is a consequence of sin, since we are separated from the tree of life. Since both spiritual death and physical death are consequences of sin, this writer sees no violation done to the text with either view, but my personal view is that the death contemplated in Genesis 2:17 is spiritual death.³

Do we see why sin is not something that should be taken lightly? Through the sin of Adam, Satan was victorious in bringing sin, and consequently death, into the world. Sin causes the death of man's spirit, separating him from his Creator, and the death of his body, since he no longer has access to the tree of life. Satan's goal was and is, not only to see God's creation caught in a downward spiral of physical decay, but to see the beautiful fellowship of the Creator and His creation destroyed for eternity.

When we read Genesis 4 and 5, it is evident that man began to age and to experience physical death. The first recorded case of physical

death was when Cain, in a jealous rage, murdered Abel (Gen. 4:8). Genesis 5 is filled with the names of those who were born, lived, and died, experiencing the separation of their spirits from their bodies, identified in Scripture as “death” (Jas. 2:26). One thing of which we can be absolutely certain, death is not our friend. In fact, according to Scripture, death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26).

As heartbreaking and devastating as physical death can be, we must remember that it is only *physical*. The souls of the departed live on for eternity. No, the tragedy of sin is not physical death; the real tragedy of sin’s entrance into the world is that it brings about spiritual death. All men have sinned (Rom. 3:23), therefore, all men are subject to punishment for their sins (Rom. 5:12).

We do not deny that it was through Adam that sin and death entered the world. However, we do deny that all men share in the guilt and condemnation of Adam’s sin. We are not “born in sin,” and therefore guilty of sin at birth, as some affirm. According to 1 John 3:4, sin is the practice of lawlessness, not the result of being conceived and born! In suffering physical death, we share in the consequences of Adam’s sin. Sometimes, even in the innocent state of childhood this consequence of Adam’s sin is experienced. It must be understood that there is a big difference between the *guilt* of sin that causes spiritual death and the *consequences* of sin that have brought about physical death.

The sad reality is, that as human beings we are born into a world where sin and physical and spiritual death exists (Ps. 51:5). We die physically as a consequence of Adam’s sin; we die spiritually as a consequence of our own sins.⁴ Death is real whether we are discussing the physical or spiritual. We need only to listen to the radio or read the obituary section of the newspaper to see that people are daily suffering the consequences of Adam’s sin. We all have had family members and friends who have passed from this life.

Some of the great Bible heroes speak of the reality of physical death. They say such things as:

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death (Gen. 27:1-2).

When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return (Job 16:22).

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? (Ps. 89:48).

And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death (1 Sam. 20:3).

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man (1 Kgs. 2:1-2).

Death should get our attention; it should really make us think about life and eternity. According to Solomon: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart" (Ecc. 7:2). Yet, many of us live our lives as though we have all the time in the world, and as if there is no such thing as spiritual death. In actuality, we do not know what is going to happen the next day, the next hour or the next minute. "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro. 27:1).

Think about the rich farmer in Luke 12. He was not at all worried about dying. He thought he had all the time in the world, yet God reproves him saying: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Lk. 12:20). How many people do we know who are just like the rich farmer? All they want to do in life is take their ease, "eat, drink, and be merry" (Lk. 12:19). Such people are not interested in spiritual matters. In fact, they share in the attitude manifested by Pharaoh when he said: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" (Ex. 5:2).

Today, a great majority of the people go through life spiritually blind. They allow Satan, the deceiver of the world, to blind their minds. They allow him to choke the Word right out of their lives with his most effective weapons: cares, riches and lust (Mk. 4:19). Like the rich farmer, many go through life paying no attention to God. Consequently they are totally unprepared for death. Living in the here and now, many may not be giving due attention to God, but we can be assured that some day He will have everybody's attention.

The rich man in Luke 16 had no interest in spiritual matters. Simply stated, God did not have his attention. The rich man faced death unprepared. Only after his unexpected death, when he is in torment, does God have his attention. We see in this account that it was too late for him. In eternity his wealth was forgotten and his spiritual poverty was exposed. As for Lazarus, his previous poverty on earth was swallowed up in the comfort and peace of “Abraham’s bosom.” Through this account, our Lord cries out to each of us: “Do not wait until death is upon you. Prepare to meet me now.”

Death’s entrance into this world should get our attention. If it does not, then we find ourselves in the awful condition of being subject to Satan.

SATAN’S REIGN

Death Utilized

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

Ever since death made its entrance into this world, Satan has had the power of death in his hands. What is this power Satan possessed? The Greek word *kratos*, here translated “power,” means “dominion” or “strength.”⁵ Not power over death, but sovereignty or dominion of death.⁶ Wayne Jackson makes this interesting observation about Satan’s power of death:

First, it must be stated emphatically that Satan does not possess the power to directly take human life. If such were the case, all Christian people would be dead, for he is our “enemy” (Mt. 13:28). The book of Job demonstrates this truth as well. Satan could only afflict the patriarch as Jehovah allowed, and the Lord refused to grant permission for Job’s life to be terminated (Job 2:6) God is greater than his adversary (cf. 1 Jn. 4:4). The reference to Satan’s “power of death” is doubtless an allusion to the Tempter’s role in the fall of humanity at the beginning of time. Death reigns as a result of sin (Rom. 5:12). Since the devil introduced sin, he is characterized as the “murderer” of the human family (Jn. 8:44). Death, therefore, is an appointment for us all (Heb. 9:27—with the exception of those who are alive at the time of Christ’s return—1 Cor. 15:51). Inasmuch as Satan ultimately shares a heavy responsibility for the sin-death

equation, in a manner of speaking, he thus is said to have “the power of death.” Not in a direct sense, but only in an historical, associated sense.⁷

As stated earlier, death is the enemy of mankind. Because Satan is our adversary, death is his friend. The Scriptures make it clear that Satan desires to see us eternally separated from God (Lk. 22:31). This eternal separation can only be accomplished through death. A man may be separated from God by his sin, but as long as he lives, there remains hope of reconciliation. When the same man dies, never having been reconciled to God, he is lost for eternity. There is no more hope for that man. After sin entered the world, Satan had a death grip on mankind. Death was part of his dominion and his ultimate weapon. Satan desires man's death in the fullest sense of the word. He desires not just our physical death, he wants us to die in our sins—spiritually dead, eternally separated from God.

Our adversary wants to take advantage of us and we have been warned not to be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). One of Satan's devices (or strategies) is to use God's law of sin and death to his own advantage (Rom. 8:2).

We conclude, therefore, that the “law of sin and death” is that law which pronounced death upon those that sin. That law existed long before the Law of Moses ever came into existence. The Law of Moses was introduced, not to remove the consequence of this previous law of sin and death, but to show what sin is really like. Paul says the “law was added because of transgression” (Gal. 3:19). It was introduced so that sin “might be shown to be sin” (Rom. 7:13).⁸

When a person transgresses God's law, that individual becomes a servant of sin. That person finds himself in bondage to sin. John declared: “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (Jn. 8:34). When God's Holy Law is violated, Satan is ready to “swoop in” and take his prisoners for they have entered his domain. Man's weakness is where Satan's strength resides. Where sin is, Satan dominates (Eph. 2:1-2).

The Scriptures teach that this world lies in wickedness (1 Jn. 5:19). That explains why Satan is referred to as “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). When a person lives in opposition to God's will, choosing to live an ungodly, hellish life, he is serving the god of this world. A soul has been snared, entrapped and imprisoned by Satan. This,

brethren, is how Satan uses God's law of sin and death to his own advantage.

Satan knows the power of God's Word. The Gospel of Christ has the power to save souls, to set us free from Satan's bondage (Jas. 1:21, Rom. 6:17, Jn. 8:32). All of us have all been taken captive by the enemy. We have allowed Satan to take advantage of us at his will. However, we have been given the power to take advantage of him and to recover ourselves out of his snare. Yet, it is up to us to use it (2 Tim. 2:26). "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

SATAN'S DEFEAT

Death Subjugated

Satan's death grip on mankind had to be broken. Just as David took Goliath's own sword and cut off the giant's head with it, David's greater Son took Satan's weapon of death and destroyed him with it.⁹ The writer of Hebrews reveals how Christ accomplished this, saying: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. 2:14). The context reveals that Christ was the One who tasted death for every person (Heb. 2:9). As the Word, He could not die. Thus, it was necessary that He become flesh, God the Son. In order for Jesus to taste death, He had to become a partaker of the same flesh and blood that all humanity shares.¹⁰ The incarnation of Christ was part of God's eternal plan to render Satan powerless. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). The Gospel is *Good News* because it reveals to man God's plan for Satan's defeat through Christ.

After Satan's victory in the Garden of Eden, God made it clear to the devil that he would be defeated. In Genesis 3:15, we get our first glimpse of God's triumphal plan which would ultimately destroy Satan's power. There, God said to Satan: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The seed promise was reiterated throughout the Old Testament (cf., Gen. 22:18; 2 Sam. 7:12-14, Isa. 7:14, Mic. 5:2). Matthew 1:21-23 reveals the fulfillment of those prophecies. In this context, we have an account of Mary, a young virgin with child of the Holy Spirit, who gives birth to Jesus, the God-Man. God had made a promise. Despite the length of time, God

never lost of sight this promise and, at the right time, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

When Christ came to the earth, taking upon himself the form of a servant, and the likeness of men, Satan was thoroughly outmatched (Phil. 2:7). Jesus proved His superiority over Satan when He cast the unclean spirit out of the man in Mark 5:1-19. The very name of our Lord causes devils, which are Satan's minions, to tremble (Jas. 2:19). When Satan tempted Jesus, in Matthew 4:1-11, he was again outmatched by the Son of God and was utterly defeated in all of his efforts to appeal to Christ's flesh.

Jesus knew that the ultimate victory could only be achieved through His own death. This is why He taught: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jn. 12:24). Jesus was well aware that He would have to die in order to cast out the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31). He took the weapon of death out of Satan's hands and defeated our great enemy at the cross. Our Lord attested Himself victor when He proclaimed: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Jesus bound the strong man and spoiled his goods when He provided the remedy for sin (Mk. 3:27; 1 Tim. 1:15).

Satan once had the power of death, but since Christ's resurrection, it is his no more. While Christ was on earth, He was often threatened with death. Finally, He did die, but as the great Gospel song proclaims: "Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph over His foes." By the glory of the Father, Christ was raised from dead to die no more. Death no more has dominion either over Him or those who are His (Rom. 6:4, 9).

When Jesus' blood was shed, when the innocent laid down His life for the guilty, death was forever swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54). Indeed, the seed of woman crushed the power of Satan and gave us hope of eternal life. In the death of that One, death itself was abolished and life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). The price for sin was paid and we were set free from the ultimate curse of death by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 6:19).

The purpose of God's plan was to restore the fellowship with mankind that was broken in the Garden of Eden. Through sin, death had its entrance into the world. Through sin and death, Satan captivates

and conquers the souls of men. We understand that in warfare those who have been captured by the enemy are held captive unless and until they are rescued. When a rescue mission is put together, a lot of planning goes into developing the right strategy for freeing the prisoners of war, before it can be carried out successfully. The warfare in which we are engaged is a spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Our God developed a plan. He developed the right strategy so that we can be made free from Satan's dominion and be reconciled back to Him.

The Gospel details for us Christ's death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). When Jesus died, and was raised by the glory of the Father, He defeated Satan (Rom. 6:4). We know Satan played the principal nefarious role in bringing sin and death into this world. The part he played placed the power of death in his hands. Nevertheless, our God's working and His power are mightier. Paul stressed:

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1:19-21).

When God sent His Son, He knew what He was doing. Jesus bound the strong man and, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). "The death of Immanuel has not broken the curse of physical death, but through our Savior's death He has opened up a 'new and living way,' by which we may escape the second death."¹¹ While some may glory in their own might and riches, Paul could only find himself glorying "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). At the cross of Christ, Satan was defeated and death was brought under subjection.

CONCLUSION

Satan certainly had his part in bringing sin and death into this world. He was victorious in causing a breach of fellowship between man and God. While he may have dominated in this spiritual warfare for a time, his dominance ended when his greatest weapon, death, was unable to defeat Christ Jesus. In Jesus Christ we too can be victorious. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). Our Lord's message of hope to us is this:

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (Jn. 11:25). The “king of terrors” is no longer to be feared (Job 18:14).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Tom Wacaster, *Studies In Romans* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2005), 256.

³ Billy Bland, “God’s Creation Of Heaven, Earth, Sea And All Therein” *The Book Of Genesis*, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2001), 81-82.

⁴ Wacaster.

⁵ W.E. Vine, *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1996), 479.

⁶ Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies Of The New Testament-Thessalonians Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 4:404.

⁷ Wayne Jackson, “Who Is In Control Of Death,” *Christian Courier* (1998 - 2007).

⁸ Wacaster, 349.

⁹ James Burton Coffman, *Commentary On Hebrews* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1973), 55.

¹⁰ Gareth L. Reese, *New Testament Epistles-Hebrews* (Moberly, MO: Scripture Exposition Books, 1992), 32.

¹¹ J.E. Wright, *Commentary On The Book Of Hebrews* (Privately Published, n.d.), 63.

SATAN'S RULE

Don Walker



Don Walker is a native Texan. He is married to the former Jackie Gillis, and they have two sons and two daughters. Walker is a 1979 graduate of the Southwest School of Biblical Studies in Austin, Texas. He has preached for churches in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Walker has done evangelistic work in Bermuda, Jamaica, South Africa, and the Czech Republic. He is the preacher for the Shenandoah congregation in San Antonio, Texas, and the Director of the annual *Shenandoah Lectures*.

INTRODUCTION¹

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” (Gen. 3:1). So begins our introduction to the most vile creature that exists. Jesus described Satan this way: “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” (Jn. 8:44). Peter forever gave warning when he wrote: “[Y]our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). As he was penning those words, one has to wonder if Peter remembered that Satan had specifically desired to have him.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had told Peter: “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Lk. 22:31). The first part of that statement in the ASV reads: “Satan asked to have you,” and in the ESV it is: “Satan demanded to have you.” The word translated “desired” (KJV) is a strong word. It has in it the idea of demanding. In this case, Satan was making a demand in order to torture or to harm Peter. Satan’s desire was exposed by Christ. The second part of the statement is, “that he may *sift* you as wheat” (emphasis added). The Greek word for “sift” is *siniazo*. It means “to sift or to shake in a sieve.” Defining this word, Young says: “By inward agitation to try one’s faith to the verge of overthrow.”² Satan demanded to agitate Peter to see if there was any faith in him. He was laying claim on him (of course he did that to the other disciples as well). Not only do we see the devil’s evil desire, but we also see his tenacity.

Even from a cursory reading of the above passages, we see that Satan desires to rule over the lives of men and women. Furthermore, we know it does not stop there when we consider the influence and the rule of Satan. He desires evil for us and he has been successful in his malevolent influence in the lives of men. In our introduction to Satan, in Genesis 3, we not only see temptation, we also see transgression. Eve and Adam both partook of the forbidden fruit. From the sin's entrance into the world to this very moment, man has shown a tremendous capacity for evil and transgressing God's Word. Jesus' own words testify to the devil's tremendous influence and success in the world when He says:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Mt. 7:13-14).

Most people who walk upon the earth will be eternally lost. The Devil wants to draw all men away from the Living God—and that he has done with all those who have reached the age of accountability. In fact, when we take into consideration Paul's words, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), we know that the devil has had far too much influence upon man.

THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR—SATAN

In Ephesians 2, Paul follows a line of progression that takes place in the lives of every Christian. The line begins with individuals who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (v. 1). It ends with the saved ones having been raised to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (v. 6) and "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (v. 22). Chapter two ends by focusing on the influence of Christ's rule in our lives. However, in verses 1-3, Paul describes our condition *before* God's mercy, love and grace had effect in our lives. In these verses, he speaks of our condition when Satan ruled in our lives, stating:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (emphasis added).

In the center of this most sinful condition we find “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Here, Paul introduces the devil. It is he that rules over the “children of disobedience.” Referring to this enemy, Paul used language with which a Pharisee would be familiar. It was the Pharisees who accused Jesus of casting out devils “through the *prince* of the devils” (Mt. 9:34, emphasis added). In Matthew 12:24, we learn that they had a name for this “prince of the power of the air” and that was “Beelzebub the prince of the devils.” The scribes levied the exact same charge against Christ, in Mark 3:22, and employed the same terms concerning Satan. That verse says: “And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.”

Jesus also used this same language concerning Satan. In John 12:31, Jesus says: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the *prince of this world* be cast out” (emphasis added). Jesus also states: “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for *the prince of this world* cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Jn. 14:30, emphasis added). When Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit being sent to His apostles, He proclaims: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because *the prince of this world* is judged” (Jn. 16:8-11, emphasis added). So it is, when we consider that before our conversion we walked according to “the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2), we must acknowledge that we were walking in accordance with Satan’s desire and will. Thus, we were in his domain and subject to his rule.

SATAN’S DOMINION AND RULE

Satan has a dominion over those he rules. It may seem to be a simplistic statement, but the ramifications associated with the Divine truth stated by Paul are far reaching. In Romans 6, he said:

But God be thanked, that ye were the *servants of sin*, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18, emphasis added).

Those to whom this was written were “servants of righteousness,” but at one time they had been the “servants of sin.” In verse 16, Paul asks: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (emphasis added). When Paul follows the phrase “his servants ye are to whom ye obey” with “whether of sin unto death,” he indicates that there is a master that rules over those who sin, or transgress God’s law. In John 8, Jesus told those religious rulers: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jn. 8:44). Their father, of which Jesus spoke, was Satan himself. Satan ruled them and had dominion over them. It is sad to say, but the majority in this world is under the rule of the great deceiver (Rev. 12:9). There is a domain over which Satan himself resides and it is densely populated. It is the realm of darkness and there is power, evil power in this realm.

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

Let us turn our attention to Colossians 1. There, Paul writes:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14).

In this context, Paul mentions “the power of darkness.” Most of us are aware of the Bible’s use of “light” and “darkness.” Strong speaks of the metaphorical use of the Greek word which is translated “darkness.” Regarding such use, the word has reference to “ignorance respecting divine things and human duties, and the accompanying ungodliness and immorality, together with their consequent misery in hell, persons in whom darkness becomes visible and holds sway.”³ The contrast between “light” and “darkness” was commonly referenced, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the Dead Sea Scrolls and ancient literature.⁴ It is imagery that we recognize even outside the context of God’s Word. The “power of darkness” was the hold and sway that it had on these brethren before they obeyed the Gospel.

Of the twenty-nine passages in which we find the Greek word *skotos* (darkness), by far it is most often used in connection with wickedness. It is employed to speak of the darkness that is in men (Mt. 6:23; Lk. 11:35), or the darkness in which men sit (Lk. 1:79). John 3:19

speaks of men who “loved darkness.” Paul refers to the “works of darkness” in Ephesians 5:11 and Romans 13:12. John the immerser’s work was: “To give light to them that *sit in darkness* and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk. 1:79, emphasis added). Paul’s work was exactly the same, except that John’s work was preparatory (before the cross of Christ) and Paul’s was on this side of the cross. But, Paul’s task was stated just as clearly. Being sent to the Gentiles, his work was: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from *darkness* to light, and from the *power of Satan* unto God” (Acts 26:18, emphasis added).

Concerning Paul’s statement in Acts 26:18, it is significant to note that Paul equates “darkness” with “the power of Satan.” In simple terms, Paul is speaking of Satan’s position of authority in which he rules over a certain domain. The Greek word *skotos*, translated “darkness” in Colossians 1:13, is the same word that is translated “darkness” in Acts 26:18. The Greek word *exousia*, translated “power” in Acts 26:18, means: “[T]he power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege), the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed).⁵ In our study of God’s Word, we see that this word is often used in connection with Christ. While Jesus was upon the earth, He taught as one who had “power” or “authority” (Mt. 7:29; Mk. 1:22). In Mark 1:27, *exousia* is translated “authority.” There, when the people observed the power that Jesus exhibited, they declared: “[W]ith authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.” It was about this authority (*exousia*) that Jesus spoke of in Mark 2:10, when He said: “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath *power* on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house” (Mk. 2:10-11, emphasis added). It is this word that Jesus uses in Matthew 28:18, when he announced: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

The word *exousia* represents authority or power which can be delegated. Jesus received His power or authority from the Father above (Mt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:19-21). It is the word translated “power” in Mark 6:7, which states: “And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits.” We expect Christ to have authority and power and for Him to give power to others. Yet, the passages we are to

consider speak of the “power of darkness” or the “power of Satan.” These passages tell us that Satan has authority over the realm of darkness.

BONDAGE

Earlier we introduced three verses from Romans 6. One of those verses was verse 16. Again, it asks: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his servants* ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (emphasis added). Peter wrote: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he *brought in bondage*” (2 Pet. 2:19, emphasis added). The point is this. When we give ourselves over to sin, then we are held in bondage by the ruler of that domain, the domain of sin, which is Satan. Satan uses God’s law of sin and death to his advantage. When men give in to the temptations of the devil, they find themselves bound or imprisoned. God, through Isaiah, said: “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, *to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house*” (Isa. 42:6-7, emphasis added). Satan has power to take captives.

SATAN’S POWER IS LIMITED

Jehovah God has all authority. Satan has no power except for that which God permits him to have. Satan’s power is limited and he labors only within the boundaries God has set for him. Having said that, we must understand that, technically, it is not correct to say that Satan’s authority is “delegated authority.” God has not authorized Satan to do what Satan does. God has not “delegated” Satan’s authority to him. That would mean that Satan does what he does by God’s authority. Actually, Satan has rebelled against God’s authority, and all of his evil is his own doing.

While God did not give Satan his authority, He does “permit” Satan to rule over the realm of darkness, and to take sinful men captive. That Satan’s power is restricted is powerfully illustrated in Job’s case. God *allowed* Satan to oppose Job. However, God drew the limits beyond which Satan could not pass in his efforts draw Job away from God. It must be emphasized that in all of the devil’s activities against Job, not once did he overstep the boundaries God had set. Understanding the

devil's evil nature, we know that his staying within those boundaries was not because he is honorable and chose to do so. Really, it is quite the contrary. If he *could* have broken the rules, he *would* have broken the rules. But, because God is omnipotent, Satan's authority is limited to the realm of darkness.

One may ask: "Why does God allow the devil to have any authority at all?" The answer to that question resides in the fact that God chose to create man with freedom of choice. When a man chooses to be righteousness, he is choosing to be ruled by Jehovah. When a man chooses to sin, he is choosing to be ruled by Satan. It is that simple. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). So, we find that even in the chaotic realm of sin, there is an organized system over which the devil rules. Since man chooses to be a servant of Satan or of God, it should be considered just how it is that the devil brings men into subjection to him and his reign of death.

DRAWN AWAY

Paul, concerned that Satan would get an advantage, proclaimed: "[F]or we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). God's Word reveals how the devil works. James wrote:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

Matthew identified Satan as being "the tempter" (Mt. 4:3), and it is he who employs temptations to capture the souls of men. Now let us briefly analyze James' statement. First, he says man is "drawn away of his own lust, and *enticed*" (emphasis added). The Greek word for "enticed" is *deleazo*. This word is found in only two other verses in the Bible. In both instances, they are found in 1 Peter 2. These verses read:

Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; *beguiling* unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children ... For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, *they allure* through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error (2 Pet. 2:14, 18, emphasis added).

The word *deleazo* means “to bait or to catch by bait,” to “be enticed, be seduced.”⁶ The thought is that of baiting a trap with the intent of capturing someone. Peter said that Satan is walking about seeking whom he may devour. In his hunting, he baits traps to ensnare us. In 1 John 2, we learn that the bait falls into three categories, “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn. 2:16). We are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lust. When lust has conceived, or been fulfilled, it brings sin. When we act upon the temptation, we thus fulfill the lust and transgress God’s law. When sin is completed, death is the result. That is when the devil becomes our master and we his servant. That is when we enter into his domain and he has the rule over us.

THE DEVIL’S DOMAIN

We have noted that the realm of darkness is the devil’s domain and that he is the prince of darkness or the prince of this world. The devil is not the only one that inhabits this realm. He has those who are assisting him in his hellish designs. Paul wrote:

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:11-12).

Paul warns us of, as one writer put it, this “spiritual mafia”—that is, the emissaries of the wicked one, Satan. Because our battle is not with flesh and blood, it does not appear obvious before us. However, because it is a spiritual battle, it is even more important that we prepare well for victory. We battle against the devil and all the powers of darkness, and the souls of men are on the line.

It is evident from this passage that the devil is in charge of a whole company of angels who assist him in his hellish work. In considering these groups some commentators, such as Barnes, will say that these are various ranks and orders of the angels. Others, such as Michaelis, conclude they are not “different groups, but more or less synonymous designations of the forces of the devil with which believers have to contend”⁷ Brother Wendell Winkler comments on these groups, saying:

Positively, we wrestle “against principalities [i.e. “demons holding dominions entrusted to them in the order of things,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Joseph Henry

Thayer, p. 77,], against powers, [“the devil and demons,” *ibid*, p. 356 (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)], against spiritual hosts of wickedness [“wicked spirits,” KJV margin] in the heavenly places.” The four phrases in this verse are used appositionally [i.e. with reference to the same thing] and refer to the devil and his cohorts; yea, the combined forces of evil that operate beneath the control of Satan himself.⁸

Whether we consider these to be four different categories recognizing a rank and file in the devil’s domain, or we consider them to be four terms applied to one group, practically speaking, it is not important. The important point is that there is a realm of wickedness in which our great enemy, Satan, has a host that opposes us on every side, and we must take the whole armour of God to overcome.

It is interesting to observe that Paul used the same terms in Ephesians 1. Writing concerning God’s power, he told the Ephesians that God exercised that power in raising Jesus from the dead, declaring: “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:20-21). This may be the significance of the use of these terms in chapter six. We are reminded that all those who assist Satan, and even Satan himself, are subject to Christ. The fact is, the only way we can overcome this enemy is through Christ Jesus. Though Satan and his cohorts are powerful, we can overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and if we love not our lives unto death (Rev. 12:11).

SIGNIFICANT & SERIOUS TRUTHS

When we put all of the passages together and consider their message, we realize that every day, we stand in the middle of a raging battlefield. The war in which we are engaged is not carnal, one fought with bullets, bazookas and bombs. Explaining the nature of warfare, Paul wrote:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Our battles are not ones that are seen by the physical eye. For that reason men walk as if there is neither danger nor eternal repercussion to their actions here. Yet, the laws that govern the spiritual realm are just as present and exacting as any physical laws that exists. Because the spiritual warfare is not observable with the eye, nearly everyone in this world is a captive of sin and Satan. Most are oblivious to this truth. Although there are two masters which can be served, the largest portion of the populace is enslaved to Satan by sin. There is a great cosmic battle raging on and our souls are the spoils. One day, that which is so obvious to us (the physical) will be of little significance, and that which is not so obvious (the spiritual) will be made known. At that time, it will be too late to alter one's spiritual condition.

Even though the vast majority stands oblivious to the spiritual war that surrounds us, does that fact excuse *anyone*? No. Paul said of the Gentiles and their standing in the world of darkness that "they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Each one who has walked the earth will stand accountable before the Judge. The importance of which realm we inhabit here will be clearly seen then.

THE DANGERS OF ALLOWING SATAN TO RULE

As previously indicated, the greatest dangers one faces in allowing Satan to rule are the eternal ramifications. John warned against that which is called the "second death." In Revelation 2:11, while encouraging the brethren to overcome, John spoke of not being "hurt of the second death." Even though he is speaking of how we can avoid the second death, we still learn of the nature of this death. It is painful. Again, in Revelation 20:6, John speaks of overcoming the second death, and he specifies that the second death has power. Later, in that same chapter, he begins to define the second death. Of it, he wrote: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20:14). Finally, in what is the most graphic and revealing verse concerning this death, John says: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). John tells us that the second death is having "part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." In this volume, there is a chapter written by brother H.D. Simmons, entitled "Hell, A Place Prepared for the Devil." Each reader is encouraged to go to that chapter

and see what hell is like. However, allow us to simply say here that hell is also a place prepared for those who allow the devil to rule their lives. This is the utmost danger those who are Satan's captives face.

However, it is not the only danger. Certainly the eternal consequences are the ultimate danger, but there are immediate dangers that can lead to our final separation from God. We do well to be aware of what the devil's rule in our lives here can do to us, and more specifically, what it can do to our hearts and our consciences. In Jeremiah 49:8 we read of "the calamity of Esau." Here is a prime example of the destructive nature of Satan's rule, even if we plan for it to be only a brief or short stay. The point is, when we sin there is a force working on our hearts and our consciences. The writer of Hebrews informs us concerning Esau and his transgressions. After describing him as a "profane person" (Heb. 12:16), he then comments: "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). Satan's rule had so affected him that he was unable to find that place of repentance.

Pilots speak of a certain situation as being the "point of no return." It is the point at which they have used over half of their fuel and there is no turning back to where the trip began. There is also in the lives of men, that point of no return. You and I may not be able to see or recognize it when an individual has come to that point. Still, we must labor to snatch *all* men and women from the flames of hell that we can. But, the fact is that men reach the point of no return far too often. Though we may not know when, God does know. It is this point that Paul develops in Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4:17-18, he gives an excellent summation of what it means for us to allow Satan to rule in our lives as he exhorts: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." In verse 19, Paul then reveals the condition of those who have allowed Satan to rule—"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." This condition is referenced in both the Old and New Testaments. Zechariah wrote: "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore

came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 7:12). Not only do we see what dwelling under Satan’s rule *will do to us*, we also see what it *will bring upon us*—great wrath from God. In 1 Timothy 4:2, Paul spoke of those who had their conscience seared as with a hot iron. The danger should be obvious. Even if we have every intention to one day depart from the devil’s domain and turn to the Lord, or to return if we are an apostate child of God, the *effects* of Satan’s rule will not always allow such a return.

CONCLUSION

John taught that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 Jn. 5:19). The reason for this is that “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), also known as “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31), who is Satan, also controls the “power of darkness” (Col. 1:13). He rules over those who are separated from God.

The devil is very powerful and has great influence in the lives of men. Yet, even though Satan is powerful and his allies very successful in this world, we can overcome him just like our first century brethren did. John wrote: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). Though the battle rages fierce, we will be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). When we allow the Lord to fight for us, as we obediently trust in Him, “we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

As the children of God, may we always be aware of the dangers that face us. May we ever be vigilant in overcoming Satan (1 Pet. 5:8)—and may each one study his Bible more and more.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² J. Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), (electronic ed.).

³ Ibid.

⁴ C.S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 1993), (electronic ed.).

⁵ Strong.

⁶ J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), (electronic ed.).

⁷ Wilhelm Michaelis, ed. Gerhard Kittle, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co. 1976), 3:914.

⁸ Wendell Winkler, *God's "Supremes": A Study of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Winkler Publications, Inc., 2005), 32.

SATAN’S STRATEGY FOR “CHRISTIAN” UNITY

Tim Childs



Tim Childs was born in Corinth, Mississippi. He is married to the former Betty Holley, and they are parents of two sons. Childs received a B.A. degree in Bible from Heritage Christian University at Florence, Alabama. He has taught in the Madisonville School of Bible in Kentucky, and the Northeast Bible Institute in Shillong, India. Childs has done mission work in Costa Rica. He preached for three congregations of the Lord’s church in Kentucky before moving, to the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Baldwin, Mississippi.

INTRODUCTION¹

Until the victorious Lord of lords comes in His overwhelming power and glory, the spiritual battle between good and evil, light and darkness will rage on. Even though Satan shall never win the war, he refuses as yet to raise the white flag in surrender, acknowledge defeat, and cease his rebellious, destructive efforts.

God has expended time and effort in giving us the Holy Scriptures to reveal His eternal plan for all time and for all humanity, in general, and for those who will follow His Son as Christians, in particular. Through His oversight and providential care, God continues to execute His plan of reconciliation and human redemption, which He formulated before the world began (Rom. 16:25-26). We must learn the lesson that God’s ways and thoughts are highly superior to our own (Isa. 55:8-9).

From the beginning of time, as in the case with Adam and Eve, Satan has been more than willing to offer alternatives to what God has revealed for our spiritual, physical, social and emotional well being. Satan uses a variety of devices (2 Cor. 2:11) with which he seeks to counteract God’s plan and come between our God and us. It behooves each of us who have “ears to hear” to listen, discern and practice what the Spirit says unto the churches in every area of our lives including the realm of Christian unity.

GOD PROMOTES UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS

Christianity is a revealed-from-heaven religion. Praise and honor are due unto Him “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,

and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). All who have heard the truth of the Gospel, and “have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine” (Rom. 6:17) delivered by Christ and His apostles, have been regenerated and born into the eternal kingdom. Since the “birthday” of the church, recorded by Luke in Acts of the Apostles, “the Lord [has] added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). As Christians, faithful and true, we are members of God’s family traveling home together.

God purposed and envisioned unity among Christians as is reflected in the spirit of our Lord’s prayer shortly before His crucifixion. Jesus lifted His voice to the Father and prayed for unity among His contemporary disciples as well as for us. He prayed for our oneness. He prayed for our unanimity of spirit with the effect being that the world would believe on Him whom the Father had sent (Jn. 17:20-21).

Through the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul made an urgent, crucial appeal to Christians living in Corinth. By inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). When men speak only “as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), without the addition or blending of human opinions, human doctrines (Mt. 15:9), and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1), they will speak a uniform message with a unifying effect on believers.

Paul additionally exhorted the saints of Ephesus to be “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Thus, to be true to Christ, we must zealously work toward the spiritual unity of the body of Christ. The spiritual body of Christ is not to be divided (1 Cor. 1:13). However, the body of Christ is not synonymous with the spiritual bodies founded by other men.

SATAN’S STRATEGY: ADOPT A SPIRIT OF UNITY

We live in a complex, rapidly changing world. Our culture pushes “believers in Jesus” to buy into a fabricated “spirit of unity” where all believers in Jesus practice tolerance of one another, even though there are conflicting differences of belief and practice. Since truth is held by so many to be relative rather than absolute, who is qualified to say one person’s truth is better than another person’s version of truth? Truth is now subjective. It is whatever the “believer in Jesus” wants it to be.

Some of our brethren are now giving in to the appeal of the siren's song for all believers "to come together at the foot of the cross and celebrate what we have in common." The "Core Gospel" concept suggests that "believers in Jesus" should focus exclusively on the central theme of the Gospel: the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior.

Through the years, the ecumenical movement has sought to bring "believers in Jesus" together without any acknowledgment that doctrinal error rampantly exists, or the tragic results it produces in the lives of those embracing it. Doctrine, being considered divisive by popular culture, has been swept away as merely the dust of antiquity.

Quite in vivid contrast, the unity of the Spirit is spiritual unanimity that is produced by embracing the Spirit-revealed message in the text of Holy Scripture and walking by faith in obedient trust. The Word of God is given to instruct and guide our feet in the strait and narrow path of righteousness that leads to eternal life. The unity of the Spirit is that precious unity that is produced by the Spirit when like-minded souls live, worship and serve God within the parameters of the Spirit's message. Since the Holy Word of God is complete, infallible, and universal, the message must not be altered to pacify the whims of changing cultures.

Christians of every era are called upon to live within the boundary God has set. We must observe His platform for Christian unity. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). The question of Amos clearly rings: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Does anyone find it ironic that in Satan's strategy for unity among the religious world, he seeks to destroy the unity that currently exists within the Lord's body?

SATAN'S STRATEGY: "EMBARRASS AND BELITTLE"

Make no mistake, Satan knows how to make people squirm and feel, oh, so uncomfortable. He likes to make allegations against God's faithful children to make them question and even doubt themselves. He knows he can always have some success with this technique.

Satan will not neglect the opportunity to slander and accuse God's children of thinking they are better than others who do not understand the Scriptures in the same way. Through his messengers, he will charge

us with being unloving, unchristian, sectarian, pharisaical and exclusivistic for not fellowshipping the Christian church and the whole denominational order.

If we are truly Christians, there is no room in our hearts for arrogance, or a proud spirit, which would claim superiority. As Paul indicated, we should only “glory in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17). The church of our Lord, by its very makeup, is to be distinctive from all other organizations in the world. Since it carries a negative connotation, no one really wants to be called “sectarian.” Well meaning brethren do not want to be thought of in terms as being bigoted.

However, one cannot embrace heresy and be a genuine advocate of Christian unity. “Heresy” is defined as “that ‘which is chosen,’ and hence, ‘an opinion,’ especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects ... such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage.”²

The church that Christ purchased with His blood, and that belongs to Him as His possession, is not responsible for the religious division and the formation of hundreds of sects so prevalent in the modern religious world. Faithful brethren are not promoters of factions or sects. God has called upon each of us to hear His Son and follow Him. We have not been given freedom in Christ to construct a religion of our own making. We do not have Divine authority and liberty to elevate our opinions over the doctrine of Christ. Sectarianism is the product of denominationalism. It is not a natural byproduct of the Gospel or the working of the Spirit who revealed that there is one body. The working of the Holy Spirit did not lead to schism and departures from the faith. To the contrary, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, forewarned against such (1 Tim. 4:1). Those who hear and follow the doctrines of men allow themselves to be partakers of division, wearing the names of various parties or sects rather than the name of Christ and it alone.

There should be no embarrassment in our hearts when we only wear the name “Christian” as brethren did at Antioch (Acts 11:26), or either to be known by our God-given identity as belonging to Jesus Christ: “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

By its very nature, Christianity is both inclusive and exclusive. It is inclusive in the sense that God offers reconciliation, pardon, and deliverance from sin to every man, woman and young person through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is to be preached unto every

creature giving everyone the opportunity to come into the family of God (Mt. 28:18-20).

Christianity is exclusive in the sense that there is but one Savior, one faith, one kingdom, one body, one church, one way unto life eternal. Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6).

SATAN'S STRATEGY: CHURCH A DENOMINATION

Satan knows we have the tendency to think in terms of that with which we are familiar. For instance, the minds of the early disciples were prejudiced concerning the kingdom Jesus would soon establish because of their familiarity with the political kingdom of Herod the Great. Since that was what they were familiar with, they could not envision the spiritual kingdom Jesus would reign over. For many decades now, children have been born into a world filled with denominations. That is all they know. In most towns and cities across America there are any number of denominational bodies clamoring for attention and more members, *et cetera*.

Satan would have all of us embrace the tale that the churches of Christ were born of late having developed as a product of the American Restoration Movement and founded by Alexander Campbell. Therefore, we must know our "point of origin" to have a proper frame of reference. The church of our Lord does not have its roots in the American Restoration Movement as certain deceivers have stated even in the national media, nor is our founder a man originally from Ireland by the name of Alexander Campbell, who came to North America September 29, 1809. The church, rather, has its roots in Old Testament prophecy and is the fulfillment of Christ's promise: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Christ did not promise to build a denomination among denominations. He simply declared His purpose to build His church in view of the Heavenly Father's will. Christ is both the founder and the "chief corner stone" of His church. The preposition "of" in the designation "church of Christ" is one that denotes ownership. So we read: "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). The name by which we are called and known surely does matter. It is not sectarian to be a member of the church of Christ, having been added thereto by the Lord (Acts 2:47). We are no more sectarian than were the disciples of the first century.

Those who are not content with the doctrine of Christ and His church are truly the ones who are responsible for sectarianism.

Men, such as Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and a host of others, were working under the objective during the nineteenth century to draw men out of the fog of denominationalism/sectarianism. They did so seeking to get men to return to Jesus Christ and the “Ancient Order” of Christianity, as directed by the Holy Scriptures.

SATAN’S STRATEGY: EXPANDED GRACE

None of us are sinlessly perfect. Paul writes: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). John further writes: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:10). So, Satan asks: “Who is perfect anyway?” He has therefore instructed his messengers to teach the brethren that God’s grace is sufficient to allow for “incidental errors” due to human fallibility. After all, none of us “get it right 100% of the time.” “Precision obedience is unreasonable,” Satan says. He continues, “Who can live up to such a standard?”

Yet, there is a marked difference in the eyes of God between “walking by faith” and “walking by one’s own will.” God has given conditions whereby one may enter into the body of Christ and be a recipient of His grace. He further has given conditions whereby we may be cleansed from our unrighteousness, which include confession and repentance. Are we, our neighbors, or our friends willing to repent and return to the way of God’s righteousness and walk exclusively with Him in the light?

CONCLUSION

The only way men, women and young people may glorify our God and Creator in the twenty-first century is to yield, submit and obey Jesus, the Lord of lords. His way, the way of truth and abundant living, is found in surrendering our wills, thoughts and opinions to His doctrine. Just as Satan twisted and misapplied the Scriptures with Jesus in the days of His temptation, so he continues to wrest them today. Just as Jesus overcame in knowing and properly applying the Holy Word, so you and I may be victorious and follow Him to see the Father’s glory and be with Him forever. Brethren, if our goal is to be men-pleasers, we cannot be true servants of God (Gal. 1:10). We must not allow modern pop culture to alter our identity as the body of Christ or

wrest control of the church's direction from the Captain of our salvation.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: Mac Donald Publishing Company, 1984), 557.

HOW SATAN HINDERS EVANGELISM

Timothy Wilkes



Timothy Wilkes was born in Memphis, Tennessee. He and his wife, the former Lynn Morris, have three children and three grandchildren. Wilkes received a B.A. degree from Southern Christian University, an M.S. and a Ph.D. degree from Capella University. He also graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching. Wilkes worships with the Lord's church in Coldwater, Mississippi, where he serves as an elder. He left full-time work in 1994 and became the director of the *Fishers of Men Ministry*.

INTRODUCTION¹

Bible believers know that Satan actively seeks to destroy Christ's disciples. We are warned: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). While Satan surely attacks and destroys the souls of mankind in the world, he most assuredly attacks Christians—attacking their discipleship; seeking to destroy their relationship with Christ. Why is Christian discipleship such a beloved target of Satan? It is through our Christian discipleship that we bear fruit and glorify the Father. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (Jn. 15:8). When considering how disciples bear fruit, the reality of Satan's attacks is evident.

We bear fruit in our worship to God. Hebrews 13:15 says: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Has Satan attacked the worship assemblies of the Lord's church? In many places, yes, he has. He can do this by attacking our obedience to John 4:24, which states: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." If he successfully attacks our attitude, or spirit, in worship, we cannot bear fruit with our lips. If he successfully attacks the content of our worship (truth according to God's Word, Jn. 17:17), we cannot bear fruit with our lips, therefore the Father is not glorified.

We bear fruit when we grow spiritually. Peter exhorts: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue

knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). As we diligently add these characteristics to our lives as disciples, we grow, or become more like Christ. Peter goes on to say: “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8). If we grow in these spiritual qualities, we will not be unfruitful, or, stated in the positive—we will bear fruit. Does Satan attack the spiritual growth of Christians? Has he attacked the virtue of our youth? Has he attacked the Biblical knowledge of members of the church? Does he attack the temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and love of disciples of Christ? Absolutely! And when an attack is successful, fruit bearing ceases and the Father is not glorified. Has Satan successfully attacked our growth? Tragically, yes!

We bear fruit when we give. Paul comments: “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem ... When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain” (Rom. 15:26, 28). Again, the question is asked: has Satan successfully affected the way some Christians give to the Lord? Yes, by causing some to give grudgingly, instead of cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). Others do not give as they have been prospered by the Lord (1 Cor. 16:2). When Satan is successful in polluting our hearts and actions in how we give, he has successfully attacked our discipleship, thereby preventing fruit bearing and glorifying the Father.

We bear fruit through winning souls. Telling of his desire to bear fruit through winning souls for Christ from among those at Rome, Paul expressed: “Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (Rom. 1:13). As in all other areas of fruit bearing, Satan wants us to fail in winning souls. Satan will be particularly interested in discouraging disciples’ evangelism, or soul winning. Evangelism is affected by all areas of fruit bearing. It is indirectly affected in our discipleship as we worship and live our lives—by the examples we set before non-Christians. Also, our giving affects us initially, but the effects are felt in evangelism; whether it is the local work, or missions. Why would Satan be particularly interested in hindering evangelism? In preventing

evangelism he hinders the spiritual life of the disciple, while keeping the soul saving message from the non-Christian.

This chapter endeavors to answer the question: “How does Satan hinder evangelism?” Various examples will be given on how Satan hinders evangelism, and thereby jeopardizes the discipleship of Christians today. Also considered, by way of a preliminary matter, is the need of evangelism, and then concluding with the Christian’s responsibility to the Great Commission.

THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM

According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, “evangelism” is defined as: “1: the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ 2: militant or crusading zeal.”² It is the preaching, or teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the world’s population is well over 6.6 billion.³ To illustrate how large this number is, it would take a clock over 209 years to tick off 6.6 billion seconds. Each one of these over 6 billion people has a soul, and each, upon becoming accountable, is in need of the Savior (Jn. 8:21). Each one will stand before God and give an account of himself (2 Cor. 5:10). There is only one hope for them; Christ (Eph 4:4). There is only one message that will help them; the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:6-9). There is only one group that can take that message of hope to them; the church of Christ (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23-25; 2 Cor. 4:5-7; Col 1:18).

God saw the need for a Savior and began to unfold His plan of salvation in Genesis 3—this should teach us the need for evangelism. Considering the hundreds of prophecies fulfilled by Christ and the types of Christ in the Old Testament should teach us the need for evangelism. The knowledge of what sin is and what sin does should teach us the need for evangelism. Knowing what Jesus Christ went through because of our sins should teach us the need for evangelism. If we truly believe the world is lost, and that there is only one way (Jn. 14:6); if we truly believe that the church is the saving institution (Eph. 5:23), we know the need for evangelism.

The knowledge of the need, coupled with the immense task of fulfilling the need, can be daunting, and may be discouraging to some disciples, thinking the task is impossible. Just as the Gospel was successfully taken to the lost in the first century, it can be done today.

If one disciple of Christ taught and baptized one person this year, and the next year both Christians taught and baptized one each, and this continued, how long would it take to convert the world? In only 33 years over 8 billion would be baptized. Imagine what would happen if we started evangelizing today with ten—then, imagine what would happen if we started with ten from ten congregations. It can be done in a relatively short period of time—we just have to do it.

HOW DOES SATAN HINDER EVANGELISM?

Through Fear

Fear can be a terrible thing and can adversely affect our discipleship. It was fear which caused Peter to deny the Lord (Mt. 26:69-75). Barnes thinks it may have been fear which caused John Mark to depart from Paul and his company in Acts 13:13.⁴ McGarvey believed this idea to be plausible.⁵ The fearful are listed first, in Revelation 21:8, of those cast into the lake of fire. Fear is a reason many members of the Lord's church do not evangelize; fear of rejection; fear of failure; fear of not knowing enough. In this instructor's experience, fear of not knowing enough tops the list of fearful reasons for not teaching others the Gospel—"Someone will ask a question and I will not know the answer." After all, Peter said: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). It is certainly understandable for a disciple to feel that he, or she, is unprepared to give an answer. What is not understandable is a disciple living his, or her, entire Christian life with this excuse, instead of seeking preparation (discussed further under the heading: *By our being ill-equipped*). Whatever the fear is that is keeping us from being evangelistic, it can be overcome. We must face the fear and then do it.⁶ The only way to overcome the fear of flying is to fly. The same is true with public speaking, driving, and evangelism. If one is afraid of evangelism, he will not overcome that fear until he evangelizes; in other words, "GO." As we go, Jesus promised to be with us always (Mt. 28:18-20); truly, a comforting thought.

When we allow fear to keep us from evangelizing, Satan successfully hinders the Gospel, and diminishes our discipleship.

Through Procrastination

Procrastination is a hindrance to evangelism. Daily, while we put off evangelism, thousands of the 6.6 billion are entering eternity

without Christ that we might have otherwise reached. The Lord said: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (Jn. 4:35). Jesus is plainly teaching us that we must not put off the reaping of souls. But so often we do put off soul winning; putting it off to wait on a big church event; putting it off to wait until the weather is better; putting it off to wait until ... The list can be endless, just like our waiting. While we are waiting, even with good intentions, Satan has successfully hindered the spreading of the Gospel. When one is contemplating obeying the Gospel, we urge him to heed the examples (Acts 2:38-41; 16:25-33; 19:1-5) and commands in the New Testament of immediate obedience: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). We should heed our own advice regarding the urgency of the Gospel.

Through A False Sense Of Accomplishment

If Christians are satisfied with their accomplishments, what will drive them to improve? Imagine a congregation of the Lord’s church with the following characteristics: First of all, the church is a laboring church; a congregation highly involved in benevolence, such as taking care of “the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (Jas. 1:27). Many brethren pour out their hearts and support to needy children and victims of tragedies, such as those suffering from hurricane Katrina. Whatever the case may be, this church is a laboring church. Second, imagine this church being spiritually mature: having spiritually mature elders, deacons, and members. These brethren are not impetuous; they are not apt to be carried away, but rather they are careful and thoughtful brethren. Third, imagine this same church lovingly, and obediently, practicing corrective discipline on her straying members. This congregation loves its members so much that it would not allow a brother, or sister, to wander back into the world without pleading with them to come home—and then disciplines them if they do not. Fourth, imagine this same congregation being steadfast in not allowing false teachers to enter their pulpit, or classrooms. This congregation is aware of false teachers and what they teach—these circumspect brethren have this ability because they know the contents of Christ’s New Testament. Finally, imagine this same congregation enduring persecution and not

giving up. They know what real persecution is and are willing to face it because of their love for Christ.

What would most of us think about a congregation of the Lord's church like this? What faithful preacher has not dreamed of preaching for this "perfect" church? What if we could say our congregations were: laboring, mature, watchful for our souls, identified false teachers, exposed false teaching, and withstood persecutions? Would we not feel a sense of accomplishment in pleasing the Lord? Most would feel this way. But how would the Lord feel about a church like this? There is a congregation like this in the Bible—the church of Ephesus. About it, Jesus said: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" (Rev. 2:2-3). By the time Revelation was written, the Ephesian church had all the fore mentioned characteristics that would satisfy most brethren today as being a faithful congregation. However, Jesus was not pleased with the church of Ephesus. After commending them for their accomplishments, He said: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev 2:4-5). Suddenly, the Ephesian church does not seem so appealing. They left their first love and are about to lose their light, unless they repent. All of their great accomplishments were not enough to excuse them from losing their first love. With all of their accomplishments they were commanded to repent of leaving their first love, or else.

The question then, should be: "What is a congregation doing when it loses its first love?" The common answer to this question is "apostasy." In other words, when a brother or sister leaves the Lord's church and reenters the world, that person has left his first love. Is that what leaving the first love is? Had the church at Ephesus left the Lord and reentered the world? No, Jesus commended them for their labors, patience (spiritual maturity), not bearing evil, or false apostles, and not fainting. The brethren at Ephesus had not reentered the world, they were still in the church—their candlestick had yet to be removed. Then what is the first love? Jesus tells us what it is by telling them how to repent. How does one repent of leaving the first love? "... repent, and

do the first works” (v. 5). What is the first work of the church? “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mt. 28:19-20). In all the commendations Ephesus received from the Lord, not one was for evangelism; not one was for following his example; not one was for doing what He came to do: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10). We could very well picture the members at Ephesus huddled together with shields, protecting themselves from the world, instead of going into all the world.

Some might question that the first love is evangelism. Think about these two things. First, think of a true new convert. What is the first thing he wants to do? He wants to convert his parents, spouse, siblings, friends, co-workers, et cetera. He wants to convert the world; it is his first love. Now, juxtapose that with the apathy and inactivity of many of our older members. There are congregations meeting the characteristics of Revelation 2:2-3, but some of these same congregations have elders, deacons, preachers, and members that have not had a Bible study with a non-Christian in years; some have never done it. They should continue to live up to the commendations in Revelation 2:2-3, but they should also renew their evangelistic zeal.

Could it be the case that many of us are satisfied with our accomplishments, all the while leaving evangelism in the background? Do we preachers look to our pulpit preaching, article writing, and lecturing as evangelism, when in fact it is mostly edification? Do we elders look to great the works we oversee, or support, satisfied that the collective evangelism done by these works fulfills our personal responsibilities to evangelize? Do we, as members, practice the notion that evangelism is the work of church leaders? May we repent, and may the Lord forgive us, if the case be so. By our thinking we are evangelistic, when we are not, we have a false sense of accomplishment, making Satan successful in hindering evangelism.

By Our Being Ill-Equipped

The apostle Paul taught that members of the body of Christ must be perfected for the work of the ministry, saying: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12). The Greek word for “perfecting” is *katartismos*.⁷ It is also translated “equipping.”⁸ Saints (members of Christ’s body) must be equipped. We must be equipped in WHAT to say. Paul told Timothy: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). The faithful one is the one full of faith, and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). This of course is acquired by studying the Word of God. Timothy was exhorted: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Also, we must be equipped in HOW to say it. The Colossians were instructed: “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). We should infer from this verse that if there is a way we ought to answer, there is a way we ought NOT to answer. Is it possible to answer someone truthfully in a manner we ought not? Of course, and many of us are no doubt guilty of it. Jesus taught His disciples to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mt. 10:16). Tragically, some brethren are as harmless as a rattlesnake and as wise as a silly dove when approaching others with the Gospel. While they should be commended for their wanting to spread the Gospel, and what they say may very well true, but HOW it is said is sometimes unnecessarily offensive. It is imperative that we equip ourselves with the right tools to communicate the Gospel. The Fishers of Men Ministry approaches this problem by teaching members of the church HOW to ask and answer questions, and just as important, HOW NOT to ask and answer questions.

Just as soldiers in the United States Military must be properly equipped to fight and accomplish their tasks, so must the soldiers of Christ be properly equipped to engage in our spiritual conflict. As is true with any enemy, Satan exploits the ill-equipped to his advantage; to hinder the spread of the Gospel.

By Our Baptizing The Non-Converted

Often brethren ask the question: “How much does a person have to know to be baptized?” Usually, the question should be worded: “How little can a person know before baptism?” This instructor likes to reply to the above question by asking: “What parts of the Gospel do you want to leave out?” To baptize a non-converted individual is circumventing

the command of Christ to teach, or “make disciples” (Mt. 28:19, ASV) and baptize them. An elder once told this preacher that he baptizes first and teaches later. What a gross violation of the Great Commission and a terrible injustice to the non-converted being immersed. The Greek word for “evangelist” is *euangelists*. Vine identifies an evangelist as someone who “makes clear the distinctiveness of the function in the churches” and is one “to proclaim glad tidings, and *euangelion*, good news, gospel.”⁹ When the evangelist Philip went to Samaria, he taught things pertaining to the kingdom of God (church) and then they were baptized (Acts 8:12). How can one truly call himself an evangelist, or engaged in the act of evangelism, if parts of the Gospel are withheld? What will cause a person to do this? Is it shame of the Gospel, or church? Is it fear that the person will not be baptized if he learns the truth about the Lord’s church, and the commitment to live and worship according to the New Testament? That is a possibility, and a reality Jesus faced. In John 6:50-67, some of the disciples found Jesus’ teaching to be hard. Upon knowing this, did Jesus change His teaching? Did He omit the offensive parts? No, He simply turned to the twelve as asked: “Will ye also go away?” (Jn. 6:67). Peter’s response was: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (vv. 68-69). Jesus was interested in true discipleship, not in followers that followed only when they agreed with His message. The same should interest us.

When the non-converted are baptized, evangelism has not taken place. If anyone wants those being baptized to be untaught in the Gospel, it is Satan. Thinking that the Gospel need not be thoroughly taught before one is baptized; thinking that one does not have to become a disciple before being baptized, is a tool of Satan in hindering evangelism.

By Questioning Our Amenability To The Great Commission

Having taught the Fishers of Men Training Course on a full or part-time basis for nearly twenty-five years, and preached the Gospel for twenty-eight years, this preacher has heard many Christians ask if they “have to teach others?” This question is actually synonymous with several other questions. What is the question, “Do I have to teach others?” really asking? The question is asking: “Do I have to be like Jesus?” Who would argue the fact that Jesus was a teacher and a soul

winner? He taught publicly and privately; he taught multitudes and individuals. When he gave His disciples the command to go and make other disciples, he was telling them to follow the example He set. Yes, we are to follow Jesus' example; not only when we suffer (1 Pet. 2:21) but also in the way we live, and teaching others was a way of life for Jesus. "Do I have to teach others?" is the same as asking, "Do I have to be like Jesus?"

The question is asking: "Do I have to help others go to heaven?" The objective in teaching others is to lead them to Christ and therefore heaven. Even in the miraculous age, the Lord relied on individuals to teach others. It was true with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), with Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9), with Cornelius (Acts 10), and it is still true today. Rare is the case when a Christian cannot point to a "key person" responsible for leading him, or her, to Christ. "Do I have to teach others?" is the same as asking, "Do I have to help others go to heaven?"

The question is asking: "Do I have an obligation to my debt?" Knowledgeable Christians understand that they deserve death because of their sins (Rom. 6:23); they also understand what their forgiveness cost the Lord (Rev. 1:5). Paul certainly understood his indebtedness for being taught the Gospel (Rom. 1:14). Because of his debt, he felt the obligation to teach others (Rom. 1:15). Anyone saved from sins owes the same debt. "Do I have to teach others?" is the same as asking, "Do I have an obligation to my debt?"

The question is asking: "Do I have to be a servant?" Servitude is a mark of discipleship. Paul made himself a servant to all by becoming "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Why did Paul become a servant? He became a servant to teach and save others. Why would today's Christians become servants? They will become servants for the same reason—to teach and save others. "Do I have to teach others?" is the same as asking, "Do I have to be a servant?"

The question is asking: "Do I have to grow?" The writer of Hebrews clearly connected teaching with growth. It was time that the Hebrew Christians should be teaching others, but instead they had not grown, they still needed to be taught first principles:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belong-

eth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

Was their lack of teaching others the reason for their lack of growth, or was their lack of growth the reason they were not teaching others? Regardless of the answer, the absence of teaching was an indicator of stunted growth. “Do I have to teach others?” is the same as asking, “Do I have to grow?”

While these thoughts do not exhaust the subject, they do give us an idea of what is being asked. Do I have to teach others? NO, if you do not want to be like Christ, if you do not want to help others go to heaven, if you feel no obligation to your debt, if you do not want to serve, and if you do not want to grow. However, if you do want those things in your life, the only way to achieve them is to evangelize.

Every disciple of Christ is amenable to the Great Commission. Part of the great commission is: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). Part of teaching them all that they were commanded, was to go teach. How selfish it is for one who has heard and obeyed the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to keep it to himself, for whatever reason. Disciples of Christ questioning their amenability to the Great Commission has surely been used by Satan to hinder evangelism.

CONCLUSION

We have a tremendous task before us, as well as an adversary against us. He wants us to lose our souls and keep us from saving the souls of others. Therefore, he will try to hinder any advances we attempt in our discipleship and bearing fruit, especially in spreading the Gospel. As disciples of Christ, we are expected to bear fruit. Jesus says: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (Jn. 15:2). And, in so doing, we glorify the Father (v. 8).

If evangelizing the world were impossible, why would the Lord command us to do it? If evangelizing the world were impossible, then why would Satan hinder us. The fact that he does hinder us in evangelism should tell us that he knows it can be done. When will we convince ourselves that it can and must be done? When will we bear the fruit that is desired by our God? May we develop the mind-set

needed, and may we continually abide in Christ, that we will bring forth much fruit (vv. 5-8).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2001), s.v. "evangelism."

³ U.S. Census Bureau (2007). World Population information. Retrieved Sunday, July 15, 2007 from <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/worldpopinfo.html>

⁴ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 203.

⁵ J. W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1978), 161.

⁶ Fishers of Men Ministry. (2007). *Training Manual*. Hernando, MS.

⁷ J. Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), s.v. "perfecting."

⁸ Friedrich Kittel, and G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985). s.v. "equipping."

⁹ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), 44.

SATAN HAS HIS DEVICES

Garland Elkins



Garland Elkins was born in Woodbury, Tennessee. He and his wife, the former Corinne Smith, have three daughters. Elkins obtained his formal education at Middle Tennessee State University, Freed-Hardeman University, and the University of Tennessee. He is a member of the faculty of the Memphis School of Preaching, serves as Co-editor of the journal *Yokefellow*, and is in charge of Public Relations for the school. Elkins lives in Memphis and is associated with the Forest Hill Church of Christ.

INTRODUCTION¹

[T]hat no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

Peter wrote: “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul also wrote: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).

SIN

We need to know the nature of sin, its effects on humanity and its final results. We need to see the hideousness and wretchedness of sin. All people should hate and abhor sin. We should hate sin, not the sinner. A good doctor does not hate the patient because he has some dreadful disease, but has tender sympathy for him, and tries to drive the disease away. Our attitude toward the sinner should be one of pity and compassion, for he has the most destructive disease known to man. Deal with the sinner gently, but fight sin with all your might! That was Paul’s attitude. He said: “But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7). Paul also said: “What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?” (1 Cor. 4:21).

Sin affects everything in life. It is a cancer gnawing out the vitals of the home, society, civilization, and the church. Like leprosy, it mars and cripples and destroys. It caused Adam and Eve to do the opposite of what God commanded. It stained Cain’s hands with the blood of his

brother. It destroyed the wicked people of Noah's day. It brought destruction to the cities of the plains (Ju. 7). It kept Moses out of the promised land; crucified the Son of God; it caused apostles and other faithful Christians to be martyred.

SATAN HAS HIS DEVICES

The word "device" is defined as, "A crafty scheme; trick. An underhanded scheme; a trick."² Christians need to be informed concerning Satan and his "devices." Satan's "devices" can be very detrimental to the individual Christian and to the entire church. I commend the following article by brother Thomas B. Warren to everyone. Read it; take note, and fear.

Sin Wears A Mask

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12, 13).

This is both a warning and an exhortation to God's children. To become "hardened" is to become morally obstinate and stubborn. It signifies an unwillingness to listen to instruction, especially instruction which comes from God. The word "deceitful" means "that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement, or influence." The writer is, therefore, warning children of God lest they become morally obstinate (unwilling to listen to God at all) because of the deceitful appearances and impressions of sin.

It Wears the Mask of "Beauty"

All should prayerfully and seriously consider the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is deceitful because it *wears a mask*; it appears to be other than what it actually is. Sin can (and does) wear the mask of beauty just as surely as an ugly person may wear a mask and appear to be very beautiful. Young men and women, think of sin as an ugly monster who wears the mask of beauty.

It Wears the Mask of a "Servant"

History abounds with instances of kings making alliances with other kings believing they could make the other their servant. Often the reverse is true. Young men take up the habit of strong drink or of narcotics believing they can make such habits their servant to bring them happiness. But instead the habit becomes their master. Men look at a life of sin and believe they can make

it their servant. They believe that they can make falsehood, deception, immorality, become their servant to bring them a life of happiness. But they find that sin will not fill the role of a servant. Sin is always the master of those who engage in it. Paul pointed out that before the Roman brethren had obeyed the gospel, they had been “*servants of sin*” (Rom. 6:17). Young men and women, look upon sin as a cruel master who wears the mask of being a servant.

It Wears the Mask of Being “Attractive” or “Advantageous”

Sin promises more than it gives. It discounts what it actually does give. The serpent put a deceptive mask on sin for Eve to see: “Ye shall be as gods...” When Eve looked at the tree, she saw it as one “to be desired to make one wise.” But to her (and Adam’s) sorrow, she found that sin was only wearing the *mask of being attractive and advantageous*.

This mask also discounted what sin actually does bring. “Ye shall not surely die,” the serpent said to Eve. It was as if sin wore a mask which cried out: “Do not be afraid, the things which God has told you about sin are but fairy tales. Nothing of real consequence will happen to you because of sin. Why not go ahead and enjoy these pleasures and advantages? The consequence is insignificant in comparison with these pleasures.” Young men and women, think of sin as an ugly, destroying monster who wears a *mask* of beauty and advantage.

It Wears the Mask of Being “Right”

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pro. 16:25). It is easy to think one is in the way of life when he is in the way of death. Many think they have been saved by “faith only.” Yet the Bible plainly says that men are not saved by “faith only” (Jas. 2:24). Members of the body of Christ may think they are pleasing the Lord even when they are actually nauseating to him (Rev. 3:15-17). Sin wears the mask of being right and says: “Come, live this way; study God’s Word very little, apply little of what you read to yourself, be little (if any) concerned for the soul of your neighbor, curse a little, tell a few lewd jokes, drink just a little, engage in just a little immorality (so long as you go to church at least once a week), and you can be certain of going to heaven when this life is over.” But such a message is a falsehood. Beware lest you be led into going to the Bible to justify a practice in which you are already engaged instead of humbly sitting down before God in readiness to walk in whatever path that Word demands.

It is easy to believe a lie if one wants to believe it (2 The. 2:8-12). If one goes to the Bible determined to prove sin to be right, it is likely that he will convince himself (Ezek. 14:4). Young men and women, look upon sin as a deceiving monster wearing the mask of “right” who is trying to damn your soul by enticing you to live other than how God instructed men to live.

It Wears the Mask of Reaping What It Does Not Sow

Paul said: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). One cannot turn up his nose at God (make things turn out other than God said they would turn out). God said that every seed would bring forth after its own kind. If a man should plant turnip seed and reap apples, it could be truthfully said of him that he had “mocked” God! This, of course, no one can do—but sin promises to do it! Sin wears the mask of promising to reap a harvest of happiness, joy and peace from the sowing of the seed of sin. But the fruit which comes from such seed is: (1) in this life: degradation, misery, fear, frustration, unhappiness, loss of fellowship with God, loss of true communion with loved ones, and (2) in the world to come: eternal separation from God and everything that is holy and good, the loss of everything that is of any worth or value to human existence, the suffering of terrible torment throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity (Rev. 20). One can no more reap a harvest of happiness from the sowing of the seed of sin than he can reap a harvest of beans from the sowing of onion seed. Young men and women, look upon sin as a lying monster who tells you that by the sowing of the seed of sin you can escape a harvest of misery, suffering, and degradation and reap a harvest of bliss.

“...exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”³

SOME DEVICES (TRICKS) OF THE DEVIL

1. *The devil attempts to convince people that God does not exist.* However, even though many have a misconception of God, the majority of people believe that God does exist. Even nature proves the existence of God. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; Their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3). Paul wrote: “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being

perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). As a house preaches that it has a builder, even so, the world preaches that God exists. “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4). No wonder that the Bible teaches that only a fool would deny the existence of God. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). However, I must point out that though nature proves the existence of God, we would not know how to serve and worship Him, without His written Word, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

2. *Another trick of the Devil is to keep people out of the Lord’s church by contending that the church “is not necessary” or that “one church is as good as another.”* If the church is not necessary in order to be saved, then Christ died for nothing. For Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). If “one church were as good as another,” why should Christ have died for His church if men and women could build churches and people could be saved in them? Salvation is in the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23) and not in any of the man-made churches (Ps. 127:1; 1 Tim. 3:15). There is but one church (Eph. 4:4; Mt. 16:18). All of the saved are in it (Acts 2:47). All promises of God are in it (2 Cor. 1:20); and, every spiritual blessing is in it (Eph. 1:3).

The Undenominational Nature and Exclusiveness Of the Lord’s Church is Seen in the Following

1. *The Lord built but one church.* In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul states, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” In verse 4 he plainly says, “there is one body.” If the “one God” is an exclusive God and the “one Lord” an exclusive Lord, then the “one body” is an exclusive body. Paul declared, “But now they are many members, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). It follows that since there is “but one body” and “the body is the church” (Col. 1:18), then there must be “but one church” (1 Cor. 12:20). That one church is the Lord’s church, the church of the New Testament, the church of Christ.

Paul in Ephesians 1:22-23 said that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.” He also said, “He is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). In one of these passages, Paul says that “the church” is “his body,” and

in the other passage, he says, "...the body, the church." So, it is scriptural to speak of the church as the body and the body as the church, since reference is made to the one and same institution.

Further, to add proof to proof, Christ promised to build but one church when He said: "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). In the language of Paul, we are told that he died for but one church. "Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). The words "the church" mean but one. The pronoun "it" can refer to but one. The conclusion is Christ loved one church; he died for one church; he built but one church. Therefore, He is the owner of but one church. This one church is the exclusive church of the New Testament.

2. *Salvation is in the Lord's church.* The Bible teaches that the true church is the family of God, the body of Christ, the kingdom of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Col. 1:13-18). No person is offered salvation outside of the family of God, for we read in Acts 2:47 that "the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved."

Through the cross, Christ reconciles men unto God "in one body" (Eph. 2:13-16), and that "one body" is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:20).

3. *One cannot be saved outside of the Lord's church because it is impossible to be saved apart from the blood of Christ* (Heb. 9:22; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23, 25). To contend that the Lord's church is non-essential since it was purchased with the blood of Christ, is to take the position that the blood of Christ is non-essential! If one can be saved outside of Christ's church, then one is forced to the position that Christ's death was useless. Any doctrine which minimizes and belittles the death of Christ is a false doctrine. Therefore, the doctrine that salvation can be enjoyed outside of the Lord's church and apart from the blood is a false doctrine.

4. *One cannot be saved out of the kingdom of God* (Jn. 3:5; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28). The Bible teaches that the church and the kingdom are the same institution. The disciples were to partake of the Lord's Supper in His kingdom, as we learn from Lk. 22:18-19, but we learn that they did this in the church (1 Cor. 1:1-2; 11:18-34); therefore, the church and the kingdom are one and the same institution. If a person could be saved outside of the church, that would mean he could be saved outside of the kingdom of God, i.e., he could be saved without submitting to God, but since there are but two kingdoms on earth, i.e., the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it follows that if a

man can be saved outside of the church he can be saved in the kingdom of Satan. That would deny plain Bible teaching.

5. *The New Testament teaches that the church of Christ is the family of God* (1 Tim. 3:15). If a man can be saved outside of the family, the church of God, that would be equivalent to one being saved in the devil's family. There are only two families on earth. Question: Where is salvation? In the Lord's family, the church, or in the devil's family? Remember, there are only two families on earth. Another question: Does God have any children outside of his family? Can a man be saved while yet in the family of Satan? These questions must be dealt with by every honest person when they are reaching a conclusion as to the necessity of membership in the Lord's church.

6. *The Lord's church is different in terms of entrance.* Surely no one would doubt the right of Christ to make the terms of admission into the church, since the church belongs to Him and all authority is given to Him. Hence, our interest should be: What does he require? He is the door, and we must enter in harmony with His will (Jn. 10:9; Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46).

Faith is required. Jesus said: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). He also said, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). We must believe, for "without faith it is impossible to please him (God)" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the first step toward righteousness (Rom. 10:10), and, necessarily, the first step toward the church.

Repentance is commanded. Christ requires that we must "repent" or "all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3). Repentance is a change of will (Mt. 21:28-31), and leads to life (Acts 11:18). God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Confession of Christ is necessary. Christ made the good confession before Pilate (1 Tim. 6:13). Peter made the good confession which is, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). This caused Christ to pronounce a blessing upon him (Mt. 16:17). Christ has promised that "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32). Confession with the mouth leads to salvation (Rom. 10:10) and must, therefore, precede the saved state.

Baptism is necessary in order to be saved. No one can be saved from his past sins until he has been baptized, according to our Lord's statement in Mk. 16:16. These were among our Lord's

last instructions to his apostles before leaving the earth. Our Lord said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith and baptism, in this passage, are joined by the coordinating conjunction and. Coordinating conjunctions join or unite elements of equal rank. Faith and baptism are thus joined in this sentence to obtain the same result salvation. He that believeth (item No. 1) and is baptized (item No. 2) shall be saved (item No. 3).

Paul taught that baptism is essential to salvation in Romans 6:3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Note that the statement made here by Paul is to the effect that men are baptized into Jesus Christ, and that they also are baptized into His death.

If men can be saved without baptism, they can be saved out of Christ, because in this passage Paul declares that men are baptized into Christ. Can men be saved out of Christ? If men cannot be saved out of Christ, then they cannot be saved without baptism, because Paul says baptism puts people into Christ. Not only so, but we note it was in the death of Christ that his blood was shed. We must, therefore, contact his blood in order to receive the benefits of his blood. Since the blood was shed in his death, we must reach the death of Christ in order to share its benefits. In Romans 6:3, it is affirmed that "we are baptized into his death." We reach the death of Jesus Christ when we are baptized, not before we are baptized; and thus reach His blood and the benefits of His blood at that point. Since we are baptized into the death of Christ, and thus into the blood of Christ, then baptism is essential to the forgiveness of sins which is made possible by the blood of the Son of God.

Also, this passage shows that we walk in the newness of life, or that the new life comes after baptism. Please observe in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Here is a burial and a resurrection. Paul tells us that, as Christ was raised from the dead, so we are raised to walk in newness of life. Here is a burial and a resurrection. Many present-day preachers contend that we walk the new life before baptism, but

Paul says that we are raised to walk in newness of life. *The newness of life comes after baptism!*

It is further seen from Galatians 3:26-27 that water baptism is essential to the salvation of the alien sinner. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Note that Paul points out two things:

- (1) We are children of God by faith.
- (2) We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Let us carefully study what Paul said. Paul, did you say, "We are children of God by faith," and stop with that? No. Did you say, "We are children of God by faith only?" No. Well, did you say, "We are children of God by faith out of Christ?" No! What, then did you say? "Ye are all *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" Friends, one must be in Christ Jesus in order to be saved. It is significant that the very next verse informs us how to get into Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Friends, you will never learn how to get into Christ in any other way. You must be in Christ to be a child of God by faith. You can get into Christ only by being baptized into Christ!

Please honestly consider the necessity of baptism from these standpoints.

- (1) Baptism stands between the sinner and the salvation of his soul (Mk. 16:16).
- (2) Baptism stands between the sinner and remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- (3) Baptism stands between the sinner and becoming a child of God (Gal. 3:26, 27).
- (4) Baptism stands between the sinner and having his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).
- (5) Baptism stands between the sinner and getting into Christ (Rom. 6:3).

7. *The exclusiveness of the New Testament church is seen in the authorized acts of worship that are set out in the New Testament.* We cannot have just anything in our worship and still please God. The component parts of worship are stated by Christ in Jn. 4:24. They involve:

- (1) worshipping the right object "God;"

- (2) worshipping with the right attitude “in spirit;” and
- (3) worshipping according to the Will of the Lord “in truth” (Jn. 17:17).

We are instructed how to worship, after the church was established on the day of Pentecost.

The early church taught in worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Prayer is another item of worship in the Lord’s church (Acts 2:42). Christians are told to “continue in prayer” (Col. 4:2) and to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer is to be addressed to God, not to Mary or to some saint; and prayers are to be prayed in the name of Christ (Eph. 5:20).

The congregations in the days of the apostles gave their contributions on the first day of the week as the Lord had prospered them. (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This was a free-will offering. Although the tithe is not bound upon the church of the New Testament, many Christians give more than ten percent. The New Testament church is not bound by the Old Testament law of tithing (Heb. 7:12). Personally, I would not think of giving as little as ten percent; this is of my choosing (2 Cor. 9:6-8), and not because I am bound by the Old Testament law of tithing.

The Lord’s church does not resort to raffle contests, socials, and other such methods of raising money for the church. Such was not done by the congregations under the direction of inspired men of the first century, and those who do such things today are not identical to congregations of the first century.

The church of the first century sang as an act of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We read in Hebrews 2:12, “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Note please, “. . .in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” No where are Christians authorized “in the midst of the church will I sing and play praise unto thee.”

The early Christians were limited to vocal music that is, singing. They did not use organs, pianos, banjos, guitars, or other mechanical instruments in their praise to God. They sang they did not play. Any church today that employs such mechanical instruments in its worship is not identical to the New Testament church. *The true church of Christ now limits its music to singing, as did the church of the first century.*

The early church, in addition to engaging in prayer, teaching, giving, and singing, also partook of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Let us observe:

(1) The fact that Jesus commanded His disciples to partake of the supper (Mt. 26:26-28). Paul mentions the same thing in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. It is, therefore, clearly revealed that the Lord commanded His people to eat of His supper.

(2) Not only so, but the Lord's people are commanded to assemble (Heb. 10:25). This command implies that some day is necessary. There could not be an assembly without some time for the assembly on some day. But what is the connection between eating the Lord's supper and the assembly?

(3) Simply this: The disciples ate the Lord's supper when they assembled (1 Cor. 11:20). They were perverting the institution by making a full meal out of it, and thus they were reprimanded for that. But the passage does reveal God's will in the matter. This was not an eating at home, but when they came together into the assembly to worship "when they came together into one place" (v. 20).

(4) Therefore, Christians came together for the purpose of eating the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:33). They were not to come together in the public assembly to eat common meals they were to eat such meals at home (1 Cor. 11:34). Bear in mind the fact that the Lord's supper is the only thing God has ever required Christians to eat in an assembly.

(5) Now, if we can find when Christians assembled or came together to eat the Lord's supper, we will know what day we are required to partake of the Lord's supper. Here is the passage: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

No one can scripturally partake of the Lord's supper on any day other than "the first day of the week," yet there are those who take it on a Thursday, or on some other day of the week. When they do so, it is without any Bible authority. The Bible plainly teaches it must be done on the first day of the week.

This cannot mean a yearly service or a monthly service. We never refer to an event that recurs annually as coming on a certain day of the week. We say that Independence Day comes on the fourth of July. We never say it comes on the first day of

the week, though it may sometimes fall on that day. So it was with the Passover of the Old Testament. It came on the 14th day of the first month, and that day was set aside as an annual religious service. If a certain day of the month had been mentioned it would have made it a monthly service. As the 14th day of the first month would designate an annual service, and as the 10th day of the month would point out a monthly service, so the "first day of the week" would specify a weekly service.

The early church partook of the Lord's supper on a weekly basis "upon the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

Since every week had a first day in it, this means that they ate the Lord's supper every first day of the week. This makes the Lord's supper a weekly observance. I ask the following questions:

- (1) Do you partake of the Lord's supper?
- (2) At what time do you partake of it?
- (3) How often do you partake of it?
- (4) Upon what scripture do you base your practice?

Denominationalism is sinful

1. *Let it be plainly stated that no matter who belongs to a denomination now, no one belonged to one in the first century.* Paul was accused of being a member of a sect (Acts 24:5). He denied that he belonged to a sect and stated that such a false charge could not be proved (Acts 24:13-14). There is nothing denominational in Christianity. People must be different from Christians to be in a denomination. It is very clear, therefore, that one can be a Christian without belonging to a denomination. Denominationalism rests upon division. Let us note: (1) *Denominationalism repudiates the teaching of the apostles.* "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). (2) *Denominationalism makes unbelievers.* Jesus prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17:20-21). Unity among believers would cause others to believe, while division would and does produce unbelievers. (3) *Denominationalism teaches that God contradicts himself.* Paul wrote, "For God is

not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33). All Christians of the first century were members of the same church, and it took all of them to constitute the church. There were no denominations in the first century, and there would be none now if no one preached or practiced anything but that which was preached and practiced in the first century. In order to go to heaven, one must repudiate all churches, except the church of the New Testament which includes all Christians. In other words, the church of the Lord consists of all of the saved of earth. The same process which makes one a child of God constitutes him a member of the Lord’s church (Acts 2:22-47). Most all religious people readily admit that a man can be a Christian and go to heaven without belonging to a denomination. *It is a fact that no matter who belongs to a denomination now, nobody belonged to one in the first century!* (Acts 2:38-47; Eph. 4:32, Jas. 3:14-16).

The following excellent comments are right on target.

There are those today who claim that the Bible teaches that there are Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. But I have no hesitation in affirming that the Bible teaches that every person who is a Christian is a member of the church of Christ. This means, obviously, that I am affirming that the Bible teaches that there are no Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The saved are those who have been reconciled unto God, and those who have been reconciled unto God are members of the body (church) of Christ (Eph. 2:13-18). The matter is really just that simple, but in the light of the importance of the matter, let us say a bit more about it.

The Bible teaches that salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). To be in Christ is to be in His church (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 20:28; Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:7; et al). The Bible teaches that it is impossible for one to “cross the line” into salvation without “crossing the line” into Christ. The Bible also teaches that it is impossible for one to “cross the Line” into Christ without “crossing the line” into the church.

The crucial relation of the church to salvation is seen in the statement “And the Lord added (Greek imperfect “was adding,” T.B.W.) to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47, KJV). The English Revised Version, in an excellent treatment, translates Acts 2:47 In this way: “And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved” (Greek present participle).

In short, the Bible teaches that there are no Christians outside of the church for which Jesus died. When one obeys the gospel, being baptized (as a penitent believer) in the name of Christ (that

is, by His authority), the Lord adds him to the church. He never fails to do this (cf. Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 12:13).

In summary, we must teach the undenominational nature and exclusiveness of the Lord's church. We must also teach that it is sinful to belong to a denomination. To build up denominationalism is but to promote divisions and to perpetuate strife in the world and among the people of God.⁴

3. *If one does obey the Gospel, and is added by the Lord to the church; Satan attempts to encourage him to go back to the world.* When a member of the church becomes unfaithful, thus returning to the world, the last state is worse than the first. (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

4. *Once in the Lord's church Satan seeks to render one worthless in the church.* He tries to convince us not to be regular in attendance (Heb. 10:25-26); not to study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15); not to pray (Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17); not to partake of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7); not to give (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Mt. 6:19-21); and, not to do personal work (1 Tim. 4:16; Mk. 16:16). We need to learn to build up the church.

5. *Satan attempts to get Christians to become worldly.* John wrote: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

James wrote: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4).

Since space is limited I will merely list a few of the many worldly practices used by the devil to ensnare people.

1. *Strong drink is a trick of the devil.* The Bible teaches: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab. 2:15); "But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever" (Jer. 35:6). Paul makes it clear that strong drink is a work of the flesh, and that those who practice such shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

2. *Those who practice abortion are worldly.* On January 22, 1973, nine men robed in black issued a decree that will live in eternal infamy. On that day, the Supreme Court ruled that: during the first three months

of pregnancy the decision to abort rests solely with the woman and her doctor; during the second three months, the State can regulate the abortion procedure to protect maternal health; during the third three months, when the fetus is viable, the State can regulate or even prohibit abortion except when it is necessary for the mother's mental or physical health (*U.S. News and World Report*, March 4, 1974, p. 44). The Bible teaches that only God has the right to take the life of men (Rom. 13:1-8). Man from earliest times has been forbidden the right to kill his fellow man (Gen. 9:6). The penalty for killing an innocent neighbor was death. The Bible condemns murder. Abortionist doctors tell us that it is more humane to kill (abort) handicapped babies as well as others, but the Bible says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isa. 5:20).

3. *Adultery is a device of the devil.* The Bible teaches: "He that committeth adultery with a woman is void of understanding: He doeth it who would destroy his own soul" (Pro. 6:32).

4. *Gambling is a device of the devil.* Gambling is an agreed upon form of stealing. One cannot gamble and practice the "Golden Rule" (Mt. 7:12).

5. *Dancing is a device of Satan.* The modern dance for the most part is allied with revellings, and lasciviousness. These two sins are in the "works of the flesh" list of Galatians 5:19-21, and those who practice such things cannot inherit heaven (v. 21).

6. *Immodesty is a device of Satan.* The Bible teaches that it is a shame for one to expose nakedness (Rev. 3:18; 16:15).

7. *The device of Satan is seen in his misuse of the movies and television.* Television can be and is used to preach the Gospel and for other good usages. However, Satan has managed to get all kinds of filth and sinful things and acts of indecency shown on the media screen. Christians must oppose all such.

8. *Pornography is a powerful device of Satan.* Allen Webster wrote a tract entitled, "Pornography's Pain," in which he discusses in detail the sinfulness of pornography. Space does not permit quoting very much of it but I will note the headings. He says: Pornography hurts the user; hurts women; hurts children; and hurts society.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed a few of the many devices of Satan. However, if space permitted I would discuss many more. Let us determine to think

and act upon things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8). May we follow Paul as he followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1), so that we may say with Paul: “The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

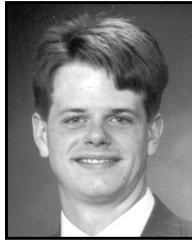
² *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* s.v. “device.”

³ Thomas B. Warren, “Sin Wears a Mask,” *The Spiritual Sword* 7.4 (July 1976).

⁴ Thomas B. Warren, *Christians Only and The Only Christians* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1984), 6-7.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL

Bryan Braswell



Bryan Braswell was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He is married to the former Gina Lilly, and they have two children. Braswell has been preaching since 1996. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. Braswell has preached in lectureships and gospel meetings across the United States and has served as the pulpit minister for the Roanoke Church of Christ in Roanoke, Texas for six years. He is now doing secular work and will be preaching for the Lord's church in Westbrook, Texas.

INTRODUCTION¹

Some may think of the devil as being a mere force, but that force is personal and is pictured in the person of an angel (cf., Job 1:6ff; 2 Pet. 2:4; Ju. 6). The devil, also called Satan, is the archenemy of God's seed (Gen. 3:15). Relative to the identity of the devil, and listing Bible truths, Coffman comments:

... it is plainly declared in the Holy Scriptures that Satan is actually a person, a being higher in the order of creation than man, but fallen from his first estate (Jude 1:6). Satan is held in awe even by angels and appears to have been cast out of his domain because of conceit and ambition (1 Timothy 3:6). Satan is the enemy that sows tares (Matthew 13:28); snatches the word out of men's hearts (Matthew 13:19); and, by means of countless snares and devices, takes men captive to do the devil's will (2 Timothy 2:26). Nevertheless, Satan is restricted and limited. He does not share control of the universe with God and may not even tempt one little child of God more than the child is able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).²

Satan is a father and has children (Acts 8:23; 13:10; Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 3:10 et al.). He is the father of lies and lusts from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). Satan lied to Adam and Eve in the beginning and he is still lying today, still seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

In this chapter, we will discuss the children of Satan. Our focus will be on how the devil is a father of children, how one becomes a child of the devil, the characteristics of the devil's children, and whether we are the children of God or Satan.

ONE IS *NOT* BORN A CHILD OF SATAN

According to Calvinism's doctrine of "Total Hereditary Depravity," one is not only a child from birth, one is a child from the moment of his conception. Because everyone dies, Calvinism insists that sin and its condemnation are hereditary, passed from parents down to their children. There is no Scriptural reason for anyone to accept such an absurd false doctrine. It is true that all men are the descendants of Adam and are "made of one blood" (Acts 17:26). Moreover, it is true that sin and the need for redemption began in the Garden of Eden. But, sin has never been a matter of hereditary, genetics, or inheritance.

Cain and Abel were not born sinners. True, Cain was evidently highly influenced by Satan, but he was not born a sinner. He, like Judas Iscariot, "by transgression fell" (cf., Acts. 1:25). Relative to Cain in the beginning, John wrote: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). Speaking of the "way of Cain," Jude related: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in *the way of Cain*, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core" (Ju. 11, emphasis added). Cain's way was the wrong way, but Abel, his brother, "by faith" chose to do right (Heb. 11:4).

The prophet Ezekiel wrote:

Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezek. 18:19-20).

Sin is a choice, not a matter of genetics. It can be and often is the result of bad influence. When one sins after giving over to evil influence or temptation, sin brings forth death. James explains:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

This corresponds with what Moses recorded in Genesis 2:17; 3:1ff. Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan. They succumbed to their own lusts. Because of their sin, which was a transgression of God's law, Adam and Eve were separated from God, which by definition is *spiritual death*. This is what God promised in Genesis 2:17. Reflecting upon how this has worked, Paul explains: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Calvinists cannot prove that babies are born in sin, therefore, one should reject their erroneous doctrine. According to the Bible, babies are born pure and without sin. Going against everything else the Bible teaches on the subject, Calvinists stubbornly quote David saying: "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). This passage is their sugar stick. In this verse, David is not saying he was a sinner from birth, or that he had inherited Adam's (or anyone else's) sin. Calvinists "twist" Psalms 51:5 in a vain effort to make it teach something it does not (cf., 2 Pet. 3:16). David could have been using hyperbole when he used those words, or he could have been describing the sinful condition of the world when he was born, however, David was not saying he was BORN WITH and CONDEMNED BY SIN. Sin is an act of violating God's law. John wrote: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 Jn. 3:4). Further, he states: "All unrighteousness is sin" (5:17).

Babies are not born into Satan's fold. Helpless about such matters, the environment into which a baby is born may be a reprobate, depraved and sinful place, but that does not mean the baby is a reprobate, depraved and sinful. At birth and during the years that follow (until they reach the age of accountability), children are innocent and are neither lost nor condemned. Should one die before he reaches the age of accountability, he is "safe" and will spend eternity in heaven.

It is only after one reaches the age of accountability that God holds him responsible for his sins. Even then he does not inherit sin. As a free moral agent, he has the power to choose whether or not he will sin. Just as one can opt to sin, he can choose to learn, believe, and obey the Word of Truth. No one can aspire to do a greater deed, for this truth leads to the God of all truth (cf., Jn. 8:31-32; 12:48-59; 14:6; 17:17). One can know the truth and be free from sin by it, but babies do not lust and commit sin. They are incapable of understanding and believing the

truth; therefore, they cannot be accountable. Hence, contrary to what the Calvinists teach, babies are neither born in sin nor are they children of the devil. When they mature, hopefully they will have been taught to steer clear of the broad pathway that leads to destruction, a path that is all too popular! (cf., Mt. 7:13-21).

THE DEVIL IS A FATHER

Jesus called attention to the fact that Satan is a father. Speaking to the Jewish people of His day, He said:

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, 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. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not ... He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (Jn. 8:41-45, 47).

It should also be noted that Elymas, the sorcerer who caused Paul so much trouble, was called a “child of the devil” (Acts. 13:10).

In 1 John 3:10, the apostle mentions the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil. Those persuaded and/or motivated by Satan’s rebellion are considered to be his followers or offspring. In the sense that he is an “influencer” of sinful deeds, Satan is the father to those who engage in evil conduct. Contrasted to the children of the devil, God’s children are those who are guided by His authority, walking in the light of His Word and continuing in His sweet, sanctified fellowship (cf., 1 Jn. 1:5-10; 2:1-3; et al.). These are those who have been *born again*. (cf., Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Jas. 1:18-23). Those who follow after the devil’s pernicious ways are Satan’s children.

Incidentally, lest anyone should misunderstand, though it is hard to believe anyone could, Satan has never literally begotten or created “flesh and blood” children. Speaking of Satan’s “fatherhood” is done so metaphorically. This is a legitimate use of the term because those

who engage in sinful thoughts and deeds are manifesting the traits of the devil. Notice again how John applies this principle to Cain, saying:

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous (1 Jn. 3:11-12).

Cain's works were evil. His choice was to behave in a way that would please Satan, not God. Therefore, metaphorically, Cain qualifies to be called a "child of the devil." The same can be said of all those who are "of that wicked one" and whose works are "evil."

ONE BECOMES A CHILD OF THE DEVIL BY CHOICE

The Bible nowhere implies that any man's free moral agency has ever been violated by God or by Satan. For a man to be a free moral agent, God had to create an environment for him in which he could be free to make choices between right and wrong. In this environment, Satan appeals to man through "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16) in an effort to get him to do evil. Though a man may be enticed, encouraged and tempted to do evil by Satan, it is still a man's choice as to whether he will do right or wrong. Obviously, if a man is convicted by and grounded in God's truths, he has a great advantage when faced with Satan's temptations. However, Satan has an easy time with those who are in tune with the world (worldly); however, they too can choose to do God's will if they desire. John exhorts: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:1-2). Study 1 John 2:1-17. This text admonishes its readers to choose to follow God instead of Satan.

James wrote: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). The word "resist" literally means to set oneself against, to withstand, resist, oppose. This is what Paul did when he opposed Peter's hypocritical discrimination against the Gentiles and ate with the Jews (Gal. 2:11). Peter, through weakness, fell into Satan's trap. He temporarily followed the devil, but Paul "withstood" Peter to his face. The Greek word translated "withstood,"

in Galatians 2:11, is the same word translated “resist” in James 4:7. Thus, this is the way to view James’ command to resist Satan.

When we humble ourselves, cast all of our cares on God, are sober and vigilant, the devil will flee from us. On the other hand, if we have not done those things, the devil will continue to torment us. Our fortification from Satan and sin is in Christ. When we are in tune with Heaven, God will protect us, “for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-9).

God permits a man to be tempted, but He tempts no man (Jas. 1:13). While God does suffer a man to be tempted, He will not allow a man to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Describing how temptation leads to sin and that sin leads to death, James states:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is *drawn away of his own lust*, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren (Jas. 1:12-16, emphasis added).

Notice that the individual is responsible for his own sins. Also, in the exhortation, “Do not err, my beloved brethren” the implication is that the individual has a choice. When Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan they chose to sin. They erred! Following after the works of Satan, Cain chose to sin. He erred, too! The ramifications of these actions were unalterable.

Consider the choices that Abraham and Sarah made regarding Hagar (Gen. 16:1-16). What if Sarah had allowed God to carry out His will in His own good time and Ishmael had not been born? Today, would we be faced with problems caused by Ishmael’s descendents? Would there be any such thing as “Islam”? Yes, these are hypothetical questions, but they serve to show that choices have long-lasting consequences. Though Abraham and Sarah made their choices at least 4,000 years ago, today, we are living with the results of at least some of their choices.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SATAN’S CHILDREN

Considering Cain’s example, we can better understand the characteristics of Satan’s children. Cain is said to be of that wicked one,

which is Satan (1 Jn. 3:12). He succumbed to the temptation of the devil. Jude writes: “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain” (Ju. 11). Because Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, Cain became angry and murdered Abel (cf., Gen. 4:4ff; Heb. 11:4). His works were evil. He did things Satan’s way. When any murder is committed, the murderer is following the way of Cain, which is the way of Satan!

According to both Peter and Jude, some angels have sinned (2 Pet. 2:4; Ju. 6). Those angels had the ability to choose. They could either serve their Creator or rebel against Him. Their choice was to rebel against Him; therefore, because they chose to sin, they were cast out of heaven. No doubt, Satan had his part to play in this rebellion. Rebellion against God’s authority is Satan’s way. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they followed Satan instead of God. Children of the devil can be recognized by their rebellion against God’s authority.

On Judgment Day, Jesus will tell those who have not done God’s will: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:23). The word “iniquity” means to live in a condition without law, either because of ignorance of it, or because of violating it.³ One who has contempt for and continually violates God’s law expresses the characteristics of Satan.⁴ John wrote: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). He further stated: “All unrighteousness is sin” (5:17). Therefore, to live without respecting and submitting to God’s authority is to live as the child of the devil. There is no middle ground. One is either a child of the devil or he is a child of God.

Does this mean that the children of God are perfect, without sin. No! It simply means that they neither live “to sin” nor “in sin.” Children of the devil have fallen prey to Satan and they have chosen to *continue* in darkness. Children of God do not *habitually* serve Satan. Instead, they strive to *continually walk* in the light of God’s truth (1 John 1:5-2:4). There are no sinlessly perfect people, but the children of God have been sanctified, justified, made righteous because of Christ. Paul wrote:

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but

ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:15-18).

Children of the devil have no regard for righteousness. Again, Paul states: "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness" (6:20). To serve sin is to serve Satan. To serve God, walking in His light, is to be a child of God.

Paul presents a vivid picture of what some of the devil's children are like, as he declares:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which

commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:18-32).

Their characteristics show that they are of Satan, but we have to ask: “Do these characteristics sound familiar? Do we see these things around us in today’s society?” Realizing Paul’s point in saying, “to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:16), each person should look into his own heart and ask: “Who am I serving? Am I serving “sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness”? Am I a child of the devil, or a child of God?” It is one or the other.

CHILD OF GOD OR CHILD OF THE DEVIL, WHICH ONE?

There is no middle ground. One is either a child of the devil or a child of God. The church at Laodicea was playing “both ends of the stick,” as we say sometimes. The Lord told them: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16). There is no time for idleness in the Lord’s church. There is no time for idleness in the individual Christian. Our fight must be carried to the enemy. If we are lukewarm, “or fluctuating between a torpor and a fervour of love,”⁵ the Lord will reject us, spit us out, and in judgment we will hear Him say: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:23). Just as we cannot serve God and mammon at the same time, we cannot serve God and Satan at the same time. It is as Jesus said: “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Lk. 16:13).

Professed “Christians” who try to have one foot in the Lord’s kingdom (the church) and the other foot in Satan’s kingdom (the world) pose one of the most difficult, wretched, heartrending, ever-present problems with which the church has to deal. There is no greater sorrow for the faithful child of God than having to deal with a double-minded man who is unstable in all of his ways (Jas. 1:8; 4:8). When we draw near to God, we know He will draw nigh unto us. When we cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, God will help us to overcome the problem of trying to serve two masters. We must not think that we can continue in the devil’s sin and believe that God’s abounding grace will save us. Denying such wrong thinking, Paul strongly answers: “God forbid!” (Rom. 6:2). There is no middle ground or a gray area. One is either

righteous or he is unrighteous. One is either a child of the devil walking in the black darkness of sin or he is a child of God walking in the white, bright light of God's Word.

CONCLUSION

Children of the devil are in the majority. Children of God are in the minority. God looks upon those who profess to be His children as being *faithful* or *unfaithful*, *right* or *wrong*. He not only judges us by our actions, He knows our hearts. He knows if we are His children, or if we are children of the devil. Are you a child of God or a child of Satan? It is one or the other!

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² James Burton Coffman, *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1968), 35-36.

³ *Blue Letter Bible*, "Dictionary and Word Search for anomia" (25 Jun 2007). <http://cf.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G458&Version=kjv>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Blue Letter Bible*, "Dictionary and Word Search for chliaros" (25 Jun 2007). <http://cf.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G5513&Version=kjv>

666 AND THE MAN OF SIN

Johnie Scaggs



Johnie Scaggs was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He and his wife, the former Nancy Thornbrugh, have four children. Scaggs is a graduate of the 8th and Lee School of Biblical Studies in Lawton, Oklahoma, Brown Trail School of Preaching, Ft. Worth, Texas and Southwest School of Preaching in Austin, Texas. He has done local work with several congregations in Missouri. Scaggs preaches for the Stewart Avenue Church of Christ in Sedalia, Missouri. He is Co-editor of *The Reasoner*, a monthly publication.

INTRODUCTION¹

Many Bible scholars list 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and Revelation 13:11-18 among the most difficult passages to understand. The lack of understanding of these verses has caused, and will continue to cause, much confusion about the coming of the Lord and the things which are related to that event.

Premillennialists have taken 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and Revelation 13:11-18, along with many other passages, and done untold damage to the cause of Christ. They would have us believe that these verses are speaking of a modern-day entity, a person who will be revealed before the Lord returns. Their views as to who that person is have changed throughout the ages. This is due to the fact that the person(s) whom they have designated as being the man of sin (or Antichrist) has come and gone, but the end of ages has not happened. In modern times, they have named such men as Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, George Bush, *ad infinitum*. Theories as to who or what the Antichrist is abound. Roderick C. Meredith writes:

After September 11, 2001, many began to wonder: is the sinister Osama bin Laden the prophesied end-time “Antichrist”? A decade earlier, some had suspected that Saddam Hussein was the Antichrist. Before him, suspicion had fallen on Mikhail Gorbachev. Even today, some consider Adolf Hitler the personification of the Antichrist.

Surrounded by these ideas—and this confusion—can we really know? Can it be proved from the Bible who or what the “Antichrist” really is?

Remember, men have all kinds of theories about this subject. Recently, evangelical leader Jerry Falwell opined that the coming Antichrist will probably be Jewish, and that he will be from the tribe of Dan. What Mr. Falwell apparently does not understand is that the Israelitish tribe of Dan split off from Judah—or the “Jews”—thousands of years ago, and is an entirely different people!

Historically, most Protestant theologians of past generations assumed that the pope of Rome was the “Antichrist.” In fact, the primary human founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, declared on August 18, 1520: “We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist” (*The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, LeRoy Froom. Vol. 2, p. 121).²

There are some things we can know with certainty about these verses. However, there are also some things about which we cannot be dogmatic. As we develop this lesson, hopefully, we will be able to understand these things. That being said, we should understand that while we cannot be dogmatic about some things connected with these verses, we can know and refute the false doctrines men attempt to support with these verses.

PAUL’S REASON FOR WRITING THE LETTER

Commenting on 2 Thessalonians, F.F. Bruce wrote: “If any section can claim to be described as the ‘body’ of this letter, it is 2:1-12. This is not only the most distinctive feature of 2 Thessalonians; it probably represents the purpose of the letter: what precedes leads up to it and what follows leads on from it.”³

The reason for writing to the church at Thessalonica was because of their lack of understanding about the Second Coming of the Lord. Paul had already addressed this issue in his first letter, but it would seem that either they did not understand completely or someone had written something which contradicted what Paul had written. In chapter 2, and verses 1-3, Paul uses three phrases: 1) “gathering together unto him” (Jesus Christ), 2) “day of Christ is at hand,” and 3) “day shall not come.” All of these phrases are a reference to the Second Coming of the Lord, or the end of time when Jesus shall be revealed: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8). We must always remember that Paul is addressing things he had previously mentioned in his first letter. So, when Paul speaks of the “gathering together unto

him” or the “day of Christ,” et cetera, he is speaking about the same event he discussed in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, i.e., the Second Coming of the Lord. He is not speaking about some so-called “rapture” as some would have us to believe.

Premillennialism’s so-called “rapture” doctrine is not taught in the Bible. However, many have taken Paul’s statement and vainly tried to support that false doctrine. F.F. Bruce wrote: “It is remarkable, nevertheless, that (according to Kelly, *Rapture*, 5-8) J.N. Darby recorded that it was 2 Thess. 2:1, 2 which, about 1830, ‘made me understand the rapture of the saints before—perhaps a considerable time before—the day of the Lord (that is, before the judgment of the living).’”⁴

In verse 2, Paul makes an appeal to the brethren to not be “soon shaken in mind.” Paul wants the brethren to remain on course, to be steadfast. Leon Morris wrote:

He employs two expressions for the kind of weakness he wants them to avoid. The first, “that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind,” directs attention to the possibility of being caught up by a sudden excitement. The adverb “quickly” does not mean, “after a short period,” as though pointing to their forsaking the true position soon after reaching it. Rather, it has reference to the quality of the action. Its force is “hastily,” “precipitately” (cf. its use in 1 Tim. 5:22). The verb is in the aorist, which points rather to a sudden action than one that is continuous. It is a verb which is often used of literal shaking, the motion produced by wind and wave, and especially violent motion ... Putting all this together then, Paul is urging them in the first instance to that stability, which will enable them to withstand any sudden shock or discovery.

The second weakness is that of being “troubled.” This time the verb is in the present and denotes a continuing state. Our Lord used it, saying, “when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be not troubled” (Mark 13:7). It describes a state of “jumpiness,” or of worry. Just as some are easily thrown off balance, so others can fall into a state of constant fretting. Paul wants neither of these states in his converts.”⁵

In the latter part of verse 2, Paul states that he does not want them to be troubled, “neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us.” It would seem that someone had troubled them. However, we are not told who it was. What Paul is about to write concerning “that day” is

the truth on the matter. It is the Word of God, and the brethren are to live by it and not let anyone or anything else trouble them regarding it.

In verse 3, Paul says: "Let no man deceive you by any means." Paul has already stated the three ways someone might deceive them: 1) "by spirit," 2) "by word," or 3) "by letter as from us." Any way they might be deceived by anyone is to be avoided at all costs. Deception is always possible. Therefore, we must always be on guard. In the earliest days of the church, men attempted to deceive others with lies, claiming to do miracles by the authority of Jesus. Paul spoke of these, saying their "coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). Unfortunately, we still have their descendants with us. Jesus said: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Mt. 24:4-5).

Before the Lord returns, first, there will be "a falling away," and second, the "man of sin ... the son of perdition" shall be revealed, (2 Thess. 2:3). Premillennialists believe that the "falling away" references to a rebellion just before the end of time. F.F. Bruce writes: "Since the reference here is to a world-wide rebellion against divine authority at the end of the age, the ideas of political revolt and religious apostasy are combined."⁶

Premillennialists want us to believe that rebellion is political in nature and will be a world-wide event which will take place just before the end of time. Yet, nowhere in the context of 2 Thessalonians does Paul speak of it being a political rebellion, or of it being a world-wide event, or of it being an event that takes place shortly before the end of time. Speaking to Pilate, Jesus said: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (Jn. 18:36). The Lord's kingdom is and has always been spiritual in nature. Never has it been, nor will it ever be, political. Premillennialists insert their doctrine into the text, making it say what it was never intended to say, instead of letting the Bible speak for itself.

The text simply says, "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). Before the Lord's Second Coming, there will be a falling away. The falling away in this verse refers to a spiritual rebellion, a departure from the Word of God, and some in the church

going into apostasy. Regarding the words used in this verse, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown says:

a falling away—rather as the *Greek*, “*the falling away*,” or “*apostasy*,” namely, *the one of which* “I told you” before (2 Th. 2:5), “when I was yet with you,” and of which the Lord gave some intimation (Mat. 24:10-12; Joh. 5:43).⁷

Strong shows that the words “falling away” in this text come from the Greek word *apostasia*, and that it means: “defection from truth (properly the state), (‘apostasy’).”⁸

Paul is not the first inspired writer to mention such a “falling away.” Numerous references to an apostasy are found in the New Testament (cf. Mt. 7:15-23; Mk. 13:22, 23; Acts 20:29-31; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-8; 2 Tim. 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:1-7; Rev. 17:3-6; 18:1-5). Mark 13:22, “For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect,” sounds very similar to Paul’s statements in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. The Holy Spirit has always revealed that there will be those who will not hold steadfastly to the truth. 2 Thessalonians is not something new to us, but to the first century church it was something new. They did not have written copies of all the New Testament as we do, therefore, they could not read and study the subject as we can. Since we do have all that has been revealed from God, there is no excuse for the many false doctrines which have spread throughout the world regarding the “man of sin.”

WHO IS THE MAN OF SIN?

Ideas about the identity of “the man of sin” are many and varied. However, the two most widely held views are: 1) “the man of sin” was the Roman Emperor Nero, and 2) “the man of sin” is the one occupying the throne of the papacy. From the Protestant Reformation unto this day, a majority of the commentators have held that Paul is speaking of the papacy when he refers to “the man of sin.”

I do not believe Paul is speaking of Nero (or any other Roman Emperor) as being “the man of sin.” The main reason for this is that “the man of sin” appears in connection with the falling away. He ascension in power seems to be a part of the church’s apostasy and rebellion against God. Remember, Paul is warning the brethren about someone who is deceiving them about the Second Coming of the Lord. Many New Testament passages sound warnings about the false teachers

who are *within* the body of Christ. None other than the “apostle of love,” John said: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

I share David Lipscomb’s conclusion relative to the identity of “the man of sin.” He states:

The Scriptures give no clear evidence of what the mystery of iniquity was, save that it was to become the man of sin, “the lawless one, who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is ... worshiped ... sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” But it is universally agreed that it means an apostasy in the church would take place before the day of the Lord, or the judgment of the world, should come. A power would arise in the church that would turn away from the law of God, that would exalt itself into the place of God. God’s place is to make laws for his people. This power would take this authority on itself and change and modify the laws of God. So it is said to sit in the temple of God, to exalt and oppose God as the only ruler and lawgiver, and set itself forth as the rival of God ... I have been inclined to believe that it applies to a principle rather than a development of that principle. The principle was the claim to make laws for the church of God. To do this is to sit in his seat, to show by his acts that he is God, the lawmaker; that he is above the law, or is lawless. If it applies to a principle, the Roman Church, or the papacy, is one development of this principle, the Greek Church is another, the Church of England is another, and every church of organization in religion that grows out of man’s adding to, taking from, or changing the order of God is an outgrowth or development of the same principle.”⁹

Leon Morris notes:

Associated with the rebellion is the person who is traditionally known as “the man of sin.” This title is so universally used that it is probably impossible to substitute another. But the better manuscripts read “man of lawlessness” instead of “man of sin.” This fits in with the words used in vv. 7-8, whereas the traditional rendering obscures the connection of thought.¹⁰

When one compares other verses in the Bible with this same language he will find some very interesting parallels. Look at the language of Isaiah 14:3ff. The one spoken of there is the King of Babylon (v. 4). In verse 12, he is identified as “Lucifer, son of the

morning.” The King of Babylon said in his heart that he “will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13-14). The language here is the same as in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Would the King of Babylon literally ascend into heaven? No. Would he actually exalt his throne above the stars of God? No. These things are not to be taken literal. They are figures of speech which describe how far the King of Babylon had fallen and how he had set himself up as a god. The same language is used by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. Both passages are expressing the same concept that when one sets himself above God, his fall is certain. The “man of sin,” or the “man of lawlessness,” is this man. He sits himself above God and all that is good, but he will be destroyed.

John wrote: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). In John’s terms, “the man of sin” or the “man of lawlessness” could be said to be anyone who transgresses the law of God. To fail to conform to the law of God is to be lawless. That is what the “man of sin” will do. He will not conform to the law of God. The “man of sin ... opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4). The “man of sin” is “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish” (2 Thess. 2:9-10). The power, signs and wonders that the “man of sin” has are all based on lies. His power and the signs and wonders are not real, they are deceptive. They appear to be real and they will deceive the righteous unless they are watching out for them. If one allows himself to be deceived by these lying wonders because he does not have the truth in his heart, God will let him believe the lies the “man of sin” unleashes on the world.

I believe that the phrase ‘the man of sin’ is not referring to a particular man, but to man in general; i.e., to the man who is lawless. The man who being lead by the spirit of Satan, forsakes the Lord to transgress the law of God is “the man of sin.” If I were speaking about “the man of faith,” I would not be referring to any particular man, but to man in general. I would include all men who are faithful to God. Likewise, when one speaks of “the man of sin” or “the man of lawlessness,” he is speaking about all those who would establish themselves

as an authority over the teaching of God. Does this mean that the pope is the man of sin? Absolutely. However, it also means that all those who came out of the Catholic Church during the Reformation Movement and established their own brands of religion are described by the phrase, “the man of sin.” “The man of sin” is anyone and everyone who exalts himself above God.

Paul says the “mystery of iniquity [lawlessness] doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7). Whoever the “man of sin” is, Paul says that he is already working his way toward the rebellion. The word “mystery” gives us the idea that he is hidden at the present time, but he is working and attempting to unveil himself. This helps us to understand that the “man of sin” is not some future person or world leader who will be revealed just prior to the end of time. Rather, it is someone or something that is at work at the time of the writing.

Paul reveals that there is a force holding back the rebellion and/or the “man of sin.” He says: “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thess. 2:6-7). He does not tell us who or what the restraining force is. It is now in place, but when that force is removed the “man of sin” or the “mystery of the lawlessness” will be able to run without hindrance.

It is popularly believed that the “restraining force” was the Roman Emperor. Many think this because the Roman Emperor was a restraining force when it came to the Jews persecuting the early church. In the first few years of the church’s existence on earth, the Roman Emperor did restrain the various nations from doing greater harm to Christianity as a whole. It is true that for a time the Roman Emperors made laws which aided Christianity (and other religious groups), as long as they gave honor to the Emperor. If one accepts this view, then it would follow that the “man of sin” would have to come from the Jewish nation. Some would agree with this saying the “temple” (v. 4) is a reference to the temple of the Jews. Thus, the “man of sin” would come from the temple of the Jews. Be that as it may, I have not seen enough evidence to support this idea. At one time the “temple” referred to the place of God’s presence, but now, at the time of this writing, God’s presence is in the church. Thus, the temple must refer to the church as it does in many other places in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). I should also point out that there is insufficient

evidence to support the notion that the restraining force was the Roman Emperor. After all, some of the worst persecutions experienced by Christians were executed by the Roman Emperors.

I believe that the restraining force is Paul. He could be referring to the apostolic age, a time when miracles still existed. When one thinks about someone or something hindering the “man of sin” or “the man of lawlessness,” was not Paul doing that very thing at the time he was writing his second letter to Thessalonica? In most of Paul’s letters he addresses problems brought about by those who were teaching false doctrines. In 2 Thessalonians he addresses false teaching as it relates to the Second Coming of Christ. As long as Paul was alive and throughout the apostolic age, those who taught error were held at bay. However with all the apostles gone and the apostolic age coming to an end, the “mystery of iniquity” (lawlessness) would come forth and be revealed. Lipscomb said: “My judgment is that Paul was the person who hindered or restrained the development of the man of sin and he says he would continue to restrain so long as he lived. When he died, or was taken out of the way, then the mystery of iniquity without hindrance would do his work and develop himself.”¹¹

We may never know in this life who “the man of sin” is. Still, we can be certain that he fights against all that is right and true. He will not conform to the law of God. He will endeavor to deceive the very elect. Understand this though, *he will be destroyed*. Paul says: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Paul also calls him the “son of perdition” (v. 3), which means he is doomed to destruction. Make no mistake. The Lord will overcome Satan and all those who exalt themselves above God. Speaking of the end of time, John declares:

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:15-17).

WHO IS THE MAN WHOSE NUMBER IS 666?

Revelation is a book filled with difficult passages. While some passages are more easily understood, others create a greater challenge.

One of the more difficult passages is Revelation 13:17-18. There, John penned: “And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.” From this, we learn of a man whose number is 666. Much has been written and said about the man whose number is 666. Yet, after all that has been written and said on this subject, there are still many questions.

When the number 666 appears, it gets people’s attention. Many people avoid using it. People in the checkout lines of grocery stores have been known to put something back or buy something more if their total comes up to \$6.66. They do not want to be associated with the number 666. To them, that is Satan’s number and anyone linked with that number is connected to the Devil himself. “At President Ronald Reagan’s request, the address on the mail box in front of his future residence after stepping down as President was changed from 666 Saint Cloud Drive to 668 because of the connotation surrounding ‘666.’ Some believe ‘666’ is the symbol of the devil.”¹²

Revelation 13 is a study of two beasts. The first beast is discussed in verses 1-10, and the second beast is treated in verses 11-18. The first beast gets his power from the dragon (v. 2). The dragon is Satan, the Devil (cf. Rev. 12:9). Most agree that the first beast symbolizes godless civil power. In the context of John’s time, the first beast is symbolic of the power of Rome.

The second beast, the earth beast, I believe symbolizes the religious world in general which supports that which is godless. This includes the Catholic Church and all other religious organizations which are not the Lord’s church. This beast gives off the image of the lamb, but speaks as a dragon (v. 11). He is deceitful and not at all what he appears to be. The earth beast causes the earth and them who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast (v. 12). All that he does is done with the intent of deceiving those who dwell on the earth to worship the image of the beast—those who will not do so are killed (vv. 12-15). Verses 16-18 reveal that the beast has the authority to administer a mark upon all those who worshiped the first beast. Those bearing this mark are given free access to all that they needed. They may come and go as they please and conduct business as needed. On the other hand, those who do not wear the mark are not given such freedoms. They are

open to persecution and discrimination because they would not worship the first beast. It is the age-old struggle between good and evil.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

What is the mark of the beast? Throughout the ages men have considered the mark to be many different things. Today, some say the mark is one's Social Security number or his bank account number. Quite a few say that if you use the internet, you are assigned an internet identification code and that code is actually the mark of the beast.

In his introduction to the book of Romans, Homer Hailey wrote:

Here is another counterpart to divine action: as God had sealed His people unto Himself by impressing His own name and the name of the Lamb upon their foreheads (7:3; 9:4; 14:1), and has promised to write His name upon the foreheads of the victors (3:12; 22:4), so the beast imitates this by requiring all to indicate their allegiance to him by a mark upon their right hand or upon their forehead. This "mark" (*charagma*) was a stamp, etching, engraving, or impress; it could be an engraved stone or a brand on a horse or a slave. In "causing" this to be done, the beast established a policy which required that they all be marked. There would be no exception; "the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond," would include all from the highest official to the lowest slave.

It is difficult to determine what the mark was. Was it a literal stamp or brand impressed upon the hand or forehead? Or is the language a figurative expression of a physical object which individuals carried with them, corresponding to modern identification cards? It is also possible that the language is used metaphorically of the devotion to the emperor in mind or deed and service. As Ramsay says, "We know too little to explain it with certainty" (*Seven Churches*, p. 106). However, as the seal which God caused to be placed on the foreheads of His subjects was not physical but a spiritual recognition of devotion to Him, it is best to think of the mark of the beast as the stamp of paganism impressed upon the character and conduct of idolaters. The boycott of Christians and the idolatry of pagans could indeed be maintained without a literal visible sign, for the Christian's character and life caused the world to boycott him.

The word *charagma* occurs once in Acts, and eight times in Revelation. It is possible that as gold, silver, and stone could be "graven (*charagmati*) by art and device of man" (Acts 17:29), so the minds and service of men could be completely marked or

graven by the wiles of the commune and by the attractiveness of the world with its power, glory, and pride symbolized in the empire and the image of the emperor.¹³

The mark of the beast is not to be taken literally. I believe that the term “mark” is used figuratively. Just as God knows who belongs to Him, Satan knows who belongs to him. Satan works day and night trying to deceive the elect, therefore, he must know who they are. He would not need to place a mark on his own to distinguish them from others. True Christians would never engage in any worship which was not authorized by God. Likewise, their manner of life would be different from those in the world. Paul wrote: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27). James said: “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (Jas. 3:13). According to Paul and James, our conversation is the life that we live. Our life, that is, the manner in which we live, is to be seen of men. As Jesus said: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). The world will always know who stands for the truth and who does not.

In his book on Revelation, Jim McGuiggan wrote:

Here’s the evil counterpart of the name of the Lord being placed on his disciples (see 2:12; 14:1). As no literal mark was involved in the first, so no literal mark is here involved. It is part of the vision. Furthermore, we have here more conflict because as you recall, in chapter 7, the elect were sealed against harm—identified by the seal as belonging to God. Here we have the mark of the beast given to the beast’s people while the unmarked Christians are committed to death.¹⁴

Just as God places His seal upon the forehead of those who are His (Rev. 7:2-4), so does the beast place his seal upon those who belong to him. The placing of the mark on the right hand and forehead is showing that it will not be hidden. All men will be able to see it. It will not be hidden from anyone. When the end of time comes, make no mistake, Satan will know who has his mark and those who bear his mark will spend an eternity with him in everlasting destruction. Likewise, those

who bear the seal of God in their foreheads will spend eternity with God in everlasting peace.

On this point, McGuiggan said:

Leviticus 8:22ff speaks of the right ear, hand and foot of Aaron being anointed when he was being inaugurated into office. The “right” side being (usually) the strongest, we have the individual’s strength devoted to the Lord. The Jews wore phylacteries on their arms and scriptures on their foreheads. All in all, we have here a declaration as to who is on the beast’s side and who is on the Lord’s.¹⁵

Whether or not we agree regarding the mark of the beast being literal or figurative, surely we can agree that it was given to identify those who belong to Satan. Because Christians have made the decision to serve God and to have no other gods before Him, they will always be persecuted. It may come in the form of governmental persecutions, or the faithful Christian may be persecuted by those who call themselves Christians but are not. Whatever the source of the persecutions, the true child of God will be faithful to his Lord.

THE MAN WHOSE NUMBER IS 666

As previously stated, down through time men have come up with different explanations regarding the man whose number is 666. The three most commonly accepted views regarding what the number 666 symbolizes are: 1) The Papacy, 2) Nero Caesar, and 3) The Anti-Christian power applicable to all ages. Those and some of the other views should be considered.

Tom Bright wrote:

This symbolic number has long been a source of study, consternation, manipulation and speculative hocus-pocus. This “number of a man” has been made to refer to men down through the ages, anywhere from ancient war lords, or medieval Pontiffs, to nineteenth and twentieth century dictatorial rulers of various nations of the world. Vincent says, “The method of reading generally adopted is that ... which assigns each letter of a name its usual numerical value, and gives the sum of such numbers as the equivalent of the name.” As an example, he shows that in the epistle of Barnabas, we are told that *Jesus* (in Greek) is expressed by “888.”

Vincent quotes Reuss in showing that almost all the historical names of the past eighteen centuries would yield the famous

“666,” listing such names as: Titus, Vespasian, Simon Gioras, Julian the apostate, Genseric, Mahomet, Luther, Benedict IX, Louis XV, Napoleon I, and the Duke of Reich-stadt.

Thus, we can see that the proposals made for the “number of a man” are almost as varied as the names of those who have written upon this “holding-much-sway-over-the-world number.”¹⁶

The most generally held view is that the number 666 represents Roman Catholicism’s papacy. It is certainly the view expressed by a great number of commentators in their explanations of Revelation 13:18. Hugo McCord said: “Since the first martyrs for Jesus’ sake, no other universal power fitting this description has existed except Rome, the Latin Kingdom, and no other power has existed that is represented by the number 666.”¹⁷

Foy E. Wallace, Jr., held the view that the man under consideration was Nero Caesar.¹⁸ Agreeing with Wallace, Bright wrote:

In my view, the culprit was Nero Caesar, who was the personification of the persecuting power, as it waged war against the early church. That this vile person wrought great persecution upon the church needs no verification. This agrees with what Hendrikson said in his introductory remarks, “A sound interpretation of the Apocalypse must take as its starting point the position that the book was intended for the believers in John’s day and age. The book owes its origin, at least in part, to contemporary conditions.” John wrote of “things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1). Thus, in the first century, there was one to whom John specifically referred; he who was the personification of the persecuting power, as its head. But on the stage of time, as Satan wars against the body of Christ, there were always those who are the personification of that which could rightly be called the “perfection of imperfection,” that which falls short of the divine. What better way to describe such a one than by the use of “6” (symbol of man, imperfection) three times (symbol of perfection)?¹⁹

Today, many may hold that view, but I do not believe the evidence points to Nero. Explaining the difficulty of coming up with Nero from the number 666, one writer says:

The solution most commonly accepted today is that 666 is the numerical equivalent of Nero Caesar. It is held to be supported by the variant reading 616, which also yields the name of Nero

when the Latinized spelling is followed. What is not generally stressed is that this solution asks us to calculate a Hebrew transliteration of the Greek form of a Latin name, and that with a defective spelling. A shift to Hebrew letters is unlikely in that Revelation is written in Greek and there is no indication that the riddle is to be solved by transposing it into another language. Further, the name of Nero was apparently never suggested by the ancient commentators even though his persecuting zeal made him a model of the Antichrist.²⁰

Other names have been supposedly derived from a manipulation of the number 666, thus making each of them the man whose number is 666. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, and Henry Kissinger are among them.

Obviously, the number 666 is used symbolically. Furthermore, as Hendrikson says: "A sound interpretation of the Apocalypse must take as its starting point the position that the book was intended for the believers in John's day and age."²¹ Thus, the Christians of John's day would know what the numbers 666 represented. We are told that the number "666" is a human number (Rev. 13:18). Stated another way, it is the number of man, not any particular man, but mankind in general who falls short of the perfect number "7." Tommy South wrote:

It seems more likely that "666" is an example of the numerical symbolism so common in Revelation. Verse 18 says it is "a human number" (literally, "the number of man," or "of a man"). If the number "7" is, as is generally agreed, the numerical symbol for perfection then "6" falls short of that perfection. Three "6s" would represent man's continual failure to meet God's standards; thus, "the number of man."

The good news about "666" is that no identification is necessary! What is important in chapter 13 is not the number's meaning, but its function. It serves to identify the followers of the beast, just as the 144,000 bear the protective mark of the Lamb (7:3; 14:1). The number needs no "interpretation" for us to understand its significance; it shows that one is a follower of Satan and not of Christ. In John's day that meant that the bearer of the "mark" (which need not be literal or visible) had yielded to the pressure of the second beast."²²

CONCLUSION

All must admit that "the man of sin" and the man whose number is 666 are both evil. Moreover it is evident that they continually attempt

to get mankind to follow Satan. The age old problem, the battle between good and evil, continues to this very day. The good news is that this battle will ultimately be won by the Lord and all those who follow Him. Thus, it behooves us to continue to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Master.

Remember, Satan can only do what you let him do. James wrote:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (Jas. 4:7-10).

If we submit ourselves to the Lord and humble ourselves with the understanding that we are but His servants, He will lift us up and give us a home with Him in heaven.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Roderick C. Meredith, "Who or What is—The Antichrist?" www.tomorrowworld.org

³ F.F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary, 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 45:162.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary 1 & 2 Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Pub., 1959), 214-215.

⁶ Bruce, 166.

⁷ *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft) NT:646.

⁸ Biblesoft's *New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.

⁹ David Lipscomb, *Queries and Answers* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, Co., 1963), 277-278.

¹⁰ Morris, 219-220.

¹¹ Lipscomb, 277.

¹² *Truth For Today* 9, no. 7 (Dec. 1988): 28. Associated Press, release in North West Arkansas Times.

¹³ Homer Hailey, "Introduction and Commentary," *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Co., 1983), 295-296.

¹⁴ Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation* (West Monroe, LA: William C. Johnson, Inc., 1976), 202.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Tom L. Bright, "Difficult Passages in Revelation," *Studies in the Revelation*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1984), 445.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁸ Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Pub., 1966), 299-302.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 448-449.

²⁰ Robert Mounce, *The New International Commentary, The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub., 1977), 264-265.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Tommy South, *Truth for Today*, 9 no. 7 (Dec. 1988): 21.

SATAN, THE FATHER OF LIES

Devin Dean



Devin Dean was born in San Antonio, Texas. He is married to the former Neely Rouse. They have two daughters. Dean received a B.S. Degree in Computer Science from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is employed by AT&T. Dean is the Director for the *Annual Schertz Lectureship*. As member of the Schertz Church of Christ, Dean is a deacon, serves on the education committee and is a Bible class teacher. He plans to begin study at the Memphis School of Preaching in June of 2008

INTRODUCTION¹

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof (Pro. 18:21).

“Not” and “nothing” make up the simple duet of words that Satan, since the beginning, has used to either create lies or to convince man that a lie is “acceptable.” He introduced the concept of lying into this world by his own example and man has excelled in lying ever since.

It Is All About Words

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Mt. 12:37).

Ye are of your father the devil, 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 (Jn. 8:44).

Everything man ever needs to understand is communicated to him through words. We think in words. We see in words. Words are the central need man has to understand this world. God communicates to man in words. Satan murdered man in the beginning with one word. In doing so he became, as described by John, “the father of it [lies].” It is through words that man still communicates (in speech, writing, thought, or action). We know from the Scriptures that “those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man” (Mt. 15:18). Likewise, we know that man in sin, i.e., transgressing the law (1 Jn. 3:4), becomes a liar (1 Jn. 2:3-4). Therefore, we can say that all sin is a lie against the Truth (1 Jn. 2:3-4, 21).

DEFINITIONS

Not ...

In English, a word that is “used to express negation, denial, refusal, or prohibition.”²

In Hebrew (*lo*), a word that is “a primitive particle; *not* (the simple or abstract negation).”³

In Greek (*ou*), a word that is “a primary word; the absolutely negative adverb; *no* or *not*.”⁴

Nothing ...

In English, it is a word that means “no thing” or “not anything” or “something or someone of no importance or significance.”⁵

In Hebrew, it is a compound word, one that makes use of *lo* as “not” and another, *kol*, meaning:

[P]roperly the *whole*; hence *all*, *any* or *every* (in the singular only, but often in a plural sense):—(in) all (manner, [ye]), altogether, any (manner), enough, every (one, place, thing), howsoever, as many as, [no-] thing, ought, whatsoever, (the) whole, whoso (-ever).⁶

In Greek, there are multiple words translated to “nothing,” yet all of them have the generalized meaning of not anything—nothing.

Truth ...

In English, it is a word meaning, “the true or actual state of a matter,” or “conformity with fact or reality; verity,” or “agreement with a standard or original.”⁷

In Hebrew, it is a word (*emeth*) meaning, “*stability*; figuratively *certainty*, *truth*, *trustworthiness*:—assured (-ly), establishment, faithful, right, sure, true (-ly, -th), verity.”⁸

In Greek, it is a word (*aletheia*) meaning, “*truth*:—true, X truly, truth, verity.”⁹

Deceit ...

Is an English word meaning, “the act or practice of deceiving; concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading; duplicity; fraud; cheating,” or “an act or device intended to deceive; trick; stratagem,” or “the quality of being deceitful; duplicity; falseness.”¹⁰ A discussion about the synonyms for deceit is worth noting:

1. deception, dissimulation. 1, 3. DECEIT, GUILÉ, HYPOCRISY, DUPLICITY, FRAUD, TRICKERY refer either to practices designed to mislead or to the qualities that produce those practices. DECEIT is the quality that prompts intentional concealment or perversion of truth for the purpose of misleading: *honest and without deceit*. The quality of GUILÉ leads to craftiness in the use of deceit: *using guile and trickery to attain one's ends*. HYPOCRISY is the pretense of possessing qualities of sincerity, goodness, devotion, etc.: *It was sheer hypocrisy for him to go to church*. DUPLICITY is the form of deceitfulness that leads one to give two impressions, either or both of which may be false: *the duplicity of a spy working for two governments*. FRAUD refers usually to the practice of subtle deceit or duplicity by which one may derive benefit at another's expense: *an advertiser convicted of fraud*. TRICKERY is the quality that leads to the use of tricks and habitual deception: *notorious for his trickery in business deals*.¹¹

Lie ...

In English, it is a word meaning, “a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth; a falsehood,” or “something intended or serving to convey a false impression; imposture,” or “an inaccurate or false statement.”¹²

In Hebrew, a word (*kachash*) meaning, “A primitive root; to *be untrue*, in word (to *lie, feign, disown*) or deed (to *disappoint, fail, cringe*):—deceive, deny, dissemble, fail, deal falsely, be found liars, (be-) lie, lying, submit selves.”¹³

In Greek, a word (*psuedos*) meaning, “a *falsehood*:—lie, lying.”¹⁴

Liar ...

In English, it simply means, “a person who tells lies.”¹⁵

In Hebrew, it is a word (*kazab*) meaning, “to *lie* (that is, *deceive*), literally or figuratively:—fail, (be found a, make a) liar, lie, lying, be in vain.”¹⁶

In Greek, it is a word (*pseustes*) meaning, “a *falsifier*:—liar.”¹⁷

Intention ...

“Intention” is an English word meaning, “an act or instance of determining mentally upon some action or result,” or “the end or object intended; purpose,” or “meaning or significance.”¹⁸ Likewise the following entry on synonyms for “intention” is useful:

Synonyms: These nouns refer to what one plans to do or achieve. *Intention* simply signifies a course of action that one proposes to follow: It is my intention to take a vacation next month.

Intent more strongly implies deliberateness: The executor complied with the testator's intent.

Purpose strengthens the idea of resolution or determination: "His purpose was to discover how long these guests intended to stay" (Joseph Conrad).

Goal may suggest an idealistic or long-term purpose: The college's goal was to raise ten million dollars for a new library.

End suggests a long-range goal: The candidate wanted to win and pursued every means to achieve that end.

Aim stresses the direction one's efforts take in pursuit of an end: The aim of most students is to graduate.

An *object* is an end that one tries to carry out: The object of chess is to capture your opponent's king.

Objective often implies that the end or goal can be reached: The report outlines the committee's objectives.¹⁹

WHAT IS A LIE?

This is the real question, and we must look to God for the answer. Satan and his children (Jn. 8:44), use every means to convince a man that a lie is either for his benefit or that it has no real meaning. Look at how Pilate attempts to deflect Christ's reasoning with the question, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Instead of accepting truth, Satan and his children would rather question truth. God is the God of truth (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16). His Word is truth (Jn. 17:17; 2 Sam. 7:28; Ps. 119:151). He will never lie (Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 89:35; Tit. 1:2). Christ says: "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6, emphasis added).

Intent Is Important

In English, the definition of the word "lie" included the phrases "deliberate intent," "an intentional," and "something intended." We must readily admit that intent can be extremely important to determine whether a lie actually occurs or not. A case in point:

- On Sunday, person A tells person B, with the full intent of being there, that he will meet person B Tuesday morning at the church building.

- On Monday, person A is suddenly given a work assignment that takes him out of town for the rest of the week—meaning he cannot meet person B at the church building Tuesday morning.
- Did person A lie to person B? Obviously the answer is no.

However, consider the following case:

- On Thursday, person A is told that he will need to leave Monday morning for a full week out of town for business.
- On Sunday, with this knowledge, person A tells person B that he will meet him Tuesday morning at the church building.
- Did person A lie to person B? Obviously the answer is yes. Person A intentionally told person B a falsehood (lie), knowing full well the truth was that he would not be there.

And another case to consider:

- Person A asks person B about the conditions of a certain road. To person B's knowledge the road is in good shape and person B states so to person A.
- Person A then takes the road, which is in bad condition, and has an accident.
- Did person B lie to person A? No. Person B made a mistake. It was not intended to deceive person A, in fact if person B had known the true condition of the road he would have probably offered alternate directions to person A.

Intent Is Not Important

Now within the same breath, we must also declare that intent is not important. There are times when intent is not important to the determination of a lie. When one speaks falsely about something on which God has spoken (e.g., the plan for man's salvation) one is a liar by God's definition (1 Jn. 1:6; 2:4; 4:20). When it comes to those things that God has directly spoken to us through His Word, we know that we have the

responsibility to investigate and to work out our own salvation (Acts 17:11; Phil. 2:12). A case in point:

- Person A has been taught all of his life that salvation is by faith alone.
- Person A then teaches the same to person B—without intent to deceive or mislead, but rather with love and real concern for person B. Person A believes and does present the information as he knows it, knowing no better.
- Did person A lie to person B? Absolutely! The moment one speaks on something of which God has spoken without the benefit of His authority (lack of agreement with God’s statements), then that person becomes exactly as described in John 8:44, “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar.”

Summarization And Application To Scripture

Let us remember it is all about words (Mt. 12:37). God’s Word is truth (Jn. 17:17; cf. 2 Sam. 7:28; Ps. 119:151). To fail to abide (stay in) in the Truth (God’s Word) is to lie, making the one who fails to abide therein a liar (Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 1:6; 2:4). This does not make all false statements in and of themselves lies, but it does make any and all statements that are not in accordance with God’s Word, the Truth, lies. Doubt, deceit, or attempts to make items of no importance (nothing) does not change the plain simple definition of the word “lie” as God uses it.

To speak without the authority of God is, according to God, a lie. Lying is without a doubt the central part of Satan’s attack on God’s preeminent creation, man. It is the “sin of firsts.” It is the first recorded sin in the world (Gen. 3:1-5), and it is the first recorded sin in the church (Acts 5:1-5). Lies are usually a sin of the tongue; however, not all lies are of the tongue. A hypocritical person is a liar, for while they may speak the Truth, their actions deny the Truth (1 Jn. 2:4). Also, as shown earlier, man in sin (transgression of the law [1 Jn. 3:4]) becomes a liar (1 Jn. 2:3-4), and thereby we can say that all sin is a lie against the Truth (1 Jn. 2:3-4, 21). Oliver Wendell Holmes may have summed up the role lying plays, and the dependence of sin on the lie, when he said: “Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all.”²⁰

THE FATHER OF LIES

Ye are of your father the devil, 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 (Jn. 8:44).

We know that the devil mentioned in Revelation 20:2 is Satan, “that old serpent.” There is no doubt that this refers back to the introduction of sin into this world, as plotted, planned, and executed by that old serpent in Genesis 3. We know that he knew the Truth, but that he did not accept the Truth (Jn. 8:44). Satan, in the beginning, used his cunning subtlety to entice Eve.

Satan introduced doubt into Eve’s mind with a subtle one word lie. We know he knew the Truth because it is the Word of God that he perverted when he said: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1). Do we see the subtle, yet all dangerous, lie in this first question from Satan? He knew what God had said! God had said: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it” (Gen. 2:16b-17a). The subtle placement of “not” into the first part of the statement makes it seem overly restrictive. He, in paraphrase, asks Eve: “Why would a loving God not allow you to eat of every tree?” He wants Eve to think that God’s command is too restrictive, that it is not that important—to make it (God’s command) nothing.

Satan does not lose his subtlety as he blatantly lies to Eve. Can you hear Satan hissing those dreadful words that feed Eve’s doubt, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4)? Again, we have absolute proof that Satan knew the Truth, for he quotes the Truth with one added word. All he does is add the word “not”! He does it in a nonchalant, easy way—and with it introduces the all out lie that would bring death into the world. We would do well to fully rehearse the warnings God gave in Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, and Revelation 22:18-19. The outcome of Satan’s additions should convince us that God meant what He said, and said what He meant!

Satan’s lie continues and further cultivates the deception of doubt he has begun working in Eve. The blatant lie begins the NOTHING attitude he desires in Eve. He has led her down the path that maybe God is not as loving as you think. Now he has told her that God’s promised outcome, death, will not occur. He then adds more by telling

her that something pleasant, or beneficial to her (“good”), will come from breaking the commandment (Gen. 3:5). Eve succumbs to Satan’s lie. Adam does no better. Eve offers him the same “forbidden fruit,” and, as far as is known, he does not even protest! Satan, Adam, and Eve all had the same problem in the end. They did not have the Truth, the Word of God, within them. Rather than the Truth coming forth, each of them—either by speech, thought, or action—lied by denying (or failing to comply with) the Truth. It was all about the words; they failed to follow God’s Word and rather, just as described in John 8:44, spoke (either vocally or by action) of their own accords.

Lying does not end or become some insignificant matter at that point. Satan’s play was successful. Think of the wrong attitudes men have had, and the lies they have told, which are exposed throughout the Scriptures. Cain continued the one word lie. When asked by God, “Where is Abel thy brother?” Cain offered the truth in the same manner as Satan, by adding that one word, “not,” thereby making it a lie—“I know not” (Gen. 4:9). Peter did no better as his denial of Christ was with the single word, “not,” again. Three times he is asked if he is a disciple of Jesus? Two times he answers, “I am not,” and “I know not” (Mt. 26:69-72; Mk. 14:67-70; Lk. 22:56-58; Jn. 18:17, 25). The third time he continues the denial of knowing Christ with the word “not” and adds cursing to it for effect (Mt. 26:73-74; Mk. 14:70-71; Lk. 22:59-60; Jn. 18:26-27). How often do we as men fall to this same trap. Oh, we do need to keep a guard on our tongues (Jas. 3:8).

Satan’s influence and children continue in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). It is worth noting that there is no record in Acts 5 of Ananias actually vocalizing his lie. Rather it appears that he allowed men to assume it. He brought his offering as many others were doing (Acts 4:32-37) and allowed others to assume he had brought the full purchase price of his land. The intent to deceive is clearly seen in Acts 5:2, and even without words it was no less a lie (Acts 5:3-4)!

The Truth Can Be Used To Lie

Satan used the desired results of lying to influence even great men to lie, and he influenced them to use the truth to do so. Abraham never lied by the definition of uttering a falsehood. Rather, Abraham lied by telling the truth. He did it twice, and used the same lie both times (Gen. 12:11-20; 20:1-14). In telling Pharaoh and Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, he told them the truth—but, he did so with the clear intent to

deceive. Telling the truth with the intent to deceive is a lie. Abraham lied because he thought the outcome was better for him and that nothing else mattered. In other words, to Abraham the ends justified the means. God said, “NOT!” (Gen. 12:17; 20:3-7).

Satan likewise used “truthful lying” in his attempt to deceive Christ. He tempted Christ by using a truth from the Scriptures, and then by offering Him all this world has to offer (Mt. 4:6, 9). In both cases, Christ defeated him with the Eternal Truth! Christ’s defense—“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4)—did not satisfy Satan. Just like he, the father of lies, did in the beginning, Satan refused to accept God’s Word. The tragedy is, since the beginning, men have continued to perform exceptionally well behind their father, Satan.

LIES AND SOCIETY

Satan’s influence upon man continues to affect our society and its values (or its lack thereof in many cases). Lying destroys friendships, homes, and trust. One source states that “67% of Americans don’t believe in absolute truth.”²¹ Let it be clearly stated here that there is absolute truth. God’s Word is THE Truth—absolute and complete! However, let us continue by noting what man’s concept of “relativity” creates. The just quoted source states:

- 91% of us lie regularly
- The majority of us find it hard to get through a week without lying
- 1 in 5 can’t make it through a single day without lying.²²

Is it any wonder that Americans think it is acceptable to “fudge” on their taxes, or that we expect politicians to lie to get elected, or that big business is not running right if it is not misleading the public? Is it any wonder society wants it to be acceptable to lie if it is to protect someone. If only all men would accept, as Christ so clearly stated, that man should live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). When Jesus said that, it was not a new thought, He was quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Think of how things in society would be affected if we followed that simple principle.

Business

How many have encountered an embellished resume? There have been sports coaches who have lost all credibility and the “dream job”

because they chose to embellish their resume. However, that is the exception rather than the rule. Society encourages the embellishment of the resume. The “little white lie” or “stretching of the truth” to make one “stand out” among other candidates is “expected.” Businesses spend untold dollars, knowing: “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro. 14:15). Why? Because man refuses to accept such Scriptures as Proverbs 14:5—“A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.”

Think of what we expect from businesses. We expect them to embellish their commercials with claims that their products are the best, the newest, the fastest, or the most improved—even if their products are exactly the same as the competitors’. We expect businesses to take away benefits and to desire more work for less money from their employees. We do not like what was done, but who did not “expect” something like the WorldCom and Enron fiascos to happen? Why? Because since Satan’s introduction of the lie, man has refused to heed Scriptures, such as Proverbs 12:22—“Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight” (Pro. 12:22).

Politics, Sex, And Marriage

While politicians, like everyone else, have to be considered on an individual basis, one specific case of a politician’s lies involving politics, sex, and marriage shows the impact lying can have on society. For the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, in the many controversies surrounding his presidency and life, lies were the norm. He is a man who quibbled over the definition of the word “is.” He determined it was acceptable to lie to the entire nation to protect his marriage and prevent harm and embarrassment to his wife and daughter. He determined it was acceptable to lie to the whole American nation, including a grand jury, because it was only about sex—in essence saying: “It was nothing.” President Clinton’s case perfectly fits Proverbs 13:5—“A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame” (Pro. 13:5).

Rather than following Satan’s rule and lead in determining that sex and marriage are “nothing,” as President Clinton did, man should turn to God and His Word. If people will accept and follow His precepts, as we “know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23), they will have the greatest respect for God’s holy and divinely established union of marriage (Heb.

13:4). If men and women everywhere would simply follow Christ's teachings found in Matthew 19:3-9 (cf. Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7), society would have fewer single mothers, fewer orphaned children, a lower crime rate, and more well-balanced children (less needful of Prozac, Ritalin, etc.). If everyone in society lived up to God's standard and kept sex in marriage, the only place He intends for it to be, think of how easy it would then be to find an honest politician!

LIES AND CHRISTIANITY

Members of the Lord's body, Christians, His church, His *bride*, need this same attitude within Christianity today. Too many have tossed Christianity aside, just as has been done with marriage. Satan has succeeded in convincing men that God did not really mean what he said in Ephesians 5:22-32. There, Paul wrote:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but *I speak concerning Christ and the church* (emphasis added).

We know the church is the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9). It is evident that if we treat the church as many are wrongfully treating marriage, then we are liars before God as we abide not in the Truth (Jn. 8:44).

The idea that the church is here just for us, to entertain us, to provide the services we desire, et cetera, is wrong! It is false doctrine. Satan's most successful efforts against the church, or God's people in any age, have always involved an attack on God's Word, the Truth. He endeavors to make people think that Truth is inconsequential, that it

does not matter and means nothing. Moreover Satan's attack on God's Word reaches its ultimate goal when men believe that disobeying the Truth means "nothing." Once a man reaches the point that Truth—obeying it, or disobeying it—means nothing, Satan has thereby increased his fold of children (liars).

We know that every false doctrine is a lie. We know that every false doctrine is from the devil. This is clearly seen in these passages:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn. 2:4).

Ye are of your father the devil, 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 (Jn. 8:44).

We know that those who teach false doctrine, even "unintentionally," only do it for their own "good" (Rom. 16:17-18) or "pleasure" (2 Thess. 2:3-12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-4). We are commanded to investigate and ensure that we identify the Truth and avoid deceit (Eph. 4:14; 5:6; 2 Thess. 2:3). It is by this same principle, and their lack of following it, that those who teach false doctrine "unintentionally" are condemned. The church, the beautiful bride of Christ, is damaged, stained, and marred when its members hear, believe, and accept Satan's lies—especially his lie that what God says is NOTHING.

Accepting Satan's lie that what God says is "nothing" has led erring Christians to accept damnable heresies, such as: 1) The doctrine of salvation by faith alone, 2) The doctrine of salvation by grace alone, 3) The use of instrumental music in worship, 4) Denying that baptism is necessary for salvation, 5) and, The "baptism" (sprinkling) of infants. Of course, the list does not end there. Man has been deceived by Satan since the beginning, and we must always remember that Satan is cunning and crafty. When it comes to agreement with God's Word, we must be in 100% agreement, not 99.999%. We know that God hates every false way (Ps. 119:104), that His words will not be false (Job 36:4), and that we should "ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16).

Today, more than ever, the church needs to turn to and study God's Word. We know that we can know the Truth (Jn. 8:32), that one's soul is purified by obeying the Truth (1 Pet. 1:22), and that it is our responsibility to use the Truth to work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). Brethren, Satan attacks, and we must defend. The church has

faltered due to the acceptance of liars and their lies. We must now take up “the whole armour of God” that the church “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). For, unlike Star Trek where “resistance is futile,” according to the Word of God resistance is *not* futile—no matter what Satan desires for us to believe or what efforts he exerts to destroy us. What everyone else is doing does not matter! God says: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7), that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6), and that Satan and his angels are defeated already (Ju. 6).

LIES AND ETERNITY

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, *a lying tongue*, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, *A false witness that speaketh lies*, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19, emphasis added).

The fact that in a list of seven things which are abominations to the Lord lying is mentioned twice should give us a picturesque thought relative to the eternal destiny of a liar. Any person who thinks God will overlook a lie after this passage is lying to themselves. God will not overlook a lie, neither will it be as Satan desires for man to believe, i.e., that “lies amount to nothing.” God has a specific destiny reserved for every unrepentant liar. Scripture warns:

He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight (Ps. 101:7).

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape (Pro. 19:5).

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish (Pro. 19:9).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

And there shall in no wise enter into it [New Jerusalem – Heaven] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

For without [the city, New Jerusalem – Heaven] are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:15).

“[A]ll liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8). No “degree of lying”—little white lies, fudging the truth, twisting the truth, bending the truth, flattery, slander, etc.—will be overlooked by God. There is one, and only one, eternal destination for the unrepentant liar—HELL.

It is no wonder that God has given ample warning against lying (Eph. 4:25, 29, 31; Col. 3:9; 1 Pet. 2:1). So thankful we should be for the example left to us by Christ. About that example, Peter penned:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, *neither was guile found in his mouth*: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24, emphasis added).

As in all things, when it comes to the use of our tongues, we should strive to follow that Perfect Example, instead of succumbing to Satan’s desires for us to become as those in Judah during Jeremiah’s day. God exposed their dishonesty, stating:

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait (Jer. 9:3-8).

God’s response to such a deplorable people is implied as He rhetorically questions: “Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord:

shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (Jer. 9:9). Oh, the quivering our tongues should have at the thought: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19; cf. Heb. 10:30; Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1; 1 Thess. 4:6).

Every sin (lying leading the way) is a lie against the Truth. Lying causes one to become an instrument of destruction according to God. Proverbs 25:18 says: “A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.” If one has become an instrument of destruction, where does that leave him in light of Christ’s admonition: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Mt. 7:13)?

Avoiding a lie against the Truth requires effort. We cannot allow Satan’s devious deceptions to convince us, as Calvinism attempts to do, that “nothing really matters.” If we do nothing, then *nothing* stands between us and hell. It is that simple! For “all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

CONCLUSION

It is all about words—more specifically it is all about the Word, the Light (Jn. 1:1, 7-9). John wrote: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). This Word is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). “[O]ut of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword” (Rev. 1:16). Christ brought God’s Word to this world (Jn. 17:8; Heb. 1:1-2). It is His Word which is the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17).

“Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro. 23:23). Truth has great value. We know: “Sound speech ... cannot be condemned” (Tit. 2:8). The use of sound speech will defeat the condemnation coming from those who are contrary to God. The use of God’s “engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21) is the most effective control that can be placed on the tongue.

Guiding his readers through a thorough discussion of the tongue’s power and use, James records:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the *tongue is a fire*, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our mem-

bers, that it *defileth the whole body*, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and *it is set on fire of hell*. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, *full of deadly poison*. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and *lie not against the truth*. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (Jas. 3:5-16, emphasis added).

Stating it in simple terms, Jesus preaches:

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Mt. 5:37).

And the psalmist does likewise:

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue:
I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me (Ps. 39:1).

Following those exhortations let us make the commitment: “I will ‘sin not with my tongue.’” We know Satan is the father of lies and that it is all about words—the words we speak, the words we think, and the words we act out. With that in mind, let us always remember that Jesus tells us: “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mt. 12:37).

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. “not,” from website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/not> (23 May 2007).

³ James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. s.v. “lo.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, s.v. “ou.”

- ⁵ “nothing.” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nothing> (23 May 2007).
- ⁶ Strong, s.v. “kol.”
- ⁷ “truth.” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/truth> (23 May 2007).
- ⁸ Strong, s.v. ”emeth.”
- ⁹ Ibid., s.v. “aletheia.”
- ¹⁰ “deceit,” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/deceit> (23 May 2007).
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² “lie,” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lie> (23 May 2007).
- ¹³ Strong, s.v. “kachash.”
- ¹⁴ Ibid., s.v. “psuedos.”
- ¹⁵ “liar,” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/liar> (23 May 2007).
- ¹⁶ Strong, s.v. “kazab.”
- ¹⁷ Ibid., s.v. “pseustes.”
- ¹⁸ “intention,” from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/intention> (23 May 2007).
- ¹⁹ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed.*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. “intention,” from Dictionary.com.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/intention> (18 June 2007).
- ²⁰ Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table,” Chapter 6. *Atlantic Monthly*, 1858. Available from
<http://eldred.ne.mediaone.net/owh/abt06.html>
- ²¹ *The Ten Commandments: Part VI*. s.v. “lying and coveting.” from Harvest Online website:
<http://www.harvest.org/church/index.php/8/20/94.htm> (1 June 2007).
- ²² Ibid.

THE DOCTRINES OF DEVILS

Lynn Blair



Lynn Blair was born in Abilene, Texas. He is married to the former Cookie Jordan. They are the parents of three daughters, two sons and eight grandchildren. Blair graduated from the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas in 1973. He has preached in lectureships and gospel meetings in twelve states and five foreign countries. Blair has worked with radio, television, and in city, county, state and federal prison ministries. He is presently serving as the preacher for the Lord's church in Valley View, Texas.

INTRODUCTION¹

In or about A.D. 62, Paul wrote a letter to the young preacher Timothy. Paul had converted Timothy and considered him to be his “son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2). This tells us about their relationship. A *real* father is not just “a biological donor,” but one who is intimately involved in the raising and training of a child. Paul had done that with Timothy.

Today, those of us who are preaching should never forget that we are warming by a fire that we did not build. Great and mighty preachers have gone before us. By the same token many of us, as older preachers, must help the younger ones. This is especially true regarding the dangers they may encounter, and the kinds of personalities and doctrines with which they might have to deal. When younger preachers are around older preachers, they need to ask questions and learn all they can (not just doctrinally, but practically as well).

What did Paul, by inspiration, tell Timothy? Among other things, in the first three chapters of 1 Timothy, Paul spoke of his work in the ministry, prayer, the subjection and adornment of women, and the qualifications of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3). In chapter 4, he deals with the problem of false doctrine.

FIRST TIMOTHY 4:1-3

Verse 1

All Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21). In our text, we are told “the Spirit speaketh *expressly*” (1 Tim. 4:1, emphasis added) about the matters being introduced. Joseph

Meador says this means the Spirit had “explicitly revealed.”² Guy N. Woods simply says this means that the Spirit spoke “plainly and intelligibly.”³ The phrase is clear, concise, absolute, and points to facts that would happen at a future time. How far in the future would these things take place? The text simply says “latter times” (KJV), “later time” (ASV).

Since the Spirit spoke “expressly” concerning those who would “depart from the faith,” and gave the identifying marks of this apostasy, it is easily recognized. It needs to be stressed that the departure would be from “the faith.” Can we know and tell what is involved in “the faith”? Surely we can since we are to: preach “the faith” (Gal. 1:23); obey “the faith” (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5); be established in “the faith” (Acts 16:5; Col 2:7); continue in “the faith” (Col. 1:23); and, earnestly contend for “the faith” (Ju. 3). Paul even told the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Further, this departure from “the faith” is brought about by “seducing spirits” and false doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1). The word “seducing” conveys an attitude of deception. Such false teachers are “deceitful workers” (2 Cor. 11:13). For that reason, Paul warns: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18). Never forget, false teachers can have “good words and fair speech.” John admonished, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Seducing spirits are false teachers who deceive their hearers. They sound so good and what they teach is smooth. An entertaining speaker can bring the crowds in to hear him. But what will those crowds hear from that entertaining, but false teacher? They will hear doctrines of devils (demons).

Demons are evil spirits associated with the devil. Jesus spoke of “the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). The word “angel” is defined as: “‘a messenger’ (from angello, ‘to deliver a message’), sent whether by God or by man or by Satan.”⁴ This is not to say that angels are messengers only. For instance, they are referred to as “ministering spirits” in Hebrews 1:14. The demons mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1 are

the devil's agents who deliver false doctrines and/or lead men into error with false doctrines. The doctrines of demons originated in Satan himself.

The word "doctrine" simply means *teaching*. Do not fall prey to the idea some try to express when they say: "We are going to have a Bible study, but we will not be getting into any doctrine." That would mean no teaching would be done because "doctrine" means "teaching." There is a clear, distinct sound when "sound doctrine" is taught from the Scriptures (1 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 2:1).

Verse 2

The men who espouse the doctrines of demons do so in hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means play acting. False teachers claim to be sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Mt. 7:15-20). Teachers of falsehood do not tell people they are teaching error. They appear to be sincere and filled with piety.⁵

False teachers presenting the doctrines of demons have no concern for truth. Their consciences are "seared with a hot iron." That phrase in the American Standard Version is translated, "branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron." When an animal is branded, the brand used identifies that animal as the property of the owner of that brand. In a manner of speaking, the branded conscience of a false teacher shows who his owner is.

Lie after lie leaves their mouths and pens, but does their dishonesty and disregard for the truth bother them? No! They neither feel guilt nor are they ashamed. Sometimes sincere brethren have a hard time imagining that anyone could be "seared" to that degree. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard the parents and siblings of someone who has left the church say: "He knows better than that." Perhaps, he may not. Sometimes there have been gaps and inconsistencies in a person's spiritual training. However, if one does know better and goes ahead and leaves the church anyway, he does not care.

Verse 3

What are the identifying marks of this departure from "the faith," or apostasy? This is so plain. Two are listed in this verse.

When I was going to high school south of Lubbock, on Fridays, we always had sandwiches for lunch. You could have tuna or cheese, but *no meat*. Why not? Because the majority of the students had been taught (by their celibate priests) that they could not eat meat on Fridays.

Concerning the phrase, “forbidding to marry,” in the verse, E.M. Zerr says: “This is a specific prediction of the doctrine of Rome, for no one of the clergy of that institution, from the pope down to the ordinary priest is permitted to marry. It makes no difference to them that Paul declares that ‘marriage is honorable in all’ (Heb. 13:4).”⁶ About the phrase, “commanding to abstain from meats,” Robert Taylor writes: “Meatless Fridays, except for fish, and restrictions about animal food for all seasons have characterized respectively such religious groups as Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists. They do not believe what Paul wrote in First Timothy 4:2-5.”⁷

These prophecies of the departure (apostasy) from “the faith” find their fulfillment in the Roman Catholic Church. Catholicism forbids its “clergy” to marry and, until recent times, forbade the eating of meats by its members on Fridays. Ultimately, the source of such doctrines as these is Satan. He seduces the hearts of men and takes them away by making laws that God never made, and by withholding privileges that God intended for man to enjoy.

The last part of verse three is also of special interest. Speaking in reference to what would become the Roman Catholic Church and others “commanding to abstain from meats,” the verse continues, “which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” From this, two things may be inferred. One is that these false teachers (Roman Catholics) teach one thing and God teaches another. Second, the followers of this false religion (Roman Catholicism) do neither believe, nor practice the truth.

HOW AND WHY DID THIS DEPARTURE HAPPEN?

The Church At Ephesus, An Example Of Departing

To see how and why this happened, it will prove helpful to look at the history of the congregation at Ephesus. By the way, this is where Timothy was preaching when Paul wrote to him.

In his very last opportunity to meet with the elders of the Ephesian congregation, Paul exhorted:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples

after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

Paul told those elders that problems would arise from within their “own selves.” Later, writing to the church in Ephesus, Paul reproved, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Yet, in spite of the warnings and exhortations, the Ephesians left their “first love.”

Approximately thirty years later, in the Book of Revelation, John addressed one of the letters to the seven churches of Asia, to the church at Ephesus. In that letter, Jesus instructed John to write:

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate (Rev. 2:2-6).

From this, it is evident that the members of the church at Ephesus had continued to fight against false doctrines and that they even hated what God hates (the deeds of the Nicolaitans). Yet, Revelation 2:4 says they had left their first love and had fallen. Because of this, they were warned to repent. Otherwise, they would lose their place in His kingdom.

Was it that they did not know what to do? No! They knew what to do. However, for some reason—pride, apathy or something else—they refused to do it. They knew enough, but they did not care enough. They had ceased to be “doers of the word” and had slipped into being hearers only, deceiving themselves (Jas. 1:22). They may have been lulled into being spiritually asleep.

The Reasons Congregations Departed From The Faith

Alluring temptation is the devil’s most effective tool. Nevertheless, when a man sins, it is because he has made the decision to do so (Jas. 1:13-16).

Congregations depart from “the faith” because of poor leadership. Every congregation has a leader or leaders. I know of a congregation that once consisted of four women. All the men had either died or moved away. When the preacher came each Sunday, he got to preach, lead the singing, lead the prayers, and do all the public aspects of the worship. When he received his paycheck, it was signed by a woman. Even those women had a leader among them.

Yes, every congregation has its leaders. If a congregation has no elders, someone will still lead it. In some cases, a congregation’s leader may claim he (or she) is not leading, when he (or she) actually is. Sometimes, even when a congregation has elders, someone else is “pulling the strings.” It may be a deacon, an elder’s wife, some rich member, or even a preacher—any of which would be overstepping their proper bounds. God’s Word says elders should be appointed in every city (Tit. 1:5), but to be appointed they must meet God’s qualifications for elders (cf., 1Tim. 3:1-7; Tit.1:5-9). Unqualified elders are worse than no elders!

Whether they are elders or not, how do these leaders lead congregations astray and why? What are they seeking? What do they get out of it? Power? Control? Money (or control of the money)? Popularity? Is it to satisfy their Pride? Whether in former or present days, when a congregation departs from “the faith” the first thing to do is *follow the money and power*. Who controls the money?

A number of years ago, while I was attending a preacher’s breakfast in another state, one of the young preachers there was telling us about the trouble he was having with a woman in his congregation. She wanted to “take over” and “control” everything. I asked: “Does this woman have money?” One or two of the older preachers smiled when I asked that question. The young preacher quickly replied, “Why, yes, brother Blair, she does. How did you know?” Follow the money. More often than not, that will lead you to the one who is in control. Sometimes, popularity or the sheer force of personality has to be considered, but it is money that usually opens the door to false doctrine. It takes money to sustain all the false doctrine that is being spread.

Three Areas Where The Departure Shows Itself

There are three areas in which departure has historically manifested itself. Keeping Paul’s warning in Acts 20:28-31 in mind, it is not

surprising that departure should first come from within the organizational structure of the church (i.e., elders, deacons, preachers, etc.).

Early in the church's existence, in the larger cities where power and money were more impressive, congregations grew in number and in wealth. Consequently, the influence of the elders in those cities grew. As it did, some of them came to be termed "Metropolitan Bishops."⁸ These men ruled over the smaller, more rural congregations. A church hierarchy continued to evolve until one man became the "Universal Bishop," and was called "Pope." Doctrinally departing further and further from "the faith," throughout its malignant apostatizing growth, Roman Catholicism developed its clergy-laity system, with its robes, rituals and titles. It mattered not to them that Peter had declared that all Christians are a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). With power and money being an issue, all men being on an equal standing before God cannot be allowed in Catholicism.

When men turn from the doctrine of Christ to the doctrines of demons, worship is another observable area where one can recognize that a departure from "the faith" has occurred. Catholicism has corrupted all five of the acts of worship authorized for the church in the New Testament.

For centuries the "Mass," as they call it (a term not found in Scripture), was given in Latin. Multiplied thousands, maybe millions, lived their entire lives without ever hearing a word from the Bible that they could understand. But, it did allow the "Pope" and all his underlings to stay in control.

Later, protestant denominational churches would not use Latin, but they would still insist on *not* preaching the Gospel. Instead, in keeping with their denominational doctrines, people were urged to stand up and "witness for Christ," giving their testimony. The silliness of their attempting to "witness" or give their "testimony" is seen in the fact that they had never heard, seen, or been in the presence of Christ. What their "witnessing" and "testifying" is reduced to, is telling about the good things God has done for them. Is the source of apparent blessings always God?

I am reminded of what Ma Barker used to tell her boys about bank robbing. She would say that God had left that money in that bank for them to steal. It might prove well to note that after Jesus had fasted for forty days, the devil offered Him stones to be turned into bread to Jesus (Mt. 4:1-4). Did Jesus ever eat bread again? It seems He did, but not

from that source, and not on the devil's conditions. Roman Catholicism's "Mass" and denominational testimonies are simply not the same as Gospel preaching.

In the area of financial support, Catholicism has led the way into apostasy. Instead of the freewill offering that Scripture teaches is to be done on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), Catholicism initiated the demand for tithes, which is an Old Testament concept. Catholics mightily enforce the collection of tithes.

To raise even more money, Catholicism came up with the idea of selling "indulgences." Catholic representatives told people that if they would buy the indulgences, it would help them to avoid the penalty for their sins. The sale of indulgences has raised the volume of revenue brought into the coffers of the Catholic Church to unknown heights.

The Roman Catholic Church departed from "the faith" regarding the Lord's Supper. Catholicism teaches the false doctrine of transubstantiation. One of their own has this to say about transubstantiation: "By the will of the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit, and priesthood of Jesus entrusted to His ordained priests, and through the words of consecration, that bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus."⁹ This is further evidence that Catholicism has accepted the doctrines of demons.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church has departed from "the faith" concerning the Lord's Supper when, in many of the congregations, the priest drinks the (alcoholic) "wine," but the congregants receive only the wafer. Please note that when the Lord's Supper was established, Jesus used the phrase "fruit of the vine," not the word "wine" (Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:18). Many of us have seen Catholic funerals and weddings where the congregants go forward to have the wafer placed in their mouths or in their hands by the priest. Then, the priest not only eats a wafer, he gets to drink the (alcoholic) wine, too. For a large crowd, this can be quite embarrassing. Those who watched John Kennedy's funeral may recall that the officiating priest appeared quite drunk by the end of that "High (no pun intended) Mass."

A more obvious area of departure concerning the Lord's Supper is one which is abundantly evident to even a casual observer. Roman Catholics have no particular day on which they serve or partake of it. Any day a funeral or wedding takes place, they want to celebrate a "Mass," and it always includes what they call "the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist." I would like to say that this "anytime obser-

vance” of the Lord’s Supper is peculiar to Roman Catholics, but I cannot. Some of our brethren have departed from “the faith” on this point as well. Scriptures prove that the first century partook of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Prayer is another area where Catholicism has departed from “the faith.” Their apostasy in this area is exposed by their use of prayer beads and the rosary, but that is not all. Contrary to what the Scriptures teach about praying to God through Christ, Catholics pray to Mary and various other “saints.” About this, Albert Barnes says:

There is, “first,” the worship of the virgin and of the saints, or the extraordinary honors rendered to them—corresponding almost entirely with the reverence paid by the pagan to the spirits of heroes or to demi-gods. The saints are supposed to have extraordinary power with God, and their aid is implored as intercessors. The virgin Mary is invoked as “the mother of God,” and as having power still to command her Son. The Papists do not, indeed, offer the same homage to the saints which they do to God, but they ask their aid; they offer prayer to them.¹⁰

Once one departs from “the faith” and follows after the doctrine of demons, there is no end to where it will lead. If you can add to the Word of God in one area, you can certainly add to it in another. As Paul tells us, we must learn “not to think of men above that which is written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

Roman Catholicism has departed from “the faith” when it comes to the music used in its worship. The New Testament authorizes us to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), not sing and play. Anybody who has ever played the children’s game “Simon Says” can understand the authority principle. Anyone who sees the sign on a door that says “MEN’S ROOM” understands it. It is a room for men and men only. It does not have to say, “MEN’S ROOM, NO WOMEN ALLOWED.” It just says, “MEN’S ROOM” and we all know what it means.

There is no New Testament authority for instrumental music to be used in the church’s worship. Moreover, there is abundant historical evidence that it was not used in the early church. Everett Ferguson states: “There are good historical, theological, and musicological grounds to engage only in a cappella music in public worship. It (instrumental music in worship) did not exist in Christian worship for centuries after the New Testament.”¹¹

My oldest daughter and I went on a mission trip to England. On that trip we visited the abbey (Cathedral) in Peterborough, where the first wife of Henry VIII, Katherine of Aragon, was buried. They proudly display a list of all the priests and bishops who have served there since about A.D. 655. Right beside that listing, they display a list of all the head organists who have played the organ there since around A.D. 855. Why is there a difference of approximately 200 years in the beginnings of the two lists? It appears that they did not use instrumental music for the first 200 years.

Pride, money, and perhaps many other things contributed to the idea that solos, robed choirs, and all kinds of special singing could be used in public worship. Of course, there is no Bible authority for such things, but that did not matter. If a big contributor with deep pockets wanted his daughter to wear a robe and sing a solo during the worship on Sunday, they would oblige him. It truly grieves me to say it, but this kind of thing is going on in the church of Christ. Follow the pride, power, control, and the almighty dollar and you will see why there is so much apostasy in the Lord's church today.

A major area to consider in Catholicism's departure from "the faith" concerns what a person must do in order to be saved. The Roman Catholic Church decided that babies inherit sin and condemnation as a result of Adam's "Original Sin," therefore, infants are born sinful. Jesus did not teach that, He taught just the opposite (Mt. 18:1-6). What the Old Testament prophets taught about babies inheriting sin and condemnation, from Adam or anyone else, is diametrically opposed to Roman Catholic doctrine (Ezek. 18:20; 28:15). Paul wrote: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

The Roman Catholic Church decided to substitute sprinkling and/or pouring for baptism (immersion), thinking it would serve the purpose as well. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch knew what the Gospel taught about baptism. When Philip baptized the eunuch, they both went down into the water, then both came up out of the water (Acts 8:25-29). Paul described baptism as a burial in Romans 6:3-4.

A real moneymaker for Catholicism is its doctrine about the nonexistent place called "purgatory." According to this Catholic doctrine (another one which came from the devil because it did not come from God), purgatory is a "waiting place" in between heaven and hell. If you die in sin, you will go to purgatory, but your kinfolks and friends can pay your way out of that place. When that is done, you can

go into heaven. There is absolutely no Scripture for any of this. Purgatory, like everything else that is unique to Catholicism, is not mentioned in the Bible.

The list of departures from “the faith” by the apostate Roman Catholic Church, in its first twelve to fifteen centuries of existence, is seemingly endless. Time and space will not permit us to touch on them all and other things must be considered.

THE REFORMATION AND THE RESTORATION

In 1517, Martin Luther had seen enough of the corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. Although others had moved away from Catholicism, Luther is generally credited with beginning the Protestant Reformation. About this same time in Switzerland, Huldrych Zwingli was leading a movement to “reform” the Roman Catholic Church, just as Luther was doing in Germany. In this same era, John Calvin was born in France. He too would be instrumental in the “reformation.” Others, including Henry VIII of England, from all over Europe joined in the revolt against Catholicism. They “protested” the stagnant corruption that had permeated the Roman Catholic Church from top to bottom. Unfortunately, the Protestants only wanted to “reform” the Roman Catholic Church, not “restore” the New Testament church. The problem was that the Roman Catholic Church had departed so far from “the faith” revealed in the Gospel that “reformation” was out of the question. Catholicism had to be rejected and abandoned in toto.

Even before the turn of the nineteenth century, many in religion realized that the Protestant Reformation was a failure when it came to reforming the Catholic Church. If anything, in a number of ways, it had made matters even worse. Several men, in different parts of the world, recognized that what was needed was a return all the way back to the New Testament and a “restoration” of the original church.

Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell and his father, Thomas Campbell, were great leaders in the effort to bring men back to New Testament Christianity. Be assured, they are not the founders of the church of which I am a member. Today, some doctrinally diluted brethren and congregations are claiming to be “adherents of the American Restoration Movement led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone.” They further state: “Their leadership and the manner in which they interpreted scripture continues to shape us today.” Does the leadership of these men still shape us today? These are the same

kind of arguments that denominationalists have put forth for decades. Now, our own brethren are touting them in their bulletins and on their websites. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is presented in the pages of the New Testament, that gives us authority for what we believe, preach, and practice—not any man (or men) in the 1800s.

The New Testament pattern for the church is perfect. However, that does not prevent men from finding ways to move in the doctrines of demons and cause brethren to go astray and depart from “the faith.”

DOCTRINES OF DEMONS SPLIT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church of Christ experienced tremendous growth. Sadly, the same human factors (pride, money, power, and control) that led people away from the apostolic pattern set forth in the New Testament into Roman Catholicism are ever present. In the 1850s, a congregation in Midway, Kentucky, brought a melodeon into its church building, planning to use it in worship. Before it could be utilized, some who rejected its use removed it. Those advocating the use of instrumental music in worship brought in another one to replace it. This episode marks the first known use of instrumental music in worship among the churches of Christ.

Brothers Addison and Randolph Clark, both members of the Lord’s church, owned and conducted a school in Fort Worth, Texas, between 1869 and 1873. Fort Worth was somewhat rowdy in those days. A man, named Pleasant Thorp, had begun a community three miles out of Granbury, Texas. There was a sulphur water spring located there, thus the community was named Thorp Spring. Mr. Thorp approached Addison and Randolph, and their supportive father, Joseph Clark, about starting a college in Thorp Spring.

The idea appealed to the Clarks and, in 1873, the college had its beginning. It was called Add-Ran College. Although the school did not include the word “Christian” in its name, it was a true Christian college, complete with a Bible department and daily chapel services. By 1877, the enrollment was 201 students. The largest enrollment, 445 students, was enjoyed by the school in 1893.

Primarily because of the financial difficulties being experienced by the growing school, in 1890, the Clarks had to deed over the school’s property to a new board and the name was changed to Add-Ran Christian University. The Clarks continued to teach and were still in

charge of the school's day-to-day activities. This university had a tremendous influence over Texas, producing preachers, teachers, lawyers, and business men.

Lamentably, the school had problems besides those having to do with finances. Some of the students had come from congregations which were using the instrument in their worship. In February, 1894, there was a Gospel meeting there at the university. Addison Clark had promised some of the liberal students that the organ could be used in the services of this meeting.

Before the services began, a discussion was conducted at the front of the building. Miss Bertha Mason was at the organ ready to play. Tensions were high. A petition had been brought forth by Joseph Clark, the father of Addison and Randolph, who by this time was a 78 year old man on a cane. Addison said he had told those students the organ could be used and he could not go back on his word. He turned to the organist and said, "play on, Miss Bertha." As the organ and singing began, Joseph Clark and his wife began to walk out.

It depends a little on who you read, but it was reported that about 140 people followed the elder Clark out of the building. It has been said that one could hear tapping of that cane as he walked out. It was also said that it could be observed that some of those who stayed wept as the conservatives walked out. After that episode, the next year the enrollment was only 294, the lowest it had been in 16 years. On Christmas day, 1895, (about a year-and-a-half after the organ episode) the university moved to Waco, Texas. Eventually the university moved to Fort Worth.¹² Today, it is called Texas Christian University. You can drive down by the campus of TCU and see the big statues of two young men. Their names are Addison and Randolph Clark.

This did not have to happen, but it did. The question is: "Why did this happen?" The answer is obvious. It happened because men, thinking more highly of themselves than they should, permitted the doctrines of demons to have their way. Historically, the 1906 U.S. Census made "official" the split that had already occurred between the Christian Church and churches of Christ. Indeed, because the Christian Church was a party to the missionary society and used instrumental music in its worship, it was a different body from the churches of Christ. With the passing of time, the Christian Church's doctrinal drift into full-fledged denominationalism only widened the gap between it and the churches of Christ.

MODERN DAY DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH

Interestingly, by 1906, when the split over the missionary society and instrumental music was “officially” recognized, we had already lost many of our church buildings and some, if not all, of our colleges. More would be lost in the immediate years that followed. As a result of those losses, many brethren inserted a clause in the deed to their church buildings and property that if instrumental music was ever brought in, the building and property would revert back to its original owner. The language varied some, but that was the intent.

The devil never rests. Over the last forty years some of us have seen history repeating itself. The same things have been happening that happened a century ago, and they are happening for the same reasons. Popularity, power and control, money, pride, and sometimes “because my kids want it,” have once again allowed the doctrines of demons to get a foothold among God’s people.

Here in Lubbock County, though not in the city of Lubbock, I saw a congregation split. The larger group, composed of liberal brethren, moved out and built a building on the west side of their town. Why did they not just take over the nice, big building in which the original congregation had been? I suspect the deed had one of those clauses in it.

Another prime example of apostasy is the North Richland Hills congregation in the Fort Worth area. For years (1967 - 2006), they had the same kind of basic clause in their Articles of Incorporation, which have to be filed with the State of Texas, saying that no instrumental music was to be used in worship in their building. In November, 2006, they amended their Articles of Incorporation, deleting language about not using the instrument. Within THREE days of filing that amendment, it was announced to the congregation that there would be an instrumental service with communion served on Saturday nights.¹³ What basis did they have for starting this reprobate worship? Rick Atchley, described as the “Senior Minister” of the congregation, reported that he had a “revelation” from the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ He got it from some kind of a spirit all right, but it was not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks only through the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16). Atchley got his “revelation” from the same source the denominationalists get theirs, the “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). His message, as well as his arguments for the instrument’s use, are the same ones the denominationalists have been using for years.

This is nothing new, it is just more prevalent and getting closer to home. Brethren do not know or do not want to know about such troubles, especially when it comes to our schools. Recently, a big “to-do” was made when Royce Money and Abilene Christian University apologized to the Christian Church for causing the split over instrumental music in 1906. Yet, there are still well-meaning older farmers all over Texas that are sending their money and their grandchildren to what they still fondly remember and call ACC. Brethren, the ACC of old was indeed a wonderful school, but the ACU of today is NOT the ACC of old.

We need to recognize that there are certain tools or means by which “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1) enter in among the Lord’s people. These same tools or means have been used for 200 years. One of them is the schools.

Whoever controls the schools gets to teach whatever they want. Ultimately, it is the financial supporters of the schools who can change this. If the liberal schools stopped receiving financial support and students from the members of the church, they would clean house doctrinally or close down. Remember TCU! When most of our preachers are coming out of liberal schools, what do you think the congregations are going to be taught from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday?

Secondly, there are some brotherhood papers, and now, possibly websites, being used by brethren who are trying “to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). What brethren read tends to go a long way towards what they believe and practice. This includes preacher favoritism. I am always amused when I run into old acquaintances who have gone the liberal route. Most usually they will tell me to be careful about following after men. I know that if I were following after them or their kind there would be no such warnings. What they are really saying is: “Be careful about following after men ... if they disagree with me!” Preacheritis is alive and well.

Thirdly, there is the general attitude of approach. Some liberal brethren will love you to death, unless you disagree with them. Then, they accuse you of being the unloving one. We do need to show care and concern for people. We do need to be friendlier to visitors in our assemblies. We do need to give new converts, and sometimes new members from other congregations, room to grow. No one knows everything they need to know when they are starting out. We must be

patient with these new converts who are not used to Biblical terminology and Scriptural worship. If they are what they ought to be, are cultivated properly, and are fed a diet of “the sincere milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2), they will grow spiritually.

CONCLUSION

There is an answer to these “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” John, writing by inspiration, says:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 Jn. 9-11).

There is a choice that every person of the age of accountability has to make. In making this choice one must ask himself: “Will I follow the doctrine of Christ and remain faithful to God, or will I follow the doctrines of demons and depart from ‘the faith’?”

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Joseph Meador, “The Explicit Warning of Apostasy” *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX.: Valid Publications, Inc., 2001), 144.

³ Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers, Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), 128.

⁴ Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers,) 19.

⁵ Robert R. Taylor, *Studies in First and Second Timothy*, The Living Way Series (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, n.d.), 53.

⁶ E.M. Zerr, *Bible Commentary* (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1954), 6:176.

⁷ Taylor, 53.

⁸ Johnny Ramsey, “The Threat of Apostasy-The Faithful Minister Reacts Through Warning, Refutation, and Fortification” *The Epistles of I and II Timothy, Titus*, ed. Curtis Cates (Pensacola, FL: Austin McGary and Co., 1986), 134.

⁹ Saunders, William, “Transubstantiation,” *Arlington Catholic Herald*.

¹⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database*. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft.

¹¹ Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*, 3d ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1999), 84.

¹² Don Morris, *Add-Ran and Its Heirs-Tract* (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications; 1973), 2-10.

¹³ Alan E. Highers, Editorial, *Spiritual Sword*, 38.3 (April 2007): 3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

SATAN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Denny Petrillo



Denny Petrillo was born in Denver, Colorado. He and his wife, the former Kathy Roberts have two sons and one daughter. Petrillo earned an A.A. degree from York College, a B.A. degree from Harding University, an M.A. degree from Harding Graduate School of Religion, and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Nebraska. He is a graduate of the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, Colorado. Petrillo is presently the President of the Bear Valley Bible Institute and teaches courses there

INTRODUCTION¹

Satan ruined everything. The first two chapters of Genesis present a wonderful beginning which includes the creation story and the insertion of man, God's crowning creation, into the Garden of Eden. How could it be more perfect? The Garden of Eden is presented as a stunningly beautiful place, with fruit trees everywhere, flowing rivers, and precious metals in abundance. God is present in the Garden with man (Gen. 3:8). God even took care of man's loneliness by creating woman for him. All is well.

Yet, as one continues reading, the perfect situation in the perfect setting is soon brought to an end. Satan is introduced into the narrative. And, as every reader knows, Satan initiated the fall of man, his separation from God and his removal from the Garden.

This Genesis account is foundational to so many teachings of the Bible. It introduces us to theologically important topics like: Satan, sin, temptation, law, separation, consequences, forgiveness, et cetera. Imagine trying to understand what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:3; Romans 5:12-21; and 1 Timothy 2:9-15 without Genesis 3:1-6. Imagine attempting to grasp what John was referring to in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 or Jesus in Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; Luke 10:18 and John 8:44 without this text.

There are those who question many aspects of this narrative. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider Satan and his activity in five categories: 1) The historicity of Satan in the Genesis account, 2) The location of Satan's first temptation, 3) The role of the serpent in the work of Satan, 4) The methodology used by Satan to tempt Eve, and 5)

The short term and long term consequences of Satan's success in the Garden.

IS THE ACCOUNT OF SATAN IN THE GARDEN MYTH?

The first eleven chapters of Genesis have been much maligned. College, university and seminary professors all over the United States and the world have attempted to discredit these chapters. Generally, there are three views. One view is that Chapters 1-11 (and, therefore our section in 3:1-6) are nothing more than a fable, a fanciful myth that has evolved through time.

If one accepts that Genesis contains at least *some* world view, then the creation account must be either literal or non-literal. For the theistic evolutionist, of course, that question already has been answered. There is no possibility whatsoever that a theistic evolutionist will accept the Genesis account as literal history, since to do so would align it squarely against evolution. Eventually, then, the events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Genesis somehow must be relegated to the status of a myth or an allegory; they *cannot* be viewed as literal, historical events that actually transpired. This simply is not an option for the theistic evolutionist.²

The view that Genesis 1-11 is a fable has a considerable number of weaknesses. It does not account for the many references to these chapters throughout both the Old and New Testaments; it does not offer an explanation of how Jesus could refer to these events, portraying them as historical; it does not fit the nature of mythological literature; nor does it account for the fact that for centuries these chapters were the foundation for beliefs in a number of civilizations.

Another position is that chapters 1-11 are allegorical, or a combination of history and allegory. To this point, Horsley said:

No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in one continued narrative, without any intimation of a transition from one to the other. If, therefore, any part of this narrative be matter of fact, no part is allegorical. On the other hand, if any part be allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact: and the consequence of this will be, that every thing in every part of the whole narrative must be allegorical. If the formation of the woman out of the man be allegory, the woman must be an allegorical woman. The man therefore must be an allegorical man; for of such a man only the allegorical woman will be a meet companion. If the man is allegorical, his paradise will be an

allegorical garden; the trees that grow in it, allegorical trees; the rivers that watered it, allegorical rivers; and thus we may ascend to the very beginning of the creation; and conclude at last that the heavens are allegorical heavens, and the earth an allegorical earth. Thus the whole history of the creation will be an allegory, of which the real subject is not disclosed; and in this absurdity the scheme of allegorizing ends.³

The allegorical view is so full of holes and weaknesses that no logically thinking person would adopt it. The language is not allegorical, plus the proposed meanings of the allegories are so fanciful and wildly speculative that the entire section becomes worthless (because one cannot possibly understand what the allegorical symbols represent). In addition, one might wonder why numerous Old Testament writers and Jesus, Paul, and John regarded this material as true history.

A third perspective is that Chapters 1-11 are literal. This is certainly the correct view. Plus, its being literal does not prohibit our seeing deeper spiritual truths than what this text reveals (for example, Satan is not personally named here, but we find out later that he was the force that used the serpent).

That it is a literal account is proven, first, by the fact that it is a part of a continuous history. The narrative goes on without a break into all subsequent history. If this record be fable and not history, the historical character of the entire Pentateuch is to be called in question, for none could point out a convenient place where early fable becomes history. The argument based on a *continuous* history cannot be refuted. The story is as clearly literal at its beginning as it is at its end, or at any point in its progress. In the second place, the literal character of this record is evidenced by the fact that reference is made to it in all candor in later Scriptures and is there made the basis of instruction and appeal which would have no weight if drawn from a fable. The Bible, as a whole and without exception, treats the Genesis record as literal. This suggests an extensive theme which can be pursued here only to a limited degree.⁴

The objections offered to our text (Gen. 3:1-6) always center around three parts: Satan, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Of course, naturalists are not going to acknowledge the existence of any spiritual being, good or evil. So, they will quickly dismiss the existence of Satan, God, and trees that had special powers. Yet, those who acknowledge the existence of God can also logically

reason to the existence of Satan. Furthermore, since God frequently used instruments to teach spiritual truths (Moses' staff, the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites, the implements in the tabernacle, etc.), it is not unreasonable that he should here employ trees. God could have created man to be immortal, and he could have given him the knowledge of good and evil, but the design of the garden was to test man's faithfulness. Having access to the forbidden fruit was necessary if God was going to be consistent with his desire for man to be a free moral being. Thus, everything mentioned in this text should not only be viewed as historical, but also seen as absolutely necessary. So much is understood by Satan, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life being literal; so much confusion is created by their being figurative.

THE LOCATION OF SATAN'S FIRST TEMPTATION: EDEN

Scholars, archaeologists and Bible students have been fascinated with the Garden of Eden. As noted earlier, the Biblical description of it is clearly meant to be understood as literal and historical. This being the case, it logically creates interest in where this perfect place is located. Years of scholarly research and investigation have produced no consensus. As one considers the vast amount of literature, dozens of locations have been promoted: East Asia, North Pole, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Sumeria, Armenia or possibly in Mesopotamia. The most fanciful, of course, is that postulated by the Mormon church. Their contention is that the Garden is found in Jackson County, Missouri, because Adam, the first man, lived in Adam-ondi-Ahman (north of Kansas City). When Adam was "kicked out" of the Garden (so they say), he moved to nearby Daviess County.⁵

The Biblical account offers the following pieces of evidence regarding the location of Eden:

- Eden was a place where God planted a garden, and this garden was situated in the eastern part of Eden (Gen. 2:8).
- A river from Eden watered the garden as it flowed through (Gen. 2:10)
- The river branched into four rivers as it exited the garden (Gen. 2:10)
- The rivers are called by name, three of which are associated with known geographical landmarks (Gen. 2:11-14).

While this information is sufficient to eliminate Missouri as a viable option (especially since the Euphrates is mentioned, and we know for certain where that river is located), it still opens the door to a few possibilities, the most logical to be somewhere in the Mesopotamian valley. R.K. Harrison said: “On the basis of currently available information it would appear that the one that locates Eden near the head of the Persian Gulf combines the greatest number of probabilities of every kind.”⁶

Of course, those who discredit Eden as being a real place point out that no such place exists today. This argument is shallow, however, in light of the fact that many areas on the earth are no longer as they once were. Evidence shows that at one time the North Pole enjoyed a temperate climate, but that is certainly not the case now. Equally, there is evidence that at one time the entire planet had a temperate climate. The earth has undergone numerous changes over the years, with the greatest impact being Noah’s flood. It is certainly logical to argue that the flood removed Eden from the face of the earth as well as made other ecological and climate changes.⁷

The Garden is described in beautiful language, and it serves as the ideal location for man to live and to flourish. It is a fitting testimony to God’s love and care for Adam and Eve. Plus, the presence of God in the Garden magnifies how special this place was. All of these points, however, only serve to illustrate the foolishness of sin. How could Satan possibly come up with a temptation that would entice Eve when she was given so much? In view of all of the liberties provided (they could eat of every tree but one), the beauty of the Garden, plus the consequences of sin (death), how did Satan pull this off? It is only when we appreciate that Eden was a literal place can we comprehend the full impact of Satan’s power in temptation.

THE ROLE OF THE SERPENT IN THE WORK OF SATAN

The fundamental question is: Was the serpent Satan, or did Satan merely use the serpent as his instrument? Five initial observations need to be made. *First*, there is nothing in the Genesis account to identify the tempter as Satan. The text merely identifies him as the “serpent.” *Second*, it is not until Revelation 12:9 that Satan is called the “the old serpent,” thus using the terminology unique to the Genesis account. *Third*, the New Testament identifies Satan as the tempter in the garden (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). *Fourth*, the oldest Jewish interpretation

(found in the third century B.C. Septuagint) argued that the serpent was merely symbolic of Satan (Palestinian Targums: Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti I and Fragments).⁸ *Fifth*, it is significant that the condemnation issued in Genesis 3:15 is only to the serpent, not to Satan.

With these points in view, it seems most logical to argue that Satan assumed the body of the serpent, using it as his instrument to tempt Eve. If this view be correct, there are several interesting observations to be made.

First, it demonstrates the ability of Satan to inhabit the body of one of God's creatures. This point ought not to surprise us, because we see frequent demon possession in humans in the first century. In addition, it reminds us of the Lord speaking to Balaam through a donkey in Numbers 22:28.

The serpent is not a merely symbolical term applied to Satan; nor was it only the form which Satan assumed; but it was a real serpent, perverted by Satan to be the instrument of his temptation (vv. 1 and 14). The possibility of such a perversion, or of the evil spirit using an animal for his own purposes, is not to be explained merely on the ground of the supremacy of spirit over nature, but also from the connection established in the creation itself between heaven and earth; and still more, from the position originally assigned by the Creator to the spirits of heaven in relation to the creatures of earth.⁹

Second, it shows the craftiness of Satan. He knew that if he should approach Eve in human form, his evil intentions would have been revealed, because Eve certainly knew that the only humans in the Garden were Adam and herself (and seeing another would have frightened her or at least made her suspicious). In addition, Satan would not have wanted to show himself to Eve in his spiritual state lest he frighten her with his superior condition and ability. Rather, Satan chose an animal that Eve would have recognized as an inhabitant of the Garden. Her familiarity with serpents would have reduced the level of fear and made her more comfortable in his presence. Also, it needs to be noted that the form of this creature, if the serpent was a snake, apparently was not like snakes today. Rather, Moses simply describes the serpent as one of the beasts "of the field which Jehovah God had made" (Gen. 3:1).

Third, it manifests the character of Satan. The Genesis account notes that the serpent was more “subtle” than any beast of the field that God had made. This word is the Hebrew *a’rum*. Its basic meaning is “nude” or “naked.” This is the word that was used to describe Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:25—“And they were both *naked*, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (cf. Gen. 3:7, 10, emphasis added). The word itself is used in both a good sense and a bad sense. Proverbs 12:16 and 13:16 both recognize the value of being “prudent” and “cautious.” Yet, the Old Testament also uses this word in an evil sense. Job 5:12 claims that God frustrates the plotting of the “shrewd.” Job 15:5 claims that the evil man chooses the language of the “crafty.” Exodus 21:14 condemns the one who plots to kill his neighbor through “craftiness.” Joshua 9:4 identifies the “crafty” approach of the Gibeonites to deceive Israel. Therefore, it seems clear that Satan picked a creature that was more like his nature, or one that would manifest the characteristics that he most admired. Satan needed to deceive or trick Eve. Choosing a creature that had an ability to be subtle was a perfect fit.

Fourth, it demonstrates the awareness of Satan. He was well aware of the command of God, and he knew exactly what needed to be done to bring about the fall of man. What is more, knowing the command of God, Satan also had to devise an approach that would reduce the significance and consequences should one violate God’s edict.

THE METHODOLOGY USED BY SATAN TO TEMPT EVE

As previously noted, Satan picked an animal that was “crafty,” because he himself is crafty. His approach with Eve was brilliant, simple and effective. We shall analyze the approach of Satan in sections.

First, Satan began by asking a simple question: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1). On its surface this seems like a harmless question. What could be so bad about simply asking about God’s ruling? What did God say? However, in this approach one notices a subtle attempt to expose the injustice of God. “Did God restrict you from every/any tree in the garden?” Also, the question was posed in such a way as to draw out the feelings of the woman, and her perception of God’s ordinance.

Second, the question does not give God the full respect He deserves. Looking at the entire text, we see that the phrase “Jehovah God” is used frequently, including verse one: “Now the serpent was

more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made” (the phrase “Jehovah God” occurred 11 times in chapter 2). By omitting the personal name of the Lord, Satan accomplishes his primary goal: minimizing the power of the Lawgiver. Later on, he will claim that by eating of the forbidden tree, Eve will also achieve godhead, being every bit as powerful as God.

Third, Satan capitalized upon Eve’s weakness. Whether Satan perceived resentment in her response cannot be proven with certainty. Though from her response, “neither shall ye touch it” (Gen. 3:3), it seems that Eve may have demonstrated a bold addition to the divine command. If God had not actually made that statement to Adam and Eve, then Eve’s response was no small alteration to what God had said!

Fourth, Satan presents an overt contradiction to God’s edict. He boldly asserts: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). This statement is as startling as it is audacious. In making it, Satan is equating himself with the One who made the law; or better, showing himself superior to the Lawgiver. Somehow, Satan knows the truth. Somehow, Satan knows better the true result of violation. Inherent in this claim is that Satan himself will protect them; that he will be able to bring about a different result than the one God decreed.

Fifth, Satan minimizes or reduces to insignificance the consequence of violating God’s command. Here he asserts: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). God said she would die, Satan says she will not. So, who is to be believed? Satan is betting that he will be trusted. If he can get Eve to believe that God will *not do* what He said He would do, then he wins.

Sixth, Satan glorifies the value or benefits of sin. Here, he explains to Eve that by eating, she will achieve the ultimate; she will “be as God” (Gen. 3:5). It has always been a ploy of Satan to sell the benefits over the consequences. The pleasures of sin are worth it, so he claims. The word “God” appears twice in Genesis 3:5, and it is significant. Virtually, Satan is saying, “God knows that you will become gods yourselves,” implying that God is withholding a wonderful blessing to them. Equally, this implies a sick and covetous jealousy on the part of God. He does not want to share His “godship” with anyone else. In addition, Satan claims that by eating, her “eyes shall be opened,” and that she will be able to discern between “good and evil.” This proposition seemed strangely attractive to Eve. Perhaps, it was only the first part that proved attractive (you shall become as God), and that she gave

little thought to the second part. Or, perhaps she saw some benefit in being able to discern between good and evil (a benefit that escapes the modern student, since we so clearly see the horrors evil has brought into the world).

Since Adam and Eve had known enough of the difference between right and wrong to form a basis for right action concerning the will of God as involved in the one prohibition placed upon them, it is evident that the new knowledge of good and evil which came to them through their disobedience was deeper and of a different character. Though there was nothing attractive in the exploit of coming to know evil by the sorrow which the experience of it secures and the value of good by the loss of it, there is, nevertheless, a strange zest in free action.¹⁰

Seventh, Satan appeals to three areas of human weakness. John notes that sin takes shape in three distinct categories: “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life” (1 Jn. 2:15-16). We should note the similarities individually.

The Lust Of The Flesh

The Genesis account states that Eve saw the forbidden fruit as “good for food” (Gen. 3:6). There was no logical reason to think that this fruit, whatever it was, would taste better than the many other fruits that were freely available. The draw of the prohibited, the mystery of the restricted, and the allure of the forbidden have caused many to stumble and to sin.

The Lust Of The Eyes

Eve saw that the fruit “was a delight to the eyes” (Gen. 3:6). Some might suppose that God made this particular fruit more attractive and appealing than the other fruit in the Garden. Such might be the case, although the text does not prove it either way. Simply stated, the fruit looked good. Again, it may have looked even better when the divine prohibition was placed upon eating it. This is why it is called a “lust.”

The Boastful Pride Of Life

Eve saw “that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). She determined that she could improve herself, even to the point of being “god,” by eating. This prideful attitude proved motivation enough. Rather than being content in her humble state as a child of the

Almighty God, she allowed this pride to induce her to act. She wanted a greater position.

THE SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF SATAN'S SUCCESS

Short Term Consequences

Satan's victory in the Garden, in many ways, was surprisingly easy. It would be interesting to know what his "plan B" might have been had "plan A" failed. Unfortunately, it did not fail. Now Adam and Eve will experience the full consequences of their sin. As we consider this text, we can discern a number of short term consequences.

First, Satan learned about mankind's lusts. Despite the fact that Eve had an abundance of fruit from which to eat, there is always an allure for the forbidden. Her desire for this fruit was exposed in two categories: lust of the eyes ("delight to the eyes") and lust of the flesh ("good for food"). By learning about man's lusts, Satan found a powerful way to tempt man to sin. From this point on, lust would be a powerful tool in Satan's hands. The problem of lust is frequently seen in the book of Ezekiel (16:26; 23:5, 7-9, 11-12, 16, 20; 33:31). Jesus warns about the dangers of lust (Mt. 5:28), and Paul says that men can become so ingrained in lustful behavior that God will give up on them (Rom. 1:24). He pleads that we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies so that "ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12; cf. 13:14). Paul also notes how the days before putting on Christ are spent "serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Tit. 3:3). James identifies the problem of sin, saying: "[E]ach man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14).

Second, Satan learned about man's prideful nature. Eve was certainly attracted to the promise that she would become "as God" if she would eat. In addition, the promise of increased knowledge would have been a point of pride. As with lust, Satan has frequently used man's pride as a way to bring him down. Pride is condemned in over fifty passages in the Old Testament alone. Asaph noted that with the wicked "pride is as a chain about their neck; Violence covereth them as a garment" (Ps. 73:6). Solomon warns: "Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro. 16:18). God says: "Pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, And the perverse mouth, do I hate" (Pro. 8:13). As noted earlier, John said that the boastful "pride of life" does not originate with God, but is of the world (1 Jn. 2:16).

Third, Satan learned how one person can influence another person to sin. After Eve had eaten, the text simply says that “she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6).¹¹ Why did Adam also yield to the sin? Was it because Eve did not die (as God had said) or did they determine that the consequences were insignificant or untrue? Did he also like the look of the fruit and did its appearance appeal to his lusts? Did he determine that he could not live without Eve, and so whatever punishment she would endure he would endure with her? Paul reveals: “Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14). Whatever motivated Adam to sin, he did it with his eyes wide-open, fully aware of what he was doing. Satan did not trick him. Still, by getting the woman to sin he succeeded in getting the man to follow.

Fourth, Satan learned how God would respond to sin. As the Genesis text notes, God punished both Adam and Eve in ways that would impact them immediately (removal from the Garden), and also for the rest of their lives (pain in childbirth, difficulty in getting the earth to be productive). He also learned what “death” meant. God had declared that the day they ate they would surely die. Death meant separation from God. Whereas Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God in the Garden, when they were removed from the Garden they also were separated from God. Actually, they “died” in two ways, one physical and one spiritual. They died physically, in that, from that day forward they began the road to death. Without continual access to the Tree of Life, they were destined to grow old and die. In addition, they died spiritually. Sin separates one from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Paul writes that one is “dead” in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

Long Term Consequences

It is clear that the sin of the first parents had a profound impact on all of mankind. Here are a few of those enduring consequences.

First, it set an example that all men, in every succeeding generation, has followed. The first sin is always the most important sin. Adam crossed that line, violating God’s mandate, and so men ever since have equally crossed that line. Paul noted the significance of this first sin with the words, “through one man sin entered into the world” (Rom. 5:12). Before, the world knew of no sin. Now, because of Adam, sin was introduced into this previously pristine, sinless realm. It must be stressed that this does not mean, as some have supposed, that Adam’s

sin was passed on, or inherited by future generations (known as the “Doctrine of Original Sin”). Paul goes on to clearly state, “for that all sinned,” in the same verse. Earlier he noted: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10) and that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Second, it brought death into the world. God’s distinct prohibition to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil also had a certain consequence—*death*. Paul explains that it was through the transgression of Adam that sin entered into the world, and death through sin (Rom. 5:12). It is Satan’s desire for man to experience the same separation from God that he received when he rebelled against God. Paul points out that, with each man who sins (like Adam sinned), he equally will die. The remainder of this section (Rom. 5:12-21) is to identify the good news of how the work of Christ has enabled us to become righteous and to enjoy the blessings of eternal life (v. 21).

Third, we learned about the insidious nature of sin and about the nature of Satan, the tempter.¹²

Very much has been written with reference to the action of the will of unfallen Adam. The problem is difficult and psychological in character. The influence of the tempter over Adam cannot be estimated. There was a kingdom of evil already abroad in the universe when Adam was created. God had permitted the fall of the greatest of the angels and he had led, by the same permissive will, an unnumbered host of angels into rebellion against God. The problem arises rather with Adam’s own desires. If he were lusting after forbidden knowledge and independence of God, he was fallen already. The situation is exceeded in complexity only by the fall of Satan; in which instance there was no tempter nor was there any inward urge which springs from a fallen nature. Yet Satan was lifted up with pride (1 Tim. 3:6) and became subject to unholy ambition desiring to reach beyond the sphere into which he was placed by creation—a sphere determined by infinite wisdom, in which he might know the benefit of infinite power, and be sustained and blessed by infinite love. The same sin is reenacted by Adam. It is written: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). The precise nature of sin was not changed by its entrance into the world.¹³

Fourth, Adam's sin has proven to be the springboard to centuries of failure. His sin reminds mankind of our own frailties and weaknesses. One might have had hope of sinlessness if the first man had succeeded, but Adam's failure merely represents the failure of all mankind.

The mental process through which Eve passed is more fully disclosed than that through which Adam passed. She had observed the tree and was aware of the divinely imposed restrictions placed upon it, but quite suddenly she saw that it was beautiful to the eye, that it was good for food, and that it offered an avenue into greater wisdom. These new impressions were but for the moment. Had they been resisted, the test would have passed forever. The experience of these two parents is not a norm or pattern of temptations which beset fallen humanity, whose experience is that of a ceaseless stress and trial with the depressing consciousness of many failures and defeats.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

There is much to be learned by studying the work of Satan in the Garden. Hopefully, by learning about his methods we can be aware of his character and his tactics (1 Pet. 5:8). As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, we need to be alert so "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Equally, we can learn something about ourselves through what Adam and Eve did. They had so much going for them, and thus so much to lose (and, of course, did lose). We have "every spiritual blessing" by being in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Like Adam and Eve, we have much to lose. We cannot allow Satan to be victorious over us.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Bert Thompson, "Genesis 1 thru 11—Mythical or Historical?" *Reason & Revelation* 2:9 (September 1982): 37-40. Revised 2001.

³ Quoted in Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Anthropology: Part 6." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 101:403 (July 1944): 270.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Tenth Mormon President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "In accord with the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, we teach that the Garden of Eden was on the American continent located where the city of Zion, or the

New Jerusalem will be built. When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden, they eventually dwelt at a place called Adam-ondi-Ahman, situated in what is now Daviess County, Missouri” (*Doctrines of Salvation* 3:74). Mormon Apostle John Widtsoe wrote: “Since Adam called together seven generations of his descendants at Adam-ondi-Ahman, it can well be believed that there was his old homestead. If so, the Garden of Eden was probably not far distant, for it was the entrance at the east of the Garden which was closed against them at the time of the ‘fall’ (Genesis 3:24). In fact, it has been commonly understood among the Latter-day Saints, from the teachings of the Prophet, that the temple was to be built in or near the location of the Garden of Eden” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 396). As a side note, the Mormon church also contends that this is the location on which Noah built the ark. In a sermon delivered by Orson Pratt, the LDS Apostle concurred with the aforementioned statements by saying: “We may, however, observe, that so far as new revelation has given us information on this subject, this Continent of ours may be ranked among the first lands occupied by the human family. The very first man who had dominion on the face of the earth, under the direction of the Heavens, once dwelt on this Continent, His name was Adam.” Pratt continued by saying, “It was on this land where both Noah built his ark, which was blown by the winds of Heaven away to the east, and landed on Ararat” (*Journal of Discourses* 12:338).

⁶ Roland K. Harrison, “Eden,” in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982).

⁷ “Shifting river beds and the changing configuration of the country in the course of millenniums, due to accumulations of enormous deposits of river silt, render such a task virtually impossible. The important thing is that Genesis locates the beginning of human life in the very region which archeological research has demonstrated to be the cradle of civilization.” Merrill F. Unger, “Archeology and Genesis 3-4.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110:437 (Jan 1953): 12.

⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Dallas, TX: Word Incorporated, 2002). 80.

⁹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:58.

¹⁰ Chafer, 279.

¹¹ Michael F. Stitzinger, “Genesis 1-3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship.” *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (Spring 1981): 23.

¹² “Even without this striking but uncertain evidence, the Devil has quite clearly, if inadvertently, let out what his motives have been right along. When ‘the old serpent’ met the first pair [the first Adam] in the Garden and suggested his own goal as a goal for the man and his wife, he said, ‘ye shall be as God’ (Gen. 3:5). When ‘late in time’ Satan met the ‘last Adam’ in the

temptation contest, and knowing, as did the demons, that he was the “holy one of God” (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34), he tempted Jesus, “and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Mt. 4:8-9). This reveals an unmistakable ambition to be like God, to replace him as object of universal worship. In other words, Satan’s basic motive is pride. It may be called selfishness.” Robert D. Culver, “The Nature and Origin of Evil.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129:514 (April 1972):114.

¹³ Chafer, 280.

¹⁴ Chafer, 282.

HELL: THE PLACE PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL

H.D. Simmons



H.D. Simmons was born in Seminole, Texas, and is married to the former Linda McAnally. They have two sons and two grandchildren. Simmons graduated from the Preston Road School of Preaching in Dallas. He received a B.S. degree at East Texas State and an M.S. degree from Abilene Christian University. Simmons has done mission work in Jamaica for several years. He is the preacher for the Portland Church of Christ, in Portland, Texas, and directs the Gulf Coast Lectureship there.

INTRODUCTION¹

For a considerable time, there have been many voices opposing the concept of hell as a place of eternal punishment. One of the more violent voices opposing the idea was the English agnostic philosopher Bertrand Russell. He wrote an essay, entitled *Why I Am Not A Christian*, pointing out what he believed to be moral defects in the teachings of Jesus. One of these “defects” was the Lord’s teaching on the subject of hell. Russell said: “I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture.”²

The concept of *hell* as a place of eternal punishment for the ungodly is quite shocking for the average individual and often seems to be not palatable for the liberal mind-set of the American culture. Multitudes in America and around the world believe that God will not allow anyone to be eternally punished. Many individuals simply cast aside the idea of the existence of hell. It is not so shocking that many unbelievers consider the idea of hell quite repugnant; however, it is very alarming that many who say they believe the Bible object to the Bible’s clear teaching on this matter. One philosopher doing research on the subject of hell at the Berkeley University Library said that almost all the books on the subject were very old and in storage. Then he said he found the very idea of hell as both incredible and repulsive, that the very idea of hell is the maximum of evil.³ In an oral debate

concerning the existence of God, this philosopher clearly denied the existence of hell.

God's people must be prepared to accept whatever is taught in the Bible concerning the correct concept of hell. It seems that man has often had a difficult time in accepting the idea of hell as being a place of eternal punishment for the ungodly. This difficulty will, in all likelihood, be intensified in the future, both inside and outside of the Lord's church. Yet, God's church must believe and obey the Scriptures, not the changing fads of culture. The apostles said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The deciding factor concerning the subject of hell is not one's culture; the deciding factor must be what God's Word says about the matter.⁴

Why do so many individuals deny the existence of hell, in spite of the clear teaching of God's Word on this subject? Man is restricted in his understanding by various factors. These include: 1) Time, 2) Experience, 3) Knowledge, and 4) Ability. Man's sense of plausibility and possibility are affected by these elements. Some of the truths that God has revealed to man will challenge him to think beyond these restrictions. The concept of hell is one of the things that challenges these limitations. Thus, many in the world, and even some in the Lord's church, deny the reality of hell as a place of eternal punishment for all who rebel against God's will.⁵

Men deny the existence of hell for various reasons. Some of them are:

- *The concept of hell is irreconcilable with man's suppositions.* Many simply do not believe that they will give an account to God for how they have lived in this life.
- *Individuals deny the concept of hell because it is incompatible with their society.* American society is materialistic and filled with sensuality. Often little if anything is said in our society about spiritual and eternal things. Man rebels at the very thought of his actions being considered as sinful.
- *Likely hell is often denied because the very idea is irritating to man's sensitivities.* The thought of everlasting punishment is unsettling for many in our world.
- *Some do not believe in the punishment for the wicked after this life is over because they would rather that such is not the case.*

It is for the same reason the murderer would rather there was no death penalty.

- *The concept of hell may be denied by many simply because it is not a very pleasant teaching.* Naked truth is often not pleasant.
- *Many do not believe in hell because they think it is not what a loving God would allow.* Many do not think of the fact that the lips of Jesus taught the beautiful Sermon on the Mount; those same lips taught about mansions in heaven and eternal punishment in hell. He used the strongest possible terms and the most forcible language to impress on man the never ending punishment of the ungodly.

Despite protests to the contrary, there is incredible evidence for the existence of hell. It is fascinating that many who *do not* believe in hell *do* believe in heaven. Yet, many teachings in the Scriptures concerning the reality of hell are found in the same context as the Lord's teaching concerning heaven.⁶

One must realize that what his society thinks can influence him. American society for the most part cannot seem to reconcile Jesus with His awesome judgment. It cannot equate a loving Jesus with everlasting punishment in hell. The Lord did teach about love and concern for our fellow man. However, He also taught many things about hell as a place of everlasting punishment for those who reject Him; and, this same Jesus warns man about hell because of His love and concern for man.⁷

Man should consult the Bible concerning the concept of hell, or any other doctrine found in God's Word (Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Thess. 5:21; Gal. 1:8-9). When one finds God's thoughts on a matter, he should submit to the Word of his Creator. What this writer (or anyone else) feels or thinks about the matter is not the issue. The most important question about hell clearly is: *What does the Bible teach concerning the subject of hell?* The Bible has an abundance of information on the subject. Many are surprised to learn that Jesus spoke more about hell than any other preacher in the Bible. Buis aptly said: "The knowledge of hell comes almost exclusively from the teachings of Jesus."⁸ Surely, man will listen to Jesus (Heb. 2:1-4; Mt. 17:5; Jn. 2:5; 12:48). If man rejects His words then he has no hope, for Jesus is the last spokesman of our Creator (Heb. 10:18ff). Any individual who desires to please God will listen to the teaching of His Son, Jesus Christ! What are God's thoughts on this very important subject?

Dissenting Voices Among The Churches Of Christ

There is a number of well-known denominational groups that denies the concept of conscious eternal punishment for the ungodly.⁹ Surprisingly, there are even those in our brotherhood who are defending this view. During the Restoration Movement in America, a preacher named Jesse Ferguson said that he never believed the wicked would be cast into hell, and that upon the evidence offered he would never believe it. This preacher was strongly opposed by the faithful and his influence was not significant. Eventually, he went into denominationalism. However, false doctrines often have a way of appearing again among our brethren, and unfortunately, it seems this concept is challenging our brotherhood again. The opposing voices seem to be growing in our day. These voices must be strongly challenged and defeated, as they have been in the past.¹⁰

Current Dissenters

At this point in the study, consider some of the current dissenters in our brotherhood who oppose the concept of eternal punishment in hell for the ungodly. In 1982, Edward Fudge published his book, *The Fire That Consumes*. In this book, our brother advocates that punishment for the ungodly *will not* be for eternity—he does not believe hell will be an everlasting punishment. This work advocates what is called “total everlasting extinction.” In spite of the error taught in Fudge’s book, it seems some brethren have been so impressed with it that they may be ready to adopt this view. John Clayton, a popular lecturer among many congregations, has admitted that he has problems with the idea of God punishing forever those who reject Him. Furthermore, he highly recommends Fudge’s book in his own writings. F. LaGard Smith has often defended the idea that there will not be eternal conscious suffering for the wicked. He also contends that the souls of the wicked will be consumed, that God will destroy their souls, not punish them. Al Pickering also advocates the concept that there will be no eternal suffering for the wicked.¹¹ While brother Smith is to be commended for opposing liberal tendencies in our brotherhood, he must be opposed for teaching this false doctrine.

Scope Of This Study

When a monetary bill is called *counterfeit*, this means it is not the real thing, though it may appear to be real. Those trained in counterfeit detection utilize great amounts of time studying a genuine bill. If they

thoroughly know the real bill, then they will be able to detect the counterfeit bill. In this study, not all the false theories and false doctrines concerning hell will be considered. Rather most of the study will concentrate on the true teaching of the Bible concerning this subject. By clearly comprehending the Bible's teaching concerning hell, then one will be capable of recognizing error when it is being taught.

The Words Translated "Hell"

Unfortunately, there are three different words translated hell in the King James Version of the Bible. This may cause confusion for some regarding this matter. Though this study will not be involved in detailed study of the Greek and Hebrew languages, it is essential for one to ascertain precisely which word is being translated "hell" in each passage under consideration. Usually, the context will be an indication which word is being used by the Biblical writer.

Note the three words that are translated "hell" in the following chart.

The Various Words Translated "Hell" in the Bible

- *Sheol*
- *Hades*
- *Gehenna*

The word "hell" is used thirty-one times in the Old Testament. In each case, it is a translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*—the place of the dead. Ten times in the New Testament "hell" is a translation of the Greek word *hades*—the New Testament counterpart of *sheol*. *Hades* is found ten times in the Greek New Testament: nine times it is rendered "hell" and once it is rendered "grave." On one occasion, *tartarus* is translated "hell" (2 Pet. 2:4). Here, it denotes the place of punishment for the rebellious angels and it may be the place in *hades* where the wicked reside until judgment.¹² On eleven other occasions, "hell" is a translation of the Greek word *gehenna*—the place of punishment for the ungodly. This word is found only in the Synoptics and in James 3:6. In the Synoptics, the word is only used by Jesus. The English word is from a Teutonic root meaning to hide or to cover.¹³

There are two different compartments in *hades*. One is for the righteous dead and is a place of comfort. The other compartment is for the wicked and it is a place of torment. It seems to this writer that the

basic difference between the compartment for the ungodly and *gehenna* is a matter of duration. *Hades* is the temporary abode of the ungodly until the Judgment. Then, the ungodly will be cast into everlasting punishment into *gehenna*. As Jeremias said: “Hades receives the ungodly only for the intervening period between death and resurrection, whereas *Gehenna* is their place of punishment in the last judgment; the judgment of the former is thus provisional but the torment of the latter eternal (Mk. 9:43, 48).”¹⁴

Gehenna is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *ge-henom*, which means *the Valley of Hennom* (Josh. 15:8; 18:16). It is also called *topheth* (2 Kgs. 23:10). This was the place of the idolatrous worship of Molech, the fire god (2 Chr. 28:3; Jer. 7:31; 32:35, Lev.18:21). Children were offered here in fire in honor of this god. It was “polluted” by Josiah and became a place of refuse and abomination. When he instituted religious reforms among God’s people, he destroyed its altars, broke down its high places and caused the place to be turned into the garbage dump of the city. However, the association with the valley was not the source of the idea of a place of eternal punishment by fire. This concept occurs throughout the Old Testament (Deut. 32:22; Lev. 10:2; Isa. 30:27, 30, 33; 33:14; 66:24, Dan. 7:10; 12:2; Ps. 18:8; 50:3; 97:3). Thus, the idea of punishment by fire combined with this concept to develop the idea of a place of spiritual punishment to which the dreaded name *Gehenna* was given to it. This application of the place name follows the analogy of using Palestinian places as Armageddon (Rev. 16:16), Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26), or Sodom (Rev. 11:8) to spiritual concepts.¹⁵ This word was adopted as a symbol for the eternal, conscious punishment of the wicked, both in body and soul (Mt.10:28), following Judgment Day. This dreadful valley became synonymous with God’s final judgment against man.¹⁶ This gorge became the filth receptacle of the city. Here, the dead bodies of criminals, the carcasses of animals and every other kind of filth, was cast into its depth. From the depth and narrowness of this gorge, and perhaps its ever-burning fires, and it being the receptacle of all kinds of putrefying matter and all that defiled the holy city, it became in latter times the image of everlasting punishment.¹⁷ *Gehenna* is found in several passages in the New Testament in this manner.¹⁸

This gorge became the technical designation for the place of final punishment of the wicked likely for three reasons:

1. Because it had been the location of the idolatrous worship of Molech—children were destroyed there by fire (2 Chr. 28:3).
2. Because of these practices, King Josiah defiled the place (2 Kgs. 23:10), and was consequently in prophecy associated with God's judgment (Jer. 7:32).
3. Because it became the place to cast the defilements of the city—thus, the name became synonymous with extreme defilement.¹⁹

Although the word *gehenna* is only used in James 3:6 and in the Synoptics, the doctrine of punishment in the world to come is clearly taught in many New Testament passages. Note the following:

- Paul spoke of eternal life for those who do good, and wrath and fury for those who do evil. There will be tribulation and anguish for those who practice evil (Rom. 2:3-9).
- All men will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and receive good or evil, according to what they have done in this life (2 Cor. 5:10). The terror of this judgment was used as a motivator in Christ's and Paul's work (Mt. 10:28). (Yet, some say it is not a proper motive.)
- At the return of Christ, the wicked will experience sudden destruction (1 Thess. 5:3). He will come in flaming fire taking vengeance on the ungodly and they will suffer everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:7-9).
- The writer of Hebrews speaks of a fire of judgment against God's enemies (Heb. 10:27).
- God knows how to reserve the ungodly under punishment until the Day of Judgment (2 Pet. 2:12).
- The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire (Ju. 7).
- John said the ungodly would have their lot in the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

These passages demonstrate that the apostles followed the Lord in teaching that this life issues in two destinies, eternal bliss or torment in eternal hell.²⁰

*Have You Heard There Is No Hell?
If There Is, It Is Not Everlasting Punishment.*

Even many who are religiously inclined suggest there is no hell. The New Testament clearly teaches that hell is real and that the punishment there is everlasting. Even atheists have admitted that the Bible clearly teaches this doctrine. One atheist said:

The New Testament does as a matter of fact plainly, emphatically and repeatedly threaten eternal punishment in hell ... This (Mat. 25:46) is one of the solemnest pronouncements of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Everlasting punishment) Nevertheless, there have been attempts made, especially since the seventeenth century, to get around the plain sense of the passage ... Therefore, the New Testament certainly does teach hell fire. In fact, I think it would not be an exaggeration to say that it is one of the main themes of the New Testament ... The people I cannot respect—and their name is legion—are those who no more believe this stuff than I do but nevertheless claim to be Christians and puff themselves up for so being.²¹

Even an atheist, who certainly does not believe in the concept of Biblical inspiration, can easily ascertain that the New Testament clearly teaches that hell is a reality and that it is everlasting.

The early “Church Fathers” gave unanimous testimony in favor of the belief in hell. It was not until Origen (185-254) that a major church leader denied the doctrine. (He held a number of other non-Biblical views.) Denying the doctrine of hell has often been accompanied by weak views of the inspiration of the Bible. If one will not believe the clear teaching of the Bible concerning hell, how can he embrace the verbal inspiration of the text? Yet, many religious people deny the very existence of hell.²²

God’s Word teaches that conscious suffering is to be the lot of the ungodly in the next life. This will be the action of the divine government for violation of its laws. Some advocate that this punishment will be limited to remorse of conscience. This will certainly be a consequence of eternal torment, but not the penalty. One guilty of a heinous crime does not pay his sentence by remorse. He must still pay the penalty for his crime. Many languish in prison cells over their crimes; yet, bitter regrets will not discharge the debt they owe.²³

God’s Word clearly and emphatically teaches that the duration of hell is to be *eternal*. It is true that the words “everlasting” and “eternal”

may occasionally be used of a temporary state (as is clearly noted by the context, cf. Ex. 12:14; Num. 25:13); however, this is definitely not the manner the words are used in reference to hell. This is evidenced by the fact that the same word qualifies both everlasting life with God for the godly when this life is over and everlasting punishment of the wicked (Mt. 25:46). The same Greek word describes one's joyful life with God and the punishment of the ungodly.²⁴ Thus, if hell is only temporary punishment, then heaven is only a temporary reward, for the same word describes the duration of each place.

In Matthew 25, Jesus gave man a description of eschatological events. Matthew 25:46 provides two important truths for man: 1) The doom of the wicked will last as long as the reward of the righteous—the same Greek word describes both destinies, and 2) That the doom of the wicked is a punishment (not annihilation). The word “punishment” expresses misery and suffering.²⁵ The destinies are revealed by the Lord for the godly and the ungodly in these verses. The verdicts of verses 34, 41 and 46 are eternal punishment and eternal life. Daniel 12:2 (Septuagint) speaks of some going to shame and everlasting contempt. It is to be noted that eternal (*aionios*) modifies life (v. 34), fire (v. 41), and punishment (v. 46) in Jesus' statements. Whatever is meant in one case must be meant in the other verses. Those on the left hand of the Lord in this image receive eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (v. 41).²⁶ There is a fascinating thing about the original language of this verse. Note the modifiers in verse forty-one: each modifier of “the fire” is added by a separate article, “the fire,” “the eternal,” “the one made ready.” These articles make each modifier a kind of apposition and thus form a climax. The word “eternal” was spoken by the Lord after time has already ceased and therefore cannot be understood in some limited sense. Hell was originally prepared for the devil and his angels as a fit punishment for them. Men are consigned to this devil's fire because they have turned from God to the devil. Verse forty-six uses few words to state such tremendous realities. This verse is a clear commentary on the eternal fire of verse forty-one. Our Lord clearly stated that this fire is eternal punishment for the wicked. This punishment is removal from the enjoyment of God, the saints and the angels in the new heavenly world. “Instead of God, the devil; instead of the saints and the angels, the company of the damned and the devil's angels. Instead of heavenly joy, hellish torture will be there. They exclude themselves and also must be excluded from God

and all holiness, and that means hell. Verse forty-six settles the question; hell is as eternal as heaven.²⁷ Those who argue away the existence of hell and of the devil are not the righteous but those who contradict the King and are in danger of arriving in hell.

One learns from these verses that the punishment in hell is: 1) Separation from God—Depart from me, 2) Association—prepared for the devil and his angels—the most gruesome togetherness of all, and 3) Everlasting fire. It is clear this punishment will last on and on, without ever coming to an end. The adjectives used in verse forty-six must be rendered the same in both of these balanced and coordinate clauses, eternal or everlasting.²⁸

Jesus graphically depicts hell in Mark 9. He said the fire is unquenchable, thus it will never cease burning (Mk. 9:43-46, 48).²⁹ If one cannot believe what Jesus said about hell, how can he take seriously what He had to say about heaven? If one cannot trust what Jesus said about hell, how can he trust what He said about anything else in the Scriptures?

My God Would Not Send Anyone To Hell!

Some attempt to shorten the duration of hell by pointing to the love of God (1 Jn. 4:8). These unfortunate individuals are ignoring other attributes of God, and they completely disregard the fact that His goodness is just as much evidenced in His characteristics of justice and truth as in His love and patience. Love and patience are valid principles only when the principles of justice and truth are also operative in the divine government. Were the Creator to cease to be just and truthful, He would cease to be good. The effort to emphasize some of the attributes of God to the neglect or exclusion of the other attributes, or to array some attributes against others, is to compromise the very nature of God. Yes, God is love. Yet, He is also a God of wrath because of His aversion to sin—the penalty of which is conscious suffering in hell forever. This penalty is grounded in His goodness and His sense of justice.³⁰

Some have argued that since God is love then Him punishing the ungodly is a contradiction. What is essential to understand is that God is as infinite in justice, holiness and righteousness as He is in love and goodness. Therefore, He cannot tolerate sin. If God simply tolerated sin, He would not be worthy of man's worship. As man looks at the very concept of God, it is a misappropriation of Biblical teaching to

merely choose one attribute of the Lord, say His love, and neglect His other attributes, say His justice. Paul pointed out this very fact in Romans 11:22 when he spoke of the goodness and the severity of God. One has a distorted, incomplete picture of God who will only consider His goodness and love. His severity is seen in the fact that He will punish the disobedient.³¹

It is vital to consider the matter of retribution. What does sin actually deserve? What does man deserve because of his sin? How can he possibly know what he deserves for it? How can man know what is the just penalty for our sin? Consider two important points:

- God is the One man has sinned against.
- All accountable men have sinned (Rom. 3:23).

Since all men have sinned, how could man decide what is the just penalty for sin? How could man really answer objectively since he has sinned himself? Man is looking at the issue through the eyes of transgressors. Would it be fair for twelve vicious murderers to decide the just penalty for a mass murderer? In like manner, man cannot know, by his own wisdom, the just penalty for sin. God is the One Who man has sinned against; therefore, only He can know the just penalty for our offense toward Him. The only way man can know the just penalty for sin is for God to reveal that to him. God has said clearly that the just penalty for sin is everlasting punishment. Man can know something of the heinousness of sin by considering the price it takes to get man out of sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19), and by considering what the punishment for sin will be if man lives and dies in it. The goal of God's discipline is the improvement, the development of its subject with a view to the realization of the high and holy purposes that God has determined for the saved. There is no training or instruction intended in the retribution of the condemned. Hebrews 12:6-8 points this out. There, one class of individuals is addressed as "sons" and the other class as "not sons." God is seen as working for the betterment of one group (sons), but condemning the other group (not sons). There is no improvement anticipated in this dealing with the condemned. Judgment falls on them as vindication of the dignity of the One to whom every creature owes its existence and Whose will has been outraged by sin. Punishment is inflicted as a requital of offense against God. The moral order of the universe must be and will be upheld. This is vindication of the dishonor done to the very Person of God. The most Scripturally enlightened men

are not able to fully comprehend the true nature of sin, nor its effect upon the One Who is infinitely holy. Thus, His vindicating punishment is beyond human understanding. Therefore, it is clearly disclosed in the words of the Bible. In Romans 12:19, God asserts His reaction to sin, and He also implies the necessity for penalty. Retribution must correspond to the required punishment. It is as certain as the character of God Himself that whatever punishment is imposed will be just and right and will be recognized as such by all. It is a manifestation of divine wrath. As God reveals in His Word the destiny of the lost, it is with the appeal that men will turn to His grace. Evil will ultimately be dismissed by God. The Moral Governor of the universe will deal with evil to that degree of perfection that characterizes all His works. The Bible predicts a coming victory over evil, which no unaided finite mind can grasp. The finite mind of man cannot extricate itself from sinful corrupt surroundings. Thus, his mind often fails to comprehend the divine triumph over evil and sin, which the Lord will execute with divine perfection. God being infinitely holy cannot sustain any relation to sin except to judge it by the flame of righteousness, which He is. His triumph will be perfect and eternal.³²

It is certainly reasonable for God to impose a sentence that He knows to be appropriate for our sins against Him.³³ Hell is mentioned numerous times in God's Word to rouse the conscience to fear of the wrath of the heavenly Judge (Mt. 10:28).³⁴

Does The Bible Really Teach The Ungodly Will Endure Endless Suffering In Hell? How Does The Bible Describe This Place?

The answer to the above question is an emphatic "Yes!" The Bible teaches such in the most direct and unmistakable manner. When an honest reader considers the evidence of the Bible itself, he will be led irresistibly to this conclusion. Hell is described as a horrible place of outer darkness, everlasting punishment, weeping and gnashing of teeth, and where the worm dieth not (Mt. 8:12; 25:46; Mk.9:44).³⁵ Neal Pollard commented on this aspect of hell, saying:

In the days of Jesus Jerusalem's garbage was dumped in Hinnom's vile valley. Therefore, it became associated with what was defiled and impure. Jesus referred to hell saying it was a place where "their worm dieth not" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). He was referring to the maggot. Thus, the Lord of heaven and earth depicted hell as a horrid place that no one would knowingly go to. Most likely His use of the word *worms* is figurative, likely

illustrating the spiritual decay, but not the annihilation of the soul.³⁶

Are These Descriptions Of Hell Figurative Or Literal?

This question has often been debated among those who claim to believe the Bible, and it deserves profound consideration. It is often difficult for man, a material being, to understand spiritual concepts. Thus, it would seem that physical things of which man is aware are used through God's revelation to acquaint him with spiritual concepts. One might ask: "In what other manner could man even perceive an image of spiritual eternal things?" It seems to this writer that God uses symbolic terms to describe places like heaven and hell. The description of heaven is informing man that this eternal abode of God's people is wonderful beyond imagination in ways man is not even able to grasp. The Lord's description of hell informs man that to be separated from God and all that is good and holy forever is such a tragic terrible loss. It should aid man in understanding the intensity of suffering, and the fact that we are responsible and accountable for our actions. The image of hell in the New Testament also helps man to know that punishment in its most fundamental aspect is retribution. The horrible description of hell indicates how horrible sin really is to our God. He reveals to man that it is the just punishment of sin.³⁷

As noted, the Greek word *gehenna*, translated "hell" comes from the Greek form of the Hebrew name for the valley of Hinnom, a spot south of Jerusalem where the garbage of the city was taken and burned. This continual burning of rubbish became a figure for eternal punishment.³⁸ Thus, even the name itself contains some symbolism. While the descriptions of hell may be figurative, God's Word teaches it is a real place of torment.

Likely, "fire" is used as a metaphor to describe hell for man. Hell is an infinite place, yet man is a finite being. Thus, the writers of the Bible are describing such a horrible place that cannot be described because of man's limited experiences. Therefore, they had to reason from what we know to what we do not know. The description of hell in the Bible is the Lord's manner of explaining to man that hell is far worse than anything man has ever considered. The nearest thing to it in our experiences is fire. On careful thought then, hell is far worse than anything man has ever considered. In like manner, heaven is far more wonderful than anything man has ever considered. Ponder the following descriptions of hell:

- Furnace of fire (Mt. 13:42)
- Everlasting fire (Mt.25:46)
- Baptism of fire (Mt.3:12)
- The fire that is not quenched (Mk.9:44-45)
- Fire and Brimstone (Rev. 20:10)
- The Lake of fire (Rev. 20:15)

There is no doubt that the Lord describes hell as a place of fire.³⁹ Consider the flag of the United States. That symbol is not powerful in itself; however, it represents the most powerful nation on earth. Consider all of her military might symbolized by that flag. If the descriptions of hell are symbolic, these symbols represent a real place that is so terrible that it cannot even be described adequately in human language.

It seems obvious that the design of the sacred writers in using such figures to describe hell is to awaken the concept of something quite terrible and fearful. They mean to teach that the punishment beyond the grave will bring about the same distress as produced on earth by the objects used to represent them. Man is so little acquainted with the state hereafter, and with the exact nature of our spiritual bodies, that strictly literal representations of such punishment could not likely be made intelligible to man. These terms are meant to denote great and unending miseries.⁴⁰

The Reality Of Hell And Sin

The awfulness of sin indicates the horrible nature of hell. As sinners, men have a tendency to downgrade the terrible nature of sin. God's Word reveals to man the horrendous nature of sin, showing:

- Sin disgraces man (Pro.14:34).
- Sin enslaves man (Jn. 8:34).
- Sin spiritually slays man (Rom. 6:23).
- Sin aligns one with Satan (1 Jn. 3:8).
- Sin is so horrible God cannot tolerate it nor have any fellowship with it (Hab. 1:13). It is completely opposed to His nature, purpose and desire.

- Sin is so horrible because of the price paid for sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19). All the horrible things that happened to Jesus occurred because of man's sin.

If man will consider the horrible nature of sin, he can begin to ascertain the terrible nature of hell. God's wrath will come on the disobedient (Col. 3:6).⁴¹ If man could comprehend the horrid nature of sin, hell would not seem so unreasonable to him.

Why Does God Punish Men?

This question is often asked by men. Fortunately, the Bible furnishes man with answers. Man may learn the answers to many of his questions by carefully noting God's warnings concerning punishment. However, why does God punish men? Consider these explanations:

- The Lord warns men of punishment and punishes men to deter man from wickedness. All through the Bible God warns men of the consequences of living ungodly lives (Heb. 3:12f; Deut. 11:26-28).
- God warns men of punishment and punishes men to lead them to reform their lives (Mt. 3:1-11; Rev. 2:1-7).
- God punishes men because of what sin actually deserves—retribution. God informs man that everlasting punishment is what sin actually deserves. Punishment to have any real effect must entail retribution.⁴²

CONCLUSION

Merely thinking about hell is unsettling and quite unpleasant. Preaching about it is often not popular and increasingly is being avoided in many places. However, we must never forget that hell is real. We must all do our best to avoid this place of torment. God wants no one to go there (2 Pet. 3:8-9). The cross is positive proof of this. Those who go there go in spite of the rich provisions God has supplied so man can avoid this horrid abode (Eph. 2:8-9).⁴³ Brethren need to know of the erroneous concepts being advocated among our number today, and they need to know the identity of those who teach such ideas (1 Jn. 4:1). The Holy Spirit placed ample information in the Bible concerning the eternal punishment of the evil and no human being has the authority to change what the Spirit has revealed to man through His Word.⁴⁴

Is hell real? Positively, “Yes!” The Word of God describes hell as a place of everlasting torment, everlasting destruction, everlasting punishment, outer darkness and a lake of fire. The Bible teaches this as clearly as it teaches there is a place called heaven, that God is real and that Jesus is His Son. If you believe the Bible, if you believe in Jesus Christ, then you must believe there is an eternal hell. Preaching and teaching about hell is a valid Scriptural motive for causing man to consider the life he is living and be prepared to meet the Lord. Proverbs 4:26 wisely admonishes to ponder the path of thy feet. All of us do this in a material manner. For instance, one would not think of stepping onto an aircraft without knowing its destination. Should one not use equal caution concerning the direction of his life? Should one not stop and ask where the course he is now following will lead? In what direction is one headed? There are only two destinies!⁴⁵

Unfortunately, many in our land do not believe that hell exists. *U.S. News & World Report* had an article on hell in 1991, which observes:

Hell has been attacked by modern intellectualism and paled by the fires of Hiroshima and the Holocaust, hell’s frightful imagery has lost much of its fury. By most accounts, it has all but disappeared from the pulpit rhetoric of mainline Protestantism.

Thus to say that it is evident there is a weakness and a lack of conviction about the Bible teaching on hell by those who should be the best informed about the subject is an understatement.⁴⁶ Joe Gilmore well said: “To say there will not be any eternal punishment for the wicked is to slander the God of the Bible and to impeach His divine veracity!”⁴⁷

One day we will all stand before God, the Great Judge. Unlike human courts, in this judgment there will be no mistakes as to the facts, no errors as to the law or as to applying the law, no mistake as to the decision of guilt or innocence and no mistake as to the punishment of the guilty.⁴⁸ May we all prepare for that ultimate day (Rom.14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Mt. 25:46), realizing there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Wayne Jackson, "Changing Attitudes Toward Hell," *Whatever Happened To Heaven And Hell?* ed. Terry Hightower (Pensacola, FL: Austin McGary and Co., 1993), 63.

³ *The Warren-Matson Debate* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), 40-41, 71; and Jackson, 63.

⁴ In the 90s, a Gallup poll revealed that 77% of Americans believed in heaven yet only 58% believed in hell. 500 preachers from various religious groups were asked if hell should be taught on any more. Only 20% said it should. 69% denied the very existence of hell. *Humanists Manifesto II* says, "... fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful..." Jackson, I, 56.

⁵ Neal Pollard, "Hell," *Heaven's Vocabulary: Words & Phrases Of Spiritual Significance*, ed. Don Walker (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2007), 213-214.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 214-215; Joe Gilmore, "The Eternal Punishment of the Wicked," ed. Eddie Whitten, *Exegetical Studies Of Great Bible Themes*, ed. Don Walker (Bedford, TX: Christian Supply Center, 1986), 213-214.

⁷ Pollard, 216.

⁸ H. Buis, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible*, ed. Merrill Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 3:115.

⁹ The Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, World-Wide Church Of God, and the Christadelphians are included in this category.

¹⁰ Jackson, 63-64.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

¹² Wayne Jackson, *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy- A Practical Handbook*, (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications, 2002), 81.

¹³ Buris, 114-115.

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel, ed., "Jeremias," "Joachim," *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 1: 658.

¹⁵ J.W. Roberts, *A Commentary On The General Epistle Of James* (Wolfe City, TX: Henington Publishing Co 1963), 131-133; and Guy

Woods, *A Commentary On The Epistle of James, New Testament Commentaries*, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1965), 166.

¹⁶ Jackson, *Bible Words*, 82; and Pollard, 212; Because Molech was worshipped here the recollection of this terrible worship gave to the valley a rather sinister character and led to Josiah defiling it for the purpose of preventing these horrible rites. It was natural that its name should become a synonym for hell. James Hastings, ed., *Hastings' Dictionary Of The Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 285.

¹⁷ John McClintock, and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, And Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 3:764.

¹⁸ Matthew 5:22, 29f, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6).

¹⁹ James Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), 3:1183.

²⁰ Buis, 116.

²¹ Warren/Matson Debate, 38-39, 41.

²² Buris.

²³ Guy Woods, *Questions and Answers Open Forum* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Publishing Co., 1986), 262.

²⁴ Jackson, "Changing Attitudes," 66-67.

²⁵ J.W. McGarvey, and Philip Pendleton *The Fourfold Gospel*, (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Foundation), 640.

²⁶ Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew Part II* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Co., 1976), 139-140.

²⁷ R.C.H. Lenski *The Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 1:996f, 1000f.

²⁸ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew, New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 890-892.

²⁹ Pollard, 216.

³⁰ Woods, *Questions*, 262-263.

³¹ Warren/Matson, 45, 54, 110.

³² Ibid., 130-131; Lewis Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1974), 2:361-362, 365, 372-373.

³³ Jackson, *Bible Words*, 171.

³⁴ Kittle, 658.

³⁵ Woods, Questions, 261.

³⁶ Pollard, 216-217.

³⁷ Warren/Matson, 131.

³⁸ Frank Gaebelin, ed., Donald Burdick *the Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 12:188. This place served as a fitting symbol of the place of future punishment, and the Lord so applied it when He came to earth hundreds of years later. Hell is truly the garbage dump of the world and this is the destiny of all who die in disobedience to God. Woods, *James*, 166.

³⁹ Foy Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Last Days*, (Fort Worth, TX: The Manney Co., 1968), 148.

⁴⁰ McClintock, and Strong, 4:169.

⁴¹ Pollard, 215.

⁴² Warren/Matson, 129-131.

⁴³ Pollard, 218-219.

⁴⁴ Jackson, "Changing Attitudes," 67.

⁴⁵ Jackson, *Bible Words*, 159; "Changing Attitudes," 62.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *Bible Words*, 90.

⁴⁷ Gilmore, 196.

⁴⁸ Jackson, *Bible Words*, 170.

SATAN’S TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

Melvin Sapp



Melvin Sapp is married to the former Frances Reid and they have two children. Sapp graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1986. He started full-time preaching in Butler, Alabama. He now works with the Kingsbury Road Church of Christ in Sumter, South Carolina, and is one of the elders there. Sapp is the director and is an instructor for the Central Carolina School of Preaching in Sumter. He has spoken on various lectureships and has conducted Gospel meetings in ten states.

INTRODUCTION¹

John the baptizer has just immersed Jesus in the Jordan to fulfill all righteousness, when the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. So alert is Satan to an opportunity to tempt man that little time passes before he challenges the faith of Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus has been on a forty day fast. Being human and divine, He experiences the same physical hunger for food that we experience. From Satan’s temptations of Jesus, many valuable lessons can be learned about Satan, temptation, and how to overcome temptations when they come our way. Thank God for Jesus, our perfect example in how to overcome our adversary, the Devil.

SATAN, THE TEMPTER

Satan is not a “make-believe” character. He is a real personality or being. Jesus announces that the devil’s end will be in the fires of hell. Picturing the judgment scene, Jesus says: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). In rebuking the unbelieving Jews, Jesus calls Satan the father of all liars and an enemy of the truth, stating: “Ye are of your father the devil, 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” (Jn. 8:44). The fall of man in the Garden of Eden is introduced by revealing the subtle nature of Satan. Moses records: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” (Gen. 3:1). Satan always challenges the Word of God and our

willingness to abide by it. The devil is our adversary and he must not be taken too lightly or ignored. Peter warns: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:8-9). We need to expect to be tempted by the devil and we must be prepared to resist him when he comes. Jesus had to face every form of temptation in order to be our perfect example and our high priest.

SATAN’S FIRST APPROACH

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread (Mt. 4:3).

Satan approaches Jesus at a very weak moment. Jesus has just ended a forty day fast and is hungry. Hunger is one of man’s strongest cravings and Satan challenges Jesus to fulfill a natural desire through a rebellious way. Every approach of Satan is to get us to obey him and to disobey God. Jesus has endured the forty days of fasting without appealing to Satan for relief. To accept Satan’s offer and to abuse miracles would be sin. The hunger is no greater on the fortieth day than on the others. Jesus’ condition is not so desperate that a miracle is needed to sustain Him. He could have fasted longer if need be. Miracles were to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. Pointing this out Jesus’ apostle, John, declares: “[M]any other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (Jn. 20:30-31). Satan does not need miraculous proof to convince him that Jesus is the Son of God. There is a difference between a challenge and a need for proof. This offer is a challenge not an appeal for proof. Challenges make fools of many people. Jesus does not need to prove anything to the devil. The demons knew who Jesus was even when the people did not. Mark 1:34 states: “And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.” Exhorting his readers to have a working faith, James tells them: “Thou believest that there is one God ... the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). The devils have no problem believing; they have trouble obeying. Along this line, it appears that the devils and a lot of people today have a lot in common.

JESUS' FIRST RESPONSE

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4).

Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 as a precedent of how to face trials involving one's need for physical food.

Israel had been led by God into the wilderness, where there was no bread; had been subjected to intensive hunger there, and had then been fed by bread from heaven. Moses explains that this was to teach them that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God ... Jesus finds in this a precedent for himself ... The duty of Israel is now his duty ... They sinned by murmuring against Moses, and by proposing to seek bread in their own way—that is, by returning into Egypt (Ex. 16:1-9). He will commit a similar sin if, distrustful of God, he seeks to turn stones into bread. They were taught to rely upon the God who had brought them into trouble to deliver them from it. This, now, is his duty, and he accepts the precedent as his guide.²

If Jesus obeys Satan, it would imply that God has abandoned Him and is unable to help Him in this desperate condition. Satan would become Jesus' deliverer instead of the Father. When we are faced with trials in our lives and are tempted to obey Satan to obtain quick relief, we realize that it is a rejection of God and an elevation of the devil. This approach is a temptation through the "lust of the flesh." Hunger is a legitimate concern, but to fulfill it through obeying the devil is sin.

SATAN'S SECOND APPROACH

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (Mt. 4:5-6).

Satan takes Jesus into Jerusalem to the highest point of the temple, he challenges Him to jump off and to depend on God to send angels to catch Him. "The only portion of the temple that seems to answer to the context was the lofty porch overhanging the valley of Kidron. Josephus says that from the roof to the valley below at this point was three hundred feet."³ Jesus does not need to prove that He is the Son of God,

to the Father, to Satan nor to Himself. Satan knew who Jesus was and a miracle would not have established it further.

Satan quotes Psalm 91:11, but misapplies it to justify putting oneself in harm's way and then challenges God to rescue Jesus from Himself. Satan implies that God will deliver us from every harm and discomfort. Miracles were not for the purpose of alleviating man from all physical suffering, but to present supernatural proof to confirm Scripture. Paul pens:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Knowing the Scriptures is very important, but knowing how to rightly apply them is essential.

JESUS' SECOND RESPONSE

Quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, Jesus responds: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mt. 4:7). In so doing, He shows that it is wrong to expect God's providence to continue if we rebel against God. God promised to be with Israel and bring them to Mt. Sinai and even unto Canaan, but many died because of their murmuring and disobedience. Notice Paul's account of how Israel tempted God:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were

destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:1-11, emphasis added).

Using the Scriptures in order to resist temptations is a valuable tool in that it allows God to direct our paths. The wise man exhorts: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (Pro. 3:5-7). Quoting Scripture is one way of sanctifying God in our hearts, which is one of the reasons why Peter commands: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

The acceptance of false doctrine is largely due to a lack of knowledge of the Word of God and the inability to expose error. Jesus is not misled by the craftiness of the devil. He knows Satan is perverting the Scriptures. Writing to the church in Galatia and bearing witness to the fact that any perversion of God's Word is unacceptable, Paul declares:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

False teachers are to be marked and avoided if the church is to remain pure. Regarding this matter, Paul instructs: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18). Jesus says, in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

This temptation appeals to the "pride of life." We ought never to think that we are so special that God will violate His law to save us

from self-inflicted injury. We should avoid situations that jeopardize our well-being and that would require an act of God to save us.

SATAN'S THIRD APPROACH

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Mt. 4:8-9).

Satan is the “prince of this world” (Jn. 16:11; Eph. 2:2). He has the power to make offers as solicitations to sin. Jesus is shown and offered all the kingdoms of this world. To receive them, *all He has to do* is worship Satan. Many people are drawn away from God by offers that seem too good to pass up, such as a new job that doubles one’s income but demands hours that prohibit his presence at worship three Sundays out of the month. The opportunity to amass fame and fortune must be evaluated as to what affect it will have on my influence, my character and my relationship with God. Our influence must not be compromised. About His disciples, Jesus says:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Mt. 5:13-16).

Moses’ faith was not weakened while in Egypt, because of his convictions. The writer of Hebrews explains:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

Satan will give us nearly anything in exchange for our worship. Resist him! “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in

exchange for his soul” (Mt. 16:26)? This solicitation is the “lust of the eyes.”

JESUS' THIRD RESPONSE

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Mt. 4:10).

Jesus flatly turns down Satan's offer and demands that he depart. We have the same power to put the devil to flight. When Peter allows the devil to influence him to rebuke Jesus, Jesus identifies Peter by the one he allows to speak through him—“[H]e turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Mt. 16:23).

We should not flirt with the devil, but straightly dismiss his solicitations. Recognize that God will not tempt us to sin. Stressing that God does not tempt man to sin, and showing how temptation, lust, sin, and death do work, James writes:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

Satan is not our friend, but an adversary, who is seeking our destruction. Therefore, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13 as authority and a precedent in not yielding to temptation. Again, in times of temptations, we must not miss the power and the assistance a knowledge of the Scriptures will provide us in resisting the devil. Jesus is our perfect example in every thing that He did. Let us follow His lead in *resisting* the devil and *yielding not* to temptations. Let us realize that the three ways that Satan tempted Jesus will be the same ways that he will tempt us. John reveals these three ways as he exhorts:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For

all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

CONCLUSION

Jesus is our great high priest. Having been tempted, He knows what it is like. He is available for us in time of need. We are encouraged by the words of Hebrews 4:14-16, which say:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² Bob Winton, *Outlined Commentary on Matthew* (Manchester, TN: by the author, n.d.), 27.

³ B.W. Johnson, *People's New Testament Commentary* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication, 1889), 1:31.