

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

THE DEFEAT OF SATAN AND THE DEMONS

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained: The Defeat of Satan and the Demons

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Contents

The Defeat of Satan and the Demons

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED	i
THE DEFEAT OF SATAN AND THE DEMONS	i
Important Notice	ii
Copyright Notices	iii
Principal Works Consulted	v
Contents	vii
Part 1	1
Synopsis: The Defeat of Satan and the Demons _____	1
Note 1 _____	1
Satan's Rebellion and Expulsion _____	1
Scripture References: Note 1 _____	1
Note 2 _____	2
Satan and the Demons Banished to Earthly Realms, or to Tartarus _____	2
Scripture References: Note 2 _____	3
Note 3 _____	3
Satan Defeated and Bound _____	3
Scripture References: Note 3 _____	3
Note 4 _____	4
Believers Can Resist the Devil _____	4
Scripture References: Note 4 _____	4
Note 5 _____	5
Satan Harasses God's People _____	5
Scripture References: Note 5 _____	5
Note 6 _____	5
Satan Blinds the Minds of Unbelievers _____	5
Scripture References: Note 6 _____	5
Related Bible Doctrines _____	6
Preliminary Remarks _____	7
Meaning of the Term, 'Satan' _____	7

Part 2.....	9
The Defeat of Satan and the Demons _____	9
Evil Angels or Demons _____	9
Principalities and Powers _____	9
Satan, the Chief of Evil Angels _____	10
The Enemy of God and Man _____	10
Satan is a Created Spirit _____	11
Satan's Sin, Fall and Expulsion from Heaven _____	11
The Bible May Allude to Fall of Satan _____	11
Lucifer, the Morning Star _____	11
The King of Tyre _____	12
Satan's Power is Limited _____	13
Satan Against the World _____	14
Satan Against God's People _____	15
Imprisoned Fallen Spirits _____	15
Many Demons Imprisoned in Tartarus _____	15
Part 3.....	17
Satan in the Garden of Eden _____	17
The Fall of Man _____	17
The Consequences of Adam's Disobedience _____	18
Spiritual, Physical and Eternal Death _____	18
Spiritual Death _____	18
Physical Death _____	18
Eternal Death _____	19
Adam Primarily Responsible for the Fall _____	19
Satan Enticed the Woman _____	19
The Serpent Crushed by the Seed of the Woman _____	20
The Seed of the Woman is Christ _____	20
Part 4.....	23
Satan Defeated by Christ _____	23
Satan Bound _____	23
Satan Bound by God's Son _____	24
Satan Bound for a Thousand Years _____	24
Satan Still Dangerous _____	25
Part 5.....	27
The 'God of This Age' _____	27
(Or, The 'God of This World') _____	27
The 'God of This Age' Influences Fallen Mankind _____	27
Righteous Acts Cannot Save a Person _____	29
God's Holy Spirit Restrains Fallen Mankind _____	29
The 'God of This Age' Claims Fallen Mankind's Devotion _____	30
Satan Cannot Make us Sin _____	30
The 'God of This Age' Subverts Moral Standards _____	31
A Man Reaps what he Sows _____	31
Supernatural or Occult Films _____	31
The 'God of this Age' Blinds the Minds of Unbelievers _____	32

The ‘God of this Age’ Infiltrates the Church _____	32
Part 6.....	35
The Prince of the Power of the Air _____	35
(NIV: The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air) _____	35
Evidences of Satan’s Power Over Fallen Mankind _____	35
Rescued From Satan’s Dominion _____	36
The Accuser of Our Brothers _____	36
Satan Accuses God’s People when Guilty _____	37
Satan Accuses God’s People when Not Guilty _____	37
God Repudiates Satan’s Accusations _____	38
The Father of Lies _____	38
The Slanderer _____	39
Satan’s Disguises _____	39
Satan as an Angel of Light _____	39
The Lie of False Teaching _____	40
Satan as a Roaring Lion _____	40
Part 7.....	43
Subordinates of Satan _____	43
The Demons or Unclean Spirits _____	43
These Evil Beings Operate from the Lower Heavens _____	43
Spirits Not Subject to Laws of Nature _____	43
Demons Acknowledge Christ’s Deity, Power and Authority _____	43
Demons Believe—and Tremble in Fear _____	45
Demons Submit to Christ’s Appointed Servants _____	45
Part 8.....	47
Associates of Satan _____	47
The Antichrist or Man of Lawlessness _____	47
Man of Lawlessness (or Man of Sin) _____	47
(The Apostle Paul’s Term) _____	47
The Antichrist _____	48
(The Apostle John’s Term) _____	48
The Beast _____	49
The Beast out of the Bottomless Pit or the Abyss _____	49
(The Scarlet Beast) _____	49
The Beast out of the Sea _____	50
The Beast out of the Earth _____	51
The Mark of God _____	52
The Significance of this Mark _____	52
God’s Servants Sealed _____	53
A Symbolic or a Literal Mark? _____	53
Saints Victorious Over the Beast _____	54
God’s Wrath Against the Beast and his Worshippers _____	55
Fallen Mankind Still Refuses to Repent _____	56
The False Prophet _____	56

Part 9	59
War in Heaven _____	59
Michael Overcomes Satan _____	59
Satan's Final Destiny and Doom _____	59
The New Eternal Age _____	60

Part 1

Synopsis: The Defeat of Satan and the Demons

Satan is the chief of the fallen angels, who, in rebellion against God before the creation of mankind, were cast out of heaven to await their final doom. Satan (which means ‘adversary’) is otherwise known as the devil (Gk., διάβολος, *diabolos*, meaning ‘accuser’; ‘slanderer’.) Again, Satan is sometimes designated as ‘the destroyer’ (*Apollyon*). He is described as having been a murderer from the beginning. All other fallen angels are designated as demons (Gk., δαιμόνια, *daimonia*) or unclean and evil spirits, but not ‘devils’. Again, Satan or the devil is sometimes known as ‘*the god of this world*’ (or ‘this age’), and the ‘*prince of the power of the air*’ (or ‘*the ruler of the kingdom of the air*’). Probably, this is because he exercises his remaining malignant power over this world (or during this present age) tempting mankind to sin, and inciting them to commit all manner of evil deeds. As angelic beings, Satan and the demons formerly possessed mighty, but not unlimited, power. However, at Calvary, Christ destroyed or laid waste the mighty power of Satan and the demons or evil spirits. Both Satan and the entire horde of demons will be cast into the lake of fire, which God has prepared for them, there to suffer eternal torments.

Note 1

Satan’s Rebellion and Expulsion

The powerful fallen angel, now known as Satan, was originally created by God as righteous, holy and good. In this original state, he may have occupied a place of eminence in heaven; similar, perhaps, to the holy archangel, Michael, or to the holy angel Gabriel. However, by the abuse of his free will, and perhaps through conceit and pride, this mighty angel foolishly attempted to rebel against God. The precise nature of Satan’s sin and rebellion is not revealed to us in the Bible. However, it resulted in his immediate expulsion from God’s holy presence, from the joyous presence of the holy angels before God’s throne, and relegation to this earthly sphere. Those angels who joined with Satan in his sin, were likewise expelled from God’s glorious presence. These are known as fallen angels, or—more commonly—as demons. In the New Testament, these fallen angelic spirits or demons are usually referred to as evil or unclean spirits. (Ezek. 28:11-19; Luke 10:18; 1 Tim. 3:6; Mark 3:11)

Scripture References: Note 1

Ezekiel 28:11-19

⁽¹¹⁾ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

⁽¹²⁾ Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

⁽¹³⁾ Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

⁽¹⁶⁾ By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

⁽¹⁹⁾ All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

Luke 10:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

1 Timothy 3:6

⁽⁶⁾ Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Mark 3:11

⁽¹¹⁾ And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

Note 2

Satan and the Demons Banished to Earthly Realms, or to Tartarus

Following their rebellion against God, many of the fallen angels were committed to Tartarus (usually translated, 'hell') where they are being held in 'chains of darkness' until the Day of Judgment. The term, *Tartarus* may be synonymous with the Abyss or bottomless pit. This is a place of torment, which is greatly feared by the demons, and where God continues their punishment, awaiting the day of final judgment and retribution. Clearly, however, not all of the fallen angels are presently being held in Tartarus. God has not consigned Satan, and those demons who assist him, to Tartarus. Rather, he has banished them from the glorious heavenly realms to the realms of this planet and the surrounding lower heavens. From these lower realms, the devil and his evil angels have been permitted some liberty to harass mankind, and to tempt the people of God. The Bible does not attempt to explain why some of the fallen angels remain imprisoned in Tartarus, while Satan and the other evil spirits have been given some degree of freedom. Ultimately, however, Satan and all his evil minions will be cast into the 'lake of fire', or 'lake of burning sulphur', from which there will be no escaping throughout the eternal ages. (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6; Rev. 20:10)

Scripture References: Note 2

2 Peter 2:4

⁽⁴⁾ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell {Gk., Τάρταρος, *Tartarus*}, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Jude 1:6

⁽⁶⁾ 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.

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever

Note 3

Satan Defeated and Bound

By his finished work at Calvary and by his subsequent resurrection and exaltation, the Lord Jesus has stripped Satan of the full extent of his mighty power. The evil one now awaits his committal to the lake of fire or burning sulphur. However, although the risen and glorified Lord Jesus has destroyed Satan's full power as a mighty angel, the devil still retains a very considerable degree of power as a superhuman being. Satan uses this power to oppress mankind and to entice people into sinful and evil deeds. This is the power, too, that he uses to tempt the people of God with severe trials and temptations to sin. Again, if God were not restraining the evil one with his *almighty* power, Satan would be able to unleash his immense residual power against fallen and unregenerate mankind. This would result worldwide in a complete breakdown of moral order and restraint. This, in turn, would lead to the open indulgence of unbridled evil. For the sake of his church, however, God is preventing Satan from bringing about such universal disorder and chaos to society. The Lord is effecting this through the almighty restraining power of his Holy Spirit. Thus, Satan ('the strong man') is bound, or held on a confining leash. (Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15; Mark 3:27; Rev. 20:1-3)

Scripture References: Note 3

Ephesians 6:12

⁽¹²⁾ 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*.

Colossians 2:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Mark 3:27

⁽²⁷⁾ No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Revelation 20:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit (Gk., ἀβύσσοῦ, *abyss*) and a great chain in his hand. ⁽²⁾ And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ⁽³⁾ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Note 4

Believers Can Resist the Devil

In and of himself, no one can resist the superhuman power of Satan. However, in and through the blood of Christ, and by the divine power of the indwelling Holy Spirit—which is the power of God Almighty—every believer is enabled, by God’s grace, to resist the devil. This means that either the believer can resist the temptations presented by Satan, or he can safely flee from these temptations in the hour of trial. Satan does not fear the believer as such (who is a mortal being). However, the evil one greatly fears the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is because, being divine, the Holy Spirit is infinitely greater and more powerful than is Satan himself. (Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jas. 4:7; 2:19)

Scripture References: Note 4

Ephesians 6:10-18

⁽¹⁰⁾ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ⁽¹¹⁾ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ⁽¹²⁾ 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*. ⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ⁽¹⁵⁾ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ⁽¹⁶⁾ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.¹ ⁽¹⁷⁾ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ⁽¹⁸⁾ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

1 Peter 5:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁽⁹⁾ Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

James 4:7

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

¹ *the wicked*: i.e., the wicked, debased, or morally destructive one. Gk., ὁ πονηρός *the evil one* or *the devil*.

James 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Note 5

Satan Harasses God's People

Satan knows that he cannot jeopardise the eternal security of God's people, which is theirs through faith in Christ. However, by various temptations, and by discouraging and disheartening the people of God, or by causing them to doubt the veracity or faithfulness of God, Satan endeavours to make God's people less effective to the world in their witness for Christ. Since, in the last analysis, the devil cannot harm the believer's immortal soul, then he attempts instead to prevent unbelievers from being told about the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, the evil one attempts to hinder individual believers from making consistent progress in their faith, thus attempting to weaken the church and to undermine its life and growth. This, however, can happen only within the bounds permitted by God, who is absolutely sovereign over all events. Ultimately, of course, Satan cannot succeed in weakening God's church, for God preserves that church by an almighty hand. On the Last Day, not so much as one individual believer will be accounted missing from the glorious and joyous presence of the Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39; Luke 22:31; Rev. 2:10)

Scripture References: Note 5

Romans 8:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ⁽³⁹⁾ 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.

Luke 22:31

⁽³¹⁾ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to *have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:

Revelation 2:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Note 6

Satan Blinds the Minds of Unbelievers

Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers in order to prevent them from understanding spiritual things, and thus come to a saving knowledge of the truth. For this reason, no one in his natural (i.e., unregenerate) condition is able—of his own will, volition or desire—to repent and believe on Christ. The veil of darkness that Satan has cast over the mind of the unbeliever must first be removed. Only the effectual calling and regeneration of the Holy Spirit can do this. Unless the Lord, who is the Spirit, removes the veil, no one can turn to him in repentance and faith. A person's salvation, therefore, is dependent entirely upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man. God has mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he wills, he hardens. (2 Cor. 2:11; 3:14-18; 4:3-6; Rom. 9:14-18; Titus 3:3-5)

Scripture References: Note 6

2 Corinthians 2:11

⁽¹¹⁾ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

2 Corinthians 3:14-18

⁽¹⁴⁾ But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ. ⁽¹⁵⁾ But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ⁽¹⁸⁾ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

⁽³⁾ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁽⁴⁾ 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. ⁽⁵⁾ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁽⁶⁾ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness {*Gen. 1:3*}, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:14-18

⁽¹⁴⁾ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

⁽¹⁵⁾ For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. {*Exodus 33:19*}

⁽¹⁶⁾ So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. {*Exodus 9:16*}

⁽¹⁸⁾ Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Titus 3:3-5

⁽³⁾ For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. ⁽⁴⁾ But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ⁽⁵⁾ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Related Bible Doctrines

The teaching about Satan and the Demons relates to the teaching of the fall of man, and to the coming Last Judgment and future punishment in hell. Satan and his angels were expelled from heaven before the creation of Adam and Eve (otherwise, Satan could not have used the serpent to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden and to entice her to sin).

The fall of man is connected with Satan's presence in the world (although Adam and Eve were wholly responsible to God for rebelling against his express command and for sinning against God).

Satan is present to tempt the people of God in all ages. However, when the Lord God expelled Satan from heaven, he was stripped of the full might of his power as a glorious celestial spirit. Later, his extensive evil power and influence over mankind would be destroyed or laid waste (but not yet wholly eliminated or annihilated) by Christ's triumph at Calvary. At present, Satan and his minions still exercise a more limited power over mankind, but only insofar as God permits. Ultimately, the devil and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire.²

Preliminary Remarks

Meaning of the Term, 'Satan'

In the Old Testament, the term '*a satan*' means 'an adversary'. At that time, the term was not used exclusively of the devil. On the contrary, this term was once a common noun that could be translated either as 'an adversary' or, more literally, as 'a satan'. Consequently, any kind of enemy or adversary could be referred to as 'a satan'—i.e., an adversary.

Concerning the fact that the term 'satan' once had a wider meaning than now, we have several references in the Bible. Firstly, in the book of Numbers, we find the angel of the LORD acting as an adversary (literally, *a satan*) against the pagan prophet Balaam. Thus, God's Word says:

Numbers 22:22

⁽²²⁾ And God's anger was kindled because he [Balaam] went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an *adversary* against him. Now he [Balaam] was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him. (Italics added; see vv.1-35)

Again, when the Philistine army prevented David and his men from infiltrating their ranks, the Philistines said to Achish:

1 Samuel 29:4

⁽⁴⁾ And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an *adversary* to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? (Italics added; see vv.1-11)

And, concerning a period of rest from the conflict and war, which King Solomon had been experiencing, he says to Hiram king of Tyre:

1 Kings 5:4

⁽⁴⁾ But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither *adversary* nor evil occurrent. (Italics added; see vv.1-6)

In this verse, the phrase translated *neither adversary*, etc., is literally *neither satan*.

Later, as he was growing old, Solomon's heart turned away from the LORD. Although expressly forbidden by God, the king had loved many foreign women. Some of these many wives or concubines had induced King Solomon to follow an abominable form of idolatry. The LORD became angry with Solomon because he had not kept his commands, and because of his sinful devotion to many women and to idols. Because of his sin, the LORD announced that Solomon's kingdom would be removed from his

² See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Fall of Man; Sin; The Second Coming; The Last Judgment; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

descendants. In the meantime, however, God would discipline Solomon by raising up an *adversary* against him. Thus, God's Word says:

1 Kings 11:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. (See vv.1-13)

Another adversary soon followed Hadad:

1 Kings 11:23

⁽²³⁾ And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah:

In the first verse above, 'an adversary' is literally *a satan*; and in the second verse above, 'another adversary' is literally *another satan*.

The same passage later says:

1 Kings 11:25

⁽²⁵⁾ And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad *did*: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria. (See vv.23-24)

Once more, '*an adversary to Israel*' is literally '*a satan to Israel*'.

From the above examples, we can see that—in the Old Testament—a 'satan' is one who is an enemy, an adversary, or an accuser. We can see also that these terms could apply to men as well as to the devil (as is the case here). In course of time, however, the use of the word *satan* as a common noun was superseded by its use as a proper noun—designating the chief of fallen angels and the chief adversary of mankind (Satan). In the New Testament, the word *Satan* is used exclusively as a descriptive name for the devil—the wicked or evil one, over whom Christ has triumphed.

Part 2

The Defeat of Satan and the Demons

Evil Angels or Demons

From the Bible, we learn that there are a vast number of evil angels, with Satan—the chief of evil angels—as their leader. Concerning these evil angels, Charles Hodge wrote:

“The Scriptures inform us that certain of the evil angels kept not their first estate. They are spoken of as the angels that sinned. They are called evil, or unclean spirits; principalities; powers; rulers of this world; and spiritual wickednesses (i.e., wicked spirits).

“The most common designation given to them is daimones, or more commonly daimonia [daimonion, *demons*], which our translators unfortunately render ‘devils’. The Scriptures make a distinction between *diabolos* and *daimon*, which is not observed in the English Version [AV/KJV]. In the spiritual world, there is only one *diabolos* (devil), but there are many *daimonia* [daimonion, demons].

“These evil spirits are represented as belonging to the same order of beings as the good angels. All the names and titles, expressive of their nature and powers, given to the one are also given to the other. Their original condition was holy. When they fell or what was the nature of their sin is not revealed...”³

Principalities and Powers

Within certain contexts of the New Testament, terms such as ‘rulers’, ‘authorities’, ‘powers’, ‘dominions’, etc., (KJV, *principalities and powers*, etc.) refer to the existence, authority and power of a higher order of created beings. Commonly known as ‘angels’, these mighty beings were endowed with great intelligence and also with all other rational, moral and spiritual faculties. As created spirits, angels are inferior and subordinate to God, but elevated high above fallen mankind. Their sphere of operations extends throughout much of the heavenly realms. These spirit beings, however, remain invisible to us.

In this context, terms such as *principalities and powers*, etc. (KJV), or *rulers, authorities, powers* etc., (NIV), occasionally designate the good or holy angels. These holy angels operate in and from the immediate presence of God. More frequently, however, *principalities and powers* (or *rulers, authorities and powers*), refer to the fallen and evil angels; i.e., Satan and the demons. The evil angels operate outside God’s immediate presence in heaven, but never independently of God’s will, purposes, or control.

The Word of God reminds believers that their real conflict is not against an enemy of flesh and blood (i.e., a human enemy), but ‘...*against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*’ (Eph. 6:12b NIV) However, concerning the eternal security of God’s redeemed people against all dangers, actual and possible—including those connected with demonic powers—the apostle Paul says:

³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p.643, [1977 reprint]

Romans 8:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ⁽³⁹⁾ 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. (See vv.35-37)

Again, God's Word tells us:

Ephesians 6:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ 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*. ⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (See vv.10-18)

Concerning the position of God's Son in relation to both good and evil heavenly rulers or powers, the Bible says:

Ephesians 1:19b-22

^(19b) ...according to the working of his mighty power, ⁽²⁰⁾ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, ⁽²¹⁾ 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: ⁽²²⁾ And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, (See vv.15-23)

As we have seen, when used in such contexts, terms like *rule*, *authority*, *power*, *dominion*, etc., may be applied, at times, to good or holy angels.

In Ephesians chapter 3, the apostle Paul speaks of Christ's exaltation to the highest place in heaven, following his work of redemption. Regarding the unveiling of that completed work to the heaven rulers—i.e., to the holy angels—the apostle says:

Ephesians 3:10-11

⁽¹⁰⁾ To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ⁽¹¹⁾ According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (See vv.1-13)

Satan, the Chief of Evil Angels

The Enemy of God and Man

One particular evil angel stands supreme above all the other fallen angels. His name is Satan. Concerning Satan, the chief of evil angels or evil spirits, Charles Hodge wrote:

“...That there is one fallen angel exalted in rank and power above all his associates is clearly taught in the Bible. He is called Satan (the adversary), ‘*ho diabolos*’, the traducer [the devil] ‘*ho poneros*’, the evil one; the ruler of the kingdom of the air; the prince of darkness; the god of this world; Beelzebub; Belial; the tempter; the old serpent; and the dragon. These, and similar titles set him forth as the great enemy of God and man, the opposer of all that is good and the promoter of all that is evil...”⁴

⁴ Charles Hodge, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.643.

Satan is a Created Spirit

Only God Triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is uncreated, and therefore has existed from all eternity. The Godhead alone has had no beginning, and will have no ending throughout the eternal ages. Everything else in the universe—animate and inanimate, known and unknown, visible and invisible—has been created by the LORD God Almighty through and for his Son, Jesus Christ, and by the all-powerful personal agency of the Holy Spirit. From this, it follows that everything that God created was originally created good. God is not the author of sin, nor is he the creator of sinful beings in any shape or form.

Among God's creation is a vast host of ministering spirits or holy angels whom the Lord created to serve him and to minister to his redeemed people. At one time, the mighty fallen angel now known as Satan was included among their number. We do not know what position Satan occupied in heaven, except that possibly he was numbered among the highest orders of holy angels who belong to the *counsel of heaven*.

When he created them, all God's angels were righteous, holy, and good. This included the angel whom we now know as Satan (Satan was not his original name). Like Adam when he was created, there was no sin in him and no inward inclination or tendency toward sin. (The inward tendency or bias toward sin came upon Adam's descendants only because of the fall and the corruption of Adam's moral and spiritual nature.)

Satan's Sin, Fall and Expulsion from Heaven

The Bible does not reveal to us how Satan fell, although certain passages of God's Word may possibly allude to this topic. From the little that the Word of God reveals on the subject, it is believed that—perhaps from sinful and foolish pride—Satan attempted to rebel against God, or to set himself up in a godlike capacity. Apparently, many other angels joined with Satan in this attempted rebellion against God. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:6)

How such a sinful inclination could ever have entered the minds of these formerly holy angels, or from where the temptation to sin originated, we do not know. However, this wicked attempt to rebel against God resulted in Satan's immediate expulsion from heaven, along with all the other evil angels. Now, only the holy angels remain in heaven. These are the elect angels. Apparently, God has confirmed these angels in their state of righteousness and holiness, so that they cannot fall into sin.

Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven, together with all the other wicked or unclean spirits, must have occurred before the creation of Adam. If this were not so, then Satan could not have been present in the Garden of Eden. Clearly, he was present, for he was the one who used the serpent to tempt Eve. By means of that serpent, Satan led both Eve and her husband into disobedience and rebellion against God.

The Bible May Allude to Fall of Satan

Sometimes, certain passages in the Bible are cited in an attempt to show how Satan fell. However, as far as we know, these passages do not refer specifically to the fall of Satan, although we may observe some obvious parallels. It must be admitted that some of the remarks made of the earthly kings about whom these passages were written, might equally—if not more appropriately—be applied to Satan, the chief of fallen and evil angels.

One of the passages that possibly might allude to the fall of Satan is Isaiah chapter 14. In this chapter, the prophet is referring to the fall of the king of Babylon, rather than the fall of Satan. However, we should take note of the parallels in this passage with that of Satan's expulsion and fall from glory.

Lucifer, the Morning Star

Through his holy prophets, the LORD God warned the Babylonian nation and its king that judgment would surely come upon them. The prophet Isaiah likens the king of Babylon to *Lucifer*. The name

'Lucifer' means 'light-bringer'—possibly, an allusion to the planet Venus. Sometimes, Venus is referred to as the light-bringer or morning star, because it is observed in the sky just before sunrise.

Concerning the consequences of God's judgment on the king of Babylon, Isaiah says:

Isaiah 14:3-4

⁽³⁾ And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, ⁽⁴⁾ That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! (See vv.1-11)

Further on in this chapter, and still addressing the king of Babylon, Isaiah declares:

Isaiah 14:12-17

⁽¹²⁾ How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

⁽¹³⁾ For thou hast said in thine heart, I 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:

⁽¹⁴⁾ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

⁽¹⁶⁾ They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

⁽¹⁷⁾ *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners? (See vv.18-23)

Although this prophecy foretold the fall of the Babylonian king and nation, there are certain elements in the prophecy that may allude to the fall of Satan.

The King of Tyre

Another passage often referred to as alluding to the fall of Satan, is the prophecy in Ezekiel chapters 26-28. These chapters speak of the fall of the king of Tyre, and the utter devastation that the LORD would inflict upon his city. Thus, concerning the king of Tyre, Ezekiel says:

Ezekiel 28:12-19

⁽¹²⁾ Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD;

Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

⁽¹³⁾ Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

(14) Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

(15) Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

(16) By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

(17) Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

(18) Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

(19) All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

(See vv.1-10; see wider context, Ezekiel chapters 26 & 27)

Admittedly, the immediate context requires us to understand this prophecy of the king of Tyre. However, it seems evident that a number of elements in this prophecy are not appropriate to that earthly monarch. These elements may reflect the original position of Satan, and the events leading to his fall. However, it must be emphasised that this is merely a theory. This theory is not sufficiently supported from other parts of God's Word to be formally established as doctrine.

Satan's Power is Limited

God expelled Satan from heaven, casting him and his followers down to the earthly realms. There, Satan exercises a considerable degree of malignant power and arrogated authority over sinful mankind. (1 John 5:19) The devil, however, cannot exercise his authority or power independently of God's will and purposes, nor without God's express permission. (Job 1:12; 2:6) God is sovereign. We must never consider Satan as a rival that possesses equal, but opposite, power to God. Satan is a created, finite, and now, unclean spirit. Therefore, he cannot possibly equal God, and never could. God is uncreated, infinite and pure Spirit. Satan has great power, but God alone is omnipotent or all-powerful.

Satan, therefore, can exert his power and authority over mankind in general, and over believers in particular, only insofar as God permits. However, since the coming of God's Son, the measure of Satan's arrogated authority, and the extent of his power as a mighty celestial being, have been severely curtailed. By the victorious work of Christ on the cross, Satan has been bound (see below). The authority and power that the evil one now exerts is more limited than before. Nevertheless, even this limited power and authority is far greater than that of any man. This is because the power of the devil is superhuman (although not divine). Divine power and authority (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, eternity, and absolute sovereignty) belong only to the persons of the Godhead. Thus, concerning God's Son, the Bible says:

Matthew 28:18

(18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Concerning the fall of Satan, and the curtailment of his power and authority over mankind, the Lord Jesus says:

Matthew 12:29

⁽²⁹⁾ Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man and then he will spoil his house. (See vv.22-32)

And again, the Lord Jesus says:

Luke 10:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. (See vv.17-20)

And concerning the victory over sin, death and the powers of darkness, which the Son of God accomplished at Calvary, the apostle Paul says:

Colossians 2:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (See vv.9-19; cf. Eph. 6:11-12)

Satan Against the World

We have seen that Satan endeavours to exercise his great power over the realm of this world. He has a particular interest in this world, because, at every turn, he is attempting (albeit, futilely) to retaliate against God. Satan's power, however, is altogether inadequate to oppose God directly. For this reason, the prince of darkness launches his malicious and evil attacks against a much weaker target—namely, mankind. Hence, beginning with his attack upon Adam and Eve, the devil has sought to bring about the ruin of mankind—especially, those among mankind who constitute the people and church of God.

With the limited power at his disposal, Satan is obliged to direct his vicious onslaughts against God's people individually, and against the church collectively, rather than against God directly. (When he sought to kill God's Son, however, Satan was making a direct attack upon the incarnate God himself. However, the evil one had to wait until the Son of God had humbled himself and taken upon himself the form of a man. Only in this weakened form—sin apart—could the evil one attack the holy Son of God, albeit unsuccessfully.) At any event, God's Word tells us that any attack against the *people* of God is considered as an attack against the *person* of God. (Zech. 2:8)

While seeking to harass and ensnare God's people, the devil and his angels also endeavour to blind the minds of unbelievers to the truths of the Gospel. In this way, 'the god of this world' tries to hinder them from seeking the Lord—the only true God—and from calling upon his name for salvation. Satan is intent on the ultimate and final ruin of mankind. For this reason, he does all in his power to keep fallen and sinful humanity from discovering the remedy that God has provided for lost and ruined sinners.

Needless to say, however, God remains in control of all events throughout the universe. Despite Satan's malicious intentions for mankind's ultimate ruin, he cannot succeed in accomplishing anything that is contrary to the will and purposes of the Almighty, Sovereign God. Were it not, however, for the direct intervention of God's Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration, all mankind without exception would remain alienated from God and continually exposed to the malice of Satan. Without God's Spirit powerfully illuminating their minds and regenerating their souls, sinners would remain lost. They would be unable to see the light of God's salvation because of the satanic veil covering their understanding. But, in the case of the elect, the Holy Spirit removes the veil covering their minds.

Although mighty in power, Satan is not almighty. He is, therefore, no match for the omnipotent Holy Spirit of God. Once the Holy Spirit begins the work of sovereign and redeeming grace in a person's

soul, Satan is completely powerless to hinder that work, or to prevent it from being fully and finally accomplished.

Satan Against God's People

Satan does all in his power to tempt God's people. However, he can do so only with God's express consent, and he is bound absolutely by the limits that God imposes on his activities. Although God thus limits Satan's power, the evil one is nevertheless described in the Bible as an enemy who attacks his prey with all the ferocity of a ravenous and roaring lion. Like a hungry lion, the devil searches remorselessly for his prey; and he is bent on the destruction—morally and spiritually—of his intended victims. (1 Pet. 5:8)

In his search for prey, our enemy the devil often makes full use of his evil characteristics of stealth, subtlety, and cunning. He employs these tactics rather than launching an outright attack upon his victims, and thus forewarning them of his evil intentions. By employing a wide range of devious approaches, the devil frequently succeeds in overcoming his prey with minimum effort. Once a victim has been seduced and overcome, it is the devil's intention to take that victim captive to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:26)

Sometimes, the Lord permits Satan to tempt his redeemed people very severely and perhaps over a prolonged period. For instance, the LORD God declared concerning his servant Job, that he was a man who was upright, who feared God and who shunned evil. (Job 1:1) Even so, God permitted Satan to tempt Job most severely. Thus, the Scripture says:

Job 1:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. ⁽⁷⁾ And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. (See vv.8-15; cf. Job 2:2)

The LORD permitted Satan to tempt Job most severely. In this extreme trial of his faith, Job lost all his possessions; he lost his health; and, above all, he lost his beloved sons and daughters. Everything for which this upright man had lived and worked, and most of the blessings that the LORD had previously bestowed upon him, were taken away from him by Satan's vile activities. Apart from his wife, Job lost virtually everything.

Yet, for all his mighty power, the devil was unable to do one thing more to Job than God had expressly permitted or decreed. God was in control of Job's life—not Satan. Ultimately, Job's intense trials would end. God would yet bless the latter days of his servant far more than the former. But, at the time of his suffering, Job was not to know the eventual outcome of his prolonged and painful trials. He could only cast himself wholly upon the LORD his God, trusting in his living Redeemer for ultimate deliverance.

Imprisoned Fallen Spirits

Many Demons Imprisoned in Tartarus

Not all fallen angels whom God has expelled from the third heaven are at liberty to roam throughout the earthly or lower heavenly realms, as are Satan and his horde. Many fallen angels are presently being held in the prison of Tartarus, before their final punishment in the lake of fire. Thus, God's Word tells us:

2 Peter 2:4

⁽⁴⁾ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell {Gk., Τάρταρος, *Tartarus*}, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Again, Jude says:

Jude 1:6

⁽⁶⁾ 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.

The reference in 2 Peter 2:4 above to Tartarus (usually translated 'hell' in the different modern versions of the Bible) is the only named reference in the Word of God to this place of imprisonment. As can be seen from Jude and other passages of God's Word, it is a place of darkness, foreboding and dreadful punishment. More than this we cannot safely say about Tartarus; unless it be considered as the same place as the Abyss or bottomless pit. In this case, whatever is said of the Abyss in God's Word will apply to Tartarus.⁵

⁵ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 3

Satan in the Garden of Eden

The Fall of Man

Acting by means of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve to sin by causing her to doubt, and then to disobey God's express command. Once Eve had thus yielded to the wiles of the devil, she then seduced her husband into committing the same sin. Thus, by their wilful disobedience and rebellion against God, Adam and Eve fell from the state of righteousness in which God had originally created them.

God had threatened to impose the death penalty on Adam if he disobeyed his express command. As a punishment for their sin, therefore, both the man and the woman incurred this penalty. In addition, God immediately expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to prevent them from accessing the tree of life. Concerning the temptation of Eve and the subsequent fall of man, the Bible says:

Genesis 3:1,6

⁽¹⁾ 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?

⁽⁶⁾ ...And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (See vv.2-13)

On placing him in the Garden of Eden, the LORD God had told Adam that he was free to eat of any tree in the garden, with one exception. Among all the other trees, two trees stood in the centre of the garden. These were the tree of life, from which—initially, at least—Adam may freely have eaten the fruit. The other tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:8-9) Concerning this latter tree—and this tree alone, of all the trees in the garden—God had expressly commanded Adam:

Genesis 2:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ 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.

Satan, however, sowed seeds of doubt in Eve's mind by questioning God's express command. Thus, in verse 1 of Genesis chapter 3, we are told how Satan deceived Eve:

Genesis 3:1

⁽¹⁾ 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?

The fall of man was a direct result of Eve doubting God's Word, and of Adam's disobedience to God's express command. Eve was the first to be deceived. Nevertheless, Adam is held responsible for disobeying God since he joined with the woman in her sin, and since the LORD had appointed Adam as the head of the woman. Additionally, Adam was the head and representative of the entire human race.

The Consequences of Adam's Disobedience

Spiritual, Physical and Eternal Death

The wages of sin is death. Death came into the world as a direct result of Adam and Eve's wilful disobedience to God's express command. God does not punish mankind for Adam and Eve's *personal* disobedience to his command. However, the death penalty imposed on Adam and Eve is conveyed to all their descendants, together with the inherent corruption of their now fallen nature. Death, therefore, passed upon all humanity, because all sinned. (Rom. 3:23; 5:12)

In the Bible, the term 'death' has a threefold meaning, which may be summarised under the following heads:

Spiritual Death

(1) Firstly, in the Bible, 'death' means *spiritual* death, or alienation from God.

Immediately Adam and Eve sinned against God, they died spiritually. At that moment, they fell from their original state of righteousness. Their moral and spiritual nature (until then, pure, holy and upright) became corrupt; and so began mankind's downward spiral toward depravity. This corrupt or depraved nature inclined men and women permanently toward sin—in thought, word, and deed. Again, because of the effects of their depraved nature on their minds and wills, they no longer sought communion with God. As with their other faculties and powers, their free will had been corrupted by the fall. It was now biased toward self and sin, instead of God and righteousness. Similarly, they lost the ability to live in a manner acceptable and pleasing to God.

Spiritual death, which includes moral and spiritual depravity and inability, is conveyed to all of Adam and Eve's posterity; i.e., to all humanity. Everyone conceived by the natural processes of procreation inherits this sinful nature from Adam. Thus, not only does all mankind bear the guilt of Adam's first sin (original sin), but they also bear the consequences—a fallen and sinful nature. Everyone, therefore, conceived naturally, and born into the world, is born in sin. (Ps. 51:5)

This, however, does not imply that natural sexual relations are somehow sinful, or that such relations between Adam and Eve were the cause of man's fall. To adopt this view is to misunderstand completely the teaching of the Bible. God has ordained that lawfully wed men and women should enjoy sexual relations. Within the bond of marriage, these relations carry God's fullest approval and blessing—provided that they are practised between the marriage partners alone; by mutual consent, and as an expression of love, affection and unity.

Physical Death

(2) Secondly, in the Bible, 'death' means *physical* death, or the death of the body.

As a result of the fall; of the penalty of sin, and of the subsequent corruption of their entire nature, Adam and Eve became subject to bodily ageing, decay and eventual physical death. This ageing and decaying process, which culminates in physical death, is common to all mankind only because of the fall. Had Adam not sinned, he—like the angels in heaven—would have been confirmed in a state of righteousness and holiness. In this state, neither Adam nor Eve's bodies would have become subject to illness, disease, general deterioration, death, and dissolution. Similarly, their descendants—also confirmed in a state of holiness—would not have been subject to physical death.

Physical death and the resulting dissolution of the body, however, is a temporary separation of body and soul. In a manner unknown to us, the data required for the form and identity of each individual body is maintained after death; perhaps with the immortal soul. In the natural realm, a living seed contains within itself (i.e., within its DNA structure) all the

data necessary to produce its future life form. But the life form that the seed eventually produces is different from the seed itself in certain important respects. In a somewhat analogous manner, and from so minute an amount of data, the body of everyone who has ever lived will be reconstituted at the resurrection, and reunited with their immortal souls.

At the resurrection, however, the bodies of believers will be suitably adapted—not for this present earthly life—but for eternal life in the presence of God. For those who have died impenitent and unbelieving, their bodies will be raised and adapted for eternal existence in that place prepared for the devil and his angels.

Eternal Death

(3) Thirdly, in the Bible, ‘death’ means *eternal* death, or final everlasting separation from God in the torments of hell.

Eternal death is yet another penal consequence of man’s sin and fall. Eternal death is that state and condition of everlasting separation from God in the endless torments of hell. This place is sometimes known as the ‘second death’ or ‘the lake of fire’. In speaking about hell, the Lord Jesus likened it to ‘the fiery furnace, [where] there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matt. 13:50); and as that place ‘where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”’. (Mark 9:48) This form of death is reserved for the devil and his angels, and for the finally impenitent.

Those who suffer eternal death will have no further opportunity of repentance toward God. In this place of torments, the lost will endure endless miseries of body and soul. Their consciences will accuse them unceasingly of their sin, and of their wilful refusal to seek God’s abundant mercy while yet time and opportunity remained for them to do so.

The presence of others like themselves in this place of eternal torments, will afford the lost absolutely no hope of companionship or consolation throughout the eternal ages. Although in the company of a vast multitude of men and demons, yet, for all eternity, each one will feel himself to be utterly isolated from all the others. For those other sufferers will be wholly preoccupied with their own miseries, and utterly consumed by pangs of remorse for their own folly. In their bitter anguish and never-ending despair, they will not be in the least concerned for the agonising pains and abject miseries of others.

Adam Primarily Responsible for the Fall

The fall of man occurred because Eve heeded the voice of Satan, instead of heeding the voice of God. She allowed herself to be deceived by the attractions of sin. Not only did Eve herself yield to temptation, but she also enticed her husband Adam to join with her in the transgression. Adam, of course, was not blameless. He bore the same guilt as Eve. In addition, however, Adam sinned in heeding the voice of his wife, instead of heeding the express command of God. Although, in point of time, Eve sinned before Adam, yet Adam was held to be the one primarily responsible. This is because God had created Adam first, and because God had created Eve as a helper (or helpmeet) for Adam. It was also because God had appointed Adam as the head of his wife and the head and representative of all mankind.

Satan Enticed the Woman

In the Garden of Eden, Satan had succeeded in enticing and deceiving the woman. Through the agency of the serpent, the devil had caused Eve to doubt God’s word, to disobey God’s command, and then to lead her husband into the same sin of disobedience and rebellion against God. By her actions, Eve had usurped her God-appointed subordinate position as Adam’s wife. This is why the apostle Paul declares that a woman must not usurp authority over the man, but must remain in submission to him. Thus, God’s Word says:

1 Timothy 2:11-14

⁽¹¹⁾ Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ⁽¹²⁾ But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ⁽¹³⁾ For Adam was first formed, then Eve. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (See vv.9-15; cf. 1 Cor. 11:3)

Satan had caused man *to fall away* from God. Ever since that time, the devil has been attempting to prevent mankind *from reaching out* to God. Except for the drawing power of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling, no one would desire to return to God or to call upon his name from a contrite, believing and truly repentant heart. Salvation, then, is entirely of the grace of God. It is not of the will or desire of any man or woman.⁶ (Rom. 9:16)

The Serpent Crushed by the Seed of the Woman

On placing his curse upon the serpent, God warned that one would come who would bruise or crush the 'serpent's' (i.e., Satan's) head. Thus, the Bible says:

Genesis 3:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ And 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. (See vv.14-24)

This verse is known as the *protoevangel*; i.e., the first reference in the Bible to the coming Redeemer. This Redeemer—the seed or offspring of the woman—would destroy the power of Satan, or the Serpent, at the cross of Calvary. Again, in Romans, the apostle Paul says:

Romans 16:20a

^(20a) And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly...

And, in Revelation, John says:

Revelation 12:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (See vv.13-16)

The Seed of the Woman is Christ

In the Old Testament, the coming Redeemer is sometimes referred to as the promised *Seed*. For example, as we have seen above, Genesis 3:15 speaks of the seed (or offspring) of the woman. Ultimately and primarily, this promise refers to the coming of Christ by means of the woman, for he alone had the authority and the power to crush the serpent's head. In this connection, the apostle Paul says:

Galatians 4:4-5

⁽⁴⁾ But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁽⁵⁾ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (See Gal. 3:26 – 4:7)

Concerning the promise of a son that God gave to Abraham and Sarah—even in their old age—this promise must not be considered as having been fulfilled completely in the subsequent birth of Isaac. On the contrary, the promised seed (in this case, Isaac) pointed forward to the coming of the seed promised by God through Isaac's line; namely, the Christ. Christ is the seed of whom the apostle Paul

⁶ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Fall of Man; Sin*, by Gordon Lyons.

speaks in his letter to the Galatians believers. Concerning the fact that the promised seed or offspring of the woman is Christ, God's Word says:

Galatians 3:19a

^(19a) Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made... (See vv.15-22)

Thus, in Christ, God's promise to send into the world one who would defeat Satan is fulfilled. This spells the defeat of Satan and the demons. It also spells the defeat of Satan's kingdom and of those who are the children of that evil kingdom, or of the realm of Satan's influence and operations.

Christ, the Seed has come, and has destroyed the evil one by his death, burial and triumphant resurrection. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to the risen glorified Son of God. He alone has power to set the prisoners free from Satan's bondage or from slavery to sin. And he is willing to exercise this power on behalf of every man, woman or child who calls upon his name, seeking the salvation of the Lord and owning him as their Saviour and Lord. Christ reigns high over all and above all others. He also reigns in the hearts and minds of all those who love him, and in whose hearts and lives God's almighty Holy Spirit dwells.

Part 4

Satan Defeated by Christ

Even after God expelled Satan from his holy presence, this mighty fallen angel continued to exercise great power over the minds of men and nations. At the cross of Calvary, however, the Lord Jesus Christ utterly condemned Satan, and destroyed the full extent of his power over mankind. Concerning Satan's humiliation and defeat by his death on the cross, the Lord Jesus said:

Luke 10:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. (See vv.17-20)

Again, in John's Gospel, Jesus declared:

John 12:31

⁽³¹⁾ Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (See vv.27-30)

And:

John 16:8,11

⁽⁸⁾ And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment... ⁽¹¹⁾ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (See vv.5-10)

Similarly, the apostle Paul asserts:

Colossians 2:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (See vv.13-14)

Although he can never exert his remaining power beyond the limits that God permits, Satan still has considerable influence over people and nations. He can tempt and deceive the people of God, but he cannot tempt them above their capacity to endure—by God's grace. Again, the devil cannot ultimately remove any child of God from Christ's ownership and safekeeping.

The devil is a defeated enemy, but he is nevertheless a very dangerous enemy. He attempts to fight a rearguard action against God's people, while attempting to deceive them into believing that he has the power to launch a full frontal attack on them. Such are the lies of the devil, for he no longer has this degree of power. Ultimately, then, Satan cannot hope to succeed in his vile and evil attacks, for God's people are being kept secure by the almighty power of God himself. We must remember, of course, that—in common with all the evil spirits—Satan trembles in fear at the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit.

Satan Bound

At the cross, the Lord Jesus defeated Satan and his entire evil horde. By means of his vicarious and atoning sacrifice at Calvary, the Lord Jesus secured salvation for everyone who believes on his name. By his grace, God cancels the debt of their sins, because the Son of God made a once-for-all sacrifice

of atonement on the sinner's behalf. This atoning sacrifice fully satisfied the demands of God's justice and holiness. Consequently, God now justifies and reconciles to himself every repentant and believing sinner.

Justification and sanctification has been secured through the cross for all the redeemed people of God. Satan attempts to keep sinners from being forgiven and reconciled to God. He would prefer that they—like him—remain under God's abiding wrath and just condemnation. However, in this respect, the 'god of this age' (i.e., Satan) has failed miserably. Christ has bound or restrained the power of the evil one. By his grace and by the power of his Holy Spirit, God is redeeming sinners to himself through faith in his Son. Furthermore, in spite of Satan's attacks on the children of God, not one of God's redeemed people will fail to inherit his or her eternal blessings in Christ Jesus.

Satan Bound by God's Son

Although Satan has been bound and his power curtailed, he still does everything in his remaining ability to tempt and harass God's people. As always, however, the devil is not given unrestrained license to do as he pleases. He is on a leash, and he is restrained by the limits of that leash. Thus, in the Word of God, Jesus declares:

Luke 11:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:
⁽²²⁾ But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.
(See vv.14-20)

Similarly, Mark's Gospel says

Mark 3:22-27

⁽²²⁾ And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

⁽²³⁾ And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? ⁽²⁴⁾ And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ⁽²⁵⁾ And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ⁽²⁶⁾ And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. ⁽²⁷⁾ No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. (See vv.20-30)

Satan's 'possessions' are the people of this world; i.e., fallen and unregenerate humanity, or humanity as alienated from God. (Matt. 13:37-43; John 8:44,47; 1 John 5:19) In reality, of course, the evil one has no rightful claim over mankind.

In stripping Satan of his power, and of his arrogated right of possession over lost men and women, the Lord Jesus rightfully claims for himself every single person whom God has given him for eternity.

Satan Bound for a Thousand Years

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John describes this scene:

Revelation 20:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ⁽²⁾ And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ⁽³⁾ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand

years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
(See vv.7-10)

This passage from Revelation indicates that the powerful fallen angel, Satan, is overcome by one mightier than himself—one of God's holy angels, perhaps symbolising the risen, conquering and glorified Lord Jesus. Again, it shows the devil bound—and remaining bound—for a specific period determined by God. Thus, Satan does not have the power, authority, or ability to determine his own destiny. His destiny is entirely in the hands of God.

In view of the symbolic nature of much of the book of Revelation, it may not be wise to place a literal interpretation on the expression, *a thousand years* (vv.2-3). A literal interpretation of this passage could be sustained only if this particular interpretation could be supported beyond question from other (narrative or didactic) passages of God's Word.

Satan Still Dangerous

In fact and in effect, the evil one has been bound. His power over evil men and nations has been curtailed. Nevertheless, at present, Satan is still a hostile and dangerous enemy. Within the limits of his eternal decree, God still permits the evil one to tempt believers, and to influence the affairs of evil men, governments, and nations. From eternity, the Lord God ordained this, with the express purpose of accomplishing his own sovereign will in the lives of his redeemed people, and in the lives of evil individuals, governments, and nations.

It is in this respect that the Bible tells us that the whole world is under the control (or controlling influence) of the evil one. To this end, the Bible refers to Satan as the *god of this age* (or *world*). Even so, the devil is powerless to exercise his evil will over mankind independently of the sovereign will of God for mankind. Again, Satan is wholly responsible to God for his own evil inclinations, intentions and actions; and for the evil that he incites in others. Similarly, all men and women are wholly responsible to God for what they think, say, and do. God is not the author of Satan's sin or of humanity's sin in any sense whatsoever.

Part 5

The ‘God of This Age’

(Or, The ‘God of This World’)

In his second letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul refers to Satan as the *god of this age* (KJV, *god of this world*). But what does this imply? What kind of age were the Corinthian believers living in? What kind of age are believers living in today? The apostle Paul gives us the answer in his introductory remarks to the churches of Galatia, where he writes:

Galatians 1:3-5

⁽³⁾ Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁽⁴⁾ Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [Gk., αἰῶνος, *era* or *age*], according to the will of God and our Father: ⁽⁵⁾ To whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

According to the Word of God, the present age—in which we live, but from which we have been saved—is fundamentally an evil age. This is because sinful and unregenerate men and women live under the controlling influence of the ‘god of this age’; i.e., Satan. The Lord Jesus Christ came not only to pay the penalty for our sins, but also to deliver us from our spiritual captivity or bondage to the god of this age.

The ‘God of This Age’ Influences Fallen Mankind

But in what ways does the god of this age influence the lives of fallen and sinful mankind? The devil does so by using every means at his disposal. The evil one seeks to win the allegiance and devotion of lost men and women. Directly and indirectly, unregenerate people fall prey to the false claims of the devil. Directly and indirectly, and to a greater or lesser extent, they are influenced increasingly by Satan’s subtle and malevolent devices.

At the present time of so-called ‘enlightenment’, many people would vehemently deny the possibility of any satanic influence in their lives or on their minds. (In reality, this ‘enlightened age’ (so-called) is moral and spiritual darkness under the guise of mere human insight or ‘light’) Claiming such enlightenment of their minds, however, these people would deny any personal association with Satan whatsoever. Indeed, they would probably deny the very existence of Satan altogether. However, such denials only succeed in demonstrating to what extent these people have been deluded and deceived by the god of this age; i.e., Satan, the prince of darkness and the author of lies. This, however, was true of us too, before the Lord delivered us from the intellectual, moral and spiritual darkness of Satan’s domain into the light and kingdom of his own Son.

The majority of people might deny the existence of Satan, or at least any connection with him or any satanic influence over their lives or work. Nevertheless, every unregenerate person in the world is under Satan’s controlling influence, albeit, not absolutely. That such is the teaching of the Bible may be inferred from the following passages of God’s Word:

1 John 3:8

⁽⁸⁾ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. (See vv.7,9)

The apostle John makes it abundantly clear that all humanity belongs to one or other of these two categories: those who are the children of God, and those who are the children of the devil. Again, in explaining the parable of the weeds (or tares), the Lord Jesus placed all individuals into one or other of two categories. Thus, Jesus said:

Matthew 13:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; ⁽³⁹⁾ The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. (See vv.24-30,36-43)

As can be seen, the contrast is between those who are the children of God's kingdom (the children of righteousness), and those who are the children of Satan's kingdom (the children of unrighteousness) There is no middle ground.

Again, the Lord Jesus' solemn words to some of the most outwardly religious people of his day, makes it abundantly plain that Satan's 'children'—i.e., those who are not the children of God—are to be found in all segments of society and in every culture. To those who (falsely) claimed God as their Father, and who would have utterly repudiated Satan and all his works—*but who rejected God's Son*—the Lord Jesus declared:

John 8:42

⁽⁴²⁾ 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.

John 8:44

⁽⁴⁴⁾ 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.

John 8:47

⁽⁴⁷⁾ He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God. (See vv.39-41)

The children of God are those—and those only—who belong to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every true child of God is identified as belonging to the Father by the regenerating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit, and by his indwelling and sanctifying presence in that person's heart and life. Anyone who does not possess the indwelling Spirit of God does not belong to Christ or to God. Rather, they belong to this world. Their unregenerate lives and inwardly corrupt hearts are influenced by this world, and by the god of this age (Satan). They seek their pleasures in the things of this world alone, and they seek to fulfil the ungodly desires of their hearts and minds. Therefore, they are known as the 'children of the devil', and are said to be under his dominion or control.

Thus, in his first epistle, the apostle John writes:

1 John 5:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [or, under the control of the evil one (NIV)]. (See vv.18-29)*

Righteous Acts Cannot Save a Person

The Bible asserts that fallen humanity lies under the controlling influence of the evil one. However, this is not to imply for one moment that the generality of unregenerate men and women are so governed by the devil that they are incapable of thinking, saying or doing anything that is good, right, honourable or praiseworthy. On the contrary, fallen mankind may do a great many things that, in and of themselves, are good and right. They may endeavour—outwardly, at least—to live honourable, upright lives. They may even attempt to do many of those things that God requires; although not from a regenerate, justified and sanctified heart; and, for this reason, not acceptable to God.

Among the totality of fallen humanity, many individuals perform a great deal of morally good deeds, including works of charity or benevolence, which may be of considerable benefit to mankind. However, these acts of 'righteousness' and benevolence are totally unacceptable to God because they proceed from a heart and life that is at enmity with him.

These people refuse to submit to God's way of attaining righteousness; i.e., by receiving righteousness as a free gift of God's sovereign grace, through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, they endeavour to establish their own righteousness, or to win God's acceptance by means of their own 'righteous' acts, without regard to their sinful and unforgiven condition in God's sight. But those who are presently abiding under God's wrath and condemnation for their unbelief and for their unforgiven sins cannot hope to appease God by self-effort or merit. The only means of propitiation and appeasement acceptable to God is through repentance and faith in the one who made a perfect sacrifice of atonement for sin and sinners. God himself has provided this sacrifice for all truly repentant and believing sinners.

Be they never so many, the righteous acts of an unforgiven and unsanctified heart can never commend a person to God. These acts are acceptable to God and worthy of reward, when—and only when—they proceed from a heart that is right with God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By the enabling grace of God, good works then proceed from that person's heart as a consequence of his regeneration, justification and ongoing sanctification.

God's Holy Spirit Restrains Fallen Mankind

The very fact that many unregenerate people perform good deeds, and do all in their power to avoid outright evil, in spite of Satan's contrary influences, is because of the general influences of God's Holy Spirit. In grace that is common to all mankind (common grace), God creates the desire in society for a certain degree of stability and moral order. To this end, the Holy Spirit excites humanity toward the good and restrains them from outright or uncontrolled evil. Thus, God's Spirit brings about the measure of restraint, benevolence, and law and order that is observed in society, and in the lives of many individuals.

If it were not for this providential and gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, Satan would achieve far greater evil results in the lives of sinful men and women than he does. Ultimately, the devil would succeed in bringing about the breakdown of morality, and of law and order, with resultant chaos in the present world system. God, however, does not intend to permit Satan to attain to such unimaginable and unbounded evil. Whenever the world comes close to such unrestrained iniquity, God acts decisively in judgment. For example, because of the widespread violence, corruption, and wickedness in Noah's day, God destroyed all humanity with the exception of those delivered in the ark. Similarly, and because of the widespread and unrestrained practise of homosexuality and other vile forms of immoral behaviour, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, together with the surrounding towns and villages. (Gen. 6:5-8,11-12; 19:24-25)

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the one who restrains mankind from unbridled evil. However, the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit in common grace may not be continued indefinitely. And, when God's Spirit is withdrawn, judgment follows and impenitent mankind perishes. Man's opportunity for repentance and salvation is then lost forever. This is illustrated most clearly in the *man of sin*. At his appearing, the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit on mankind will be withdrawn. Then—more than at any other time since the fall of man—evil and iniquity will abound throughout the world. This state of affairs will continue for a limited period only, however. The Lord will act in judgment against the man of sin and upon an ungodly world. The Lord Jesus will come in all his splendour, together with the holy angels, and he will destroy the man of sin by the majesty, power, and glory of his very appearing.

The 'God of This Age' Claims Fallen Mankind's Devotion

Again, when men and women refuse to acknowledge and worship the Lord God, and Jesus Christ his Son, as the only true God, it is because they acknowledge other objects of devotion. It does not matter what shape or form these other objects of devotion assume. False gods, or gods of other religious persuasions, are idols set up by Satan to draw men and women after himself. The same is true of those people who virtually worship as a god the achievements of science or technology, or who place undue confidence in the sum of man's knowledge. (Cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 10:20)

Similarly, those who say that they do not acknowledge any kind of god do not thereby escape the force of this argument. To believe that self (*ego, I*) is all, or that man has no need of God, is to believe a lie—a deceptive lie of the devil. Satan uses this very powerful and persuasive lie to accomplish his intended purposes: the denial among mankind of the true and living God. The devil does this by holding a person's mind (including his understanding, reasoning, and other intellectual capacities) in captivity to himself. For only a captive and blinded mind is incapable of seeing and acknowledging the truth.

Again, to set one's heart on things like ambition, success, wealth, possessions, or anything else, is to worship an idol. These things are not necessarily sinful in themselves. However, when any one of them is allowed to occupy first place in our lives, it is because Satan has succeeded in stirring up our old sinful nature. The evil one has drawn away our hearts from the Lord our God, and has caused us to 'devote' them to these false gods. But, in tempting the Lord Jesus with the riches of this world, did not Satan say:

Matthew 4:9

⁽⁹⁾ ...All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Success, riches, possessions and honour, may come to us from the Lord, when we are honouring the Lord in our lives. However, when we are failing to honour the Lord, the Lord may permit Satan to tempt us with the sins of greed, covetousness, lust, and idolatry.

Satan Cannot Make us Sin

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that we cannot blame Satan for the sins that we commit. The Lord Jesus made it abundantly plain that evil proceeds from our own sinful hearts—not from some outside source or power. For all his great power and influence, Satan cannot *make* us evil nor can he *force* us to commit sin. He can only entice, allure, deceive or tempt us, albeit, severely at times—but not above the grace of God to resist.

When we yield to temptation and commit sin, that sin proceeds from our own fallen nature. We, therefore, remain wholly responsible and accountable to God for every sinful thought, word, and deed. We cannot claim that Satan 'overcame' or 'overpowered' us and caused us to sin. For God's Word tells us that the Lord does not permit us to be tempted above our capacity to endure. Nor are we ever tempted except God provides some way of escape. To this end, the apostle Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 10:13

⁽¹³⁾ 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*.

The ‘God of This Age’ Subverts Moral Standards

The evil stratagems of the devil and his angels include the powerful and incessant tendency toward persuading people to be more broad-minded concerning moral and spiritual issues, and to be more tolerant of the liberal views of others. Again, the god of this age endeavours to subvert moral standards by inducing people to think it a matter of no great importance if they pursue an indifferent, careless or inordinate way of life. Similarly, the devil works on the hearts and minds of people, inducing a number of these individuals to break all bounds of decency and order by freely indulging in licentious or grossly immoral attitudes and practises.

In this more extreme form, God’s moral standards become inverted or perverted by the suggestions of the devil, and by the corruption of fallen human nature. Through human agency, the evil one tries to persuade people that—under certain circumstances—sinful practises are not really sinful (except, perhaps, in the minds of a number of ‘unenlightened’ people). Coming as it does from the prince of darkness, such an evil and perverse suggestion is perfectly consistent with the Biblical appellation of Satan as the deceiver, and as the father or author of lies. (John 8:44) However, to the extent that these perverse and wicked lies have been believed, people have felt free to engage in these evil and immoral practises; or, at least, to condone or approve of these sinful practises in others. (Rom. 1:32)

In their fallen condition, men, women, and young people submit more easily to the delusive lies of the devil—especially if it results in immediate satisfaction of the natural appetites. In the process, however, these people often bring shame and ruin upon themselves by freely indulging their sinful lusts. Instead of controlling and honouring their God-given natural desires, they submit themselves to shameful and dishonourable practises or standards of behaviour. Ultimately, however, God gives such people over to the sinful desires of their own hearts and minds. (Rom. 1:24,26,28)

A Man Reaps what he Sows

The people whom the god of this age entices into pursuing these sinful courses of action, are those who have remained in ignorance of, or who have totally disregarded, the teachings and warnings of God’s holy and unchanging Word, the Bible. The Bible declares repeatedly that all such attitudes and practises are sinful; that they are utterly prohibited by God, and that those who practise them are exposed to the wrath and judgment of God. No matter how a person may feel about them, the Bible utterly and uncompromisingly condemns immorality, and all forms of perverse attitudes and practices, as sin. Furthermore, God’s Word warns us against the folly of pursuing such an evil way of life. A man always reaps what he sows. (Rom. 1:18-32; Gal. 6:7-8)

Yet, we who have experienced God’s redeeming grace in our lives are not at liberty to sit in judgment upon those who are, or have been, guilty of gross immorality or any other degrading sin. It is by the grace of God alone that we stand. There is not one of us who might not have surrendered himself or herself to the same sinful way of life, had it not been for God’s restraining power and grace in our lives. Even at this moment, it is only by God’s grace, by the cleansing and atoning power of the blood of Christ, and by the keeping and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, that we continue to stand. But, from day to day and from moment to moment, let us take care lest we should fall. (1 Cor. 10:12) Let us, then, keep our eyes, hearts and minds fixed firmly on the Lord, and let us live in the power of the Spirit and in the strength of the Lord.

Supernatural or Occult Films

To take another example of satanic influence over the lives of men and women: The god of this age seeks to win the hearts and minds of people through expanding and liberalising occult beliefs and practises. Thus, for example, satanic books, films, videos, DVD’s and other similar media are accepted in certain quarters as a normal form of entertainment. In fact, they are an insidious attempt to influence the minds and wills of men and women, and to create a growing interest in the realm of the spiritual

forces of evil. This is especially true of the realm of Satan and the demonic in particular and of the supernatural (as opposed to the divine) in general.

Similarly, a growing interest may be noted in the spiritualistic practises, in astrology, in pagan religious rites and ceremonies, including magic and voodoo, and in many related quasi-religious cults. This is affecting people in every culture and at every level of society, from the person in the street to certain government leaders and advisors.

The ‘God of this Age’ Blinds the Minds of Unbelievers

One of the consequences of Satan’s alluring enticements is to blind the minds of unregenerate men, women and young people: That is, the devil effectively places a ‘veil’ over their rational faculties (in this case, their insight or understanding) so that they are prevented from comprehending and believing the truths of the Gospel.

Although he cannot hinder the purposes of God, Satan does all in his power to keep people from seeking the Lord. Even when some of these people are brought into contact with the Gospel, the god of this age casts a covering veil over their minds. Thus, the truths of God’s Word fail to create any lasting impression on their souls. Because they cannot see and believe the truth—and so be saved—these people ultimately perish in their sin and unbelief.

Concerning, however, Satan’s attempt to blind men’s minds to the truth, God’s Word says:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

⁽³⁾ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁽⁴⁾ 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. (See vv.1-6)

All humanity would remain under this dark satanic veil—spiritually blinded, and thus entirely incapable of understanding and believing the revealed truth of God’s Word—if it were not for the intervening, drawing and illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. By the grace and mercy of God, however, the Holy Spirit illumines the sin-darkened and satanically veiled minds of unbelievers, so that they can see the truth, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then, can they understand the truth. Only then, can they see the Son of God as the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)

The ‘God of this Age’ Infiltrates the Church

Even within the church—the professing body of believers—the evil one seeks to gain a foothold and to draw people after him. This may happen when false teachers infiltrate the church, bringing a form of doctrine that is at variance with the express teaching of the Bible. Alternatively, they may mix truth with error in such a way that the error is not immediately or easily discernible. In such a manner, many of the Lord’s people may be deceived and led into sin.

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that false teachers would come, and would upset the faith of some. Thus, in advising and instructing Timothy regarding the appointment of elders, Paul says concerning these church leaders:

2 Timothy 2:25-26

⁽²⁵⁾ In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; ⁽²⁶⁾ And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (See vv.14-24; see esp. vv.16-18,23)

Sometimes, such false teaching is accompanied by, or tends toward, evil or immoral practices. The men and women who propound such evil doctrines, however, are not in fact ministers of God, however

much they may profess otherwise. According to God's own Word, these men or women are deceitful workmen; they are apostles of Satan, and ministers of darkness. (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Pet. 2:1-22)

Thus, in this manner, Satan seeks to draw people away from sound doctrine, through acceptance or tolerance of pernicious error, and into sin and allegiance to himself. Were it not for God's grace, even the elect might be deceived and led astray by Satan's subtle devices, or by the deceptive message of these false teachers. However, in the case of God's elect people, this is impossible. An almighty hand protects the elect; and, although they may err for a time, they cannot ultimately be led away from God or from his holy and infallible Word. They are the sheep of God's fold. They can never perish. God's Holy Spirit illumines their minds so that they can much more readily recognise and deal with error effectively and decisively. (1 John 2:20; 4:1-3; 2 John 7-11)

Part 6

The Prince of the Power of the Air

(NIV: The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air)

Another title given to Satan is *the prince of the power of the air* (or *the ruler of the kingdom of the air*. (NIV)) In the Old Testament, the title 'Ruler' or 'Prince' is given to the archangel Michael. This title is a common enough in everyday usage, but here it may be intended to suggest that Satan too—although under a different name—was once an archangel in the presence of God. Since God expelled this rebellious angel from his holy presence, however, Satan now has set himself up as the ruler, prince, or god of this age. Nevertheless, whatever may be Satan's vain pretensions to power and dominion, God remains in absolute control of all events throughout the entire universe. A fallen angel—who is merely an extremely powerful *created* being—cannot possibly usurp the universal and sovereign dominion belonging absolutely of right to the *uncreated*, eternal and infinitely powerful God.

The Bible reveals that the redeemed children of God have been delivered from Satan's bondage. Among other things, this means that the believer has been saved (or delivered) from the deceiving and powerful influence that Satan exerts on their minds, enticing them to yield to the desires of their own sinful nature, and then enslaving them to their sinful attitudes, thought, words and practices. Unregenerate mankind, however, remains under the deceiving and controlling influence of the ruler of the kingdom of the air—the prince of darkness, or of this dark (sinful) age. Effectively, this means that unbelievers are yet enslaved to the evil one's enticements, and are in bondage to their own sins.

The effects of Satan's power and influence over our former manner of life, and over the lives of those still outside of Christ, is indicated by the Scripture that says:

Ephesians 2:1-2

⁽¹⁾ And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins

⁽²⁾ 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: (See vv.3-5)

Evidences of Satan's Power Over Fallen Mankind

As a rule, unbelievers may not be aware of Satan's influence upon their lives, but the fact is proved by the kind of lives they live. It is proved by the very fact that they are fallen and sinful creatures; alienated from God and at enmity with God by their evil attitudes, dispositions, and behaviour. It is proved by the fact that they accept and practise sin as though it were a normal fact of life. All these evidences testify not only to the fact that all people are sinners, but also to the fact that—in their unregenerate state—everyone is a child of their spiritual father, the devil.

We should note, however, that a person's sin proceeds from his or her evil heart or corrupt and sinful nature. Satan may take advantage of a person's fallen nature by tempting, alluring, inducing and provoking that person to sin. Nevertheless, each man or woman is a rational and responsible being. Regardless of the nature and strength of satanic inducements, enticements or other forms of temptation, a person remains fully accountable to God for all his sinful inclinations, thoughts, words, and actions.

The Bible tells us that unbelievers belong to the kingdom of darkness (sin, impurity and deceit, etc.), rather than to the kingdom of light (righteousness, holiness and truth, etc.). Unbelievers hate the light, and do not approach the light for fear that the light will expose and condemn their evil deeds. (John 3:19-20) These and other facts demonstrate beyond all shadow of a doubt that unregenerate mankind

lies under the controlling influence of a powerful evil being. The Bible tells us that this evil being is Satan—the ruler of the kingdom of the air, or the prince of the power of darkness.

Rescued From Satan's Dominion

Only by the grace of God in redemption, can a person be delivered from Satan's bondage and released into the liberty of the children of God. However, concerning the position in which we all once stood before our regeneration and conversion, God's Word says:

Ephesians 2:3

⁽³⁾ 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. (See vv.1-10)

Speaking of the dark kingdom from which the Lord Jesus has delivered us, God's Word says:

Colossians 1:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: ⁽¹⁴⁾ In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: (See vv.9-12,21-22; cf. Acts 26:18; 1 Pet. 2:9)

And, reminding us of the wicked and powerful spiritual enemy against whom we must contend, the apostle Paul declares:

Ephesians 6:12

⁽¹²⁾ 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*. (See vv.10-18)

All truly born again believers (those in whom God's Holy Spirit lives) have been translated from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom. By his sovereign grace, God has effectually called us to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God has regenerated us, and God has justified and adopted us into his own family as children and heirs—co-heirs with his own Son.

Although we have inherited so great salvation and privileges, however, God's Word reminds us that we will need to contend daily and hourly against the spiritual forces of evil in high places. These spiritual forces are the powers of darkness in the heavenly realms. This, rather than flesh and blood (i.e., human opposition) is the nature of the warfare that God's redeemed people are called upon to pursue. We do this, however, not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord our God. We fight the good fight of the faith in the comforting and sustaining might of Christ our risen and glorified Redeemer, and in the invincible power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Accuser of Our Brothers

In keeping with the significance of his name, Satan is also known as *the accuser of our brethren*. (Rev. 12:10) He is seen as the one who stands before God—not to minister (as do the holy angels)—but to bring railing accusations against the saints of the Lord, pointing out all their sins and transgressions.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah tells us of the vision he saw of God's high priest Joshua (symbolically representing the nation of Israel). In this vision, Zechariah saw Joshua ministering before God. However, the high priest appeared to be clothed in filthy garments.

At Joshua's side, Satan stood accusing him before the Lord—Joshua's filthy clothes symbolising Israel's inward impurity or corruption. Thus, Zechariah the prophet relates:

Zechariah 3:1-4

⁽¹⁾ And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. ⁽²⁾ And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*

⁽³⁾ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

⁽⁴⁾ And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. (See vv.5-7)

Satan Accuses God's People when Guilty

In Zechariah's vision, the high priest Joshua represents the chosen and holy nation of Israel. However, as God's holy people, Israel should have been all too aware of her sins, and consequently of her total unworthiness to stand in God's presence while she remained in her sinful condition. Israel's iniquities and her utter unworthiness were greatly magnified by Satan, however, who is pictured as standing before the LORD accusing God's people of every imaginable fault and transgression. 'The accuser of our brethren' was doing all in his power to malign and discredit God's people. Yet, in spite of Satan's vile accusations, God's attitude toward his redeemed people was as unchanging as was the immutable God himself. God's people remained—and would ever continue to remain—precious in his sight. (Isa. 43:4)

Although Satan stood vehemently accusing Joshua—and, therefore, God's people—of their sins, the LORD refused to acknowledge any of his vile accusations. To prove his love for his own people, the LORD sent his angel to take off Joshua's filthy clothes (representing Joshua and his people's sins). In place of his vile garments, God's servant clothed Joshua with garments rich and clean. We may understand this of the garments of salvation, or of the perfect righteousness that God freely bestows upon all his redeemed people. Satan, therefore, had no valid ground for accusing God's redeemed people. God had justified them. Like all of his redeemed children, they could never again be condemned. For none can sustain any charge against those whom God has justified. (Rom. 8:30-34)

Satan Accuses God's People when Not Guilty

Since he is the 'father' (i.e., originator and instigator) of lies, Satan also accuses God's people of sins they have *not* committed. The evil one alleges blame, where no blame exists. He attempts to slander a person's character or to malign his reputation—acting through human agency—in order to call into question or to discredit that person's integrity or reputation. These untruthful and slanderous accusations or innuendoes can be very hurtful and harmful to the person under attack and to others associated with him. God, of course, is aware of the true situation, and is not influenced in any way by Satan's vile accusations against his redeemed and holy people.

Concerning the assurance that he gives to those who slander his people, the LORD asserts through his prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 54:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

And, concerning God's certain judgment on the one who stands accusing the saints of the Lord, the apostle John says:

Revelation 12:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (See entire passage: vv.7-17)

God Repudiates Satan's Accusations

God is utterly holy. He therefore cannot excuse or acquit the guilty. Nevertheless, the Lord totally repudiates the devil's vile accusations against his redeemed people. The reason for this is that their sins—past, present and future—have already been dealt with by the substitutionary and atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To accuse God's redeemed people of their sins is to imply that the finished and perfect work of Christ their Redeemed was, in fact, incomplete or imperfect. God will not tolerate such vile slanders against his Son or against those for whom his Son died. Christ secured a perfect, complete and once-for-all sacrifice of atonement for the sins of his people. Thus, Satan's accusations against the people of God are malicious, unfounded, and manifestly untrue. Even at this moment, the Lord Jesus is at God's right hand interceding for his people, and pleading the merits of his redeeming blood. There are absolutely no valid grounds, therefore, for any accusations against the people of God. Their judgment has already been borne by Another, and their sin atoned for once-for-all by his redeeming and sanctifying blood. (Heb. 9:12,22,25-26; 10:10,12,14,18)

We must not understand this to mean, however, that—since God will not accede to any accusation against his redeemed people—the people of God are at liberty to practise a sinful lifestyle. It is from that very lifestyle that Christ died to redeem them. God's redeemed people are a holy people. They are a separated people; a people set apart from the corruption of this sinful world, and set apart to live for God's glory. It is impossible to have experienced regeneration and justification, without also experiencing sanctification and increasing holiness of life. Those who continue to practise a deliberately sinful lifestyle—after having professed faith in Christ—show by their actions that their profession was false. And, if false, they are still in their sins.

The Father of Lies

The children of God are also the children of Abraham, for all believers share Abraham's faith in God's covenant promises. Those, however, who are not the children of God, are the children of the devil. If the Holy Spirit does not indwell a person, then he or she is under the controlling influence of the evil one. Even so, every individual remains wholly responsible in the sight of God for his or her own rational and moral choices and corresponding actions.

To the Jews who claimed to be the children of Abraham, Jesus declared:

John 8:44

⁽⁴⁴⁾ 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. (See vv.42-47)

Satan is the father of lies, and of all forms of deceit and hypocrisy. Thus, concerning the subtle deception practised by the serpent on Eve, God's Word says:

1 Timothy 2:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (See vv.11-15; cf. Gen. 3:1,13)

And again, concerning the true nature of Satan and of his deceiving influence over the entire world—and especially the world of fallen mankind—the apostle John says:

Revelation 12:9

⁽⁹⁾ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (See vv.7-17)

The Slanderer

As we have seen, Satan is a liar and the father (or originator) of lies. He engages in all forms of deceit and intrigue against God's people. He slanders their name (by means of human agency) and endeavours to discredit them by bringing their character into disrepute. He will attempt to do this by enticing the people of God to the extent that some of them yield to the temptations of their own sinful inclinations, and fall into deliberate and wilful sin. Then, the evil one will ensure that their names are tarnished and that their enemies never forget their sins.

Often, however, the devil fails to entice God's people or to find any glaringly obvious faults. Or he proves unsuccessful in inducing God's people to engage in open and possibly scandalous sin. On such occasions, however, the devil may resort to activities that are much more subtle. For example, the enemy of souls may invent faults and accuse God's people of sins of which they are completely innocent. He may cause people—sometimes even the people of God themselves—to falsely accuse other believers of some imagined misdemeanour. By such means, the evil one may cause all kinds of false innuendo to be levelled against some of the Lord's people. He may persist in his malicious and slanderous attacks against God's people, until others begin to imagine that there may be some truth in these scurrilous accusations. 'There can be no smoke without fire', some will say.

This, however, is the very thing that Satan is endeavouring to achieve. For if he succeeds in deceiving or misleading others, they will be sure to continue the evil work that the devil has begun. By such evil stratagems, some of God's faithful servants may be brought to ruin. They are guiltless in the eyes of God—but under unfounded suspicion in the eyes of men. The slanderer has done his job well.

Yet, God will not desert his people to the slanderous lies of the enemy, or to the evil suggestions of other people. Eventually, the truth will manifest itself. Satan will be exposed as the liar that he is, and the people who believed his lie will need to live for the rest of their lives with the memory of their false accusations and innuendo against a fellow-believer. Yet, if they repent and acknowledge their sin, God will forgive them and will have compassion on them.

In the meantime, however, God's servants are called upon to endure patiently all such things as false accusations, slander, and malicious gossip. And, concerning those who suffer thus—while engaged in God's service—the Scripture says:

Isaiah 54:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD. (See v.16; cf. 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16)

Satan's Disguises

Satan as an Angel of Light

In his endeavours to gain access to the people of God, Satan's approaches are not usually obvious. Indeed, he often conceals his approach, or masks it under the guise of apparent goodness, truth, or righteousness. In this way, Satan's emissaries may gain access into different local churches. Then, by means of enticing and alluring words, they succeed in deceiving some of these fellowships.

Concerning those who purport to teach God's way, but who in fact are false messengers or emissaries of Satan who preach false doctrine, God's Word says:

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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. (See vv.1-12; see esp. vv.3-6)

The Lie of False Teaching

Once more, Satan's skill as an inveterate liar, and as the subtle deceiver of humanity, has been put to maximum effect to mislead unwary people of God. Just as Satan used the serpent to deceive Eve, so some believers in the Corinthian church had been deceived by Satan's messengers into believing another lie—that of false teaching. God's Word describes false teaching as a lie because, in one way or another, that teaching seeks to subvert or modify God's eternal and unchangeable truth—revealed only in his Word, the Bible.

Such subversion or modification of the Word of God was not new. In the Old Testament, and by the same means, Satan induced Israel into believing the same kind of lie. By means of false prophets, the professing people of God forsook the eternal truths of God. Failing to abide in God's truth, they turned their hearts toward the detestable religious practises of their pagan neighbours. By enticing them away from the truth of God, Satan had induced these people into idolatry and the worship of false gods—although the people themselves had willingly embraced this evil practice. These vile practises however were expressly forbidden by the teaching of God's inerrant and infallible Word, as the Israelites well knew.

In the church at Corinth, Satan was at work again. Disguised like their devilish master, as 'angels of light', these false teachers were evidently very eloquent in their oratory and persuasive in their arguments. By such means, these ambassadors of the devil were succeeding in leading God's people astray by their distortions of the truth. But the angel of light (so-called) is nevertheless the devil in disguise. His servants ever strive to distort the truth, or to contaminate the truth with a mixture of half-truths and outright lies. This is the work of Satan, and the province of those who lie under his power and control. Holy they may appear. But wholly given to the devil's schemes they are in fact.

Satan as a Roaring Lion

The one who at times appears as an angel of light—i.e., as though innocent, holy, and harmless—at other times appears as a raging lion: A lion seeking prey: A fierce lion seeking to maul and to destroy by sheer force of strength. Thus, God's Word says:

1 Peter 5:8-11

⁽⁸⁾ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. ⁽⁹⁾ Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

⁽¹⁰⁾ But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. ⁽¹¹⁾ To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Therefore, the apostle Paul exhorts the Christians to:

Ephesians 6:10-13

⁽¹⁰⁾ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
⁽¹¹⁾ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ⁽¹²⁾ 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*. ⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (See also vv.14-18)

Part 7

Subordinates of Satan

The Demons or Unclean Spirits

In the King James Version of the Bible (KJV), evil spirits—literally, ‘unclean spirits’—are sometimes referred to in the translation as ‘devils’. There is, however, only one devil (Gk., δίαβολος, *diabolos*, *slanderer*), and this is Satan. All other evil spirits are known simply as *unclean spirits* or *demons* (from Gk., δαιμόνιον, *daimonion*, *hostile and evil or vile spirit*).

The demons are subservient to Satan. Both Satan and all the demons, however, must submit wholly to Christ and to his commands.

The demons are created spirits. But nothing that God created was ever created evil. Before their fall, Satan and his angels were numbered among the holy angels. They became evil spirits (or fallen angels) through their sin and rebellion against God, their Creator.

These Evil Beings Operate from the Lower Heavens

Following their expulsion from the highest heavens, Satan and all the other unclean spirits or demons were banished to the realms of this earth. We should probably understand this to include not only the planet Earth itself, but also the lower heavenly realms associated with the solar systems and galaxies: i.e., the vast area commonly known as ‘outer space.’

Spirits Not Subject to Laws of Nature

It must be remembered that Satan and the demons are spirits. As such, they are not subject to the same space-time limitations as are imposed upon human or any other material or physical bodies. Being incorporeal creatures, spirits are not bound by the laws that govern the physical universe.

Physical laws, such as the law of gravity or relativity act only on material bodies or physical objects. They form powerful fields of attraction or repulsion between different bodies, and they restrict the movement of bodily, gaseous or liquid matter through space. Similarly, the laws of time and distance are relevant to all material and physical bodies. However, none of these natural laws has any relevance to, or effect on, spirit beings such as angels. This is true of both holy and evil angels.

Again, this means that spirits are not bound by the physical laws that govern the reflection, refraction, diffusion and velocity of light in and through space. From this it follows, that—like the holy angels—these evil angels or demonic spirits may be able to move through space at speeds that are incomprehensible to the human mind.

Whether, on occasions, the evil spirits can assume material form—like the holy angels—is not revealed to us in the Word of God. On the contrary, from the Bible, it would seem that the only way that these fallen and unclean spirits can assume material form is by taking possession of an existing living body—either human or animal. However, since they do not displace space within a living body, it is possible for a large number of evil spirits to take possession of a single person or animal. (Mark 5:6-13)

Demons Acknowledge Christ’s Deity, Power and Authority

The demons confess that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, and they acknowledge fully the Lord’s supreme power and authority over them. They acknowledge, too, the Lord Jesus’ ability to

command them to depart immediately to the realm of torments (the 'Abyss')—a place that engenders great terror and dismay among the unclean spirits or demons.

Concerning the demons' acknowledgement of Christ's deity, the Bible says:

Mark 1:23-24

⁽²³⁾ And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ⁽²⁴⁾ Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. (See vv.21-27)

Again, the medical doctor, Luke, tells us of a time when Jesus was healing people who were brought to him:

Luke 4:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ And devils [Gk., δαιμόνια, *demons*] also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ {Or *Messiah*} the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. (See v.40)

On another occasion, the physician Luke records of a demon-possessed man:

Luke 8:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. ⁽²⁹⁾ (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) (See vv.26-39)

Clearly, then, the evil spirits recognised Jesus not just as a man, or even as one of the Jewish exorcists, but as none less than the Son of God Most High. These unclean spirits were compelled to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the only one who had the power and authority to send them to the Abyss—that place which filled them with abject terror.

To this end, it is recorded of the unclean spirits:

Luke 8:31

⁽³¹⁾ And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep (Gk., ἄβυσσος, *abyss*). (See v.30)

Again, concerning the Abyss or bottomless pit, the Bible says:

Revelation 9:2

⁽²⁾ And he opened the bottomless pit (Gk., ἄβυσσος, *abyss*); and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (See also vv.3-11; Rev. 20:1-3)

Fear seizes the demons at the thought of Christ's almighty power over them. They know that—by a word of command—the Lord Jesus is able to commit them to the 'Abyss' or 'bottomless pit'. The demons are aware that this is a place of great foreboding and unimaginable torments: a place where these fallen spirits will suffer eternally, along with Satan and his other subordinates.

Demons Believe—and Tremble in Fear

Unlike many people, the demons believe in the Son of God—although not unto salvation. Rather, they believe and tremble with fear at the prospect of the final doom and consignment to the lake of fire. For, unlike fallen and sinful humanity, there is no hope of salvation for any of the fallen angels. They are lost irrecoverably, and they will never be offered any hope of forgiveness or restoration to the presence and favour of God.

Thus, to the Lord Jesus, the demons cried out in terror and despair:

Matthew 8:29

⁽²⁹⁾ And, behold, 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?

And, concerning the fact that the demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God, James says:

James 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

The demons have faith in God, and in his Son Jesus Christ. Although they are evil spirits, they do not doubt for one moment the reality and power of the living God. Nor do they doubt for one moment the reality or the torments of hell.

The demons freely acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. Many people do not acknowledge these things; but the demons are utterly convinced of them. They believe all this, and much more, about the true God.

The demons' faith, however, will never save them from a lost eternity. They believe—but they can only shudder in fear at the dreadful torments that are coming upon them, and utterly despair that God's love, mercy and salvation is not for them.

From this, it follows that faith in God, or in his Son, is not necessarily saving faith. As far as the professing Christian is concerned, his faith—if it is saving faith—must be demonstrated to be genuine by his everyday actions or manner of life. Holiness of life and good works (practical demonstrations of Christian love and concern) must always follow saving faith.

Demons Submit to Christ's Appointed Servants

Those who were called to preach the Gospel were given specific gifts to equip them for their calling and ministry. One of these gifts was the ability to cast out evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus. Apart from the twelve apostles, this gift was exercised by some—if not all—of the seventy-two disciples sent out by the Lord.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Luke 10:17-20

⁽¹⁷⁾ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

⁽¹⁸⁾ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

⁽²⁰⁾ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. (See vv. 1-16)

The apostle Paul also cast out demons on occasions. Thus, concerning a girl who had a spirit of prediction or fortune-telling, the Scripture says:

Acts 16:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

⁽¹⁸⁾ And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. (See vv.16-24)

The demons are compelled, by the Spirit of Jesus, to submit to those who are acting in the name of the Lord, and whom the Lord has gifted and equipped for this ministry. However, the evil spirits do not necessarily respond to those who do not belong to Christ, and whom the Lord has not specifically equipped with the requisite authority to act in his name.

Thus, the Scripture records this warning about some would-be exorcists:

Acts 19:13-16

⁽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. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? ⁽¹⁶⁾ And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (See vv.11-20)

Part 8

Associates of Satan

The Antichrist or Man of Lawlessness

Man of Lawlessness (or Man of Sin)

(The Apostle Paul's Term)

In his second letter to the church at Thessalonica, the apostle Paul reminds the believers about the teaching that they had received concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Some of these believers had understood this teaching to imply that the Lord's second coming was imminent. To correct this false impression, the apostle subsequently wrote to tell the church that the appearing of the man of lawlessness or the man of sin must precede the Lord's second advent.

To this end, the apostle Paul wrote:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

⁽¹⁾ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, ⁽²⁾ That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ⁽³⁾ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁽⁴⁾ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

The apostle continues:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-14

⁽⁷⁾ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. ⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked (Gk., *ἀνομος*, *anomos*, *Lawless* ⁷ *[One]*) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ⁽¹¹⁾ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ⁽¹²⁾ That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

⁽¹³⁾ But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: ⁽¹⁴⁾ Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See vv.5-6,15)

⁷ *Wicked or Lawless [One]:* One without law, or one who refuses wilfully and wickedly to obey the law, and who repudiates and despises the law.

The Antichrist

(The Apostle John's Term)

In his epistles, the apostle John uses the term *antichrist* in a twofold sense. Firstly, John uses this term to refer to the coming Antichrist. (The apostle Paul refers to the Antichrist as the 'man of lawlessness', or the 'man of sin'). Secondly, John applies the term, 'antichrists' to the many false teachers who foreshadowed the real Antichrist. These false teachers or 'antichrists' were creating discord and havoc in some of the churches in John's day.

Concerning these antichristian teachers, the apostle says:

1 John 2:18-19

⁽¹⁸⁾ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ⁽¹⁹⁾ They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

What are one of the characteristic marks of the Antichrist; or, indeed, of any of Satan's servants? According to the apostle John, the Antichrist is one who—like his satanic master—lives the lie, and teaches the lie. In particular, this involves the denial of the truth that Jesus is the divine and eternal Son of God, and that God's divine Son is indeed the promised Messiah (or Christ).

Summarising this point, the apostle John declares:

1 John 2:22

⁽²²⁾ Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (See vv.20-27)

By their teaching, these men were attempting to refute everything that the Lord Jesus and his apostles had said concerning these very things. Even in John's day, Satan's subordinate antichrists—the false teachers—were already doing their evil work.

Frequently, such antichrists live and teach the lie concerning the need for holiness of life among God's redeemed and sanctified people. These antichrists are the men and women who infiltrate the church, sometimes rising to high office within the church hierarchy. However, these servants of Satan pervert the Scriptures to make them permit the very things that God's Word condemns. They turn the truth of God into a lie, and they themselves live the lie. By their own evil conduct and teaching, they succeed in leading some of God's people into the gross and vile sins of immorality and idolatry. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 3-19; Rev. 2:14-16,20-23)

As we have seen, the antichristian spirit was already in the world in John's day, working through the false teachers of the day. This satanic spirit endeavoured to deny the grace of God and to pervert the message of the Gospel. This Gospel was (and is) the message of eternal salvation. This is the message that the Lord has delivered once-for-all to the apostles, and which subsequently have been recorded on the pages of the New Testament. Certain people, however, were denying some of the most fundamental truths of God's Word, and were attempting to impose their erroneous views on the church of God.

Concerning such people, the apostle John writes:

1 John 4:2-3

⁽²⁾ Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ⁽³⁾ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (See vv.1-6)

Concerning these false or antichristian teachers—who refused to acknowledge that Jesus was the Most High God incarnate as a Man (sin apart)—the apostle John says:

2 John 1:7

⁽⁷⁾ For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (See vv.8-11)

On a very much larger scale, the real Antichrist will deceive and lead people away from the worship of God to the worship of himself. This wholesale and worldwide turning away from the truth will happen to an extent never before witnessed or experienced since the creation and fall of mankind.

As ever, however, in times of apostasy, God will preserve his elect, redeemed and holy people. Even so, many of those who have professed faith in Christ outwardly (i.e., without experiencing regeneration) will accept the lie of the Antichrist or man of lawlessness. This will happen because, in reality, these people have refused to acknowledge and love the truth, although many may have professed otherwise. Because of their refusal to acknowledge and believe God's truth, God sends upon their minds a powerful deluding influence. Consequently, these people accept and embrace the evil teaching and practises of the Antichrist. Ultimately, however, they will perish in their iniquity. The Antichrist himself will be utterly destroyed by the glorious appearing of the Son of God.

The Beast

The Beast out of the Bottomless Pit or the Abyss

(The Scarlet Beast)

In Revelation chapter 9, we are told concerning the angel of the Abyss or bottomless pit:

Revelation 9:11

⁽¹¹⁾ And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon [*Destroyer*]. (See vv.1-12)

And, concerning the beast that arises from the Abyss or bottomless pit, we are told in Revelation chapter 11:

Revelation 11:7

⁽⁷⁾ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. (See vv.1-14)

And, in chapter 17, John says:

Revelation 17:3

⁽³⁾ So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. (See vv.1-6)

The apostle John continues:

Revelation 17:6-18

⁽⁶⁾ And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. ⁽⁷⁾ And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

⁽⁸⁾ The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

⁽⁹⁾ And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. ⁽¹⁰⁾ And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. ⁽¹¹⁾ And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

⁽¹²⁾ And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

⁽¹³⁾ These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. ⁽¹⁴⁾ These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

⁽¹⁵⁾ And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. ⁽¹⁶⁾ And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. ⁽¹⁸⁾ And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. (See also Rev. 18:1-24)

From the above explanation given by the angel, it is evident that the 'waters' on which the 'whore' or 'prostitute' sits (v.1) symbolises all the peoples and nations of the world. Similarly, the 'prostitute' symbolises that city (or centre of evil power and dominion) that endeavours to exercise complete dominion over world rulers. This dominating evil power operates under satanic influence and control, and by the devil's power and authority—but wholly within the limits of God's eternal decrees.

The Beast out of the Sea

In Revelation chapter 12, the apostle John sees the vision of war in heaven: Michael and his angels overthrow Satan and his demonic horde. Satan—the dragon—is cast down to the earthly realms. In furious rage, the devil then endeavours to attack and destroy the church and people of God.

Then, in chapter 13 of Revelation, the apostle John observes the dragon (Satan) standing on the shore of the sea. As he looks, John now sees a 'beast' rising out of the sea. This beast should be understood of an exceedingly evil person or ruler arising out of the 'sea of mankind'; i.e., from among the peoples or nations of the world. Some interpreters, however, believe that the beast represents an evil kingdom or nation (rather than an individual ruler or dictator).

Concerning this extremely evil associate of the devil, God's Word says:

Revelation 13:1-8

⁽¹⁾ And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ⁽²⁾ And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. ⁽³⁾ And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. ⁽⁴⁾ And they worshiped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

⁽⁵⁾ And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months. ⁽⁶⁾ And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. ⁽⁷⁾ And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁽⁸⁾ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (See vv.9-10)

The Beast out of the Earth

Following this dreadful and frightening vision of the *beast out of the sea*, John sees the vision of another 'beast'—a beast arising out of the earth. Thus, the apostle relates:

Revelation 13:11-18

⁽¹¹⁾ And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. ⁽¹²⁾ And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ⁽¹³⁾ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ⁽¹⁴⁾ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means* of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. ⁽¹⁶⁾ And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: ⁽¹⁷⁾ 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.

⁽¹⁸⁾ 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 three-score *and* six. [666]

The last of the three holy angels whom John sees, comes to announce from the Lord what will happen to those who worship the image or representation of the beast, or who receive his identifying mark on their hand or forehead:

Revelation 14:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ⁽¹⁰⁾ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ⁽¹¹⁾ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (See vv.1-13)

Before looking at further passages that speak of the mark of the beast, it may be helpful at this stage to compare this expression ('mark') with another similar—but opposite—expression in God's Word. This is the 'mark', or identifying seal, that God places upon his own people.

The Mark of God

The Significance of this Mark

God sets his seal of ownership upon every one of his redeemed and holy people. This seal identifies God's people as belonging to him. No one else can receive this mark, except those whom the Lord has redeemed.

In order to understand the significance of God's identifying mark, it is necessary to consider an Old Testament parallel. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, God warned the unfaithful and grossly idolatrous people of Israel of coming judgment on their vile and sinful way of life. Together with their religious leaders, these people had turned away from the worship of the only true God, and from the services of the sanctuary. Indeed, the situation had become so bad, that the elders of the house of Israel were actually practising their detestable deeds within the precincts of God's holy temple. Israel's sins had become so abhorrent to God that he had determined to destroy everyone who had engaged in this vile idolatry. Men and women alike were to fall under the righteous judgment of God.

A small number of people in the city of Jerusalem, however, had not involved themselves in any of these vile sins or practices. They had remained faithful to God. In spite of the intense difficulties that this must have entailed upon them, these people had stood their ground.

In order to spare these faithful believers, the LORD had instructed his angelic messengers to go throughout the city of Jerusalem, placing an identifying 'mark' on the foreheads of God's true and faithful people. These people were genuinely grieving over the sins being committed by the majority of people in the city and nation.

Thus, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 9:3-4

⁽³⁾ And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side; ⁽⁴⁾ And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Once God's true people had received the identifying mark on their foreheads, the LORD commanded his holy angel to execute judgment on the remainder of the people—those without the mark. This, of course, included the unfaithful and wicked religious leaders, as well as all the other citizens.

To this end, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 9:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: ⁽⁶⁾ Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house. (See Ezek. 8:1 – 9:11)

In order to protect and preserve his own people (especially in times of crises and judgment), God sets his identifying mark or seal on all his true children.

There is, however, an evil and sinister counterpart to the mark of God—namely, the mark of the beast. In effect, this is the mark of Satan. Its purpose is to identify all those who belong to Satan's kingdom; i.e., everyone who is outside the church and kingdom of God, and who has never experienced spiritual regeneration, justification or sanctification.

God's Servants Sealed

That God sets his seal or mark on his own people, identifying them as belonging to him, can be seen from a few typical passages of his Word. Firstly, concerning the 144,000 who represent the redeemed of the Lord, God's Word says:

Revelation 7:2-3

⁽²⁾ And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ⁽³⁾ Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (See vv.1-17)

God's servants are recognised and protected from ultimate harm because he has identified and sealed them as belonging to him. Symbolically, they are said to have the seal of God on their foreheads (v.3; cf. Ezek. 9:4) God's *specific* judgments on the impenitent and ungodly pass the believer by (as, for example, at the Exodus from Egypt).

Then, secondly, in his vision, the apostle John sees the fifth angel sounding a trumpet. Then, John sees a 'star' descending from heaven to earth. To this 'star' is given the key to the Abyss or bottomless pit.

The apostle relates what he saw in his vision:

Revelation 9:2-4

⁽²⁾ And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. ⁽³⁾ And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁽⁴⁾ And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. (See vv.1-11)

A Symbolic or a Literal Mark?

We should remember that the mark that God places on the forehead of his redeemed and holy people represents the mark and seal of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the one who identifies God's people as belonging to him, and who seals them unto the day of redemption.

In Revelation, the apostle John is speaking of a mark on God's people, which, in his vision, appears to be a physical mark. It may be. However, there is no absolute necessity for believing that this mark must be physical in nature, any more than the mark on God's people of Ezekiel's day needed to be a physical sign. Whatever may be the truth, it should be remembered that no outward physical mark can be any substitute for the inward spiritual mark and work of the Holy Spirit. Without the inward sealing and sanctifying work of the Spirit of God, and without his preserving power, an external mark would be to no avail for the preservation of the soul.

Concerning the possibility that the 'mark' on God's people may be symbolic of the inward reality, it should be borne in mind that symbolic expressions are used very frequently in the book of Revelation. For instance, the seven golden candlesticks or lampstands and seven stars were not intended to be understood literally. As the Scripture itself tells us, the seven lampstands represented seven churches, and the seven stars represented the seven 'angels' (or ministers) of those churches. Likewise, the mark on God's people may be representative of the sealing power and effect of God's Holy Spirit.

In the same way, the mark on those who worship the beast may be a symbolic mark, rather than a literal feature impressed on the forehead or hand. Those who receive the mark of the beast may simply represent all those who live in Satan's domain; i.e., in the world—apart from Christ, and outside the safety of God's church. (Cf. 1 John 5:19)

Saints Victorious Over the Beast

We have looked briefly at the background to the identifying mark that God places on his people. We have considered also the counterfeit of God's mark—the identifying mark that the 'beast' or evil associate of Satan is said to place on all those who belong to Satan's domain. Before considering the mark of the beast further, we will observe what happens to those of God's people who refuse to accept the mark of the beast on their hands or foreheads. Concerning those who had not yielded to the demands to worship the beast and his image, and who had refused to accept his identifying mark, God's Word says:

Revelation 15:2-4

(2) And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

(3) And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

(4) Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (See vv.1-8)

Those believers who remain faithful to God on earth will experience supreme blessing in heaven. Though, in their endeavours to remain true and faithful to their Lord and Master, they must needs endure much suffering, and perhaps be prepared to lay down their lives, yet they shall not lose thereby. They are the beloved of the Lord; for they do not count their lives dear unto themselves. On the contrary, they are ready to die—if need be—rather than deny the one who loved them with an everlasting love, and who redeemed them for eternal glory. Thus, their beloved Saviour and Master will receive them into the glorious mansions on high. Their great gain is to be with Christ, and to share in the song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb—the song of eternal redemption from bondage to this evil age.

Such is the glorious blessings of those who do not yield to the beast, or receive his mark or number. Although it may cost them their lives, these martyrs remain true to the Lord Jesus and to his Father and theirs.

God's Wrath Against the Beast and his Worshipers

Those people, however, who allow the 'beast'⁸ to seduce them, and who acknowledge this evil person in their lives, must ultimately pay the penalty; i.e., the penalty of refusing to acknowledge the one and only true and living God, and Jesus Christ his Son. Conceivably, this will include a substantial number of people within the visible church who had professed faith in Christ. Under persecution, however, these individuals had later abandoned their profession and had apostatised from any claim to the faith.

We should observe, however, that these people were like the weeds (or tares) among the wheat. Outwardly, they may have exhibited the appearance of the genuine article, but the genuine article they were not. They were never true believers—although they may have professed to be so. They mingled with the church, but they did not belong to the church, the body of Christ. For those who are members of Christ's mystical body cannot be sundered from that body. If they are truly regenerated believers, they are an integral part of Christ's body.

However, whether from among the world, or from among false professors within the church, a vast multitude of people will accommodate themselves to the service of the beast. This may be seen as adapting oneself to the methods and practises of the world system that is then current (and where these methods and practises are notoriously evil and ungodly). Again, it may be considered as associating oneself with the men and women who live in accordance with the desires and dictates of this present evil age. All such people receive the mark of the beast.

We must remember, however, that—were it not for God's grace toward us—we too would very likely have participated in the things of this present evil age. We cannot pass judgment, therefore, on those who are deceived into following the way of evil while still in their unregenerate state. 'There but for the grace of God...'

However, concerning those who identify themselves with—and pledge themselves to—this idolatrous world system, and regarding God's judgment upon the adherents of the beast, the apostle John relates:

Revelation 16:1-2

⁽¹⁾ And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

⁽²⁾ And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshiped his image. (See vv.3-9)

And, concerning the outpouring of God's wrath on the beast itself, the Bible says:

Revelation 16:10-11

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

⁽¹¹⁾ And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

(See wider context, Rev. chapters 14 & 15)

⁸ *beast*: i.e., by the satanically inspired personage or power who arises at this time from among mankind [G. Lyons]

Fallen Mankind Still Refuses to Repent

In spite of these terrible judgments and painful sufferings, mankind will still refuse to acknowledge the only true God. They will also stubbornly refuse to acknowledge that God was judging them, righteously and justly, for all their evil deeds. In spite of all that happens to them, however, they will steadfastly refuse to repent of what they had been doing (vv.9,11).

Like Pharaoh many centuries earlier, these men and women will harden themselves deliberately and repeatedly against God and against his warning judgments. They will continue to do this, even although God gives them clear and unmistakable evidence of his almighty power in their midst. They will persist in their sin and rebellion, even although they have a clear knowledge in their hearts and minds of God's eternal truths; so, they will not be ignorant of his ways. Nevertheless, although they will know that God judges and condemns such evil deeds, they will persist in their sins. Inevitably, this will have the effect of hardening their hearts and minds against truth and righteousness. Because of their own moral and spiritual insensitivity, it will become impossible for them to see the folly of their evil deeds, and to call upon the Lord for mercy.

So it is now. Men and women are suffering the consequences of their own evil deeds or manner of life. Yet, they refuse to acknowledge God or to confess their sin to him. They also refuse to acknowledge that God may be judging them, righteously and justly, by giving them over to the indulgence of sin, with all its attendant and subsequent miseries. Even so, these people refuse to repent. They desire only to find the means by which they may be able to continue practising their sins. They even claim that these evil deeds should not be seen as sinful. Satan has so blinded the minds of those who are thus alienated from God, that they imagine that evil is good; or that sin is normal and natural! God alone can deliver from such gross darkness and moral insensitivity and perversion. (Rom. 1:18-32)

Indeed, so insensitive have these people become that they imagine that being sent to hell will be a great boon. They imagine this, believing (vainly) that they will be able to enjoy the practise and pleasures of sin without restraint upon their 'liberty' and without limit of time!

How depraved is the mind that refuses to believe the dreadful realities of the torments of hell! Those who suffer there, will be too consumed with their own torments and anguish of soul to find any pleasures in that terrible place. On the contrary, the pleasures of sin will be the last thing on their minds.

The False Prophet

Another of Satan's subordinates, and an associate of the beast, is the false prophet. This particular false prophet receives satanic power to perform lying signs and wonders, which the people mistake for genuine miracles. By this means, the false prophet deludes and deceives those who have received the mark of the beast. This has the effect of adding to their spiritual blindness and insensitivity, and involving them ever more deeply in their denial of the truth and in their sinful way of life.

Concerning the evil origin and works of the false prophet, the apostle John says:

Revelation 16:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (See vv.12-21)

Ultimately, however, the Lord and his servants triumph over the beast and the false prophet. They are taken and cast into the fiery lake. Thus, God's Word says:

Revelation 19:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. ⁽²⁰⁾ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that

wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Then, Satan—the one from whom the beast (or exceedingly evil person) and the false prophet had derived their power—is himself cast into this ‘fiery lake of burning sulphur’:

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (See vv.7-9)

Part 9

War in Heaven

Michael Overcomes Satan

Revelation chapter 12 tells us of a great war in the heavenly realms between the archangel Michael, and Satan and his angels (or demons). In this war, Michael and the holy angels utterly defeat Satan and his army of fallen angels. Then, Satan and all the other rebellious and unclean spirits are cast out of heaven and down to the regions of this earth. This may not refer to the original fall and casting out of Satan and his evil angels.

Concerning this war in the heavenly realms, God's Word says:

Revelation 12:7-12

⁽⁷⁾ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁽⁸⁾ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁽⁹⁾ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

⁽¹⁰⁾ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

⁽¹¹⁾ 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.

⁽¹²⁾ Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

(See entire chapter, and chapter 13)

Satan's Final Destiny and Doom

Ultimately, Satan and all the demons will be cast into the lake of fire or burning sulphur. These expressions represent that place of eternal torments that God has prepared for them: Thus, concerning the Day of Judgment, God's Word says:

Matthew 25:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ 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: (Cf. v.46)

And again, the apostle John says:

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (See vv.7-9)

The 'everlasting fire' (Matt. 25:41) or 'the lake of fire and brimstone' ('burning sulphur' (NIV) (Rev. 20:10) should not perhaps be understood literally. Spirits do not possess material bodies upon which flames or chemical agents might act. For this reason, spirits are not susceptible to suffering by the element of fire, or by any other physical or material agencies. When the Bible speaks of the endless sufferings endured in the 'lake of fire' or 'burning sulphur', it is illustrating, by the use of human analogies, how terrible these sufferings will be. The intention of God's Word is to teach the intensity and duration of these sufferings—not their precise nature.

Whatever form the lake of fire actually assumes, the sufferings endured by Satan and the demons—and by impenitent mankind—will be analogous to the sufferings inflicted endlessly on a physical body, were that body to be cast into a literal lake of fire. This, of course, assumes that the body has been translated, and thus rendered incapable of annihilation in the flames.

Apart from bodily sufferings, which can be inflicted only on fallen mankind, the sufferings of hell also include torments of soul (or spirit). The torments of soul are inflicted on fallen mankind, and on fallen angels (spirit being common to both).

Among other sufferings, these torments of the soul are considered to include an ever-accusing conscience; agonising, unremitting and unavailing remorse; lucidity of memory concerning sin and concerning one's wilful and repeated refusal to seek God's mercy, and of endless hopelessness and utter despair of soul. These torments of the soul will probably seem to exceed the physical sufferings inflicted on the body. This is the kind and degree of suffering to which Satan and the demons will be subjected, together with that part of sinful humanity that remains impenitent to the end.⁹

The New Eternal Age

With Satan and the demons thus suffering eternal torments in the lake of fire, the world can never again be the object of Satan's evil designs. The LORD God omnipotent reigns—and reigns forever. In Christ Jesus, God's eternal designs and decrees continue to be fulfilled. The purposes of God concerning creation, providence, and redemption have already been accomplished.

The new and eternal age is the next major stage in God's plan. This does not mean, however, that the new creation is necessarily imminent. Whether imminent or not, is it certain of accomplishment: for God has promised it in his Word.

Portraying the glories of the coming new eternal age, the apostle John says: ¹⁰

Revelation 21:1-4

⁽¹⁾ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ⁽²⁾ And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ⁽³⁾ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God.* ⁽⁴⁾ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any

⁹ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

¹⁰ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Heaven*, by Gordon Lyons.

more pain: for the former things are passed away. (See vv.5-27; cf. v.2 with Rev. 19:7-9; cf. also Eph. 5:25-27)

To God be the glory—both now, and throughout the ages of the ages!