

# THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

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## *Preface*

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Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

**T**HE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)



# *Introduction*

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## SPIRITUAL COMBAT

FROM THE MOMENT OF BIRTH, every person, regardless of age or gender, regardless of status in life, is in the midst of the great war. A ceaseless war! No man knows exactly when it began, and no man can end it. The resolution will never be attained during human history. The antagonists are irreconcilable; the conflagration, inescapable.

The angelic conflict is not a world war. This is a war beyond the world. Yet for all of its infinite size and scope, the key combatants are unseen, although very real. This horrendous fight pits Satan, as the god of this world, against the God of all creation. At the same time man has a part to play—a huge part. Even though on his own man cannot bring the war to an end, he was created to resolve the conflict. Yes! God created man to conclusively settle this massive spiritual conflict. More importantly, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have an indispensable role as His soldiers. Throughout human history Satan and his angels will mightily struggle to achieve victory, but the outcome of their operations is not in the balance. Ultimately God will win, even though Satan will appear to have some success along the way.

The titanic struggle began as a rebellion of angels in heaven, long before the genesis of Adam and Eve. Mankind entered the spiritual combat when Satan approached the woman in the Garden with the idea of being “like God” (Gen. 3:5). The first couple partook of the forbidden fruit and propelled their progeny into combat that will endure until Jesus Christ’s triumphant return.

The war strategies of Satan and his angels are abundant and diverse. Until the birth of Christ, it was the overall intent of Satan to block the coming of the Messiah. That failed! While Christ was on Earth, Satan’s objective was to frustrate and arrest His salvation

mission on the cross. That also failed! Jesus Christ accomplished what Satan feared most—strategic victory at the cross.

The God-man Savior is now resurrected, ascended to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, sealing the doom of Satan and his angels. Yet they will never quit and they will never surrender. Instead, the fallen legions and their commander have regrouped and plotted a new strategy for the current era of human history—the Church Age. Their battle for the hearts and minds of the human race has intensified, as these condemned beings come ever closer to the divine reckoning that is their end.

Satan and his angels seek to discredit, distort, and eliminate the dissemination of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They advance false religions to obscure the message of grace. They counter all advance by Christians in the plan of God. All of the believer's service for God is contested. Every believer in Jesus Christ is the object of God's implacable antagonists.

In light of Satan's new, insidious agenda, it is imperative that as believers in Jesus Christ we understand the spiritual warfare that surrounds us—this ongoing battle between good and evil that defines our very existence. There can be no pacifism, no shirking of responsibility, no 'draft dodging,' or hiding from the onslaught. Satan will destroy and annihilate, if he can! And we are always his prime target.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. (Eph. 6:12)<sup>1</sup>

To score tactical victories in our Lord's inevitable march to triumph, we must understand the enemy and we must know how to fight and how to win. We are never left defenseless. The grace of God has provided an overwhelming advantage in the form of protective spiritual armor (Eph. 6:13–17). We have the power of God the Holy Spirit within us, the infallible Word of God as our weapon of choice,

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Those marked "KJV" are quoted from the King James Version; those marked "corrected translation" are the author's translations representing more literally the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, Texas) or correlates the quotation with the topic at hand.

the Gospel to declare to a dying world, and a spiritual life pioneered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Using these resources, we have the extraordinary privilege of bringing tactical defeat to the treacherous and pernicious enemy of God. We can advance to spiritual maturity and become heroes in the invisible war. God is glorified as we lock shields and stand firm on His power and Word.



## Chapter One

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# THE ANGELIC REALM

## DO ANGELS REALLY EXIST?

THE INTRIGUING POSSIBILITY THAT ALIENS EXIST in the stellar universe has excited the imagination of mankind. Fascination with reports of unidentified flying objects and tales of spaceship encounters have conjured visions of strange creatures from other planets. Countless movies have portrayed such events. People want to believe they are not alone in the universe.

Debate has intensified over whether these alleged sightings are science fiction or actual fact. Is there indeed unseen life in outer space? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is yes. Real extraterrestrial beings do exist, but they are not the exotic life forms so often depicted in the popular entertainment media. They are rational, supernatural creatures revealed throughout the Bible as angels (Ps. 91:11; 103:20; 148:2; 1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 3:16).

An angel (ἄγγελος, *angelos*) is a messenger or communicator, an envoy, one who brings news. Angels are also described as “morning stars” (Job 38:7), “stars of God” (Isa. 14:13), “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14), “stars of heaven” (Rev. 12:4). The Bible describes their number as “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11).

In spite of biblical documentation of angelic existence, many Christian scholars, theologians, and even ministers feel uneasy and uncertain about angels. They do not like speaking of supernatural creatures that cannot be empirically verified, especially in these days of great technical, scientific advances. Even if the existence of angelic beings is not outright denied, it is 'spiritualized' or somehow diminished to make the Christian message more palatable to a skeptical world.

Unfortunately, this confusion has penetrated the minds of those who view angels and spiritual warfare apart from the declarations of Scripture. While refusing biblical testimony, they have become enamored and entranced by the divergent and seductive views of Eastern religions, spiritism, humanistic psychology, and even agnosticism. Despite the misconceptions and perversions of the biblical doctrine of angelology, angelic creatures do exist and hold a unique place in the plan of God. To dismiss these supernatural beings as either myth or irrelevant is to ignore their integral relationship with creation, salvation, and the ongoing activities of mankind. This role is found in the assertion of the Word of God, which must not be denied by the believer in Jesus Christ.

## THE ANGELIC CREATION

Before time existed, there always was the eternal triune God.<sup>2</sup> At some point before the universe existed, God chose to create a vast host of powerful, rational creatures who would reside with Him (Col. 1:16). In speaking to Job, the Lord confirmed that the angels preexisted creation. They were on hand to observe the work of God.

“Where were you [Job] when I [God] laid the foundation  
of the earth?

Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,

Who set its measurements, since you know?

Or who stretched the line on it?

On what were its bases sunk?

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2. R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Trinity* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2003). Hereafter, cross-references to the author's books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

Or who laid its cornerstone,  
 When the morning stars [angels] sang together,  
 And all the sons of God [the entire angelic creation]  
 shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4–7)

"*All of the sons of God shouted for joy*" (italics added) when the universe, "the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), was created as the domain of the angels. Here they would rule and perform whatever responsibilities and tasks God had for them. Why God created angels and a place for them we can only guess. He was not lonely or in need of companionship, but clearly their main purpose was to serve and praise God.

Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,  
 You who serve Him, doing His will. (Ps. 103:21)

Praise Him, all His angels;  
 Praise Him, all His hosts! (Ps. 148:2)

While all angels have phenomenal power with which to carry out this role, they are neither sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent. They are limited to what God commands or permits as His purpose requires.

Descriptions of angels are quite varied. They are likened to stars, and their bodies are composed of a substance similar to light (Matt. 28:3).<sup>3</sup> Whatever their makeup, the bodies of angels have the capacity to become visible or invisible and the ability to alter their appearance for the purpose of carrying out their roles. In previous dispensations,<sup>4</sup> angels appeared to man in human form in order to act as guardians (Gen. 3:24), divine messengers (Gen. 19:1–15; Luke 1:11–20), and communicators of doctrine (Dan. 8:15–19; 9:22). Scripture reveals that

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3. The human body is corporeal; the angelic body is immaterial. From the name "Lucifer," the Hebrew noun *helel* (derived from the verb *halal*), meaning "bright and shining one," we learn something of the substance of their bodies. Since light has content, it can take a definite form, one that can easily become visible.

4. A dispensation is a period of human history expressed in terms of divine revelation. These consecutive eras reflect the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. They constitute the divine viewpoint and theological interpretation of history. The doctrine of dispensations is the vehicle by which believers living at a specific time can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose for their lives. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 3–4.

angels will once again be visible on Earth in future dispensations (Rev. 12:7–9; 16:12; 19:17). However, the period of the Church Age, the dispensation in which we now live, is unique in that all activities of angels in the world are invisible. This is the age when all divine revelation comes directly from the Bible and when all angelic protection, including the “ministering spirits” assigned to every believer (Heb. 1:14), is strictly unseen.

According to Psalm 8:5 in the King James Version, angels were created a higher species than mankind. Angels are superior to man in intellect (2 Sam. 14:20), physical strength (Ps. 103:20; Matt. 28:2; Rev. 7:1; 9:15), and beauty (Rev. 10:1). Unhindered by material barriers (Acts 12:6–7), angels possess greater mobility than mankind (Dan. 9:21) and they are not confined to habitation on Earth.

While angels are physically superior to man as created (Heb. 2:7), believers in the Church Age have a higher position, or spiritual rank, than angels. In the future eternal state, through the possession of a resurrection body like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, all believers will hold both a spiritual and physical advantage over angels (Phil. 3:21; Heb. 1:4).

For all their differences, men and angels have one vital attribute in common—self-determination, or volition. In other words, both creatures are able to make free and independent decisions. Because volition is a necessary component of rational mentality, God gave His creatures free will so that they might choose for or against Him, for or against His plan (Col. 1:20). The question is this: How could angels who saw firsthand the power and glory of God reject Him? It seems unimaginable, but many angels did. The angelic conflict originated with their first act of negative volition, their first decision counter to the will of God.



## *Chapter Two*

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# THE OPENING OF THE CONFLICT

## LUCIFER, THE ANGEL OF LIGHT

LUCIFER, EVENTUALLY KNOWN AS SATAN, was the most beautiful creature ever to come from the hand of God. He was the very embodiment of his name “star of the morning, son of the dawn” (Isa. 14:12). Ezekiel 28 establishes an analogy between the magnificence of Lucifer and the glamour of the King of Tyre:

“Son of man [Ezekiel], take up a lamentation [funeral dirge] over the king of Tyre [Lucifer], and say to him,  
‘Thus says the Lord GOD,  
“You had the seal of perfection,  
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”’” (Ezek.  
28:12)

This type of analogy is common in Hebrew writing; the same principle occurs in the Messianic Psalms (Ps. 16:10). While David makes statements concerning himself, these statements also apply prophetically to the Messiah. Similarly, while Ezekiel describes the qualities of the King of Tyre, his statement involves a person greater than the King of Tyre. About this person Ezekiel says, “You had the

seal of perfection.” He characterizes Lucifer, who was created with a perfect balance of beauty and wisdom.

“You were in Eden, the garden of God;  
Every precious stone was your covering:  
The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;  
The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper;  
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald;  
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and  
sockets,  
Was in you.  
On the day that you were created  
They were prepared.” (Ezek. 28:13)

Satan remains the most intelligent and spectacularly beautiful creature in the universe. The traditional portrayal of the devil with red skin, narrow evil eyes, and forked tail is pure fiction. Neither is Satan the sinister beast depicted in art and literature. Were he visible, men would undoubtedly be awed by his glamour, charmed by his brilliance, captivated by his personality. He remains the most impressive of all creatures. Nevertheless, he is absolute evil.

“Eden” in Ezekiel 28:13 refers not to the earthly Garden of Eden of Genesis 2 and 3 but to heaven, where Lucifer originally resided. The gemstones adorning Lucifer indicate a significant endowment of beauty and favor from God. They are mentioned only three times in Scripture: in connection with the breastplate of the high priest of Israel (Ex. 28:17–20), in reference to the eternal New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19–20), and here, describing Lucifer’s clothing prepared for him by God. Lucifer’s jewel-encrusted vestments, worn in the presence of God, signify the honor of his high rank as guardian of the throne room, where he reflected God’s glory. Even his voice was incomparable. “The workmanship of your settings and sockets” likens Lucifer’s voice to the sound of a pipe organ, resonant and melodious, an instrument of praise to God.

“You were the anointed [messianic] cherub who covers [the  
throne room],  
And I placed you *there*.  
You were on the holy mountain [throne] of God;  
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.” (Ezek. 28:14)

Verse 14 reveals Lucifer's original job title and the description of his commission by God. He was the "anointed cherub." Contrary to many artistic representations, a cherub is not a fat, pink, naked infant with cropped wings. Cherubs are high-ranking, four-winged angels, beautiful and powerful creatures (Ezek. 1:4–12).<sup>5</sup> As the messianic cherub, Lucifer was the personal honor guard of the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the highest position a creature could hold. However, for all his impressive qualities, he was still a creation of God and did not possess God's essence.<sup>6</sup>

## THE PREHISTORIC CONFLICT

Despite his exalted position, Lucifer became dissatisfied and wanted even more. He led an attempted coup against God and introduced the concept of evil into prehistory. For this Lucifer was sentenced to eternal condemnation in the lake of fire. His fall launched the conflict of the ages—the conflict in which we are intimately and immediately involved.

### *Satan's Prehistoric Fall*

"You [Lucifer] were blameless in your ways  
From the day you were created,  
Until unrighteousness [the original sin] was found in you  
[his moral fall]." (Ezek. 28:15)

Lucifer was created a sinless, perfect being, mightier than all the other angelic creatures. Secretly, he began to covet the sovereignty, power, and glory of God. Omniscient God "found" the "unrighteousness" in His prized angel. Lucifer had decided in his mind to rebel against God before he committed any overt act of sin. From this

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5. See Appendix for the organization of elect angels.

6. God's essence, divine essence, is His nature or essential being. Essence means inner or intrinsic nature, true substance, a person's qualities or attributes. Divine essence is comprised of ten attributes, all of which are absolute, eternal, and unchangeable and can never be separated from the whole of His being: sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and veracity. See Thieme, *The Unfailing Love of God* (2008), 6–11.

moment on, “Lucifer” became known as “Satan.”<sup>7</sup> This one spark of arrogance initiated sin in the universe and caused his personal demise. Arrogance motivated Satan’s revolution in heaven and became the cornerstone of his cosmic system on planet Earth.<sup>8</sup>

### *Satan’s Attitude*

“But you said in your heart,  
 ‘I will ascend to heaven;  
 I will raise my throne above the stars of God [angels],  
 And I will sit on the mount of assembly [place of  
 assembly for angels in heaven]  
 In the recesses of the north.  
 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds [angelic  
 masses];  
 I will make myself like the Most High.’” (Isa. 14:13–14)

These two verses describe mental attitude sins underlying the prehistoric fall of Satan. Instead of thinking about the high honor bestowed upon him, Satan justified his ruthless ambition and deceived himself regarding his own ability. The anointed cherub became absorbed in his own splendor and wisdom. He asserted his independence from God. Choosing his own will over God’s will was the quintessence of sin.

Satan’s unchecked pride culminated in five abominable “I wills,” found in Isaiah 14:13–14. His five presumptuous boasts manifested his audacity and accompanying covetousness toward God. Clearly, the devil is the author of negative volition, as well as vainglory, sin, and evil.

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7. The title “Satan” is the Hellenized form of the Hebrew שָׂטָן (*satan*) and means “enemy.” He is variously called “the serpent of old . . . the devil . . . Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

8. The cosmic system is Satan’s orderly, cohesive, and multifaceted system of thinking, which includes a purpose, strategy, and structure of authority designed to subvert the human race and control the world he now rules (Eph. 2:2). Satan’s cosmic system, his alternative to the perfect plan of God, is the classroom for communicating Satan’s false doctrines. See Thieme, *Christian Integrity* (2002), 173–86; *Satan and Demonism* (1996), 12–15.

### *THE FIRST “I WILL”*

“I will ascend to heaven.” At this time, Satan still inhabited the abode of God, the third heaven.<sup>9</sup> The first “I will” is a defiant expression exposing his burning desire to displace God as the ruler of the third heaven. Notice he did not say, “I will remove God,” a mission he knew was impossible. He wanted to replace God’s rule and almighty authority.

### *THE SECOND “I WILL”*

“I will raise my throne above the stars of God.” The metaphor “stars of God” refers to angels (Job 38:7; Rev. 12:4). This second “I will” reveals Satan’s ambition to seize greater power and his impatience to usurp the throne of God as the ruler of angels. As the supercreature, he wanted to be worshiped alongside God by the angelic creation. This was the arrogance of his thinking: “Why should God not provide authority and autonomy to me? Am I not beautiful and brilliant above all others? Did He not create me to rule?” This power lust would disrupt not only the angelic creation but later the human race as well.

### *THE THIRD “I WILL”*

“And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.” This phrase reveals Satan’s desire to rule on the heavenly throne before all the assembled angels. He wanted to reside in the very seat of power and authority occupied by God the Father, the One who would condemn him.

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9. The Bible speaks of more than one heaven, telling us that Jesus Christ “passed through the heavens” (Heb. 4:14a). The band of atmosphere around the earth is the first heaven of Genesis 1:6–8, 20 and is also specifically designated in Revelation 21:1b. The second heaven is the stellar universe, the solar system and planetary heavens of galaxies (Gen. 1:14–18) and the realm of angelic activity. The third heaven is the throne room of God, beyond stellar space. It is “the highest heavens” (Deut. 10:14) and the place of His throne room (1 Kings 8:39). The third heaven is also the final residence for believers (John 14:2; 2 Cor. 12:2). See Thieme, *Creation, Chaos, and Restoration* (1995), 5, 6, 10, 19.

### THE FOURTH “I WILL”

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.” Many figurative uses of clouds in the Bible refer to God’s presence (Ex. 33:9; Isa. 19:1; Matt. 17:5), illustrating His unparalleled glory (Ex. 16:10; 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10–11) and sovereign power (Ps. 135:6–7). Even though Satan had been bestowed with tremendous honor and glory over other angelic creatures, he grew increasingly dissatisfied with the position God had assigned him. He craved to possess the very power and glory of God, to usurp the throne for himself, to overthrow divine authority. Ever more ambitious, the fourth “I will” reflects his obsession with supplanting God as the ruler of the physical universe. Satan wanted all the glory, yet he had neither the character, the ability, nor the means for it.

### THE FIFTH “I WILL”

“I will make myself like the Most High.” This boast conveys the escalation of Satan’s insatiable power lust: “I will be like God!” The mighty angel was impressed with God’s omnipotence and sovereignty, not with His grace or justice, righteousness or love. Notice his claim to be *like* the Most High. Satan knew he could never be equal to God, but that did not curb his rabid hunger to rule his own kingdom. He would endeavor to seize and hold the authority of God, a futile ambition indeed.

## *The Angelic Revolt*

Conversion of Satan’s arrogant power lust into active treason disrupted the harmony existing in the universe. He wanted the absolute authority wielded by God. He became narcissistic and rebelled against divine authority. The insurrection had repercussions throughout heaven among all of angelic creation. Using his considerable powers of persuasion, Satan rallied other angels to his side and perpetrated the division of angels for all time.

The test of angelic volition continued in heaven until all angels had made a decision for Satan or for God. Scripture’s division of angels into the categories of elect and fallen, or holy angels and demons (Mark 8:38b; 1 Cor. 10:20–21), confirms that some angels accepted and others

rejected God. Though the majority of angels remained true to their Creator, certain members of angelic creation yielded to the super-angel.

And his tail [Satan's power] swept away [revolution in heaven] a third of the stars of heaven [angelic creatures who followed Satan at his first fall], and threw them to the earth. (Rev. 12:4a)

One-third of the angels were lured from God by the charismatic Satan. They fell into the same destructive trap of arrogance and joined him in his fall. As the architect and instigator of this celestial anarchy, Satan became the leader of these angels who chose against God.

Unbridled arrogance breeds inordinate ambition, and Satan certainly surpassed all other creatures in his egocentric desires. In God's realm, only genuine humility pleases God. Humility recognizes and submits to divine authority. Satan lacked all humility and became the prototype for anti-authority. This attitude was his demise.

## THE TRIAL OF SATAN

Unable to ignore this angelic mutiny, God convened a trial of the offenders.<sup>10</sup> Satan and those angels who followed him were found guilty and judged. This trial was fair in every respect, consistent with God's essence. God is just—He is absolutely fair. God is omniscient—He knows all the facts. He is omnipresent—He is a complete and astute observer. He is omnipotent—He has the absolute power to execute justice. God is immutable—He is incorruptible as a judge. He is veracity, or truth, and cannot countenance any lie. God is sovereign—He is the supreme ruler of the universe. He cannot share that status with His creatures. His perfect integrity, made up of His righteousness

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10. A comparison of Scripture with Scripture leads to this conclusion. To interpret Scripture and reach a conclusion about the fact of Satan's fall or any other biblical subject, critical analysis must be used. The author uses isogogics, categories, and exegesis (ICE). Isogogics is the examination of Scripture within the framework of its historical setting or prophetic environment. Categories refers to the classification of doctrine according to subject matter. Exegesis is a grammatical, syntactical, etymological, and contextual analysis of Scripture from its original languages. A scriptural analysis of Satan's appeal is presented in Chapter 3.

and justice, cannot be compromised for sinful creatures. Consequently, God had to reject any attempt by Satan to supplant Himself.

At the conclusion of the trial, God pronounced a penalty on those guilty of revolution, those who chose against Him in favor of an imperfect, aspiring, evil substitute. Their sentence is recorded in Scripture:

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into *the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.*’” (Matt. 25:41, italics added)

This conclusively determined the eternal destiny of the fallen angels. Once the judgment was pronounced, immutable God could not reverse His decision. They were convicted and doomed. From then on, Satan and his fallen angels were permanently aligned against God and the elect angels.



## Chapter Three

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# THE EXTENSION OF THE CONFLICT

## SATAN APPEALS HIS SENTENCE

CLEARLY, EXECUTION OF THE JUDGMENT of Matthew 25:41 has been delayed. Satan and his angels still wander the earth and will continue to be a force in the universe until the end of human history. Only then will their sentence be executed (Rev. 20:10). What could have postponed their punishment? No doubt faced with the horror of his doom, Satan vigorously objected to the verdict and filed an appeal with God. The lapse of time between the sentence of fallen angels in eternity past and execution of that sentence at the termination of human history leads to this conclusion. Satan's appeal is played out in human history. In fact, human history is the actual demonstration of that appeal.

Titles ascribed to the super-angel after his fall, "Satan" (σατάν, *satan*) and "the devil" (διάβολος, *diabolos*), mean "adversary, accuser, attorney." The legal connotation of these designations further implies Satan's course of action. He assumed the role of defense attorney to appeal what he considered an unjust ruling.

A judicial appeal is always grounded upon some alleged miscarriage of justice. What exactly was Satan's allegation? What argument could he have possibly concocted to refute the verdict of perfect, omniscient, and just God? While the blasphemous accusation

of Satan is unknown to us, it can be reconstructed on the basis of an objection voiced consistently in devil's world—"It is not fair!"

Here is the most important point. Satan's appeal was grounded on the claim that God's just decision to cast His own creatures into the lake of fire was incompatible with His divine love: "How can a loving God pronounce such a horrific sentence on His own creatures? How can a loving God cast His angels into an eternal lake of fire? What kind of love is that?"<sup>11</sup>

Satan's polemic was brilliant but blasphemous. He contended that God cannot be loving and just at the same time. He impugned the essence of God by seeking to elevate divine love above divine justice and righteousness. The great perpetrator of arrogance completely rejected the fact that the solidarity of God's attributes is behind everything He thinks and does. The perfect, eternal character of God cannot be unfair or prejudiced and cannot pass a false sentence. God can never compromise His righteousness and justice in order to deal with His imperfect creatures strictly out of love.

Embedded in the accuser's challenge are two egotistical assumptions: (1) the creature is perfectly capable of succeeding independently of the Creator, and (2) the creature should not be held responsible for his wicked decisions. Satan contended that the love of God should allow for disobedience and that autonomy and independence from God are valid principles for successful living. Satan set God's love against His justice and righteousness. In doing so, Satan established an argument often used today against punishment, both human and divine. Satan is formidable in his subterfuge.

When Satan hurled his malicious slur, God would have been perfectly justified to immediately banish these offending angels to their fiery doom. Instead, He graciously chose to grant Satan's appeal. In this momentous action, God would demonstrate His perfect character while allowing Satan every opportunity to prove his own flawed case. Exactly why He did this is unknown, as Scripture does not reveal His reasons. He did, however, grant the appeal, for Satan is still at large and is still demonstrating the evil that marks his every action.

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11. This is God's unfailing impersonal love. See Thieme, *The Unfailing Love of God*, 25-43.

Of course, God never loses control of any situation. God set the terms of the appeal. God set the stage for the appeal. God put the appeal in motion. He countered Satan's argument by initiating to the angels a grand demonstration of the perfect harmony of His justice, love, and righteousness. This would be a test case to prove that arrogance always leads to destruction and that creation can never achieve independence from the Creator. As evidence, God brought another creature into the mix—mankind.

## THE ROLE OF HUMANITY IN SATAN'S APPEAL

With the creation of man, God inaugurated human history as the environment for demonstrating that His decision to condemn the angels was indeed righteous, just, and compatible with His love. The stage was set with planet Earth as the battleground. The prehistoric angelic conflict was extended into and reflected in the human realm.

Man was created a lower creature than the angels, limited in strength, intelligence, and mobility. His very existence, however, would provide evidence, arguments, and precedents for the rejection of Satan's appeal. *Man was God's answer to Satan.*

The appeal of Satan runs coterminously with human history. Between the passing of sentence in eternity past and execution of sentence at the end of the Millennium, the entire panorama of the human-angelic drama unfolds. Everything in Scripture regarding the history of mankind is either directly or indirectly related to the ancient warfare among the angels. God is duplicating every situation that Satan used as a basis for his arguments and objections during both the prehistoric trial and appeal. Earth is now the courtroom and stadium for the angels to witness Satan's culpability and proof after proof of God's perfect love and fairness (Job 1:6; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:12).

### *Human Volition Is the Issue*

Like angels, man is rational and possesses free will. The exercise of human volition for or against the plan of God, for or against Jesus Christ, will resolve Satan's appeal and the overall conflict. God's

purpose, then, was to test human volition by replicating the decision faced by the angelic creation in prehistory. This test would begin with the first man and woman in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. In the heavenly “garden of God” (Ezek. 28:13), Satan opted for arrogance and negative volition over grace. In the Garden of Eden, mankind would face the same option. Thus Adam and the woman were introduced to a tree in a watershed choice for free will.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat [a test of volition, a choice for or against God], for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die [the fall of man that would parallel Satan’s fall].” (Gen. 2:16–17)

Although sin and evil had already entered the universe through the fallen angelic hosts, Adam and the woman were not yet tainted by the stain of that sin and rebellion.<sup>12</sup> In their state of sinlessness, it was unnecessary for God to place conscience, the knowledge of good and evil, in their souls.<sup>13</sup> What they did possess was mentality and volition—the ability to decide for or against the plan of God. Adam and the woman had the complete freedom to either comply with or disobey God’s *one* mandate concerning the tree. Upon the outcome of that decision hung the future of all mankind. Sadly, the arrogance and negative volition of Adam and the woman in the Garden of Eden propelled the human race into a fall parallel to Satan’s, with equally disastrous consequences: condemnation from the justice of God! But God did not leave man in a hopeless condition.

The love of God was clearly demonstrated even in the midst of divine judgment. God’s love interceded for the man and woman with a

12. Sin is any mental, verbal, or overt activity that violates the character and standards of God. Evil encompasses the policy, purpose, and modus operandi of Satan to capture and control the human soul, establish his own millennium, and become the victor in the angelic conflict. Satan uses evil to corrupt the human race in his attempt to control the world he now rules.

13. The soul is the immortal, immaterial essence of man that comprises the real person, giving him rational, moral, and relational capacities. Reflecting the image of God (Gen. 1:27), the soul consists of self-consciousness (awareness of your own self-existence), mentality (ability to think), volition (ability to choose), and conscience (norms and standards). See Thieme, *The Plan of God* (2003), 5–7.

way to redress condemnation. He provided for them, and subsequently the human race, a Savior and salvation by grace through faith contingent on nonmeritorious positive volition.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

The moment of Adam’s fall and judgment was a moment of truth for the angels. Once again they saw the justice of God at work. Just like Satan and his angels, man was condemned for choosing against God. Divine justice had sentenced Satan to spend eternity in the lake of fire. Man deserved the same. Yet would man have to join Satan? Definitely not! He could accept the solution offered by the love of God. He could believe in the promise of a Savior, Jesus Christ, who would pay the penalty for all human sin at the cross, opening the door of salvation to all mankind. As the conflict plays out against the backdrop of human history, the issue is *human volition*! Man, inferior to angels but possessing identical free will, can choose either God’s grace plan of salvation or Satan’s path of condemnation.

The truth is, if only *one* person in human history believes in Jesus Christ, the character of God and His judgment of Satan are vindicated and Satan loses his appeal. Why? Because the passage of human history demonstrates that no person—or angel—goes to the lake of fire except by his own negative volition (John 3:18, 36). This salvation, in fact, has been appropriated not only by one person but by untold numbers of people throughout the ages. Thus God reveals His perfection, fairness, love, and grace toward all creatures (Ps. 145:21; Rom. 9:23; 11:25–36).

What, then, is the major issue in resolving the appeal of Satan and all fallen angels? In a word, Christ! “For as in Adam all die [spiritually], so also in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). Man’s decision to remain in Adam, under condemnation, or to accept God’s provision for redemption and reconciliation is the resolution.

No longer under condemnation, the believer in Christ now has another option: whether or not to advance toward spiritual maturity and execute the spiritual life. Choosing the plan of God sets him apart for the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a believer—to be entered as evidence against Satan. Such a believer is a *witness for the Prosecution*. As the believer advances toward spiritual maturity, he

gains credibility as a witness for the divine Prosecutor. His maturity glorifies God and provides conclusive evidence to God's love, grace, and justice. This believer testifies to the efficacy of divine assets against all obstacles in Satan's world. When the believer in humility implements the plan of God, relying upon divine grace and power, the appeal of Satan is shown to be invalid.

During his appeal Satan and his angels watch every believer. They see the grace, mercy, and love of God by observing the volition, positive or negative, of mankind. They can understand why they are condemned as they behold human beings placing their trust in Jesus Christ, thereby demonstrating that the free will of man does not necessarily choose against God, as the fallen angels did in eternity past. It is significant, then, that while alive on this earth, every believer represents Christ as an ambassador (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20) to both man and observing angels.

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles [as witnesses for the Prosecution in the angelic conflict] last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. (1 Cor. 4:9)

Elect and fallen angels sit in the stands of the stadium called planet Earth. Elect angels observe and rejoice over the conversion of just one person to Christ (Luke 15:7–10). They “long to look” at the Gospel being spread by ambassadors for Christ (1 Pet. 1:12). Fallen angels watch and tremble when one person expresses positive volition to the Gospel, is regenerated, and then advances to spiritual maturity.<sup>14</sup> This is the testimony that destroys Satan's appeal and demonstrates God's love and justice working in tandem. This is why fallen angels are organized to resist and oppose the ambassadorship of the believer.

The possession of volition makes every man a free agent in the devil's world. There are two decisions that impact the angelic conflict. First, man has the option either to believe in Jesus Christ and inherit eternal life or to reject this salvation and reap eternal condemnation. Second, having trusted Christ as Savior, man can continually choose

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14. Regeneration is the theological term for spiritual birth, or being “born again.” By the imputation of eternal life from God at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ, a regenerate person passes from spiritual death to spiritual life (John 3:3).

to execute the plan of God or reject His plan and follow Satan's malevolent agenda. Each person chooses to be either a witness for the divine Prosecutor or a witness on behalf of Satan's defense. Which choice do you make? Best to be a witness for the Prosecution, glorifying God while countering Satan's plan.

### *Human Volition Is Tested*

God's response to Satan's appeal began with the creation of Adam. God created Adam innocent, in an untested state of sinlessness. Adam was created trichotomous: body, soul, and spirit. He had a perfect body from the perfect hand of God. Made in the image of God, he had a soul, which gave him rational, moral, and relational capacities. He also had a human spirit necessary to understand spiritual phenomena, divine truth. Adam was spiritually alive and had a personal relationship with God.

Adam was placed in the pristine environment of the Garden of Eden. In love, God abundantly provided for all of Adam's needs, just as God had provided for the angels in heaven. So that Adam would not remain alone, God created for him a suitable companion. God's order evidenced distinct roles in a well-defined system.

#### *THE DIVINE DESIGN: ROLES OF THE MAN AND THE WOMAN*

In His design of man and woman, God originated the most exceptional of all human relationships. God created Adam first, forming him from the "dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). Adam was capable of total obedience in carrying out his position as ruler over all God's creation. Yet even in the perfect environment of the Garden, where he was surrounded by "all the cattle, . . . the birds of the sky, and . . . every beast of the field," Adam was not a reclusive creature; he was lonely and incomplete (Gen. 2:20). By himself, Adam could not be fulfilled. In God's infinite wisdom and love, He furnished exactly the right solution.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man [אָדָם, *adam*] to be alone; I will make him a helper [עֵזֶר, *ezer*] suitable for him." (Gen. 2:18)

And the LORD God fashioned [בָּנָה, *banah*] into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man said,

“This is now bone of my bones,  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman [אִשָּׁה, *ishah*],  
Because she was taken out of Man [אִישׁ, *ish*].”  
(Gen. 2:22–23)

The woman was created from the source of Adam, his rib, and presented to him. Adam bestowed upon his gift the name “Woman,” *ishah*, identifying the qualities of womanhood and commemorating her origin, “out of Man,” from a missing part of man (*ish*). In taking Adam’s rib, God had left a gap filled only by that which was “fashioned” from the rib.

God pronounced them husband and wife. They would “become one flesh” in a union that would be sealed by physical intimacy and transcend all other human relationships (Gen. 2:24). God’s marital design included an ideal order, one that confirmed equally important yet distinct roles: the man would lead and the woman would respond to his leadership. Adam’s authority would be over the woman. The order of their creation established this priority:

For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man [Adam]; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake. (1 Cor. 11:8–9)

To fulfill his God-granted obligation, Adam would have to initiate love toward his wife and assume the responsibility to guard and maintain her freedom. As the designated leader and protector, he would have to love her with an intensive love, exhibiting enduring devotion, loyalty, and dedication. He would have to assume the necessary responsibilities of everyday life and consider his wife’s opinions whenever facing a decision. In other words, he would have to demonstrate leadership.

We can draw upon a military analogy to help explain the concept of Adam’s authority as the husband, the initiator-leader. An infantry company is ordered to defend a hill. The company commander, the leader and authority in that organization, is responsible for the tactical deployment of his company and the welfare of his men. Once the



commander gives the order to execute, he then directs his subordinate platoon leaders to disseminate his plan. They respond to his authority and set up the defense. They are not inferior to him; they just have less authority. As the initiator-leader, the one in authority bears the responsibility for the end results, either failure or success.

With God's delegation of fundamental authority to the man, the woman's divinely appointed purpose was that of a "helper" (*ezer*) who would respond to Adam's authority with virtue, deference, and honor (Gen. 2:18). As his perfectly suited counterpart, she would complete him physically, relationally, intellectually, in every way that husband and wife unite. Her love would ultimately be expressed through her respect for her husband and his God-ordained role. She would exemplify God's design and remain at her feminine best by responding to her husband's love, not by opposing him in reaction.

This divine design of marriage, with its perfectly ordered system of leadership and response, would ensure the volitional freedom of both Adam and the woman while guarding them from disobedience toward God. If Adam and his wife maintained the proper balance between authority and freedom, initiation and response, they would remain obedient, be acceptable to His righteousness, and avoid His justice. They could resolve once and for all the ancient conflict between God and Satan. Basking in God's love, they would enjoy an eternity of perfect environment and demolish Satan's appeal.

Satan, who had rejected rather than responded to God's love, was already tried and judged. Now it was man's turn either to revolt and be condemned or to respond and revel in His love. The extension of the angelic conflict into human history began with the first couple.

### *FOCUS ON THE TREE*

God accompanied His provision for man's enduring, undefined existence in Garden of Eden with one definitive prohibition:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it, [dying] you shall surely die [מות, *mut*]." (Gen. 2:16-17)

Notice that God's command concerning the prohibition of this particular tree was given directly to the man. Why? Because the man

was the designated authority. God utilized the chain of command He had established. It was Adam's responsibility to communicate God's mandate to the woman and ensure its implementation by both of them.

For the first couple, the other trees in the Garden were to provide physical nourishment, aesthetic pleasure, and spiritual blessing (Gen. 2:9). But the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" served an entirely different purpose. The tree represented the coexistence of God's absolute authority with the free will of man. This tree would be *the test* of their volition. God's definitive mandate provided man with a clear-cut choice. To eat from the tree would be disobedience—negative volition; to refrain from eating would be obedience—positive volition. Would Adam and the woman abuse their freedom and elect to defy God's sovereign authority as had Satan? Would man obey or disobey God, respect or abuse the authority delegated to him, use his freedom to succeed or to fail?

As long as man complied with the divine prohibition, he would enjoy the benefits and blessings of perfect environment in the Garden and love would remain his point of contact with God. Righteous God can only personally love what His righteousness approves. As long as man obeyed, he would maintain a harmonious relationship with God. On the other hand, if Adam partook of the forbidden fruit in rebellious independence of God, he would become the object of divine judgment. Divine justice would have to replace divine love as the point of contact with the human race.<sup>15</sup>

God carefully instructed Adam regarding the test and warned him of the consequences of disobedience (Gen. 2:17). The verb *mut*, "to die," actually occurs twice in the Hebrew and is literally translated "dying you shall surely die." The grammatical structure of this phrase emphasizes the intensity of the death that God declared.<sup>16</sup> God specifically warned man that eating this fruit would have extreme consequences.

The first use of *mut*, "dying," however, did not refer to physical death. When Adam bit into the fruit, he did not suddenly keel over and die. In fact, Adam lived for 930 years after his original sin (Gen. 5:3–5).

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15. Thieme, *The Integrity of God* (2005), 51–59.

16. The grammatical structure that indicates emphasis is the absolute infinitive of *mut* preceding the finite form of *mut*. See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 37–38.

God's warning of Genesis 2:17 referred to a penalty more immediate and severe: spiritual death—total separation from God, total inability to have a personal relationship with Him. The wages of sin is not physical death; "the wages of sin is [spiritual] death" (Rom. 6:23). When Adam and the woman ate of the forbidden fruit, this is what occurred; they died spiritually (Rom. 3:23; 5:12). Physical death would eventually follow spiritual death. Just as God proclaimed, "dying [spiritually] you shall surely die [physically]."

Satan and his angels listened very carefully when God instructed Adam concerning the tree. The man was the divinely appointed ruler "over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28*b*). Satan craved that position as a springboard to greater power and authority over God's creatures. Should Adam fail the test, Satan would become the ruler of the world (John 12:31) and gain the opportunity to win his appeal. With this in mind, Satan took action and interjected himself into the affairs of mankind for the very first time. The devil plotted a coup d'état to usurp Adam's rulership and subvert God's new creation. He craftily implemented a covert strategy of divide and conquer. He first attacked the woman, and then the man through her.

### *THE ATTACK ON THE WOMAN*

Satan chose to indwell the serpent as his instrument to attack the woman. His decision to confront the woman first was deliberate. God had ordained the man as the authority in marriage. Satan knew that the woman, whose natural role was to respond, was more susceptible to following him. So Satan chose to attack the woman away from her husband. Satan would tempt the woman through deceit and flattery. He would home in on any uncertainties in her soul while simultaneously offering her a prime opportunity for disobedience. His primary weapon would not be fear, intimidation, force, or power, but conversation—especially provocative, crafty conversation—designed to exploit her vulnerability. Satan would employ intentional distortions, subtle but effective insinuations, in order to further his own agenda.

As long as Adam afforded care and leadership to his wife from the doctrine and love in his soul, the woman would remain under his protective authority and would not be tempted by the "knowledge of good and evil." Yet sometime between her creation and her fall, Adam apparently relinquished his leadership responsibilities. In that case, the

woman's respect for him weakened. Instead of responding to Adam, she began to drift away from his authority and question God's design for the man's leadership role. She should have recognized the serpent's cynical innuendoes as contrary to the divine mandate and conferred with Adam. But the woman did not. Beguiled by the serpent, she bypassed her husband.

Keep in mind, Adam was not the only authority over her. The other authority designed to protect her was the Lord Jesus Christ and the divine viewpoint that He communicated "in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8*b*). Even though she had been attending 'Bible class' every evening, she probably had stopped paying attention. She apparently became distracted from the Lord's authority, especially His prohibition of the tree.

Dismissing these two means of protection, the woman allowed herself to be deceived. She started talking and responding to a serpent. By engaging in this dialogue and listening to an authority other than God and her husband, she became enthralled and began to entertain Satan's distortions of truth. Her temptation was not sinful. There was only one sin possible in the Garden—disobeying the divine prohibition. This overt act of disobedience would inevitably follow the denial of her divinely appointed role as a woman.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God [*Yahweh Elohim*] had made. (Gen. 3:1*a*)

Satan, in the guise of a serpent, spoke intimately with the woman. The serpent is often considered among the lowest of created beings—slimy, dirty, sneaky, poisonous. The original serpent, however, apparently possessed an illumination or rare beauty that set it apart from the other animals in the Garden. This serpent also exhibited a familiarity with the woman; perhaps it was even her pet, her companion, as a dog or cat might be today. The woman must have been delighted when the serpent, indwelt by Satan, actually *spoke* to her.

And he [the serpent] said to the woman, "Indeed, has God [*Elohim*] said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1*b*)

Satan realized that the words he used would affect the woman's thinking. Satan fired his opening volley in such a way as to introduce doubt into her unsuspecting mind, literally saying, "Is it *really* true

that God has said . . . ?” The sly devil pretended to be shocked at the idea that God would make such a prohibition. He sought to influence the woman’s thinking by suggesting that God was lying about the danger of the forbidden fruit.

Notice also how Satan referred to God only as *Elohim*, instead of the *Yahweh Elohim* of Genesis 3:1a. There is a difference between the two titles. *Yahweh Elohim* in the Old Testament is “Lord God,” the name of God in relationship to man. *Elohim*, the plural word for “God,” refers to divine essence in general, as opposed to one person of the Trinity. The woman had a relationship with Jesus Christ as *Yahweh Elohim*, not as the more distant *Elohim*. By using *Elohim* only, a tactic he would weave throughout this entire dialogue, Satan intentionally sought to divert the woman’s attention away from her personal relationship with God. God entered the conversation only as an impersonal being of unapproachable status. Satan was implying that God lacked personal love and concern for the woman—an implication upon which he would quickly expand.

Satan pressed on with his line of questioning, “Has God really forbidden one tree in the Garden of Eden?” Satan was implying that God was unfair, keeping something from her that was valuable and desirable. The tempter’s first stratagem slandered the character and grace of God.

One of the devil’s primary objectives has always been to deny that God is in any way connected to or concerned with man, to deny that a distant, righteous God does love. Satan’s suggestion that God is unjust, unfair, and uncaring implies that for God to condemn anyone to the lake of fire is incompatible with His love and shows a lack of concern for the welfare of man. Of course, Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). God is very interested in man! The prohibition of one tree was a bona fide test of free will and was in no way an unkindness or indifference to man. God’s love was not suspended at the tree. God loves man, and He would ultimately demonstrate that love at the cross.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us. (Rom. 5:8)

Adam and the woman had everything they needed in the Garden. Satan’s insinuation of unfairness exploited the woman’s weakness, which eventually led to overt sin. The woman fell into his trap. She began to entertain thoughts of self-indulgence and rejection of divine

authority—the same thought pattern that had caused Satan’s fall. Once appreciative of God’s perfect provision, now she was becoming dissatisfied with God’s one prohibition. Instead of conferring with either Adam or God regarding the choice she now faced, she carried on with her ‘harmless’ little conversation.

### THE WOMAN’S RESPONSE

Aside from slandering God’s character, Satan had baited the woman with an opportunity to explain God’s prohibition. Satan was hoping she would in turn distort the prohibition. This is exactly what she did.

And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said [her interpretation], ‘You shall not eat from it *or touch it*, lest you die.’” (Gen. 3:2–3, italics added)

In her answer to the tempter’s question, it is clear she had paid little attention to God’s instruction and cared even less for the details of His Word. The Lord had taught her “you shall not eat” from the tree, but she foolishly added her own false interpretation when she said “or touch it.” The woman misstated God’s Word. She put her own ‘spin’ on the truth, indicating a dissatisfaction with the divine prohibition. Had her soul been saturated with doctrine, she would have accurately echoed God’s *one* mandate. The woman would have understood the import of the one prohibition He had given to her, but such was not the case. She was deceived by Satan’s flattery. She had made herself vulnerable to Satan’s deception by ignoring every authority designed to protect her and by distorting God’s Word.

The woman assumed that death was in the property of the tree, so that either to taste it or to touch it would cause physical death. She was wrong on two counts! Death did not lie in the property of the tree but in disobedience to the authority of God. God had warned of *spiritual death* in relation to eating the fruit, but she failed to understand that eating meant severing all relationship with God.

Genesis 3:2–3 reveals how fully the woman allowed the serpent to determine the agenda. Ignorance of doctrine prepares fertile soil for the germination of self-centeredness. Having gained a foothold, Satan pressed his attack:

And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die!” (Gen. 3:4)

As sarcastic ridicule of God’s warning in Genesis 2:17, the serpent exclaimed, “Now look here, you are not really going to die; that is absurd!” He was denying the reality of disobedience to God and disconnecting sin from its consequences of death. Denying death, Satan disregarded God’s just condemnation of sin by disconnecting love from justice. In doing so, Satan highlighted his own case. Yet to sever the connection between sin and punishment is impossible. God would be unrighteous and unjust if He did not pronounce a penalty upon sin and hold the creature responsible for his decisions. Satan’s entire mission, then and now, is to deny this truth.

With each successive stage of seducing the woman, the serpent grew more bold in his attack upon God.

“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:5)

As revealed in verse 5, Satan impugned God’s motives. He portrayed God as selfishly withholding a greater wisdom and status from Adam and the woman. In effect Satan said, “If God really loved you, He would not deny you the knowledge of good and evil.” Now the woman was paying close attention to every word.

Satan then made his first appeal to human arrogance and ego: “You will be like God.” Satan himself had arrogantly succumbed to the desire to be like God, and now he promoted the same thought in the woman. His assertion decorated the lie with enough truth to gain credibility. He disguised the fact that “the wages of sin is death.” If she ate of that tree, her eyes would indeed be opened—not to be like God but to discover what Satan and sin were truly like! The woman would see that disobedience to God was inevitably self-destructive. Spiritual death—separation from God—would be the horrendous result.

### *The Fall of Man*

In the wake of Satan’s temptation of the woman would occur an event with repercussions for the remainder of human history. Adam would commit the first act of willful, cognitive disobedience toward

God. Adam's original sin would result in the total depravity of his progeny—the fall of mankind (Rom. 5:12–14).

### THE SIN OF THE WOMAN

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate. (Gen. 3:6a)

Following her discussion of the tree with Satan, the woman began to rationalize disobedience. She had swallowed Satan's lie instead of metabolizing God's truth. She persuaded herself that she needed what she thought that fruit could provide—wisdom. She looked longingly at the fruit, the object of the test. God's mandate was blotted out of her thinking. Her vulnerability to the temptation made her ripe for overt disobedience, even before she plucked and tasted the fruit.

Man has perpetuated this mentality throughout history. People who have been provided everything by God's immeasurable grace continually desire more. And who prods us in this quest? Satan!

The more the woman stared at the tree in the middle of the Garden, the more the fruit "was a delight to the eyes." Aspirations of being like God lingered in her mind. To her, the tree was desirable to make her as wise as God—the final rationalization. Being tempted was not wrong, but succumbing to temptation was her downfall. At this point the first overt sin in the human race occurred—she ate the forbidden fruit. The penalty for her disobedience was immediately imposed. She died spiritually and lost her relationship with God.

Satan in his genius had plotted to separate the woman from the authority umbrella of the Lord and her husband. Satan deceived the woman and exploited her role as responder. In turn, she reversed her role toward Adam and became the *initiator*. She enticed her husband to ignore God's Word, just as she had done.

### THE SIN OF THE MAN

Adam was faced with a dilemma: either maintain his obedience to God or follow the lead of his now spiritually dead wife. He could choose fellowship with God in the Garden or fellowship with the woman outside the Garden. He chose the woman, the same choice many men would make today.



And she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.  
(Gen. 3:6b)

Adam, the ruler of the earth and head of the first household, abdicated his authority. He *responded* to his wife's overture, even though he knew better. He had no illusions concerning the meaning of God's prohibition, which he now flagrantly disregarded. The woman, in reaction to Adam's authority, had responded to the deceit of Satan. Adam knowingly abandoned his authority, misused his freedom, and decided to follow the woman. He, too, became subservient to Satan and rejected the divine mandate. Adam knowingly disobeyed God, "and he ate." Satan's plot had worked.

Now in spiritual death, Adam and the woman were separated and estranged from God. They were condemned! Without hope, without everlasting life! The same arrogance and negative volition found in Satan propelled the first humans into a parallel fall with equally disastrous consequences for the entire human race. Adam fell under the condemnation of sin and, like Satan, became an outcast. Because Adam was condemned, the entire human race was also condemned (1 Cor. 15:22a). Satan's contention that a loving God cannot sentence His creatures who have chosen against Him to eternal condemnation was proven wrong in the Garden.

#### OPERATION FIG LEAVES

Adam and his wife had been created without the knowledge of sin. Before the Fall they were ignorant of evil. Each possessed a human spirit for fellowship with God, and neither had a sin nature.<sup>17</sup> As long as they remained obedient to God's one mandate, they enjoyed the blessings God poured forth. However, the instant they partook of the forbidden fruit, they suffered spiritual death. They were stripped of their relationship with God. They lost their human spirit, acquired a

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17. The sin nature is an integral part of every human being except for Jesus Christ. It is the center of man's rebellion toward God. Synonyms for the sin nature include the "old man" of Ephesians 4:22 (KJV), the Adamic nature of "flesh" of Romans 8:3-4, the principle of "sin" of Romans 7:8-20, and the death "in Adam" of 1 Corinthians 15:22. The sin nature resides in the cell structure of the body and is the source of temptation, lust, and human good, but man's volition is the source of sin. See Thieme, *Old Sin Nature vs. Holy Spirit* (2000), 1-4.

sin nature, and became aware of the existence of another plan—satanic good and evil.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Gen. 3:7)

Until that moment they had never noticed their naked state in the pristine Garden. Now “the eyes of both of them were opened” to their nakedness. They saw themselves and were suddenly conscious of sin. Discovering their condition signified they had acquired a conscience. They could distinguish between good and evil, and their conscience was a witness to them that they were in a fallen state.

Looking at each other, Adam and the woman were ashamed. Satan wasted no time in drawing their attention away from their fallen condition and onto their vulnerable nakedness. The new ruler of the world naturally insinuated that clothing was necessary for Adam and the woman to make themselves right with God.

Adam and the woman got busy making “loin coverings.” They attempted to solve the problem of sin and the sin nature with a superficial covering of fig leaves. In their estimation, this eye-opening situation of good and evil called for a relational adjustment. Adam and the woman covered themselves in an attempt to adapt to each other and to make a human adjustment to the justice of God.<sup>18</sup> Behind these self-righteous efforts to make themselves acceptable to God was the thinking of evil. Fig leaves were their attempt to cover their sin. “If we are right with each other,” they reasoned, “we must be right with God. If we put on some clothes and adjust to one another’s shame and sin, we will be adjusted to God’s justice.” Thus began Operation Fig Leaves, the first act of human good—man’s attempt to regain the favor of God through his own works.

Human good is any benevolent production or deed that seeks to meet the standards of God apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. A function of the sin nature, human good at its best produces relative, temporary fixes to mankind’s problems, as opposed to the absolute, permanent solutions of God. No matter how admirable the accomplishments, no matter how sincere the intentions, human good has no

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18. For more on man’s adjustment to the justice of God, see Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 28–33, 95–97, 276–78.

spiritual or eternal value and is not rewardable in heaven. It obscures the grace of God and the reality of man's depraved condition. It always falls short of the standard of divine righteousness and, for this reason, falls right in line with Satan's agenda.

Human good is part of Satan's policy of evil—Satan's thinking—and reflects the subtlety of his genius. Theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer points out that the system which Satan initiated in his fall, *cosmos diabolicus*, "includes all the good which he can incorporate into it and be consistent in the thing he aims to accomplish."<sup>19</sup> There is, then, a conflict of 'good' versus good, that is, satanic good versus divine good.<sup>20</sup> Satan seeks to replace divine good in this world by sponsoring the counterfeit righteousness of human good, like Operation Fig Leaves.

Here is a fundamental flaw in Satan's cosmos: Human beings seek to adjust to each other instead of adjusting to the truth of God's person and will. They seek human solutions rather than divine solutions. Such anthropocentric philosophy thrives today. Many people assume they will go to heaven because they do not harm anyone, or because they pay their debts, or because they get along well with people, or because they are respected by their peers. In other words, because they are 'good people.' These beliefs exemplify the myth of salvation by works—striving to please God through human efforts. Relative human righteousness is a vain effort that cannot meet the standard of God's perfect righteousness and justice. No matter how good man may be, he cannot on his own solve the problem of spiritual death—condemnation and separation from God.

Man makes a permanent adjustment to the justice of God through faith alone in Christ alone,<sup>21</sup> and then he makes continual adjustments throughout his life as he grows spiritually by learning and metabolizing

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19. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 100.

20. Divine good is service or deeds produced by the believer who is in fellowship, filled with the Holy Spirit. Divine good has spiritual and eternal value and is rewardable in heaven.

21. This salvation adjustment to the justice of God results in justification from God. At the moment of faith alone in Christ alone, God's own righteousness is imputed, or credited, to every believer (Rom. 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:21). He is justified, making him acceptable to God in time and eternity.

Bible doctrine.<sup>22</sup> Adapting to other members of the human race, though important for human relationships, does not impress God. Living a good life cannot placate God.

Not surprisingly, after the first man and woman succumbed to Satan's temptations, the deceptions of human good instantly controlled their lives. Adopting the devil's policy, they completely violated the justice and righteousness of God and sought His approbation through a pitiful act of covering themselves. There was no turning to God in recognition of their helplessness. They did not say, "O God, we have sinned." They did not implore His grace and mercy. Instead, they assumed that if they could become acceptable to each other, they would be acceptable to God. They assumed they had solved the problem because they had covered their nakedness. But who made the clothes? They made them. They sewed the fig leaves; they put them on.

Adam and the woman expected their own works would square them with God, but they could no longer approach God. An impenetrable barrier had been erected between the first couple and God the moment they sinned and died spiritually. The fig leaves were useless! This reality hit them head-on the moment the Lord entered the Garden.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [spiritual time] of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:8–9)

The Lord God came into the garden to pay His daily visit to them in the "spiritual time" of the day, the time of their daily exposure to God's Word. What did they do when they heard the Lord? They both hid among the trees. They recognized the inadequacy of the fig leaves.

When God called to the man, the responsible one, the leader, to account for himself, why did Adam not respond to God as he had

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22. Metabolizing doctrine is the process of learning, understanding, and believing biblical principles in order to grow spiritually. The word "metabolism" is derived from the classical Greek noun μεταβολή (*metabole*), meaning "metamorphosis" or "transformation." When food is consumed, the human body converts it into nourishment for physical growth. By analogy, when Bible doctrine, spiritual food, is 'eaten' under the filling of the Holy Spirit, it is converted into nourishment for spiritual growth (Jer. 15:16a). See Thieme, *Reversionism* (2000), 3–7.

always done before he ate of the forbidden tree? He no longer ran to meet his Creator because he had forfeited his personal relationship through spiritual death. All rapport was gone between mankind and God. At that moment, Adam and the woman realized their total separation from God and their helplessness to do anything about it. All they could do was hide. They could no longer come face to face with God. They could not adjust to the righteousness of God, and this is why the justice of God had to judge them. In love, God would provide the answer to the condition of spiritual death.

The only possible way spiritually dead Adam and the woman could regain their relationship with God was if someone else totally acceptable to God paid the penalty for their sin. Christ would be that someone else (1 Pet. 2:24). Although mankind did not become like God, as Satan claimed, in time God would become Man through the Incarnation, so that by means of salvation mankind could share God's estate forever. There can be no greater love and no greater justice and righteousness. They go together! If Adam and the woman would accept Christ's still future work on their behalf, their human spirit would be restored to them. However, the sin nature was here to stay.

### *'PASSING THE BUCK'*

Hiding among the trees, spiritually dead Adam and the woman did not deserve to hear from the Lord ever again. But Jesus Christ, in an act of grace, broke the silence. He called them out from where they were hiding (Gen. 3:9–10). While Adam was preoccupied with fig leaves—covering up his nakedness, shame, and fear—the Lord's questions directed the man's attention to the real problem.

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen. 3:11)

Negative volition, that is, the act of disobedience to God's command, was the issue. The divine interrogation put Adam on the spot. When he realized that there was no way out of his predicament, he devised a means of absolving himself of guilt or blame. He passed the buck; he played the blame game.

And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." (Gen. 3:12)

Notice how Adam implicated God as well as the woman. He actually included God because God gave him the woman. Adam also indirectly blamed the tree—his environment. Now you cannot beat that for ingenuity! Adam was brilliant, but not enough to match God. In shifting the blame, he exposed his lack of obeisance for his Creator as well as the loss of leadership and love for his wife. Once united under perfect environment and idyllic personal love, the relationship of the first man and woman was now devastated. Characteristic of the sin nature was his rejection of responsibility for bad decisions. Only after submitting his lame excuses did Adam finally admit his own failure: “I ate.”

The Lord ignored Adam for the moment and turned to the woman.

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Gen. 3:13)

The woman caught on quickly. Faced with the issue of disobedience, she also attempted to escape responsibility. What was her excuse? “It’s not my fault, God. The serpent told me it would be all right.” She claimed ignorance. True, the serpent did deceive her, but the serpent was not responsible for the fact that she ignored God’s mandate and conceded to Satan’s temptation from her own free will. Ignorance was, and still is, no excuse.

### *Sentencing the Guilty*

At this point the Lord God ceased His questioning. The disobedience was exposed. His next step was to pronounce a just punishment on everyone involved, beginning with the serpent. Since the serpent was the agent of Satan in deceiving the woman, he too must be judged.

And the LORD God said to the serpent,  
“Because you have done this,  
Cursed are you more than all cattle,  
And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly shall you go,  
And dust shall you eat  
All the days of your life.” (Gen. 3:14)

Until that time the serpent had been the alluring and shining one, the most glamorous of all the lower creatures. From then on this animal

would be a reptile crawling on the ground and eating dust, degraded and despised. The serpent had been a party to Satan's self-exaltation, so now it would undulate through the dirt in perpetual humiliation.

The curse on the serpent was given before the promise of salvation of Genesis 3:15. Satan also had been judged before the plan of salvation was declared to man, making it clear that Satan and his agent are excluded. Salvation concerns only the human race. Nevertheless, the promise in Genesis 3:15 uses an analogy that cannot be understood apart from this curse on the serpent. By crawling or creeping on the ground, the snake is most vulnerable to attack. While a snake can strike a man from the ground, the man can kill a snake by crushing its head. The plan of salvation would be revealed and promised to mankind using just this analogy.

#### THE WOMAN'S SENTENCE AFTER THE FALL

We will bypass Genesis 3:15 for the moment and continue with the sentencing of the woman and the man in verses 16–19.

To the woman He said,  
“I will greatly multiply  
Your pain in childbirth,  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Yet your desire [תְּשׁוּקָה, *teshuqah*] shall be for  
your husband,  
And he shall rule over you.” (Gen. 3:16)

The woman's sentence still holds. With the pronouncement of the woman's curse came the activation of the womb, which was dormant prior to the Fall. For the remainder of human history, the woman's body would bear biological life. The entire pregnancy is in view here, as it encompasses a lengthy period of heightened emotions and physical discomfort culminating in the child's birth. Still, from this sting of God's justice would emerge the opportunity of salvation for condemned mankind. Through childbearing, God would demonstrate the greatest love to the human race. The process would be the means through which the humanity of Christ would enter the world, the means through which God would become man in order to pay the penalty for mankind's sin. This is God's grace, even in judgment.

But *women* shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (1 Tim. 2:15)

Then follows the second aspect of God's judgment of the woman in Genesis 3:16*b*, which helps explain the nature of the woman: "Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Often misinterpreted as sexual desire, the Hebrew word *teshuqah* in this context means "desire to rule or control." *Teshuqah*, as a desire to rule, specifically refers to the woman's strong inclination to resist the man's authority in marriage. This understanding of "desire" is apparent because of the literary genre of verse 16—Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry utilizes *parallelism* to express the intended meaning. In other words, the phrases work in pairs to further enhance and define each other. Genesis 3:16*b* is antithetical parallelism—the phrases share a common subject, authority, yet are opposed to each other. The final phrase, "he shall rule over you," indicating his designated authority over her, is the key to understanding the woman's desire. The husband will rule over her, even though her desire is to rule over him. The first phrase refers to the woman's desire to take the man's authority, while the second phrase stipulates that regardless of her "desire," the man will hold the leadership role.

The woman dominated her husband at the Fall, so God gave her a fitting and just sentence. He pronounced her natural trend as the lust to become the initiator rather than the responder, the lust to rebel against God's design for the man to "rule [be the leader] over you." From this point on, women in all generations would strive to subvert the authority and leadership of their husbands. Because of sin, women seek to dominate men.

The woman's rebellious pride, which was first aroused by Satan's flattery, was intensified in the Fall. After the Fall she instinctively despised being ruled by the man. Yet now in God's stated curse and condemnation, He once again defined the role of man and woman in the divine design. Revolt was the woman's curse, but in love God provided for her deliverance from that curse. Within her designated role as responder was the woman's opportunity to fulfill the plan of God for her life. The cursing of "desire" for her husband became the blessing of submitting to the divine design, something she failed to do in the Garden. In pronouncing a just punishment on the woman and providing the solution, God once again demonstrated the compatibility of His justice with His love.



Is this subordination unfair to the woman? Feminists certainly contend that it is. But in their contention they display the curse on the first woman, the innate desire to control. Authority orientation toward a husband is *strength* for the woman. Without it she takes on the man's role, which does not become her. She loses direction and becomes vulnerable to deceit and seduction. She responds to the wrong stimuli or to the wrong person in wrong ways. This is how Satan attacks. What a woman thinks passes for happiness and independence turns into confusion and misery—the consequence for refusing to orient to her husband's authority.

Unfairness and injustice have no place in God's perfect order. Cursing is turned to magnificent blessing when mankind submits to His plan. Subordination to the husband by the wife is embracing God's plan. This is the solution to the curse of the woman.

The original role of subordination for the woman in marriage is described in Genesis 2:18, where God states that He would "make him [the man] a helper [*ezer*] suitable for him." For the purpose of completing the man, God created an *ezer*—what a beautiful word! *Ezer* means much more than just an assistant who eases the load of life for man. The word denotes correlation, association, and fulfillment. By nature of her distinct design, the *ezer* is a complementary component, the part that corresponds and responds, an opposite number that fits him specifically. The woman is the man's partner in life, which includes sexual fulfillment under the prescribed condition of marriage. She has the same soul composition, the same spiritual opportunities, yet she has a different role in God's plan.

Contrary to human viewpoint contentions, *ezer* does not imply a status of inferiority or forceful servitude. In following God's purpose, a woman willingly surrenders to her husband's authority vested in him by God. Her natural inclination, however, is to contend with authority; therefore, becoming a responder is an acquired skill. She must learn to respect the authority of both God and her husband. How could it not be a blessing for the authority-oriented woman to bear witness against Satan, the one who originally undermined God's authority structure?

#### THE MAN'S SENTENCE AFTER THE FALL

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you;  
 In toil you shall eat of it  
 All the days of your life.  
 Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;  
 And you shall eat the plants of the field;  
 By the sweat of your face  
 You shall eat bread,  
 Till you return to the ground,  
 Because from it you were taken;  
 For you are dust,  
 And to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:17–19)

Instead of leading her away from Satan’s seduction, Adam had followed the woman’s lead. He was influenced by the woman when he should have been influencing her. He had renounced his own rightful position as the man and relinquished his responsibility in marriage.

Let the husband fulfill [ἀποδίδωμι, *apodidomi*] his duty [ὀφειλή, *opheile*] to his wife, and likewise also the wife [respond] to her husband. (1 Cor. 7:3)

He must lead; the wife must respond. The present active imperative of *apodidomi* is a command meaning “to render.” *Opheile* refers to what is mandated to be rendered to the wife: “his duty” or “due.” In God’s design, the husband’s due is to initiate love and benevolence to her.

A principle of business and investment illustrates how a husband should “fulfill his duty.” In order to receive a return, something must be invested. When a man invests nothing in his marriage, he receives nothing in return. Failing to invest leadership in his marriage, a man may make the mistake of treating his wife with indifference, callousness, or abuse, still expecting her to respond with love. He may be kind and affectionate when he wants to satisfy sexual needs but then quickly revert to selfishness. In reaction, the wife can so easily become vindictive, bitter, resentful, or hostile toward her husband, perhaps toward authority in general. Her reactions can eventually result in apathy, depression, extreme self-indulgence, or even the rejection of the concept of marriage. Such men have yet to understand that what they sow by either leadership or the lack of it, they reap in either marital harmony or marital discord.

Adam apparently failed to “fulfill his duty” in the Garden. The result was a wife who was persuaded by Satan, a wife who in turn

persuaded her husband into overt sin. Adam deliberately disobeyed God's command to "not eat from it" and instead obeyed his wife. For this the justice of God sentenced him.

Where man had previously received total provision without working, now he would make his livelihood from his own painful toil. As additional punishment, Adam lost his dominion over creation. Nature shared in the consequences of Adam's original sin (Rom. 8:19–22), for the natural world that God created was included in the curse. Earth now produced troublesome briars and thorns, and some animals became carnivorous and ferocious. Only through hard labor, superior intellect, and shrewd calculation could man wrest a living from the soil and dominate animal life.

### *The Promise of Salvation*

The curse showed that fallen man was in no position to reverse his predicament unless God should mercifully intervene. Man's only hope would be found in God's solution to the angelic conflict, for it would show Satan and his angels how a loving God can save a fallen creature and still maintain His righteousness. So let us return to Genesis 3:15, where the divine answer to the problem of man's sin is first revealed.

"And I will put enmity  
Between you [Satan] and the woman,  
And between your seed [Satan's seed] and her seed [seed  
of the woman, Jesus Christ]." (Gen. 3:15a)

God pronounced eternal enmity between two seeds, Satan's and the woman's. Yet within this declaration of enmity is found the embryonic promise of a Savior and salvation. The first declaration of the Gospel and only hope for mankind is Genesis 3:15, referred to in theology as the "proto-evangel."

The seed of Satan represents unbelief, rebellion, and spiritual death. Satan's seed is the proliferation of his policy of evil in human history, as well as his antagonism toward God and God's plan of salvation from the seed of the woman. The woman's seed is her descendant or offspring—the Promised One, the Messiah. The woman's seed represents God's gracious plan of redemption centered in her descendant, a virgin-born child: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4a). The *seed*

*of the woman* is the first messianic title, and it refers specifically to the human origin of Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that Genesis 3:15 contains references only to Satan's seed and the woman's seed. Adam is not mentioned. Why? Because Adam's sin was a sin of cognizance, and through him spiritual death is passed to the human race. This is what 1 Timothy 2:13–14 reveals to us:

For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived [ἀπατάω, *apatao*], but the woman being quite deceived [ἐξαπατάω, *exsapatao*], fell into transgression. (1 Tim. 2:13–14)

The whole emphasis of this verse is on “deceived,” as confirmed by the use of *apatao* and *exsapatao*. This same verb, *apatao*, is found in Genesis 3:13 of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, to describe the woman's “transgression,” not the man's sin. Paul probably chose the verb *apatao* to connect 1 Timothy 2:14 with the deception in Genesis 3:13. Adam was not influenced by subterfuge, but the woman was misled by her chat with Satan. She whined, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13).

“Deceived” describes the condition of the woman at the time of the Fall. By rejecting the protection of both Adam's authority and God's Word, she fell prey to a complete snow job! There is no doubt, however, that while blindly deceived, the woman did sin. Ignorance was no excuse. She wanted to eat of the forbidden fruit, and she made the decision to do so. Sin lies in an act of volition, whether in ignorance or cognizance. Yet being deceived, she did not understand the *consequences* of her sin. With Adam, such was not the case.

When Adam accepted the forbidden fruit from the woman, he was completely aware of his act of disobedience and had no doubt about the consequences. When Adam saw her with the fruit in her hand, he knew what had happened. Even so, he proceeded to take the fruit from her. His volition responded knowingly, willingly, in full cognizance. He deliberately chose fallen woman outside the Garden over the Lord inside the Garden.

Remember that the burden of leadership was on Adam, not the woman. Even before the woman was created, “the LORD God commanded the *man*” not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17, *italics added*). Consequently, while man

and woman were both guilty of sin, upon Adam fell the greater culpability for the Fall. The onus was placed upon Adam. The Lord Himself placed the blame. The post-Fall confrontation was between God and Adam, not between God and the woman (Gen. 3:9).

When Adam sinned in the Garden, he was the ruler of the world and the representative, or federal head, of the human race. Adam's sin of cognizance caused our fallen condition. When he chose to sin, he secured the condemnation of the entire human race because the entire human race was seminally in him. "Seminally in Adam" means the entire human race was present with Adam because we are all derived genetically from him. We all share Adam's corrupted nature.

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin [the sin nature] entered into the world, and [spiritual] death through sin, and so [spiritual] death spread to all men, because all sinned [when Adam sinned]. (Rom. 5:12)

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:19)

For as in Adam all die. (1 Cor. 15:22a)

All members of the human race—except One—are the seed of Adam. Adam's sin nature is transmitted to all genetically; every cell of biological life is contaminated with the sin nature.<sup>23</sup> In human procreation it is the seed of the man that passes the sin nature to his offspring, whether son or daughter. Adam's sin nature becomes everyone's sin nature through the twenty-three contaminated male chromosomes that fertilize the uncontaminated female ovum at conception. Then at birth, Adam's original sin of cognizance is imputed to the genetically formed sin nature for condemnation.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, every person entering the world by natural generation, the progeny of Adam, is rendered spiritually dead at birth, in a state of total separation from God, in total depravity, and incapable of fellowship with Him.

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23. All cells in human life are contaminated by the sin nature with one exception, the female ovum prior to fertilization. For a detailed discussion on the genetic perpetuation of the sin nature, see Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 65–68.

24. *Ibid.*, 69–79.

Herein is revealed the need for a virgin pregnancy, no male seed, in order to preclude the genetic transmission of the sin nature. The Savior had to be true humanity yet without a sin nature. Such prerequisites could be satisfied only through a supernatural birth that excluded a human father (Luke 1:35). The seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, would enter this world by means of the virgin pregnancy.

“Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [God with us].” (Isa. 7:14*b*)

Our Lord had to be born in this miraculous way in order to be without sin and qualify as the promised Savior. Without the perfect twenty-three male chromosomes provided by God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20), Christ would have been tainted by the sin nature passed down from Adam. This manner of procreation was the basis for redemption, because it provided the world with a perfect human being, the only One qualified to be judged as a substitute for sinful man.

Genesis 3:15 continues,

“He [Christ, the seed of the woman] shall bruise [crush] you on the *head* [Satan at the return of Christ at the Second Advent],

And you [Satan] shall bruise him on the *heel* [Christ at the cross, the First Advent].” (Gen. 3:15*b*, italics added)

The seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, will crush the head of Satan. Just as a man might kill a snake on the ground by a blow to its head, so Christ will crush Satan’s head, his rulership of the earth, at the Second Advent (Rev. 19:21—20:3). In Genesis 3:15*b*, the bruising of Christ’s heel is a prophecy of the cross, where He “was wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5, KJV).

A man’s heel is vulnerable to the strike of a serpent, and Satan hoped the death of Christ would be the fatal blow. But in fact, Christ’s “bruise,” His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross, would pay the penalty of sin and open the way of eternal life. Christ would bear in His own body the judgment for every sin in the human race, including Adam’s original sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). This triumph at the cross would be Christ’s strategic victory in the angelic conflict.

In declaring the victory to be the seed of the woman, Genesis 3:15 points to salvation for the human race through her seed. Adam, as the representative of fallen mankind, recognized the truth of this prophecy.

Now the man called his wife's name Eve [חַוְוָה, *chavvah*, "life"], because she was the mother of all *the* living. (Gen. 3:20)

The Hebrew word for Eve is *chavvah*, which means "life" or "life-receiving one." The woman would receive from Adam that seed which would perpetuate the human race. At the same time, his seed would transmit sin and spiritual death to all their progeny, thus extending the angelic conflict into human history.

In the midst of this tragedy, Christ would arrive as the seed of the woman and win the strategic victory at the cross. Satan's doom would be sealed by that victory, though his final defeat would be postponed until after the Millennium. For mankind, the result of Christ's strategic victory over death would be the free gift of "eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Whereas the man and the woman had been under condemnation a moment before, they now possessed eternal life, having believed in the promise of the living one, Jesus Christ. Adam called her *chavvah* as a testimony to their personal faith in the promise of the One who would become the seed of the woman.

To graphically depict His salvation promise of Genesis 3:15, the Lord Jesus Christ performed the very first animal sacrifice. The shedding of animal blood was an illustration of the future substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross: Christ, the Innocent One, must suffer and die for the guilty (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).<sup>25</sup> The blood of Christ, a metaphor for His substitutionary spiritual death, would cover, or atone for, the sins of man. Christ would pay the penalty of sin, incurred at the fall of Adam and the woman, and remove the issue of spiritual death for all mankind.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (Gen. 3:21)

Adam and Eve, having accepted the redemption solution depicted in the sacrificial offering, were clothed by God with "garments of skin." These garments, made from the skins of the innocent, sacrificial animals, replaced the fig leaves that Adam and the woman had put on after the Fall. The fig leaves represented human righteousness and

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25. Thieme, *The Blood of Christ* (2002), 11–21, 36–37; *Levitical Offerings* (2004), 15–35.

good deeds, the attempt by man to reconcile himself with God, and epitomized the counterfeit nature of Satan's evil plan. The garments represented God's own righteousness, imputed to man at salvation (2 Cor. 5:21). Just as the animal's blood was shed to provide these garments, so also must the blood of Christ be shed to allow for God's imputation of righteousness. In other words, God's solution of Genesis 3:15 replaced man's solution.

At the last judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment, all who have refused the redemption solution will stand before God in the "fig leaves" of their own making. They will be judged on the basis of their good works (Rev. 20:12–13). Their sins, which were judged on the cross, are not an issue. Only those regenerate ones who wear the righteousness of God, illustrated by the "garments of skin," will avoid the final judgment and the lake of fire (Isa. 61:10; Rom. 3:22; Rev. 20:11–15).

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22–24)

This verse delineates a change of scene for the battleground of the angelic conflict—"east of the garden of Eden." The sinless environment of Eden had been lost by the disobedience of the man and woman. The tree of life, associated with perfect environment and perpetuation of right relationship with God (Gen. 2:9), was forfeited. God placed the cherubim with "the flaming sword" to guard the entrance to the Garden. Had Adam and the woman returned to the Garden in their fallen state and eaten of the tree of life, they would have lived forever in spiritual death, no relationship with God for all eternity. The conflict would have remained unresolved.

The tree of life will not be seen again by man until the eternal state (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14). A new tree, the cross, was now the issue. Forgiveness of sin and eternal life with God could only be accomplished through the cross of Christ (Gal. 3:13). The salient issue in resolving the angelic conflict was still man's nonmeritorious positive volition. In



a sinful environment outside the Garden, man's free will would now decide for or against the salvation work of Christ.

God transformed an apparent defeat by the failed witness of Adam into the basis for ultimate triumph. In grace and love God provided the perfect solution—the promised Savior who would propitiate, or satisfy, His justice.

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God [the Father] displayed publicly as a propitiation in His [Jesus Christ's] blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His [the Father's] righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. (Rom. 3:24–25)

Jesus Christ, God the Son, the seed of the woman, would become true humanity and be judged in order to satisfy God's perfect righteousness and justice. Thus God the Father would demonstrate the greatest love in sending His Son to pay the penalty for human sin. This demonstration would destroy the basis for Satan's appeal.

Although banishment from the Garden turned disaster into the greatest possible potential happiness for man, he would never be free from satanic attacks. Always crafty, Satan would become bolder and more diversified in his attempts to lure mankind into his camp. In his pride, the devil would never stop trying to prove God wrong or usurp His authority, and he would use both believers and unbelievers as pawns in his warfare. But God, the divine Prosecutor, has His witnesses, and a certain believer named Job was one of His first stars.

## *Chapter Four*

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# THE WITNESS OF JOB—A VISIBLE OLD TESTAMENT HERO

SATAN'S VICTORY IN THE GARDEN segued into more attempts to invalidate the Prosecution's case. Having wrested rulership of the world from Adam, Satan initiated his malevolent plan to promote his new kingdom on the earth and destroy the work of God. Because of Adam's failure, the usurper was firmly entrenched as the "ruler of this world" and "god of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4). Now he had to conclusively prove his case. The battleground was planet Earth; the target, fallen mankind. Satan's assets included his legion of fallen angels.

Though Satan no longer held the honored position he had before his fall, he continued to have free access to the courtroom of heaven (Rev. 12:7–9; cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; Zech. 3:1). He regularly went into the presence of the Lord at the time of angelic convocations. In these convocations God presented certain believers as witnesses for the Prosecution.

Satan, as his own defense attorney, enjoyed the right to cross-examine God's subjects in efforts to disprove the validity of their faith. He accused believers of loving God only because they were being blessed. God heard the argument and permitted Satan's scheming, belligerent scrutiny of His children for the same reason He allowed Satan to live—to settle Satan's appeal in the angelic conflict.

To this day, the heavenly courtroom examines the evidence of mature believers as they live their spiritual lives.

The most detailed account of testimony for the Prosecution is that of Job, an early believer from the patriarchal period.<sup>26</sup> Job became Satan's target because there was no believer like him throughout Satan's entire kingdom. He was a believer in fellowship with God, said to be "blameless, upright, fearing [trusting] God, and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1). He was "blameless" in that he did not invite temptation or testing. By the gracious hand of God, Job had been endowed with tremendous wealth and ten children (Job 1:2–3).

Accusations the devil would level against Job exemplify his venomous methods. Job would face this agonizing trial while completely unaware that he was the chief witness in the heavenly courtroom battle taking place.

As the biblical chronicle of Job unfolds, we see Satan, the great accuser of believers, presenting himself along with the "sons of God [other angels]" before the Supreme Court of Heaven. Satan had just returned from "roaming about on the earth" (Job 1:6–7), performing reconnaissance on the weaknesses and sins of believers, which he still does to this very moment. The information he gathers serves to promote his case.

Knowing that Job was prepared to be marvelous evidence for the Prosecution, the Lord presented Job as His witness and granted Satan the right of cross-examination (Job 1:8). Satan immediately proceeded to censure Job's character while casting aspersions on divine justice and challenging the love of God.

Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast

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26. The Book of Job is the most ancient in the Bible. Many details in the book indicate a setting for its events during the time of the Patriarchs or soon after, perhaps while the Jews were living in Egypt (2086–1440 B.C.). For example, (1) its use of archaic Hebrew interspersed with Arabic expressions suggests that the Hebrew and Arabic had not yet developed as separate languages from their common Semitic root; (2) Job lived "in the land of Uz" (Job 1:1), an undocumented and unknown location; (3) like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Job made sacrifices to God as the priest of his family (Job 1:5); (4) wealth was measured in livestock (Job 1:3; 42:12); (5) Job's life span was consistent with patriarchal ages (Job 42:16); and (6) the Book of Job lacks any reference to Moses, Israel, or the Mosaic Law.

blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.” (Job 1:9–11)

Satan ridiculed the faith of Job, slurring his motivation and implying that Job’s faithfulness was merely the expected result of divine favor. Satan attributed Job’s happiness to material prosperity, something the devil still offers as a substitute for God’s grace. Trying to bolster his own case, Satan charged that if God removed Job’s prosperity, he would “curse Thee to Thy face” and be no different from Satan himself (Job 1:11).

In order that Job’s testimony might disprove Satan’s claims, God permitted Satan to challenge the witness with intense suffering. Before commencing cross-examination, however, God reminded Satan that Job’s life must not be harmed (Job 1:12). Satan could go only as far as God permitted, for believers are a “PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION” (1 Pet. 2:9). He does not let Satan run roughshod over them without constraints.

Satan departed from the presence of the Lord and wasted no time in carrying out his plan to break down Job. Within a very short period of time, he brought swift and repeated disaster upon Job: Sabeen bandits massacred many of Job’s workers and stole his work animals; an electrical storm killed additional staff along with his flock of sheep; a Chaldean raid destroyed his remaining men and animals; and finally, a violent desert storm collapsed the house in which Job’s children were enjoying a feast. All but the messengers were killed (Job 1:14–19).

Job had lost everything. The depth of his grief was unfathomable. Contrary to Satan’s expectations, Job, in the midst of his shock and sorrow, continued to worship God as the source of his prosperity and strength (Job 1:20). He faithfully responded, “I was born into this world with nothing, and I shall go out of this world with nothing. The LORD gave me everything I have, and the LORD has taken away everything. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21, corrected translation).

“Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”  
(Job 1:22)

Job had passed the initial evidence test with admirable poise and grace orientation. Satan’s first cross-examination had failed; his

cynical opinion of Job had proven false. Satan strode back into the courtroom continuing to berate. God then reiterated His case, repeating His formal commendation of Job:

“Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.” (Job 2:3b)

In the context of praising Job, God stated the purpose of evidence testing.<sup>27</sup> God permitted Satan to cross-examine this mature believer with undeserved suffering, a suffering inflicted for no apparent reason. But there was a good reason. Job’s suffering “without cause” would demonstrate the glory of God by forcing Job to depend totally on God’s grace provisions. Job’s integrity was sustained by divine assets provided for his spiritual life.

The devil paid no attention to the integrity of Job. Arrogantly refusing to admit his wrongful claims, he now argued that Job had not been thoroughly tested. He suggested that as long as Job was physically sound, he could find the human strength to keep up this hypocritical façade, but if Job were to lose his health, he would surely then curse God (Job 2:4–5). God again permitted His adversary to continue this line of inquisition.

Satan inflicted Job with a horrible, painful skin disease, reducing Job to such a miserable and repulsive state that even his wife advised him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:6–7, 9). Despite these crushing circumstances and disappointments, Job maintained his perspective of God’s love and justice and refused to join his wife in reaction against God. Job expressed his spiritual maturity magnificently in the way he answered her. Where Adam had accepted his wife’s call to sin, Job refused to follow his wife’s goading to sin against the Lord.

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27. Suffering plays an essential role in advancing the believer to maturity. Undeserved suffering in the life of the mature believer furnishes evidence in a courtroom drama that has been unfolding since long before human history began. In the appeal of Satan, God calls mature believers to the witness stand to testify concerning His matchless grace. Evidence testing is Satan’s attempt to discredit their testimony. For more discussion on evidence testing, see Thieme, *Christian Suffering* (2002), 185–97.

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:10)

Still determined, Satan now set out to discredit Job's faith in another way. Job began a seven-day period of silence under the pious scrutiny of three 'friends.' During this time, as Job sat in excruciating pain, each of his visitors concluded independently that Job must have committed some horrible, secret sin that moved God to discipline him so severely. Rather than comfort their bereaved friend in this intense testing period, they self-righteously judged him. These arrogant interrogators, presuming to help God make Job see the error of his ways, engaged Job in a formal debate regarding the reason for his terrible suffering. Yet they were unwittingly aiding Satan in making his case.

Throughout this arduous deliberation, Job remained confident in his innocence and the fact that his suffering was undeserved. Job was not perfect, however. His tremendous pain and pressure made him vulnerable to the pious arrogance of his 'comforters,' and he periodically succumbed to self-pity and self-justification. At one point he even complained that God was refusing to vindicate him.

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him,  
That I might come to His seat!  
I would present *my* case before Him  
And fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:3-4)

Although Job had no problem understanding his blamelessness, he was exasperated with the silence of God. Why did God allow this debate with Job's friends to go on and on? Why did God refuse to make Job's innocence clear to his critics? God understood Job's pressure, but He would not intervene until Job had passed the test with his own knowledge and application of the doctrine in his soul. God also remained silent because the courtroom procedure of cross-examination was under way. He would not vindicate Job until Satan had finished his interrogation.

The long debate finally ended when Job's three critics ran out of arguments. Job had adamantly opposed every suggestion that he was guilty of secret wrongdoing (Job 32:1).

God then broke His silence and reminded Job of divine omnipotence and faithfulness (Job 38—41). At any moment God could have vindicated Job before his three petty antagonists, but a far greater issue was at stake: the vindication of God in Satan's appeal. So God made the issue clear to Job. The witness of Job in the angelic conflict was more important than Job's personal vindication.

“Will you really annul My judgment?  
Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”  
(Job 40:8)

Job ultimately admitted his attempt at self-justification (Job 23:3—4) and returned to fellowship with God. He judged himself as having committed a sin, and he changed his mind about attempting to defend himself to the three friends.

“Therefore I retract,  
And I repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6)

Job had now completely passed his evidence test on behalf of the Prosecution's case. The mighty accuser had nothing more to say. Satan had deployed his entire arsenal at Job, urging him to relinquish all confidence and turn against the Lord. Job's testimony, however, had ultimately served to silence Satan, refute his slander, and win a victory for the Prosecution.

The angelic creatures, both elect and fallen, were all watching as Job came out on top and glorified God to the maximum. Job had remained faithful to God even under such adversity because he understood God's perfect character and trusted His grace provision. In this the angels found proof that volition is truly free to accept or reject God's will. In this they witnessed the perfection of God's integrity and His love.

God did not forget Job's success in passing evidence testing. He proceeded to bless Job abundantly beyond his original state of prosperity, even providing a new family (Job 42:10—16). God's grace and love were supremely demonstrated toward a man who refused to apply cosmic solutions to the adversities of life.

God continued to present Old Testament believers as evidence for the Prosecution. Visible heroes such as Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, and Esther relentlessly chose the plan of God over Satan's cosmic system and produced positive impact on their generation and

history. By so choosing, their lives were declarations of the benevolent grace, love, and faultless justice of God. Divine praise for their faith is forever recorded in Hebrews 11.

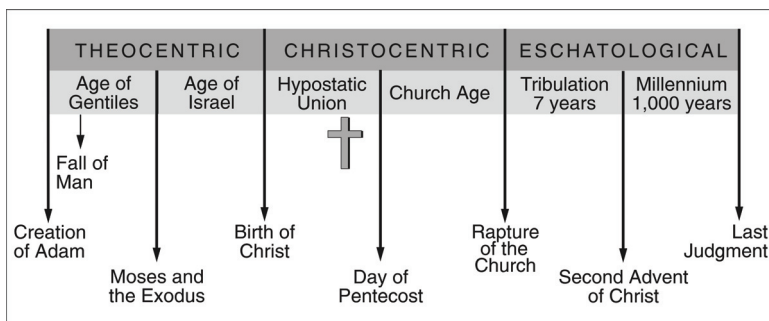


## Chapter Five

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# VICTORY IN THE CONFLICT

SINCE SATAN'S APPEAL WILL BE RESOLVED in human history, it must also run parallel with human history. The progress of the appeal corresponds to the biblical periods of history called dispensations. These six divine administrations can be grouped into three categories of two dispensations each. Each phase of divine history reflects an advance in the unfolding of God's plan for mankind and requires a new strategy by Satan.



THE DISPENSATIONS OF HUMAN HISTORY

The *theocentric* dispensations are the Age of the Gentiles and the Age of Israel,<sup>28</sup> both of which occurred “long ago” before God had “spoken to us in *His* Son” (Heb. 1:1–2). The *christocentric* dispensations begin with the first advent of Christ, called the Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union, and continue with the Church Age, which is the present dispensation. Finally, the *eschatological* dispensations, prophesied and promised for the end of history, are the Tribulation and Millennium.<sup>29</sup>

## ATTACKS ON THE GENETIC LINE OF JESUS CHRIST

After the original sin of Adam and the woman, God came into the Garden of Eden and promised eternal salvation. Satan was present when God announced this dramatic plan to defeat him.

“And between your seed [unbelieving humanity] and her seed [the virgin-born Messiah];  
He [Jesus Christ] shall bruise you on the head [Satan’s final doom].” (Gen. 3:15b)

Although detailed information concerning the person and work of the Savior would be revealed progressively, Satan instantly understood the identity and significance of the seed of the woman. The devil was well aware of the divine plan whereby his evil works would ultimately be destroyed (1 John 3:8b). He knew the arrival of the Savior, the greatest manifestation of God’s love and justice, would settle the angelic conflict in God’s favor.

To prevent the salvation plan from unfolding, Satan designed a counter-strategy. Throughout the remainder of the Age of the Gentiles

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28. The Age of the Gentiles spans the time period from Adam to Moses when the Jews were under slavery in Egypt. During the Age of the Gentiles, God founded the Jewish race through Abraham and used the Jewish patriarchs as leaders of the people. In the Age of Israel, or Jewish Age, God established the Jewish nation, Israel. This age began when God led the enslaved Jews out of Egypt at the Exodus (1441 B.C.) and concluded with the birth of Christ (4 B.C.). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 22–36.

29. Eschatology is the study of the final destiny of the human race.

and the Age of Israel, his tactics would vary but his strategy would center on thwarting the coming of the Messiah.

Satan's campaign began by motivating the first recorded murder in human history (Gen. 4:8; cf. 1 John 3:12). Satan fully understood that the future humanity of Christ would come through the regenerate children of Adam and Eve. In an effort to eliminate Christ's genetic line, the enemy made his first strike on the couple's first sons. Satan inspired Cain, an unbeliever, to murder Abel, a believer, in order to cut off the line of the Savior.

God personally pronounced Cain's punishment: Cain was barred from farming, the vocation he loved, and was condemned to be "a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:11–12). More importantly, God reestablished the Savior's line in the birth of Seth (Gen. 4:25). Still, Satan was not deterred. He struck again, launching one of his most audacious plans.

The angelic infiltration on the human race is recorded in Genesis 6.<sup>30</sup> In an attempt to contaminate and destroy all true humanity, "the sons of God," or fallen angels, invaded Earth and cohabited with "the daughters of men." The insidious goal was to corrupt human genetics and thereby foil the virgin birth of the Savior, who had to be true and pure humanity. The union of fallen angels and human women produced a superrace, the "Nephilim," literally "fallen ones" in the Hebrew (Gen. 6:2, 4). If left to continue procreation, the fallen angels would have reduced the human race to a hybrid of man and angel, a corruption that would have rendered impossible Christ's birth as true humanity.

And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them [Nephilim]; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth." (Gen. 6:12–13)

Following the acts of sabotage against His plan, God permanently removed the sexual ability of all angels. He incarcerated the offending fallen angels in Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) to await their ultimate transfer to the lake of fire at the conclusion of the conflict (Matt.

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30. Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation* (2002), 6–17.

25:41).<sup>31</sup> On Earth, God's justice destroyed the tainted Nephilim and brought judgment upon "all flesh" through a worldwide flood (Gen. 6:13). However, there was one exception. God preserved the pure human race through Noah and his family.

Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (Gen. 6:8*b*, 9*b*)

"Favor" means that Noah believed in the promised Savior. "Righteous man," "blameless in his time," and "walked with God" all indicate that he was a mature believer who had discovered and depended upon the grace of God to the maximum. During the scourge of the Nephilim, Noah and his family were the only ones on Earth to do so. The Age of the Gentiles continued with Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Three groups of Gentiles descended from them (Gen. 10:1–32). The Messiah would come through Shem's line (2 Sam. 7:8, 12; cf. John 4:22; Rom. 9:5).

The population increased and eventually settled in the fertile plains of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. It was in this region that Satan set into motion a deceptive scheme whereby man would destroy himself through his own unbridled arrogance (Gen. 11:1–4). In what the Lord would later designate as "Babel," this single-language population set out to build a spectacular center of world unification.<sup>32</sup> Man, through his own ability and concerted effort, presumed to build a "tower whose top *will reach* into heaven" (Gen. 11:4).

The grace of God and the Savior were left out of this 'monument to man.' Satan and his fallen angels cheered, well aware that this counterfeit utopia of secular 'one-worldism' could only serve to obliterate freedom, volition, and all restraints on the sin nature. Man was reflecting Satan's cosmic system in this project. He was trying to reach God through his own works, exclusive of the grace of God. When human accomplishments obscure the reality of man's need for

31. Tartarus, the third compartment of Hades, is the temporary prison for the Nephilim until God casts them into the lake of fire. *Ibid.*, 21.

32. In the Old Testament, Babylon is first called "Babel," derived from the Hebrew root בָּלַל (*balal*), meaning "to confound" or "to confuse." It was in Babel that God confused the language of the people. Both the biblical city and the tower of Babel, mentioned in Genesis 11:1–9, were built in the land of Shinar, more commonly known as southern Babylonia. See Thieme, *Daniel Chapters One through Six* (1996), 151–53.

God, the result is always evil. At Babel, the result could only be anarchy and the ultimate destruction of the human race.

God intervened and restrained man's capacity for self-destruction. Divine judgment confused the language of the people. The building of the tower was halted, since the ability to communicate with one another had been removed (Gen. 11:5–9). God's judgment upon this one-world government was a clear warning against any form of international rule and a ringing endorsement for the concept of the national entity. In a world dominated by the sin nature, power vested in a unified international body apart from God would always degenerate into ironclad totalitarianism. To protect the human race from the self-destructiveness of a one-world state, God scattered mankind, "every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations" (Gen. 10:5). These boundaries would limit the range of human arrogance and evil, assuring the proliferation of the human race and the line of the Messiah.

Satan's next move was to concentrate on one man—Abraham, the father of a new, Jewish race. Through the line of Abraham, God promised a Savior (Gen. 12:3*b*). Satan heard God's promise to Abraham and immediately targeted Abraham's family. The assaults began when Abraham's wife Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's harem (Gen. 12:14–15). Since God's promise was for Sarah to be the mother of His chosen race—not a concubine in the harem of a heathen king—God's sovereign will intervened. He struck Pharaoh and his house with "great plagues," prompting Sarah's release back to Abraham (Gen. 12:17–20).

Another assault involved Abraham's heir. God had promised Abraham a son from his own body (Gen. 15:4), but his wife Sarah was barren. In an attempt to help the plan of God, Sarah offered her Egyptian maid Hagar, apparently a very beautiful woman, "and gave her to her husband Abram" (Gen. 16:3). Falling in line with Satan's deception, Abraham convinced himself that Hagar would be the fulfillment of God's plan; thus a son, Ishmael, was born to them. When Abraham prayed that Ishmael might be his heir, God flatly denied his petition, saying, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him" (Gen. 17:19–21). Shortly thereafter, Isaac was born. God preserved Abraham's line to continue God's plan of salvation in human history along with the strategic defeat of Satan.

Four centuries passed, and Satan's intrigues to destroy the now prolific seed of Abraham only intensified. As the "sons of Israel multiplied greatly and became exceedingly mighty," Egypt's Pharaoh became consumed with fear of Jewish treachery and enslaved their entire population (Ex. 1:7–10). His successor escalated this anti-Semitic plot by ordering the murder of all Hebrew-born male infants in his kingdom (Ex. 1:15–16).

God's response to this new scheme of Satan was the preservation of one infant who would be God's man to deliver the Jews. Moses was rescued and raised by the compassionate daughter of the Pharaoh himself (Ex. 2:5–10). God used this Egyptian princess to spare Moses for his critical mission of preserving God's covenant promises and the messianic line through the Jews.<sup>33</sup>

Eighty years later Moses led a nation out of Egyptian slavery, bound for the land God had promised Abraham. This mass exodus marked the beginning of the next dispensation, the Age of Israel. Moses's mission, however, would not be free from Satan's perpetual enmity toward the Jews. As the Exodus generation made its way out of Egypt, the reigning Pharaoh set out to annihilate the Jews at the Red Sea. Once again, God's overruling plan and purpose frustrated the agenda of Satan and his Egyptian pawns. Demonstrating His love and grace, God parted the waters to allow His chosen people to safely escape. He subsequently drowned Pharaoh's entire army (Ex. 14:27–28; Deut. 11:4).

The Father's benevolent will prevailed, as Abraham's seed was perfectly protected through the line of David, the king. The Davidic Covenant promised David an heir who would be the Messiah, a Son who would reign forever (2 Sam. 7:8–16; Ps. 89:20–37); hence, Satan naturally set his sights upon destroying the royal line of Israel. He perpetrated multiple attacks through evil kings and their consorts.

During the eighth century B.C., King Ahab's idolatrous daughter Athaliah married into the throne of Judah and corrupted two generations

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33. God established four unconditional covenants, an everlasting treaty with Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, and his born-again progeny, and He guaranteed their fulfillment (Gen. 17:7). The treaty promises the Jews a future, a purpose, and a title deed to a land of their own. The four unconditional covenants to Israel are the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3), the Palestinian Covenant (Gen. 15:18), the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8–16), and the New Covenant to Israel (Jer. 31:31–34). See Thieme, *Anti-Semitism*, 13–15; 123–25.

of the house of David with death and deception. The Lord, however, “was not willing to destroy the house of David” (2 Chron. 21:7); He could not break His own Word. Even at the highest point of evil infiltration, when Athaliah plotted to assassinate all remaining Davidic descendants, Satan’s mission proved fruitless. The Lord used a little-known woman, Jehoshabeath, to hide and protect one offspring, thereby preserving the line of Christ (2 Chron. 22:11). The evil Athaliah was eventually executed, an event which finally ended one more threat to the house of David (2 Chron. 23:14–15).

Approximately a century and a half later, with his sights still fixed upon David’s seed, Satan targeted Judah’s then king, Hezekiah. He was the last of the line and had no heir to inherit the throne. Hezekiah had ignored Isaiah’s teaching of God’s Word to the point of nearly destroying himself and surrendering Judah to Assyria. When divine discipline struck Hezekiah with a mortal illness, he recognized his helplessness and rebounded (Isa. 38:2–3).<sup>34</sup> The Lord heard his prayer and added fifteen years to his life so that he might produce an heir and continue the line of David. Yet Satan’s threat to the reign of Hezekiah was not over.

The Assyrian Empire was the next weapon of Satan’s choice. Jerusalem was besieged by the massive Assyrian army. With that army came the Rabshakeh, the Assyrian king’s clever propagandist who would place doubt in Judah’s faith in God and in Hezekiah’s leadership (2 Chron. 32:10–11; Isa. 36:14–15). Hezekiah “prayed about this and cried out to heaven” for help (2 Chron. 32:20). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself as “the angel of the LORD went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians” (Isa. 37:36). Judah was delivered from destruction, and the Davidic line was preserved through Hezekiah.

Driven by the ever-present specter of the lake of fire, Satan launched another pernicious attempt at the entire Jewish race. During the seventy years of Jewish captivity—first under the Chaldeans, then the Persians—he used the Prime Minister of Persia, Haman, to plot a holocaust in the Persian Empire (Esther 3:6–9). But God is always

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34. Rebound is the grace provision whereby the carnal believer recovers the filling of the Holy Spirit, the power source of the spiritual life, through naming sins privately to God the Father (1 John 1:9). This is the method of restoring the believer’s fellowship with God to recover the spiritual life. See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993).

faithful, even when disciplining His people. He again exposed the futility of Satan's desperate efforts. Through the courage of Esther, the king's Jewish wife, and her cousin Mordecai, God revealed Haman's plan, delivered His chosen people, and affirmed the Messiah's unbroken descent from Abraham (Esther 7:3–6; 8:3–8). Satan was left to witness the ironic justice of Haman's impalement on the very stake intended for his Jewish victims (Esther 7:9–10).

Satan initiated and manipulated other campaigns against the lineage of the promised Messiah to prevent Him from arriving in perfect fulfillment of God's covenant. The devil eventually resorted to targeting the relationship between Mary, the mother of the humanity of Christ, and Joseph, His legal father.

The marriage of Mary to Joseph was the final link in fulfilling Christ's position as both the blood and legal heir to the throne of David (Matt. 1:1–16; Luke 3:23–38). At the time of the angel's announcement to Mary that she would bear the Son of God, she and Joseph were "betrothed," an arrangement equivalent to a legal marriage (Matt. 1:18*b*; Luke 1:26–35). However, when Joseph learned that his wife was with child, the marriage was not yet consummated. Joseph was a man of great virtue, "a righteous man" who loved Mary, so he made the decision to divorce her secretly, "not wanting to disgrace her" (Matt. 1:19). Without Joseph as His legal father, the humanity of Christ would not have been legitimized as the prophesied Messiah, the Son of David. God resolved Joseph's dilemma with His Word, once again squelching Satan's tactics: an "angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph and instructed him to take Mary as his wife, "for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. . . . You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20–21).

In the fullness of time the King was born. The Savior entered the world in perfect fulfillment of God's plan. The virgin-born descendent of Abraham was fully qualified as the legal, moral, judicial, and prophetic heir to the throne of David. All of Satan's strategy to block the first advent of Christ had utterly failed.

Satan was then obliged to revise his strategy and concentrate on removing or neutralizing the Lord Jesus before He could get to the cross (Matt. 2:1–18; Luke 4:16–29; John 8:59). However, neither man nor angel can frustrate the plan of God. No power or being could take the life of the Lord Jesus until His hour had come (John 7:30; 10:17–18).



Christ would go to the cross on schedule. Steadfast to the end and with the “joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), He would accomplish the work of salvation, demonstrate His obedience to the Father and love for all mankind, and render impotent all the evil works of the devil.

## SATAN’S CHALLENGE MEETS DIVINE POWER

The next increment of God’s plan was the Age of the Hypostatic Union, a unique period of history in which the Second Person of the Trinity became man: “For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 2:9). The Son of God, as undiminished deity, took upon Himself true humanity in order to fulfill the Father’s redemption solution for fallen mankind (John 1:1–3; Rom. 1:3–5; 1 Tim. 3:16). Although Jesus Christ “existed in the essence of God, He did not think equality with God a gain, a thing to be seized and held, but laid aside His privilege [of functioning under His deity]” (Phil. 2:6–7*a*, corrected translation). Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes, taking on the form of a slave, “being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6–7).<sup>35</sup>

Jesus did not use His divine omnipotence outside of the Father’s will. Instead, God the Father designed an unprecedented system of power to sustain the humanity of Christ while on Earth. In this divine power system, He concentrated on the doctrine in His soul and relied exclusively upon the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, who empowered and guided Him in the midst of the devil’s world (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1; John 3:34). Jesus Christ would accomplish His mission on Earth as true yet sinless humanity, pioneering a unique spiritual life that He invented, tested, proved, and passed down to us as our inheritance. He lived the *prototype* spiritual life that set the precedent for our *operational* spiritual life. The connection between the prototype spiritual life and the operational spiritual life is stated in Philippians 2:5:

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35. In theology this is known as the doctrine of kenosis, which takes its name from the Greek verb κενόω (*kenoo*), “to deprive oneself of a rightful function, to debase oneself.” Translated as “emptied” in Philippians 2:7, kenosis explains how Jesus Christ, the supreme God of the universe, condescended to become a man and suffer the humiliation of the cross (Phil. 2:6–8). See Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 215–19.

“Keep on thinking this in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (corrected translation).

Jesus Christ was the seed of the woman, the promised descendant of Abraham and David. He was the reality of the animal sacrifices of Israel and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament messianic prophecies. On the cross He would propitiate the integrity of God the Father, reconcile the enmity between man and God, redeem man from the slave market of sin, bring salvation to mankind, and win the strategic victory of the angelic conflict.

Was it any wonder Satan feared this moment in human history? This was the backbreaker for Satan and his angels. The advent of Jesus Christ brought into clear light the futility of Satan’s efforts.

So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL [but later lost his human spirit].” The last Adam [Jesus Christ] *became* a life-giving spirit [the Savior]. (1 Cor. 15:45)

## GOD’S STRATEGIC VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

Satan knew the score when Christ appeared on Earth. To be the winner, he must confound Christ’s mission, for Jesus was the chief witness of God’s love and the only one who could utterly defeat him. Thus Satan laid a trap to discredit the testimony of Christ. Before embarking upon His public ministry, Jesus faced an extraordinary series of temptations from Satan. If He succumbed to any one of them, He would violate God’s will. If Christ sinned, the promise of salvation first made in Genesis 3:15 would never be fulfilled, for only the perfect God-man could bear the judgment for sin. Satan could strike the fatal blow in his appeal and gain victory in the angelic conflict by deterring Christ from fulfilling His mission.

These three unprecedented temptations were preceded by a period of extreme physical duress. Jesus, led by God the Holy Spirit, spent forty days in the wilderness without eating (Matt. 4:1–2). At the end of that time, Satan struck. Physically weakened from hunger, the humanity of Jesus faced the tempter while armed with the greatest power in the universe, the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Greater is He [the Holy Spirit] who is in you than he who is in the world [Satan]. (1 John 4:4b)

Satan launched his attack by tempting our starving Lord to use His omnipotence independently of the Father's plan and turn stones into bread (Matt. 4:3). The master pretender solicited Jesus to perform a miracle for the purpose of satisfying His hunger. While the deity of Christ could have easily performed this feat, the independent use of His deity would have compromised the Father's plan. Furthermore, had Christ created bread to provide sustenance for Himself, He would have rejected the Father's promise of logistical provision. The perfection of Christ's sinless humanity would be nullified, along with the cross, salvation, and resurrection. Jesus's starvation could have overridden any other thought, but He kept His eye on the mission and threw the truth in Satan's face. His short response illustrates the vital importance of relying upon the Word of God:

"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE BUT ON EVERY WORD [Bible doctrine] THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD." (Matt. 4:4b)

Though Satan's initial temptation failed to bring victory, he persisted. He transported Jesus to the highest point of the Temple,

And said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'HE WILL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE CONCERNING YOU';

and

'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'

(Matt. 4:6)

The devil cleverly employed the very technique Jesus had used to rebuff the first temptation—he quoted Scripture. He used God's Word against the God-man. However, he distorted the passage by divorcing the verse from its context (Ps. 91:11–12). By twisting the meaning of Scripture, the tempter made his distortion appear true. He tried to convince Jesus that not jumping was equivalent to not trusting in God. This sleight of hand persists today.

Satan was once again enticing Jesus to act independently of the Father's authority. Jumping 450 feet into the valley below would have

been a senseless act of self-centered arrogance incompatible with the Father's will. Jesus would have reduced Himself to the level of Satan and sanctioned the devil's claim to independence from divine sovereignty. The Lord addressed this predicament in His reply, "YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST" (Matt. 4:7*b*). Jesus revealed His full understanding of what Satan was doing—attempting to defeat the mission of the Messiah and thwart the plan of God.

Confounded but resolute, Satan maneuvered a third time. The ruler of this world offered Christ all of his kingdom if Christ would fall down and worship him (Matt. 4:8–9). Had Christ yielded to this temptation, He would have elevated Satan to 'king maker' and accepted the crown under Satan's terms. Jesus Christ would have accepted Satan's will over God's will. Instead, the Lord emphatically refused the enemy's proposition with a sharp command, "Begone, Satan!" With another quotation of Scripture, Jesus reminded Satan that creatures are never to be worshiped, that all creature loyalty is to the plan of God: "YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY" (Matt. 4:10; cf. Deut. 6:13). The Lord had confirmed His earthly objective. Thrice defeated, Satan retreated.

Satan's temptations presented a real choice for the humanity of Christ, far beyond what the believer will ever encounter. These temptations were designed to entice God's chief witness to yield to Satan's evil machinations and to rely upon His own power and plan, rather than relying on the power and plan sanctioned by God the Father. Christ's yielding would have been tantamount to admitting that the power system provided by the Father—the sustaining ministry of the Holy Spirit and the inner resources of Bible doctrine—was ineffective and insufficient. Christ would have fallen into the same trap as Adam and the woman in the Garden. His testimony would have been undermined; the cross, forfeited. Satan would have gained ascendancy over God on Earth, a decisive victory.

Much to Satan's frustration, our Lord denounced the devil's offers, maintained the impeccability of His humanity, remained in the Father's plan, and demonstrated the sufficiency of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine for conquering temptation.<sup>36</sup> Jesus's

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36. Impeccability is the doctrine of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ in hypostatic union. *Ibid.*, 219–21.

resistance was motivated by His knowledge that Satan's appeal would be disallowed on the grounds of His work on the cross. In these temptations and throughout His life and ministry, Jesus invariably utilized the power of God the Holy Spirit. Even through the ordeal of the crucifixion, the Holy Spirit sustained Him. In spite of Satan's best efforts, his failure was inevitable.

When the Lord shouted the victorious words on the cross, "It is finished," Satan's back was broken (John 19:30). Satan's contention that God was unfair and unloving in sentencing him to eternal condemnation was once and for all proven wrong. Christ's substitutionary work confirmed that in dealing with sin, divine love is never divested of righteousness and justice, nor are divine righteousness and justice divested of love. In fact, in order to satisfy the righteousness of God the Father, who could have no association with sin, the Father had to forsake His own Son. He had to separate Himself from the humanity of Christ during those three horrible hours when all of mankind's sins were imputed to Him and judged. Yet even through this excruciating substitutionary spiritual death, the humanity of Christ remained perfect, humbly bearing the penalty of sin that rightfully belonged to all men.

Satan knew this was the ultimate picture of the love and justice of God working in tandem to provide for the salvation of mankind. In His immutable, unfailing love, God the Father honored His promise to Adam and the woman with the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Father's magnificent grace gift to mankind. Christ's subsequent resurrection, followed by His ascension and session, sealed the strategic victory, bringing our Lord to maximum glorification and guaranteeing victory over His adversary.

Satan was now confronted with the fact that his appeal was lost. The testimony of Christ forever demonstrated that God is absolutely fair and loving to His angels. For His humble submission to the Father's plan, Jesus Christ was exalted to the right hand of God. For his arrogant independence, Satan will one day be cast into eternal condemnation.

God's triumph through Christ was conclusive. Nevertheless, the angelic conflict would continue. Satan cannot admit defeat. The next phase of history would unveil a more intensive phase of the war. Believers would be positioned for tactical victory, a victory that would

complement the Lord's strategic victory in the angelic conflict.<sup>37</sup> All believers would be given equal opportunity to utilize the unique divine power system pioneered by our Lord during His first advent and become witnesses for the Prosecution in Satan's appeal. This power system is another great manifestation of the love and grace of God toward those who remain in the midst of cosmic warfare.

### *Tactical Victory of the Believer in the Church Age*

As a result of our Lord's strategic victory through the cross and resurrection, He ascended to heaven, was seated in the place of highest honor, and was awarded His royal title, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). He now had the title but no royal family to accompany Him. One had to be formed. God the Father interrupted the dispensation of Israel and inserted the Church Age—a new, never-before-revealed dispensation designed to form and complete Christ's royal family.

And He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him [Christ] as head [ruler] over all things to the church [royal family of God], which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:22–23)

The royal family of God is made up of every believer in the Church Age. The royal family is also designated "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 4:12).<sup>38</sup> Christ is the head and all who believe in Him are

37. Strategy describes the overall plan to secure victory in a war—*strategic victory* is one in which the objective of the war is achieved. Tactics constitute the methods used to employ troops in combat situations—*tactical victory* is one in which specific objectives are met to defeat the enemy on the battlefield.

In the angelic conflict, Jesus Christ won the strategic victory by His substitutionary spiritual death and His resurrection. This victory sealed Satan's ultimate doom. The believer attains tactical victory in the ongoing combat by advancing to spiritual maturity in the Christian life (Eph. 3:18–19).

38. The Body of Christ is scriptural imagery describing every Church Age believer in union with Christ as a member of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15), all formed into one organic whole with various spiritual gifts and functions but with a common plan, common objectives, and

members of His body (1 Cor. 12:18, 20; Col. 1:18a). This distinctive group is set apart from believers in all other dispensations.

Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new [καίνος, *kainos*] creature [spiritual species]; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

In this verse, the Greek word *kainos* does not mean “new” as in recent, current, or new in time, like a new coat that replaces an old one of the same type. *Kainos* means “new in kind, new in species,” describing something remarkable that has never existed before—a totally unprecedented relationship with God. For example, every Church Age believer, as a royal priest, represents himself personally before God (1 Pet. 2:9a), and as a royal ambassador, he represents the absent Lord Jesus Christ to the human race and to angels (2 Cor. 5:20).

The phrase “in Christ,” found throughout the New Testament epistles, is a technical term for the Church Age believer’s astounding, absolutely unprecedented union with Christ. From the moment of salvation, each believer is identified with Him forever, sharing all that Christ is and has.<sup>39</sup> Every Christian shares in the Lord’s strategic victory on the cross (Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12a) and shares His exalted position in heaven—“crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9–11; Rom. 6:5). In fact, because “angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him,” Church Age believers are also positionally superior to angels, including the chief fallen angel, Satan (1 Pet. 3:22). Never before in history have all these privileges been extended to believers in Jesus Christ, including even the greatest Old Testament believers. And these unprecedented advantages will not be duplicated in future dispensations.

Just as royal offspring in the human realm receive special assets and grooming for their eventual function as royalty, so nobility in the spiritual realm must also receive special assets and be prepared in a

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a united purpose (Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–27). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 85–87; *Tongues*, 43–44.

39. Every member of the royal family of God shares Christ’s election (Eph. 1:4), His destiny (Rom. 8:28, 30; Eph. 1:5), His sonship (Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1–2), His heirship (Rom. 8:16–17), His priesthood (Heb. 10:10–14; 1 Pet. 2:9), His sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2, 30), His royalty (2 Tim. 2:11–12), His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), and His eternal life (1 John 5:11–12). See Thieme, *The Plan of God*, Appendix.

certain way. The Holy Spirit's unique ministry to the Church equips the distinguished body of Church Age royalty for tactical victory over Satan. Amazingly, Christ has bequeathed to the Church the same system of power that sustained His humanity during His earthly ministry and enabled His substitutionary work on the cross (2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 3:20). The divine power of God the Holy Spirit and the prototype spiritual life of Christ are now the power system and operational spiritual life available to every Christian.<sup>40</sup> They are the means of tactical victory in the conflict.

Through the filling of the Holy Spirit, the believer can now "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) and fulfill God's plan. The Holy Spirit supplies the spiritual IQ for learning God's instruction (1 Cor. 2:12–13). This spiritual provision, called the grace apparatus for perception (GAP),<sup>41</sup> enables every believer to learn Bible doctrine regardless of human IQ, cultural background, or environment, so that he might fulfill the mandate to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). The Holy Spirit enables every believer to retain, recall, and apply the doctrine learned (John 14:26). Bible doctrine is the material the Holy Spirit uses to manufacture the virtues of Christ in the believer's soul. Every day that the believer learns and applies Bible doctrine, his thinking is renovated according to the thinking of Christ (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 4:23). The more the believer thinks with divine viewpoint, the more he emulates the integrity and capacity for life that Christ demonstrated in His humanity (Eph. 5:1–2; 1 John 2:6).

This supernatural manner of living is *the unique spiritual life of the Church Age*. When believers "walk by [means of] the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), they have an inexhaustible supply of spiritual strength, an

40. The Holy Spirit had a limited ministry to believers of Old Testament dispensations. The Spirit endowed certain believers for special purposes, including writing the Old Testament; artisanship in the Temple; prophecy, communication, and leadership to client nation Israel; and fulfilling the roles of judge and priest. In the Church Age, He indwells all believers (John 14:17) and can fill believers. Never before has every believer been commanded to "walk by the Spirit" and to "be filled with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18).

41. The grace apparatus for perception (GAP) is a nonmeritorious system of spiritual comprehension empowered by the filling of the Holy Spirit. GAP enables every believer to understand, learn, and apply the whole realm of Bible doctrine, regardless of education or human IQ. The mechanics of GAP are described by the terminology Operation Z, which is discussed and illustrated in Chapter 7. See Thieme, *Mental Attitude Dynamics* (2000), 8–13; *Reversionism*, 3–7; *The Unfailing Love of God*, 49, 72.



unseen power that surpasses any human ability, talent, genius, or achievement (1 Cor. 2:5). This divine system transforms them from spiritual babies to spiritual adults, from untrained combat recruits to triumphant Christian warriors. Tactical victory is secured on the battlefield of their souls through a consistent, positive attitude toward perception and application of doctrine—a dedicated pursuit of advancing to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity is the objective of the Christian life. It is the result of thousands of decisions to stay within the plan of God and obey the mandates of the divine system. The believer who chooses to utilize the spiritual life and hold the high ground of spiritual maturity provides conclusive evidence of God's love and justice. This is the Church Age tactical victory designed to complement our Lord's strategic victory over Satan.

Peter wrote his second epistle knowing that he would soon die and be face to face with the Lord (2 Pet. 1:14). This impulsive apostle, who had overcome many obstacles on the road to spiritual maturity, concluded his dying words with a mandate to maintain momentum and achieve tactical victory.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness [fail to execute God's plan, will, and purpose], but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [to achieve tactical victory]. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:17–18)

Now confronted with the special privileges and assets of Christ's new royal family, the devil has become more desperate. Satan's crosshairs are trained on the Body of Christ. He and his legions have mounted a concentrated assault against the believer's means to achieving tactical victory—the power of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. Satan endeavors to dupe immature believers into a counterfeit spiritual life based on human viewpoint, human efforts, and human emotionalism (2 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 3:3). This course of action is cunningly brilliant, for human accomplishment and emotionally charged experience in the name of spirituality distort truth and glorify mankind.

For those consistently advancing believers moving toward maturity, Satan reserves his strongest weapons. He applies pressures, persecutions,

and testings, all in attempt to erode the believer's faith and disprove the validity of dependence upon God. Ironically, the very power source that Satan seeks to disparage is what fully delivers the assaulted believer.

To illustrate His ability to perfectly provide for His own, God permitted Satan to dispatch a "thorn in the flesh" to torment Paul.

And for this reason, lest I should become arrogant because of the extraordinary quality of revelations, there was given to me for my benefit a thorn in the flesh, an angel from Satan that he might torment me, lest I should become arrogant. (2 Cor. 12:7, corrected translation)

God's intention for Paul was to bear the suffering. While the "angel from Satan" sought to sabotage Paul's spiritual life and ministry, this thorn demon forced Paul to recognize that in his human helplessness, God's power is operational. The great Apostle came to boast about his weakness and adversity in order that the power of the Holy Spirit—the same power utilized by Christ in hypostatic union—would be manifested in him. Paul embraced the victory to be attained by relying solely upon divine provisions for deliverance from the evil of Satan. In celebration of his abundant, unfailing spiritual assets, the Apostle declared, "when I am weak, then I am strong."<sup>42</sup>

Then He assured me: "My grace has been and still is sufficient for you, for My power is made operational in a state of helplessness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may reside in me. For this reason I find contentment in weaknesses, in slanders, in pressures, in persecutions, in stresses in behalf of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9–10, corrected translation)

The unique assets given to the Church Age believer underscore the all-sufficient grace and power of God to sustain any believer while he lives in the devil's world (1 Cor. 2:4–5). The Father's omnipotence operates through His Word resident in the believer's soul. Therefore, the issue for every member of the royal family is to live by the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit and to learn, metabolize, and apply Bible doctrine. When the Holy Spirit controls a soul inculcated with

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42. For a full discussion of Paul's thorn in the flesh, see Thieme, *Christian Suffering*, 83–91.

the mind of Christ, no situation, adversity, or temptation can shatter that witness. Satan cannot penetrate this hedge of protection and conspicuous demonstration of God's love.

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written,

“FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL  
DAY LONG;  
WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGH-  
TERED.”

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:33–39)

Ours is the privilege of utilizing divine assets and thereby evidencing the manifold grace, power, and glory of God to both observing angels and the unbelieving world. This is how we tactically triumph in relentless warfare against a far-superior enemy. This is the purpose for all commands of Scripture and the only way to glorify Jesus Christ in time. *This is the very purpose for which God keeps us alive in the devil's world.* Tactical victory in the angelic conflict is our directive, our obligation, our mission! Every one of us now has equal opportunity either to rely upon God's omnipotence and plan and be a witness for the Prosecution or to reject it and remain a resident of the cosmic system. Each of us now stands either to deny or to affirm Satan's appeal.

### THE CORPORATE WITNESS

In the Church Age there is a special case of a witness for the Prosecution—achieving tactical victory as a corporate witness. Even more significant than the testimony of the individual believer, this

corporate witness is *Christian marriage*.<sup>43</sup> This is the union of one born-again man and one born-again woman who demonstrate a positive response to God's marital authority structure while simultaneously executing the unique spiritual life of the Church Age. Christian marriage is now the corporate opportunity to succeed where Adam and the woman failed.

With the inception of the Church, God elevated Christian marriage above the divine institution of marriage and made it part of resolving the angelic conflict.<sup>44</sup> The divine institution began with a perfect couple in perfect environment, but even perfection could not protect them from the advances of Satan. For marriage to bring forth a tandem victory of husband and wife in spiritual warfare, there had to be far greater provisions, mandates, and empowerment. The revelation of Church Age doctrine and the operational spiritual life added this new dimension to marriage. Even under the worst conditions, Christian marriage can succeed and produce unprecedented contentment, stability, and testimony to both the unbelieving world and observing angels. Only in the Church Age do believers have the opportunity to jointly participate in such distinct and magnificent evidence against God's antagonist.<sup>45</sup>

In distinguishing Christian marriage from the divine institution, God assigned to husband and wife the same relationship that exists between Christ and the Church. The husband's leadership in marriage is now analogous to Christ's rule of the Church; his love for his wife must reflect Christ's love and sacrifice for the Church. Fifty-one percent of responsibility in marriage lies with the husband. Beyond initiating an environment of love, tranquillity, happiness, strength, loyalty, and stability in the marriage, the Christian husband must

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43. Marriage was the first organization, the first "corporation" in history. Derived from the Latin *corpus*, meaning body, a "corporation" is an association of individuals created by law, existing as an entity, and therefore any group of persons united in one body.

44. The divine institution of marriage began with Adam and the woman and will forever define matrimony as the union of one man and one woman. As a biblical institution, marriage is sanctioned for both believers and unbelievers regardless of the dispensation. Christian marriage, composed of a man and a woman who are both believers in Jesus Christ, is only available in the Church Age.

45. A believer married to an unbeliever cannot be part of this corporate witness. Believers are warned against being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14, KJV).

provide the spiritual tenor and lead the spiritual advance. The greater the position of leadership, the greater the sacrifice!

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up [as a substitutionary sacrifice] for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:23, 25–27)

The Christian wife's subordination to her husband parallels the subjection of the Church to Christ; she responds to him in obedience as to the Lord, "as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). Out of that response comes the highest form of love—respect. With her relationship with the Lord as first priority, the wife willingly submits to her husband rather than seeking to undermine his authority (Gen. 3:16*b*). She is the most beautiful of all creatures when she responds to her husband from the doctrine in her soul.

Wives, *be subject* [subordinate] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. . . . But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. . . . And *let* the wife *see to it* that she respect her husband. (Eph. 5:22, 24, 33*b*)

The mutual responsibility of both spouses is "forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). There is no virtue when the past failures of a spouse are remembered. Forgiveness is always a function of grace. Each spouse bears the other's failures by relying on his own relationship with God and confidence in His plan centered in Christ.

When two believers unite in matrimony and advance to spiritual maturity together, God is glorified and the angels cheer. Consequently, Christian marriage stands as an intense battleground, not for war between husband and wife but for the ongoing combat between the married couple and the schemes of Satan. His subtle and overt offenses are abundant: trivializing adultery and divorce; promoting communal living; disregarding the divine institution of one man and

one woman in marriage; reversing male and female roles—feminism, homosexuality, lesbianism. All of these perversions are effective weapons against the union of man and woman. In addition to these attacks, Satan steps up his invasion of Christian marriage with distractions and pressures aimed at deterring the spiritual life of each spouse, for as goes the spiritual life, so goes the marriage.

So how exactly do the born-again husband and wife defend against the enemy's concentrated assault? How do they surmount the internal challenges of marriage as well as the outside influences of the devil's world? They advance together to spiritual maturity while remaining within their divinely ordained roles. They embrace the elevated opportunity and utilize the enhanced ability to exercise spiritual leadership and authority orientation. The husband initiates that leadership and the wife responds. With Bible doctrine in the mix, man and woman enjoy a coalescence of souls, a unique and intimate interplay, distinctly influencing each other as they move toward the high ground together. Husband and wife mutually support each other in spiritual growth, problem solving, and rearing children in the ways of the Lord. This tandem spiritual advance, the Christian husband and wife in synchronized application of Bible doctrine, defeats Satan's seductions and wins a supreme tactical victory. This is the ultimate in Christian service, an unbeatable team, an impenetrable and victorious witness for the Prosecution in the angelic conflict.

### *Completion of the Church Age*

Upon Jesus Christ's ascension, He sat down at the right hand of the Father to await the completion of His royal family as the Church Age plays out on the stage of human history. The only prophetic events concerning the Church Age are its beginning on the day of Pentecost, which was prophesied by Christ (John 14:16–17; 16:7–15; Acts 1:5), and its termination at the resurrection of the Church. When the royal family—"those who are Christ's"—is completely formed, the Church Age will end and believers will be transferred to heaven (1 Cor. 15:23). The Rapture, or "exit resurrection" from the Greek ἐξανάστασις (*exsanastasis*), describes the moment all Church Age believers will be removed from the devil's world forever.<sup>46</sup>

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46. No one knows at what point in the future the Rapture will occur—setting dates is

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16–17)

The voice of the archangel will be the royal family's sound of victory. These are Christ's warriors called to assemble in order "to meet the Lord in the air." Every Church Age believer will be immediately transformed from a body sown as "perishable," in corruption and dishonor, to a body raised as "imperishable," in eternal incorruption and power (1 Cor. 15:42–43). This new body, a resurrection body, will be "like Him," a recognizable body of flesh and bones that is free from the sin nature (1 John 3:2).<sup>47</sup> Christ "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21).

Immediately after the Rapture there will be a period of fantastic happiness and celebration, a reunion of the entire royal family, assembled for the first time in spontaneous mass recognition of Christ. This time of worship and of breaking into song will culminate as Christ leads the entire royal procession to heaven.

For it is written,

"AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL  
BOW TO ME,  
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."  
(Rom. 14:11)

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fallacious. God alone decides the timing (Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:32). All we know is that it will happen suddenly, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52).

47. Scriptural descriptions of Christ's resurrection body reveal what resurrected believers will be given. The resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples numerous times (Matt. 28:9–10; Mark 16:12–14; Luke 24:15, 36; John 20:19, 26; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:5–7). Even in this new body, He was recognizable to them. His resurrection body retains the scars from the nails in His hands and feet as well as the wound in His side. Christ's resurrection body has substance, flesh and bones (Luke 24:39–40), and can be touched and felt (John 20:17). It can walk through stones or closed doors (Luke 24:36). His resurrection body breathes (John 20:22) and eats (Luke 24:42–43). In resurrection body, Jesus Christ can move unaided in both vertical and horizontal planes (Matt. 28:10; Acts 1:9–10). He can suddenly appear and just as suddenly disappear (Luke 24:31).

A shocking contrast will occur when the celebration gives way to grave solemnity: The Lord Jesus Christ will convene court. Church Age believers will be summoned to the judgment seat of Christ, or *bema* seat, where,

Each one of us shall give account of himself to God.  
(Rom. 14:12)

The Greek term βῆμα (*bema*), literally meaning “a step,” portrays a seat or raised platform where a judge sits to adjudicate a case. This is the “judgment seat” of Matthew 27:19, John 19:13, and Acts 18:12. The Lord Jesus Christ will evaluate the deeds of each believer and distribute rewards based on how he executed the Church Age spiritual life, how effectively he witnessed for the Prosecution, the tactical victories he won.

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time [of evaluation by Christ], *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1 Cor. 4:5)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed [rewarded] for his deeds in the body [that is, during his life on Earth], according to what he has done, whether good [divine] or bad [worthless human good]. (2 Cor. 5:10)

This scriptural account of Christ's one-on-one evaluation dramatizes God's objective for the believer while on Earth: learn Bible doctrine, gain spiritual momentum, apply divine viewpoint to life, and come to love God and produce divine good. If the believer stays the course in pursuit of spiritual maturity, God will be glorified. For this believer, God has fantastic blessings waiting in eternity. Scripture calls them the “surpassing riches of His grace” that include “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places*” (Eph. 1:3, 7; 2:7). These rewards and blessings are above and beyond the normal blessings of heaven, such as those described in Revelation 21:4.<sup>48</sup> These surpassing

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48. For additional information on the judgment seat of Christ and blessings in eternity, see Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 99–104; *The Integrity of God*, 166–85.



grace blessings include the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8); the “crown of life” (James 1:12); the privilege of wearing the uniform of glory, a uniform of translucent light, over the resurrection body (Rev. 3:4, 18); ruling with Jesus Christ on Earth during the Millennium (2 Tim. 2:12a; Rev. 2:26; 3:21); an inscribed pillar in the temple (Rev. 3:12a); and several other special honors received from the hand of Jesus Christ Himself. These are some of the glorious decorations of tactical victory—the rewards reserved exclusively for the believer who stands firm on God’s power and Word.

## OPERATION FOOTSTOOL

The culmination of the Church Age will be the beginning of the end of the angelic conflict. This will be the time of Satan’s desperation, his last throw for victory. Yet his doom is sealed.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, heaven was opened wide as He arrived the victorious one. The Father ushered Jesus Christ into His presence and said in effect, “Sit down!”

The LORD [God the Father] says to my Lord [the resurrected Son of God]:

“Sit at My right hand,

Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.” (Ps. 110:1)

But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. (Heb. 10:12–13)

The prophecy of Christ’s final subjugation of all who stand against Him is first announced in Psalm 110:1 and restated six times throughout the New Testament (Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42–43; Acts 2:34–35; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 10:12–13). Here is depicted the victorious Messiah as the King of all the earth with His foot on the necks of His defeated enemies. Operation Footstool refers to the series of events that crown Christ’s glorious triumph in the angelic conflict.

Operation Footstool will begin at the Second Advent and terminate at the end of the Millennium. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to

Earth to establish His kingdom, reign for one thousand years, and forever remove His enemies—Satan and his angels and all unbelievers of human history.

The word “footstool” is an idiom for conquest. In the ancient world the term referred to a human footstool, reflecting a particular Roman military custom. A relatively short race in stature, the Romans bore exceptional pride in conquering the towering barbarians. Following a battle victory, Caesar would order his troops to bring in the tallest barbarian, who would be slapped down in front of him. Caesar would then cover his subject with the Roman standard and proceed to stand on him—literally making his conquest a human footstool. The troops would cheer this graphic display of victory.

At the end of human history, Satan, fallen angels, unbelievers, even death itself, will all be made Christ’s footstool. Once and for all conquered, crushed, they will in effect lie prostrate at the Lord’s feet, and in victory He will stand upon them. Then the original sentence will be carried out. They will be removed from the earth and cast into the lake of fire.

### *The Tribulation and Operation Footstool Phase I*

Before Christ can come again for the final destruction of His enemies, the Tribulation must occur as prophesied.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it* [the Second Advent] *will not come* unless the apostasy [of the Tribulation] comes first. (2 Thess. 2:3a)

The Tribulation is a period of seven literal years that will begin immediately following the Rapture of the Church, culminate in worldwide devastation, and terminate with Christ’s return to Earth at the Second Advent. These seven years will be the great accuser’s final thrust to harness control of the world, establish a utopia of his own, and, by destroying Israel, remove God’s ability to fulfill His covenant.<sup>49</sup> With the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit removed at the Rapture

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49. For a detailed look at how Satan will use certain events, personalities, nations, and geographic localities in his final attempt to destroy Israel, see Thieme, *Armageddon* (2002), 19–31.

(2 Thess. 2:7), Satan will now have his freest hand; lawlessness and apostasy will define this age.

In his futile attempt to rule the planet as well as, if not better than, God, Satan will enlist two henchmen called “beasts” in Revelation 13: the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire, or king of the West, and the false prophet.<sup>50</sup>

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea [dictator of the Revived Roman Empire], having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns *were* ten diadems, and on his heads *were* blasphemous names. . . . And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth [the false prophet]; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. (Rev. 13:1b, 11)

During the first half of the Tribulation, Satan will appear to triumph. Prosperity and world peace will seem apparent. However, the devil’s arrogant agenda will render his kingdom a house of cards. The ties of political and religious unity needed to support his prosperity program will predictably unravel, as they always have throughout history.

At the critical midpoint of the Tribulation, Satan, along with his demons, will be evicted from heaven and cast down to the earth (Rev. 12:8–9). Frustrated and embittered by millennia of restraint and defeat, the commander of evil will unleash his most vehement fury onto the human scene. Enormous portions of the earth’s population will be decimated by a holocaust ignited by their own degeneracy (Rev. 6:1–11). The entire world will be engulfed in a war of unprecedented violence.

Watching his pseudoutopia collapse into chaos, a maniacal Satan will set vast human and demonic forces into motion in his last effort to snatch victory from defeat (Zech. 14:2; Rev. 12:17). He will use the same old line of reasoning he used during the Age of Israel; that is, if he can kill all Jews, God cannot keep His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3).

The ensuing world war will culminate in Satan’s apocalyptic pogrom against Israel—the Armageddon Campaign.<sup>51</sup> This blinding display of unbridled evil will be the most terrifying conflagration the world has ever seen, truly the war to end all wars! Jerusalem will be surrounded by the armies of Satan’s earthly warriors, yet a remnant of

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50. Ibid., 13–17.

51. Thieme, *Anti-Semitism*, 109–114; *Armageddon*.

Jewish believers will refuse to surrender in what appears to be an utterly hopeless situation. Their massacre seems imminent.

Then suddenly the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven in His second advent to join the battle and commence Operation Footstool.

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it *is* called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon His head *are* many diadems [crowns]; and He has a name written *upon Him* which no one knows except Himself. And *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white [resurrection body] *and* clean, were following Him on white horses [sign of victory]. (Rev. 19:11–14)

Jesus Christ is the Conqueror and Judge, the Faithful and True, coming to deliver the believing Jews, to annihilate the enemies of Israel, to depose Satan as the ruler of this world, and to establish His promised kingdom. He will lead the most fantastic procession in all of history: “The armies which are in heaven” (Rev. 19:14), including the angelic army, Old Testament saints, martyred tribulational saints, and believers of the Church Age, “were following Him on white horses.” The “robe dipped in blood” indicates that Christ alone will fight and kill the enemies of Israel. This will be the only army in history in which the Commander in Chief, Jesus Christ, does all the fighting while the troops stand by and watch.

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19:15–16)

The “sharp sword” of verse 15 is the greatest weapon of all time. The living Word of God will slay the armies at Armageddon with the words of His mouth. The “wine press” is the massive slaughter that will terminate the Armageddon Campaign. The greater violence of the divine onslaught will destroy the violence of evil. Notice that Christ Himself will demonstrate how to win a war. He will not come back to

sit around a peace table and negotiate a settlement. Jesus Christ will wipe out the enemy! He will strike them with a plague by which their flesh, eyes, and tongues “will rot while they stand on their feet” (Zech. 14:12). Blood will be as high as the horses’ bridles and flow for 200 miles (Isa. 63:1–6; Rev. 14:19–20). It will take seven months to bury the dead (Ezek. 39:12).

In the wake of His resounding conquest, the complete subjugation of His enemies will begin. All unbelievers will be cast into the fire of Torments, where they will reside until their final judgment.<sup>52</sup> The two beasts will be cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), and Satan, along with his fallen angels, will be bound in the Abyss for the next one thousand years (Rev. 20:1–3). With the enemies of the Lord removed from Earth, all warfare will cease (Ps. 46:9). The “armies which are in heaven” and the surviving believers of the Tribulation will join the Lord in the next and final phase of human history.

### *The Millennium and Operation Footstool Phase II*

The Lord Jesus Christ will establish the millennial kingdom in which He will reign supreme on Earth for a literal one thousand years (Zech. 14:9; Matt. 25:31). As declared by the prophet Isaiah, “The government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6b). The unfailing love of God will be vindicated by the fulfillment of all His covenant promises and blessings to Israel. These include the return of all regenerate Jews to the promised land and the establishment of Israel’s kingdom with the Son of David on its throne (Isa. 11:11–12; 14:1–4; Zech. 10:6–12). God’s justice will be vindicated through the perfectly righteous and just rule of Jesus Christ over all the earth.

And He will judge between the nations,  
And will render decisions for many peoples. (Isa. 2:4a)

“THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,  
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS  
KINGDOM.” (Heb. 1:8b)

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52. Torments, one of four compartments of Hades, is the temporary hell for the souls of unbelievers. See Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation*, 19–21.

The unadulterated environment of the Millennium will duplicate that of the prehistoric universe before the fall of Satan, as well as that of man's first abode, the Garden of Eden. The Bible describes the millennial environment in many ways: There will be universal peace (Isa. 2:4; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:3). All nations will experience economic prosperity. Religion and false doctrine will be eradicated and replaced by unfettered worship of the now present King of kings. Nature will no longer be cursed (Isa. 11:6–8; 35:1). Disease and starvation will be unknown; injustice, forgotten.

In spite of these pristine conditions, sin will exist. Believers who survive the Tribulation to live in the Millennium will continue to possess a sin nature, which will be inherited by their children. Even among the most extensive presentation of truth throughout all human history, some will reject Christ as Savior. What indisputable proof that perfect environment, devoid of a relationship with God, has absolutely no effect on the sin nature. Regardless of external conditions, man will always have the free will to accept or reject the only solution to his internal desolation—the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, man's rejection of God's love in salvation will occur in Satan's absence, proving human culpability for sin and the justness of God's condemnation. Still, the angelic conflict will continue, for not yet are all His enemies under His feet.

At the end of one thousand years, Satan will be released from his incarceration only to reignite the conspiratorial tactics begun in the Garden (Rev. 20:7). Satan, code-named "Gog," will lure myriads of unbelievers, code-named "Magog," to openly revolt against the perfect environment and rule of Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:8). The futile Gog and Magog Revolution will be instantly suppressed as its combatants are devoured by a great fire descending from heaven (Rev. 20:9).

In the long and thoroughly vetted appeal of Satan, the final pronouncement will be "Appeal denied!" Satan's moment of truth will have arrived. He will know the battle is lost, that the verdict in prehistory is now his reality (Matt. 25:41). He and all his angels will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Jesus Christ will immediately convene the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15), His final confrontation with those who chose against Him. All unbelievers of human history will be resurrected and consigned to the lake of fire forever.

And I saw the dead [those without Christ], the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life* [records the names of everyone who has personally received Christ as Savior. When a person dies without believing in Christ, his name is blotted out of the Book of Life]; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Rev. 20:12)

Unbelievers will not be evaluated according to their sins, for all human sins were judged at the cross. These subjects can only be judged according to their human deeds. What a tragic spectacle! Here will stand corrupt, totally unworthy mankind depending upon some paltry system of human merit to meet the incomparable standards of God's perfect righteousness. Lacking this perfect righteousness, fallen man will be rendered unqualified to live with God. This courtroom will find no place in the new universe for the rejectors of Christ. There will be no second chance, no opportunity to plea bargain—only perpetual torment for refusing the free gift of salvation offered to all mankind! Like their angelic counterparts, they will be cast alive into the lake of fire, eternally separated from God (Rev. 20:12b–15).

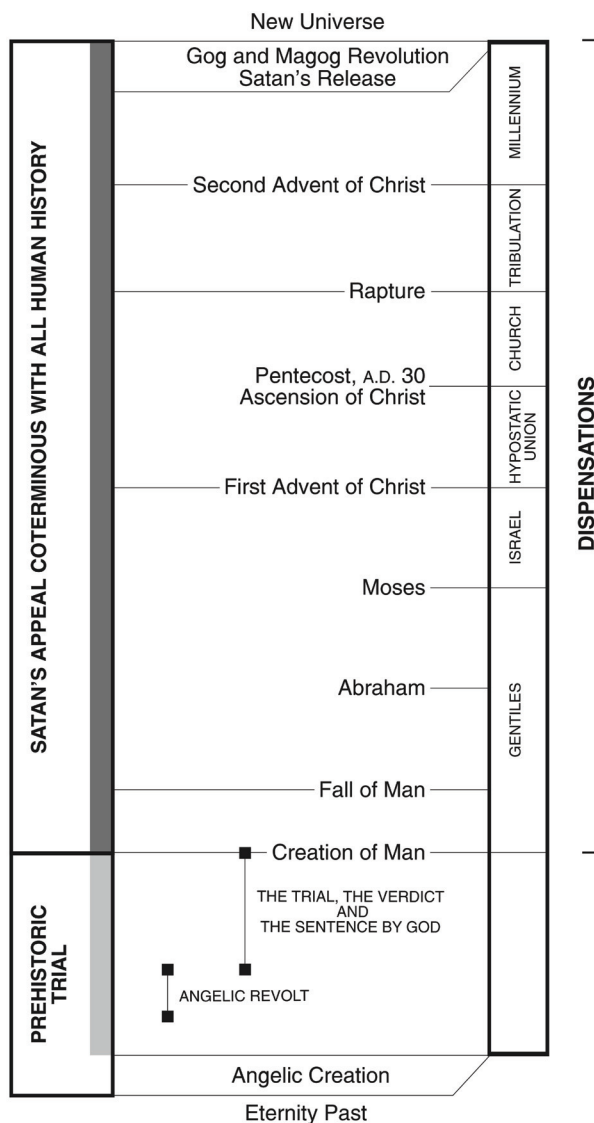
With no angelic revolutionaries or unbelievers remaining, human history will come to a dramatic close. The angelic conflict will be a *fait accompli*! Enemies crushed beneath His feet, Jesus Christ will hand the Kingdom back to “the God and Father,” so that the Son subordinates Himself, along with elect angels and all believers of human history.

Then *comes* the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. . . . And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24, 28)

Planet Earth and the entire old universe will then be destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:10). “A new heaven and a new earth,” with New Jerusalem as its capital city, will be created for all elect angels and regenerate mankind to enjoy in the presence of the Lord throughout eternity.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (Rev. 21:1–2)





A TIME LINE OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

## Chapter Six

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# THE OFFENSIVE STRATEGY OF SATAN

THE MAXIM “KNOW YOUR ENEMY” certainly applies to spiritual warfare! It is essential that Christian warriors know the character and tactics of the adversary. Believers in Christ must understand the hostility between God’s grace and Satan’s evil. They must be able to discern the vast array of wicked plots and plans that present the prince of darkness as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Those who are cognizant of Satan’s deceptive devices will not allow the devil an advantage (2 Cor. 2:11), but those who remain ignorant will fail in the skirmishes of the angelic conflict. The words of theologian Donald Grey Barnhouse are a fantastic reminder of the essence of Satan’s strategy:

One of Satan’s greatest stratagems has been the attempt to keep men in ignorance of the real nature of his being and the fraudulent dimensions of his pretensions.<sup>53</sup>

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53. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 156.

Evil disguised as good embodies the devil's policy, purpose, and modus operandi (John 8:44). Satan's offensive strategy in history is to attack God and His grace policy through temptable, corruptible human volition. The carrots he dangles entice human volition to turn away from God's grace and onto man's own devices. When negative volition presents an opportunity, Satan seizes the initiative. He preys on the trends of the sin nature<sup>54</sup> and targets man's thinking with false doctrine and evil ideas, the "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Satan is the master imitator. He will stop at nothing and will use every trick to make himself and his army of deceitful spirits appear good rather than evil.

But what precise methods and devices does he use? What are his stratagems regarding believers, regarding unbelievers? How does he enact his plan of anti-Semitism? What is his goal concerning the nations of the world? His offensive strikes at the believer encompass a number of traps and deceptions aimed at derailing Christians from advancing in the spiritual life. With respect to unbelievers, the devil's strategy runs the gamut from blinding their minds to the Gospel, to promoting human viewpoint and human good, to encouraging all forms of sin and degeneracy. Concerning anti-Semitism, Satan continues to infect the world with the lie that the Jew is the root of virtually all evil. God's chosen people suffer the devil's determination to eradicate them as both a nation and race, a cause rabidly pursued for over four thousand years. Regarding nations, Satan is the chief opponent to the laws of divine establishment<sup>55</sup> as well as to the sovereignty and freedom of national entities. As the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the devil keeps seeking to devour once and for all any person or nation that threatens his influence.

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54. We all have a trend in one direction or the other. One trend of the sin nature is toward legalism—a futile attempt to earn salvation, spirituality, or the approbation of God through morality or good works. The other trend is toward antinomianism, the lust for self-gratification leading to licentiousness—lawlessness, lasciviousness, and unrestrained immorality. See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*, 9–10.

55. These are principles of authority, morality, ethics, and the rule of law ordained by God for the survival, stability, protection, and perpetuation of the human race, believers and unbelievers alike, throughout human history. These laws establish temporal authority that protects self-determination, privacy, property, and human life—the basic components of human freedom. See Thieme, *Freedom through Military Victory* (2003), 4–6.

## SATAN'S DEMON FORCES

Ephesians 6:12 provides a divinely inspired intelligence report that discloses the order of battle of Satan's forces.

For our struggle [our spiritual combat] is not against flesh and blood [against human beings], but against the rulers [highest ranking demon generals], against the powers [authorities of the demon officer corps], against the world forces of this darkness [demon ambassadors], against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness [the rank-and-file demons] in the heavenly *places* [the stellar universe, even heaven itself]. (Eph. 6:12)

What a formidable organization! There are four categories of the chain of command listed: "rulers," "powers," "world forces of this darkness," and "spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

The first category against which believers struggle is "rulers" (ἄρχή, *arche*). A clue to the identity of the rulers of Satan's army comes from terminology of the fifth-century B.C. Athenian democracy. The chief magistrate of Athens was called the archon. He was the highest authority in Athens. *Arche* in the hierarchy of demons is similar. The ruler holds the highest position of authority, the equivalent of a general officer in the military.

The first ruler is called Beelzebul, "ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24; Luke 11:15). In the New Testament passages in which this name is found, Beelzebul refers to Satan himself, the overall ruler of the demons. He is certainly the highest authority in the demon legions, the commander and chief of all the forces arrayed against God in the angelic conflict.

The second ruler is called Abaddon in the Hebrew, and the equivalent in Greek is Apollyon, the "angel of the abyss" (Rev. 9:11). Apollyon means "destruction." His name is found in connection with a great demon invasion from the Abyss during the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation (Rev. 9:1–12). Apollyon will lead this great demon army, which brings horrific destruction on the earth.

Those in the second group under Satan's command chain are simply mentioned without any explanation. They are called "the powers" (ἐξουσία, *exsousia*), the unnumbered multitude of demons vested as officers under the higher command of their generals. *Exsousia* means "authority," as one with authority over others.

The third category is designated “the world forces” (κοσμοκράτωρ, *kosmokrator*). *Kosmokrator* means “world-ruling gods” or “rulers of the cosmos” and refers to Satan’s demon ambassadors. They function as Satan’s own emissaries to the courts and dominant capitals of the world. These powerful agents influence human world leaders to carry out satanic policies. Daniel 10:13–20 records two ancient kingdoms that were the instruments of *kosmokrator* demons.

The fourth category in Satan’s organization consists of “the spiritual forces [πνευματικός, *pneumatikos*] of wickedness.” *Pneumatikos* refers to immaterial beings, demons, who are the rank-and-file forces of Satan. They operate “in the heavenly places.” Their theatre of operations is the band of atmosphere around the earth, the stellar universe, and they are allowed to be in the presence of God to represent Satan. These demons are under the command of the *exsousia* and are the antagonists most likely to engage man directly.

### *Demon Influence and Demon Possession*

The cosmic system does not distinguish between its victims. Satan’s demon forces attack both the believer and unbeliever, albeit in different ways: influence and possession. These demonic attacks do not occur apart from man’s free will; the consent of the human targets must be involved. In fact, the prerequisite for the demons’ attention is a soul saturated with negative volition. This can be the believer in carnality,<sup>56</sup> one whose thinking is “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2), or the believer who has become antagonistic toward Bible doctrine. The target can also be the unbeliever in total rejection of the Gospel of salvation. Both believer and unbeliever become subject to demonic attack if they choose a lifestyle in the occult,<sup>57</sup> drug use, or criminal behavior.

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56. Carnality is the absolute status of a believer out of fellowship with God, without the filling of the Holy Spirit, because of unconfessed sin in the life. See Thieme, *Isolation of Sin* (2000), 1–9.

57. The occult refers to practices such as idol worship, the phallic cult, astrology, divination, necromancy, Eastern mystical meditation, demon worship, voodooism, witchcraft, and wizardry. Though many of these practices are viewed as innocent pathways to knowledge, self-awareness, or ‘spirituality,’ Scripture is clear that they are evil—all avenues of communicating the doctrines of demons to the human race. They are strictly forbidden by God. Only spiritually destitute people rely on the occult for solutions to problems, the meaning of life, and hope for the future. See Thieme, *Satan and Demonism*, 18–48.

*Demon influence* is the infiltration of satanic ideas into the thinking of both believers and unbelievers. This is the literal invasion of the soul by the “doctrines of demons”—the false policies, subtle distortions, half-truths, and outright lies conjured to corrupt and dominate man’s thinking. Demon influence is a process by which every facet of the soul is eventually overwhelmed by demonic doctrine. When believers or unbelievers remain under the influence of the cosmic system long enough, all norms and standards related to truth are gone, destroyed. Cosmic policy is now “seared in their own conscience” (1 Tim. 4:2) and becomes the motivation and thought pattern behind their every decision and action. Believing “the father of lies” (John 8:44), the demon-influenced are dupes of Satan. No amount of good intentions or sincerity can protect them. They become their own worst enemy.

For the unbeliever, demon influence can be a staging ground for *demon possession*. Demon possession is the invasion and control of the body of an unbeliever by one or more demons. The Greek of the New Testament unambiguously designates demon possession with the words δαιμονίζομαι (*daimonizomai*), “to be possessed by a demon,”<sup>58</sup> and ἔχω δαιμόνιον (*echo daimonion*), “to have a demon.” Further evidence that *daimonizomai* indicates bodily possession by a demon comes from Luke 8:30, in which the word εἰσέρχομαι (*eiserchomai*), meaning “to enter into, to go in,” emphasizes the internal residence of a demon within the body of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:12; 9:25). The power that indwelling demons exert over the human body is tremendous. Demons are capable of imparting supernatural strength as well as inflicting physical illness and deformities (Luke 8:29; 13:11). Demons can cause blindness and inability to speak (Matt. 9:32–33; 12:22). They are able to induce mental disorders and suicidal mania (Luke 8:26–35) and are often responsible for personal injury to their victims (Mark 9:17–18).

Demons can also effect personality changes manifesting irresistible, compelling, and charismatic qualities. For example, apart from the

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58. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 169; and Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:19–20.

Various passages use the synonym “to have an unclean spirit” (Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει, *Pneuma akatharton exei*) instead of “to have a demon” (Mark 3:30; 7:25; Luke 4:33).

explanation of demon possession, it would be improbable for a man of Adolf Hitler's mediocre abilities and lackluster personality to command the near worship he received or to formulate the sinister policies he instituted. The hypnotic magnetism he exuded could certainly have been Satan endued, as could the fiendish tactics that put Hitler's schemes into operation. His later drug addiction, degenerating into ranting and raving until spittle covered his chin and jacket, is also behavior described of demon-possessed people in the Bible (Luke 9:39).

Can Christians fall prey to demon possession? Since the righteousness of God is imputed to believers and believers are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), by Jesus Christ (John 14:20), and by God the Father (John 14:23), they can never be demon possessed.<sup>59</sup> Believers who succumb to the temptations of the sin nature and express decisive negative volition toward Bible doctrine can certainly be influenced by demon doctrines, but no biblical example or statement exists to suggest or warn that believers can be indwelt by a demon.

## ATTACK ON THE GOSPEL

The attack on the Gospel is a satanic offensive strategy against the volition of unbelievers, described in Scripture as "enemies" of God and "hostile in mind" (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). Unbelievers exist in a continuous state of estrangement, alienated from a relationship with God by their own negative volition (2 Pet. 2:20–22), which Satan exploits to the fullest.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor. 4:3–4)

The word "veiled" (καλύπτω, *kalupto*) means translucent; the object behind it can be seen but not clearly distinguished. To whom is the Gospel veiled? Unbelievers—those who are perishing, those who if they die in spiritual death will spend eternity with Satan and the

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59. For further discussion of demon influence and demon possession, see Thieme, *Satan and Demonism*, 15–17.

fallen angels in the lake of fire. But God is “not wishing for any to perish” (2 Pet. 3:9). He repeatedly presents the opportunity for salvation. The Gospel is there and can be recognized, yet it is obscured because the unbeliever has not yet chosen to believe. The veil is simply a metaphor for his negative volition. It is not a matter of understanding or not understanding; it is the fact that the hearer refuses to lift the veil by expressing faith alone in Christ alone. Satan cleverly attacks at that point of negative volition.

In rejecting the truth, the unbeliever becomes subject to the infiltration of satanic lies, which blind his thinking to the light of the Gospel. Satan and his forces pounce upon these opportunities and encourage man to get his false ideas about salvation from other sources, including his own imagination. Lewis Sperry Chafer has this to say about the devil’s deceptions:

Any of the great spiritual subjects which are of universal interest to humanity, such as physical health, life after death, morality, unfulfilled prophecy, or religious forms, may be substituted in the false systems for that which is vital. And while those subjects are all found in their proper relations and importance in the true faith, the fact that people are universally inclined to give attention to them furnishes an opportunity for Satan to make a strong appeal to humanity through them, using these subjects as central truths in his false and counterfeit systems.<sup>60</sup>

The devil knows that when the message of God’s grace is removed, the Gospel remains obscured. True to his cause, the brilliant manipulator has “blinded the minds of the unbelieving” by promoting false systems in which the works of mankind replace the grace of God. In the case of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, persistent obstinance toward the message of salvation eventually “hardened his heart” (Ex. 8:32). Each rejection of truth intensifies negative volition, ultimately making it almost impossible for the unbeliever to change his mind about Christ. Hence, Satan’s objective is accomplished.

### *False Gospel of Religion*

Religion is Satan’s ace trump, his most insidious ploy against the human race. Religion is man by man’s efforts striving to gain the appro-

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60. Chafer, *Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology*, 108.



bation of God, whereas Christianity is man's relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. In religion, man seeks God through personal merit and works. In Christianity, God seeks man through the saving work of Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)

To derail man from the Gospel of grace, Satan ingeniously offers a counterfeit gospel based on human works and morality (Gal. 3:2–3). He contrives a false righteousness that appeals to human arrogance (Matt. 19:16–26). People presumptuously believe they can merit God's approval through their own efforts. Instead of turning to God for solutions to life's problems, they think in terms of social adjustment, social action, social improvement, crusader arrogance—whitewashing the devil's world. Jesus Christ strongly condemned this counterfeit *modus operandi* in the Pharisees of His own day (Matt. 23; Luke 18:9–12), and Isaiah likened self-righteousness to a “filthy garment.”

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,  
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.  
(Isa. 64:6a)

Of course, Satan accomplishes much through his false teachers. Religion has its own ministers (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13–15) who teach a false doctrine of salvation through human endeavors, brotherly love, world peace, utopianism. Appealing to man's arrogance and pride, they promote legalism and idolatry in place of the finished work of Christ on the cross (Col. 2:20–23). Their religious philosophy asserts that God will accept man's good works as the basis for a relationship with Him. They proclaim a counterfeit gospel (2 Cor. 11:3–4) far more often than the biblical Gospel of faith alone in Christ alone. In all its nuances, their ‘gospel’ of religion promotes human reformation in place of spiritual regeneration. Anticipating this attack on the true Gospel, the Apostle Paul warned:

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8)

Religion and grace are mutually exclusive. The need is the same in every age. The solution is also the same: “Believe in the Lord Jesus,

and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31b). The unbeliever who adds anything to faith in Christ cancels the efficacy of that faith, and one who places his faith in anything but Christ is simply not saved. Apart from faith alone in Christ alone, man remains a pawn in Satan’s gambit.

### *False Gods and False Powers*

Using religion to lure man away from the true Gospel, Satan presents a wide variety of gods, all of which are simply representations of the same person, Satan himself (2 Thess. 2:3–4). Throughout history obeisance to these false divinities has captivated mankind, primarily because demonic activity is often accompanied by supernatural power, signs, miracles, and revelations (2 Thess. 2:9–10).

Mystics often claim that God speaks directly to them or that God, angels, or divine beings have appeared to them, offering previously unrevealed insight or information. For example, Islam and Mormonism both derive from a mystical apparition: the alleged appearance of an angel who claimed to provide new divine revelation.

Christianity has not been immune to the infection of mysticism. In the early Church mystical trends gave rise to the monastic movement, in which monks isolated themselves in the north African desert and sat atop pillars in the wilderness awaiting the voice of God. The pervasive influences of mysticism are still evident in churches today. For example, worshiping alleged apparitions of Mary and other historical Christian figures is a familiar practice within certain denominations. Even more institutionalized is the false doctrine of transubstantiation, which purports that in Communion, the bread and cup are supernaturally transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ.<sup>61</sup> By ingesting this believed-to-be flesh and blood of Christ, partakers assume they are one with God. Shamefully, the Lord’s Table becomes a ritual without reality, a meaningless practice devoid of doctrine.

Recent trends in the United States illustrate an increasing preoccupation with Eastern mysticism and manifestations of the occult. Certainly, subjects like reincarnation and spiritual awakening through meditation have captivated people in droves. Furthermore, the practices of spiritism—communication with unseen spirits in order to

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61. For an in-depth discussion on the body and blood metaphor, see Thieme, *The Blood of Christ*, 34–36.

gain comfort, healing, or information concerning future events—now permeate popular society. Traditional private séances center around a medium who attempts to contact the dead, while New Age channeling involves a medium or trans-channeler who permits the spirit to possess his own body and speak directly to an audience. Of course, consulting the stars through astrology to predict future events also carries an increasing aura of respectability.

People who adhere to these empty religious forms (Col. 2:18; 2 Tim. 3:5) imagine that they worship and receive divine guidance, while in their unbelief and rejection of truth, they merely worship the “god of this world.”

### *Satan Cunningly Denies the Savior*

Recall that in seducing the first woman, Satan denied that there could be a personal relationship between God and man when he referred to God as *Elohim*, not *Yahweh Elohim*. In using *Elohim* without *Yahweh*, Satan recognized the unreachable, aloof Creator, but not the Savior. The same results of the devil’s personal work are seen today. Many people recognize the existence of a supreme being but refuse to recognize a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior. For instance, the French writer and philosopher Voltaire was a deist, not a Christian. Deism asserts the existence of a God who can be known through reason and observation of the laws of the natural world, as opposed to God who is understood through biblical knowledge. Deists believe that God set creation into motion then abandoned the process; therefore, God does not intervene in human history. Pantheism, generally upheld by religions such as Hinduism and Taoism, asserts that God and the universe are one, that the universe conceived of as a whole *is* God. The pantheists’ god is neither personal nor a person.

Satan’s influence is so cunning that he has actually found a way to incorporate Christ while rejecting Him as Savior. Christian Science upholds Jesus as its ideal, but because sin and evil are assigned to the realm of unreality, a savior and salvation are deemed unnecessary. Buddhism and offshoots of Eastern mysticism, like Theosophy and New Age concepts, recognize Jesus but reduce Him to a mere ideal man, a medium of a high order, or the quintessence of the intellectual

man. Islam claims Him as an important prophet but denies Him as the Son of God who provided atonement for sin. In practice these religious cults and philosophies attempt to raise man to Christ's level, a blasphemous and downright impossible objective.

### *Satan Deifies Mankind*

Satan exploits man's arrogance by encouraging secular humanism, the belief that man himself, independent of God, can solve the problems of the world in which he lives. This ideology is "a way of life and thought that is pursued without reference to God or religion."<sup>62</sup> Humanism relies on systems of perception related strictly to the finite mind and human achievement. Giving central importance to man instead of God, humanism looks to science to solve the mysteries of life and the planet on which life exists. It upholds philosophy and psychology as solutions to adversity and dysfunction and blames man's problems on environment, as opposed to personal decisions. Those who live by this cosmic doctrine deny the Word of God and accept human deliberations and rationalizations as wisdom, but their conclusions amount to utter foolishness. In humanism, anyone and anything can be a celebrity. In grace, there is one celebrity, Jesus Christ. No person or philosophy in life can become a satisfactory substitute for fellowship with the Lord.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy [reducing God to limits of human mind] and empty deception [declaring that man has a spark of divinity or is a god], according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world [secular humanism], rather than according to Christ. (Col. 2:8)

Deluded by intellectual arrogance, secular humanists often regard Christianity as weakness. The nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche pompously refers to "that Christian distress of mind that comes from sighing over one's inner depravity and care for one's salvation—all conceptions originating in nothing but errors of

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62. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984 ed., s.v. "Secularism, Secular Humanism," by D. W. Gill.

reason and deserving, not satisfaction, but obliteration.”<sup>63</sup> Faithful to Satan’s cause, such intellectuals use philosophical assumptions and academic arrogance to amass persuasive yet fraudulent evidence against the Gospel and biblical viewpoint.

Ironically, even the most brilliant minds of humanism overlook the fact that the man who wrote the Pauline Epistles was one of the greatest intellects who ever lived. Paul, with all of his genius, never tried to produce a human philosophy. He always dealt with what God revealed to him. Regardless of their IQ or brilliance, humanists cannot grasp the overarching principle that divine revelation supercedes human reason and intellect in the approach to life and reality. They cannot understand that while their brains are certainly not lame, their brains are dead—dead to the understanding of the absolute truths of God, “for they [absolute truths] are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14b). Hence humanists live their lives in frustration, merely accompanying Satan in his futile attempts to provide a human utopia apart from the work of Christ.

## ATTACK ON THE WORLD

Satan understands that since the fall of man, circumstances are far from right in his kingdom, the world he now rules. He blames this situation not on his own incompetent rule or on man’s sinful nature but on man’s environment. His objective to make a better world has given birth to the pipe dream of a man-made paradise. Satan attempts to create a perfect world devoid of God: world peace without the presence of Christ; economic panaceas without divine provision; multi-culturalism, secular education, environmentalism as man’s hope and preservation; and legislation of morality and welfare as man’s personal security.

Based on the humanistic viewpoint that man is inherently good, this satanic plot appeals to idealists who sponsor visionary schemes for social improvement and urge peaceful coexistence with enemies whose goal is to destroy freedom. In addition to feeding the pride of

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63. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Human, all too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1996), 26.

human good, the devil targets man's innate power lust. He knows full well that authority motivated by the desire to control others eventually converts to tyranny. Satan himself is a tyrant. He controls his domain through tyranny.

The devil's demons and human agents can be found strategically located in all the capitals of the world, where they attempt to influence rulers in favor of satanic policies (Dan. 10:13). History abounds with the fruits of their labors. The Middle Ages was a period of supreme religiosity, superstition, and inquisitions. The French Revolution witnessed the efforts of murderous revolutionaries like Robespierre and Danton to supplant the existing monarchy. The 1914 anarchist's assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, triggered the devastation of World War I. This one event gave rise to a proliferation of antiwar peace movements that attempted to establish what only the "Prince of Peace" can and will accomplish upon His return (Isa. 9:6). Hitler's Third Reich was the nefarious undertaking of a self-styled elite to raise up Germany to a world power and a superrace, all for the ultimate purpose of exterminating the Jewish race, also Satan's objective.

In the devil's world, durable peace, human equality, and total control of the environment will always be fantasies. Such cosmic panaceas are merely guaranteed methods for eliminating personal freedom, the key to human happiness, the key to maximum function of human volition. Under the influence of evil, egotistical policy makers and their malcontent, insecure constituents fall for these notions and play right into the hands of Satan.

### *Socialism*

Socialism is a human attempt to provide a utopian economy. The basis for socialism in modern history is found in Sir Thomas More's book *Utopia*, which describes an imaginary island with political and social perfection. "Utopia," therefore, became a synonym for any visionary system of economic, social, or environmental perfection. The theory of utopian socialism is a lie, an economic tinkering with the laws of divine establishment whereby a false premise is inculcated: If capitalism voluntarily surrenders its ownership and means of production to the State or to the workers, unemployment and poverty

will be abolished. This is the devil's hoax, for economic prosperity is created by capital and investment, not by government or workers. Capitalism provides the greatest opportunity for all to advance economically and socially. Socialism reduces people to the lowest common denominator. Like the tyranny of communism, socialism establishes slavery to the State, rather than freedom of self-determination with the government protecting that freedom. By its very nature socialism crushes volition and breeds dependency, as it divorces the people from reality and systematically robs them of capacity for life.

To attain his utopia, Satan advocates philosophies that people are inherently equal, that the rich are greedy and take from the poor, that any kind of inequality should arouse a sense of guilt, that the successful owe a debt to the unsuccessful. In short, socialistic ideology advocates equal results at the expense of equal opportunity. These tenets define the stupidity and insidious evil of socialism. This delusional system denies the existence of the sin nature while overlooking its own evil function.

As a means of gaining power for a few 'enlightened elite,' socialism fomented class warfare, jealousy, envy, and greed in those who arrogantly presume themselves to deserve something for nothing. Their alleged remedies for inequality simply create new inequalities. French revolutionaries—under the banner of "liberty, equality, and fraternity"—eliminated the crown and the aristocracy only to elevate themselves, replacing one tyranny with another. The end result of their power lust was Robespierre's guillotine, which claimed 40,000 lives. Writer Victor Hugo later turned a magnificent phrase when he wrote that equality is merely the political translation of the word envy.

To those who do not understand human freedom or appreciate the proper function of man's soul, the intentions of socialism sound good: a new world order with equality and prosperity for all! Intoxicating words make perverse ideas popular, but words do not change truth. Socialism is the outright transfer of power from the individual to the State. Take note: Freedom is restricted for the so-called greater good; wealth is confiscated from those who rightfully produce and redistributed to those who do not; taxes are increased to support such travesties as socialized medicine and other governmental entitlement programs while military funding is decreased. A socialistic society becomes malleable to the whims of dictatorial bureaucrats who interfere in every aspect of life.

If Satan's hoax is successful in obstructing divine principles for a nation, history evidences that divine discipline is inevitable. Just as tears came to Jeremiah's eyes as he watched the disintegration of Judah (Jer. 9:1), so we should not only weep but also pray for our great United States of America as it increasingly faces these dangers.

### *Internationalism*

In the devil's world God provides for the protection, orderly function, blessing, and perpetuation of mankind. For this purpose He ordained four divine institutions: the individual, marriage, family, and the national entity.<sup>64</sup> God delegated a primary authority within each institution: volition for the individual, the husband for marriage, parents for the children, and government for the national entity.

The fourth divine institution, also referred to as nationalism, maintains that national laws, distinctions, interests, and security take precedence over international interests. Essentially, nationalism furnishes protection for the first divine institution, the individual. Nationalism protects the individual's rights under the rule of law, thereby strengthening the freedom of a nation as a whole.

These founding principles for mankind are delineated and consistently verified by Scripture. In Genesis 10:32, beginning with the descendants of Noah, God divided the world into national entities with geographical boundaries. This is God's system for safeguarding mankind by providing a balance of power among many nations, rather than a concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals who proceed to play God and attempt to control the world.

No surprise, Satan is the enemy of nationalism, offering internationalism in its place. His intent is a universal state in which the 'brotherhood of man' is the impetus for an ideal world of economic equality and peace. Satan's first enactment of this scheme occurred in the land of Shinar, where he sponsored the building of the city of Babel and a mammoth tower to represent world unification and an international religion (Gen. 11:1-4). The tower in fact became the focal point for power and a breeding ground for concentrated evil. God rejected internationalism and judged it by imposing the chief

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64. Thieme, *Freedom through Military Victory*, 1-20.



obstacle to the one-world state—the multiplicity of languages. With the people’s ability to communicate with one another destroyed, “the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city” (Gen. 11:8). The result was the formation of different populations and, ultimately, distinct nations.

Nationalism provides the maximum opportunity for freedom to operate under the laws of establishment, whereas internationalism, by the very nature of its system, is susceptible to despotism. Why? Because internationalism subsumes individual and national interests in order to accommodate the largely irreconcilable interests of many nations. Freedom and autonomy of the individual and nation are crippled for the sake of the world at large. Internationalism imposes fewer restraints on the sin natures of those in power and allows greater margin for the enslavement of the powerless. This way, Satan can more easily rule his domain and enforce his policy of evil, which includes the promotion of religion without Christ.

Indeed, the objectives of the one-world system are the objectives of Satan in his increasingly desperate attempt to perpetuate his world rulership. When the unbeliever or carnal believer tries to solve the world’s problems from human viewpoint, he looks to such international organizations as the World Council of Churches and the United Nations. Has the latter been successful in maintaining world peace? No, it has been primarily ineffective. Check the record. There have been myriads of wars since the United Nations was formed, and the organization itself is laden with corruption. This epitomizes internationalism.

No matter how sincere man’s attempts may be to make this a better world, he will fail. This is Satan’s world, and no created being, not even the genius of Satan, has the sovereignty, omniscience, or omnipotence to bring about a perfect society. He is incapable of pulling the peoples of the world together and ruling them under internationalism, as the final period of the Tribulation will prove. Satan can never circumvent God’s plan or institutions. Until Jesus Christ returns to reign over this world in the Millennium, there will be no international peace and prosperity.

And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. (Mark 13:7)

## ATTACK ON THE JEWS: ANTI-SEMITISM

History is replete with the horrors perpetrated against the Jews: the Arab atrocities of Mohammad in the seventh century, the Crusaders in the eleventh century, the inquisition of Torquemada beginning in 1487, the Holocaust of Hitler in World War II. Today anti-Semitic nations unabashedly deny the existence of the Holocaust, call for Israel to be wiped out, and join forces in targeting Jews. News outlets worldwide repeatedly headline violent actions against the Jews: synagogues attacked, Israeli flags burned, public menorahs desecrated, swastikas painted on Jewish-owned shops.

At the heart of it all, the Middle East continues to boil in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli-Palestinian political negotiations start up, break down, and restart without any sign of even basic consensus while rioting, border skirmishes, and suicide bombings persist. Through maximum media exposure, the Arabs hope to demonstrate that the Jews are the oppressors, the source of Middle East strife, a thorn in the side of the world.

The United States has not remained unaffected by this evil. Anti-Semitic organizations continue to embrace bigotry and hate. Several hundred groups across our nation either claim affiliation with or have adopted the heinous philosophy of the Identity Church, perpetuating the myth that Jews are responsible for the world's problems. Another extremist group, the Nation of Islam, makes repeated accusations of Jewish dominance and power. Their leader consistently labels Jews as bitter racists during his public speeches. Rising numbers of anti-Semitic incidents within our country are reported by the Anti-Defamation League citing vandalism, harassment, and physical assaults against Jewish individuals, property, and community institutions. Further display of anti-Semitism within our borders is witnessed through anti-Israel demonstrations at Jewish community centers and attacks on Jewish individuals, property, and synagogues.<sup>65</sup>

The venom that renders masses of people susceptible to anti-Jewish agitation is more than fear, distrust, prejudice, insecurity, or envy. Such vicious hatred reflects Satan's scheming to defeat the plan of God through anti-Semitism. If, Satan reasons, he is successful in destroying the Jews, God will be unable to keep His covenant to Israel

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65. Thieme, *Anti-Semitism*, 31–84.

of a kingdom with the greater Son of David on the throne. There will be no Israel to receive the promised blessings. And if God cannot fulfill His unconditional covenants, His veracity is flawed and Satan will have grounds for demanding dismissal of all charges against himself and the fallen angels.

Satan's rulership over this planet gives him the distinct advantage of being able to manipulate the nations and leaders of this world. History authenticates the devastating effects of virulent bigotry toward God's elect people. Anti-Semitic outbursts persist throughout the world and will continue until the conclusion of the Tribulation.<sup>66</sup>

The Jewish race is unique in all history. Abram, renamed Abraham by God in Genesis 17:5, became the father of the Jewish race after his circumcision at the age of ninety-nine. God promised unconditionally to make Abraham a "great nation" that He would perpetuate and protect throughout time and eternity. God formed this people for the specific purpose of being His instruments for the development and dissemination of His Word. They would represent Him on Earth, they would be custodians of His holy Word (Rom. 3:2), and through them the Messiah would come (2 Sam. 7:8, 12; cf. John 4:22; Rom. 9:5).

Since God was intent on establishing and blessing the Abrahamic line, Satan had to attempt to destroy that line. To counter the devil's evil design against the promised new race, God affixed a blessing and cursing clause to the Abrahamic Covenant. The clause guaranteed divine provision, protection, and preservation of Jews in every generation. God served notice that the Jew will survive human history.<sup>67</sup> The anti-Semitism clause reads:

"I [God] will bless those who bless you [the Jews],  
And the one who curses you I will curse.  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."  
(Gen. 12:3)

Though Satan's controlling influences may be invisible, any incident of anti-Semitism is part of Satan's master plan for Jewish extermination. No one, especially the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, should ever be guilty of the insidious prejudice and treacherous evil of anti-Semitism. Divine judgment and utter ruin are the ultimate

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66. *Ibid.*, 85–114.

67. *Ibid.*, 14–16.

destiny of individuals or nations that practice anti-Semitism—in the past, present, and future. History openly reveals the correlation between the rise and fall of nations and their attitude toward the Jew.

It is a noteworthy fact of history that great conquerors, Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon, have always treated the Jews well: they recognized their religious function and sought to give it freedom to develop, for their own advantage as well as for that of the Jews. On the other hand, lesser men, endowed with narrower outlooks, have failed to recognize the Jew and have sought to crush him. In their desire to impose an artificial uniformity, they “broke down the boundaries of peoples and put down the inhabitants” (Isa. 10:13). But such Procrustean methods are contrary to nature, and tyranny, whether towards Jews or towards any others, has never secured permanent results. The same policy of religious unification has characterized subsequent dynasties, from the Assyrians to the Romanoffs, and the same fate has overtaken them. The Jew has survived their disappearance.<sup>68</sup>

God made a solemn promise that Jews will always remain on the earth (1 Sam. 12:22), and this promise to Israel from God remains immutable to this very day. Israel has a secure national future, which no human or satanic evil can destroy. Jesus Christ preserves the Jew in every anti-Semitic attack and ultimately destroys those used as the minions of Satan in their quest to destroy Israel.

## ATTACK ON BELIEVERS

Since the devil is the chief enemy of God, he is also the chief enemy of the Christian. Satan has many strategies to dupe believers, and all of his strategies have similar characteristics: arrogance and preoccupation with self, antagonism, hatred, hostility toward grace and truth. How then does the devil operate in this arena?

Satan is constantly working to frustrate the will of God, to discourage the inculcation of doctrine as well as its application, and to

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68. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., s.v. “Jews,” by Walter Yust.

shift the focus from the Word and onto the world. If Satan can infiltrate believers' minds with human viewpoint, he can render them casualties in the angelic conflict. Ignorance of his schemes and rejection of divine viewpoint shut down all spiritual advance. Believers must guard against becoming targets of a fivefold satanic attack, "in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes [strategy]" (2 Cor. 2:11).

### *Accusing Believers*

For the accuser [Satan] of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them [believers] before our God day and night. (Rev. 12:10b)

Until the devil and his followers are "thrown down" out of heaven in the middle of the Tribulation, Satan continues to have free access to the throne room of heaven. He relishes the opportunity to present any member of the Body of Christ as hypocritical, ignorant, faithless, or weak. And this he does constantly "day and night."

The devil has complete files on all living believers. His efficient demon intelligence network carefully annotates every sin and failure of believers. While these sins may be hidden on Earth, they are an open scandal in heaven. Satan periodically assembles with other angels in the presence of the Lord to present his accusations (Job 1:6–11; Zech. 3:1). Omniscient God is well aware of the believer's failures, but in the interest of resolving the angelic conflict, He allows Satan to bring these infractions to His attention. The devil's advantage is only temporary, because Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, acts as the believer's defender as soon as the accusation is made.

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin [may not lose momentum through sin]. And [nevertheless] if anyone sins, we [continue to] have an Advocate [παράκλητος, *parakletos*] with [before] the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. (1 John 2:1–2)

In 1 John 2:1, the Apostle John uses the Greek noun *parakletos* in its judicial sense, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ in a role similar to that of a present-day defense attorney. In the ancient world the word

was used to designate a professional legal advisor. The Latin equivalent of *parakletos* is *advocatus*, from which is derived the English word “advocate.” An advocate is “a consulting lawyer or one who presented his client’s case in open court; or one who, in times of trial or hardship, sympathized with the afflicted and administered suitable direction and support.”<sup>69</sup> Remarkably, each believer is acquitted of all Satan’s charges by the “Advocate,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

First John 2:2 cites the basis for Christ as our legal representative in heaven: “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.” The righteousness and justice of God were propitiated, or satisfied, by Jesus Christ’s payment for our sins on the cross. The satisfaction of God’s justice is the deciding factor in dropping all charges.

If we are accused by Satan in heaven, our Advocate confirms our status as reconciled and redeemed. Since all sins were judged at the cross, the law of double jeopardy applies. We cannot be judged for sins that have already been judged. Therefore, God the Father throws the case out of court, and our sins become a family matter for the administration of divine discipline: “FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES” (Heb. 12:6). No matter how often we may bungle on Earth, in heaven the devil’s blasphemies are ably refuted by our great defense attorney, “Jesus Christ the righteous.”

### *Luring Believers from the Word*

In every dispensation and in every generation, the master deceiver seeks to obscure the truth. During the Age of Israel, Satan set out to lure the Jews from the doctrine revealed in the God-ordained rituals of the Mosaic Law. The devil promoted elaborate pantheons populated with major and lesser gods who demanded offerings, even human sacrifices (Lev. 18:21; Jer. 32:35). Israel, captivated by these polytheistic religions, perverted the worship of *Yahweh*. The Book of Hosea reveals the catastrophic results.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [doctrine].  
Because you have rejected knowledge,

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69. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed., s.v. “Advocate.”

I also will reject you from being My priest [client nation].  
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children [loss of client nation  
privileges and blessings]. (Hosea 4:6)

Reading this passage written in the eighth century B.C. is like reading a current newspaper. For her “lack of knowledge,” Israel was warned about divine judgment that would be administered under the fifth cycle of discipline (Lev. 26:27–39). Rejection of doctrine destroyed the nation. The United States should heed this warning, since Satan’s objective of undermining the foundation of biblical theology in this nation has found extensive success.

Hebrews chapter 10 reveals a new generation of believers who also neglected doctrine and became sidetracked by the enemy’s diversionary tactics. They threw away as worthless their confidence in God’s instruction and retreated into the ignominy of legalism. Ephesians 4:17–24 presents still another group of unstable believers admonished for their defiant attitude toward the Word of God. Paul likens their reversionistic thinking to that of unbelievers.

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord,  
that you [believer] walk no longer just as the Gentiles  
[unbelievers] also walk, in the futility of their mind, being  
darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of  
God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of  
the hardness of their heart. (Eph. 4:17–18)

Notice that alienation from the spiritual life is not the consequence of any misbehavior or sin but the result of “ignorance” of doctrine. Without doctrine the believer simply cannot execute the spiritual life. Romans 12:2 commands the Christian to renovate his mind by learning divine viewpoint. The rejection of doctrine—the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16)—is tantamount to renouncing the authority of Christ. For this reason Satan and his forces work tirelessly to obscure the importance of biblical truth. The enemy’s major tactic in the current age involves directing the local church into apostasy by replacing the exegetical teaching of the Word with legalism, emotionalism, deceitful signs, humanism, ecumenicalism, and a host of false doctrines. The words spoken by the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, still ring true today.

Many are easily led to fix their attention upon the secondary things, and to neglect wholly the one primary thing. . . . And Satan has blinded their eyes toward that which is of eternal value.<sup>70</sup>

Biblical truth is the sole, complete revelation of God's perfect plan for the believer! Those who neglect His Word have simply rented a room to the devil.

### *APOSTATE LEADERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH*

Apostasy is the rejection of Bible doctrine and the acceptance of false doctrine (Heb. 3:12). Apostasy amounts to the believer forsaking God's plan for his life. While he does not lose his salvation, his thinking becomes distorted, evil, no different from that of an unbeliever. For the local church, apostasy begins and ends with those who stand in the pulpit.

God disseminates His doctrine for the Church Age through the man with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher.<sup>71</sup> In order to carry out his God-ordained mission, the pastor must first be properly trained. Then, once he accepts a position as pastor, his responsibility—his obligation—is to continually study the Word and teach those in his congregation who are positive. The faithful teacher concentrates on “rightly dividing the word of truth” under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). Through consistent, accurate, and exegetical communication of Bible doctrine from his pulpit, his sheep can become spiritually self-sustaining, able to stand on their own two feet. The command to the pastor-teacher is clear:

Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (2 Tim. 4:2)

The Body of Christ cannot be equipped for defense in the angelic conflict without the proper function of this uniquely important communication and leadership gift. Believers simply cannot extract the doctrines necessary for spiritual advance by reading and studying the Bible on their own—a sure recipe for distorting and misunder-

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70. Chafer, *Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology*, 108.

71. For an in-depth discussion on the pastor-teacher, see Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 91–93.



standing God's truth. And a congregation cannot advance to spiritual maturity when there is no doctrinal content in the pastor's message.

Tragically, apostasy is rampant in our pulpits today. Far too many men with the gift of pastor-teacher have positioned themselves as advocates of human viewpoint, rather than entrusted communicators of the inerrant canon of Scripture. Either unprepared or unwilling to study and teach, they understand nothing (1 Tim. 6:4a). As their own spiritual growth ceases, they impose human standards upon God's perfect instruction until His systems of grace and divine provision are obscured. Many of these pastors are dynamic speakers who may even inspire the lives of their listeners, but apart from a ministry grounded in God's Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they move headfirst into apostasy. Their spiritual gift of communication becomes an instrument of deception. Like the pastors about whom Paul warned Timothy, their sermons are "empty talk," based on the influence of human viewpoint in their souls.

But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter [talk], for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene [cancer]. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection [Rapture of the Church] has already taken place, and thus they upset [corrupt] the faith [doctrine] of some. (2 Tim. 2:16–18)

The goal of such pastors becomes attracting a crowd, and they attempt to achieve this in many ways. As alternatives to Bible teaching, they offer personal visitation, counseling, social programs, speculative prophecy, and emotion-based worship services. What little theology comes from these pulpits is primarily false: attaining or maintaining salvation through works and rituals; spirituality through the use of now defunct spiritual gifts, like healing; man's liberation through social engineering; and various other philosophies that confuse and detract from the person, work, and significance of Christ.<sup>72</sup>

Since this is the devil's world, false doctrine is very popular. As Paul warned, it spreads like cancer. There are deluded believers in every generation drawn to the teaching of an apostate pastor. Every

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72. For a discussion on the danger of false teachers, see Thieme, *Reversionism*, 75–81.

time he stands up to speak, the souls of his followers move deeper into confusion and further from biblical truth.

### *FALSE SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION*

Luring believers into social interaction as a means of spiritual growth is a popular tactic of the enemy. Many churches focus the spotlight on their social programs as a draw for attendance, so that their services amount to a social gathering with a sermonette. In this type of atmosphere, social life and group solidarity are mistaken for the spiritual life.

Believers attracted to these activities may be seeking approbation and a sense of belonging through interaction with other people. The mental attitude and motivation to attend church is to be part of a family, or to hear short, uplifting, inspirational devotionals, or to 'feel' spiritual. A need to join others of similar social circumstances—the singles group, the young-married-couples group, the old-married-couples group, the divorced-persons group, and so on—may also play a part.

While on the surface this so-called Christian fellowship appears innocuous, it may turn out to be detrimental. Such gatherings can become breeding grounds for apostasy. These group settings are ripe for developing church cliques, for manipulation under the guise of Christian support, for sympathy seeking, for competitive witnessing—all of which are motivated by self-absorption. The believer's loyalty to the group begins to exceed his loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Social interaction is a normal and legitimate function of life, as it allows companionship, sharing, humor, intellectual stimulation, and the fostering of friendships with like-minded believers. Social life in the local church, however, must never take precedence over the consistent intake of Bible doctrine. When a believer puts priority on relationships with people over a relationship with God, his spiritual life languishes, his spiritual growth stagnates, and God is not glorified. Growing spiritually demands metabolizing the Word of God. Only then can the believer develop capacity for rapport with God and the resultant personal relationships with those of like mind. Only then will social life attain the correct emphasis and become most enjoyable.

### *THE DECEPTION OF FALSE SPIRITUAL GIFTS*

An insidious part of Satan's strategy against which every believer must be on guard is the widely popular use of obsolete spiritual gifts.

Wherever religion extols these former sensational gifts as a measure of the Christian life, Satan succeeds in his objective of deception. The inherent evil of this strategy is evident when the believer understands the true biblical purpose of the temporary spiritual gifts.

A new dispensation, the Church Age, was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. The precanon period of the Church Age—the time in which the New Testament canon was being formed—was characterized by *temporary* spiritual gifts such as apostleship, prophecy, miracles, healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12).<sup>73</sup> These temporary gifts authenticated the divine authority of the apostles, spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Jews and Gentiles “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8b), and communicated both verbally and in writing new doctrines for the unique spiritual life of the Church Age. As God’s instructions and doctrines for the Church were permanently recorded in the New Testament epistles, the purposes of these temporary gifts were fulfilled. In time they were gradually withdrawn. By A.D. 96, with the completion of the written canon of Scripture, temporary spiritual gifts were terminated.<sup>74</sup>

But when the perfect [completion and circulation of the New Testament canon] comes, the partial [the temporary gifts in the precanon period of the Church Age] will be done away [discontinued, abolished]. (1 Cor. 13:10)

So why do so many Christians today assign top priority to the now defunct gift of tongues? The emotionalism of so-called tongues has enormous appeal in making the believer feel close to God by ‘heightened spiritual power.’ This is why tongues is an exceptional method for Satan to attract followers. Many Christians would rather indulge their emotions than apply their minds to the study of the Bible.

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73. The precanon period came to a close with the death of John, the last apostle, sometime after he wrote Revelation in approximately A.D. 96. The postcanon period runs from A.D. 96 to the resurrection, or Rapture, of the Church and is the era of permanent spiritual gifts. Gifts like pastor-teacher, evangelism, administration, and helps are designed to communicate the doctrines of the written Word of God and carry out the functions of the local church (Eph. 4:11–13). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 68–70.

74. For more discussion on the use and termination of temporary spiritual gifts, see Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 130–32; *Tongues*, 46–49, 59–64.

When believers get off track through emotionalism, they assume that God is behind these spectacular activities. Not at all! The postcanon Church Age ministry of God the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with such practices. Every experience categorized today as tongues is a *pseudotongues* experience. This is simply part of Satan's scheme to confound the believer, divert his spiritual growth, and weaken his defense in the angelic conflict.<sup>75</sup>

Some charismatic theologians not only erroneously claim tongues to be a currently operational gift, but they also completely ignore the true precanon purpose of tongues. Despite the fact that the tongues phenomenon on Pentecost involved *legitimate* foreign languages, some now claim to 'speak' a mysterious angelic language. They even advocate these unintelligible utterances as a private mode of prayer and a symbol of spiritual status.<sup>76</sup>

Churches infiltrated by these satanic doctrines influence people to vie for spiritual status by claiming to speak in tongues, hear voices, see visions, perform miracles, heal the sick. They particularly encourage newly saved members to seek such emotional experiences. Nothing could be more harmful to a new believer. The immature believer equates emotionalism with being spiritual. He perpetuates the false doctrine that his feelings are the criterion for his Christian life. Under these conditions, the believer remains ignorant and is distracted and neutralized as a witness for the Prosecution.

### *THE FALLACY OF WORKS AS THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE*

All believers are called to service in living the Christian way of life. Christian service includes prayer, giving to church or charity, evangelism, offerings of time and expertise to various forms of work both inside and outside the local church. However, for any type of service to be effective in God's plan, it must result in the production of divine good, as opposed to human good. Only divine good production meets God's standards, has intrinsic value, and will qualify for eternal reward at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:14).

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75. Thieme, *Tongues*, 78–81.

76. In order to pray effectively, the believer must understand how to pray. God has ground rules, procedures that must be observed at all times. See Thieme, *Prayer* (2003), 6–15.

A believer's divine good production is accomplished through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Good works can only glorify God when performed by a believer in fellowship. As the believer grows in grace and doctrinal orientation, his mental attitude becomes one of genuine appreciation for all God has provided. The more the believer matures in the Christian life, the more capacity he has to rightly serve the Lord. True Christian service is therefore the *result*, not the means, of the believer's spiritual growth and execution of the spiritual life.

Bearing fruit [Christian service] in every good work [divine good] and increasing in the knowledge of God [spiritual growth]. (Col. 1:10*b*)

Only deeds and service accomplished in the filling of the Spirit and doctrinal inculcation glorify God; deeds and service accomplished in the status of carnality glorify self. Works performed from the motivation to earn divine approbation or blessings, to impress other Christians, to maintain salvation, or to stave off divine discipline are nothing but human good—dead works, cosmic production. These works are “wood, hay, and straw,” fit for burning at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12–13). The human good deeds of a carnal believer are no different from the human good deeds performed by an unbeliever. The believer's human good may contribute to the betterment of society, but it does not glorify God and will not be rewarded in eternity.

Human good disguised as legitimate Christian service is a cunning and effective weapon of the devil against believers. This satanic lie has poisoned modern-day Christianity by enticing many pastors and their congregations into glorifying themselves rather than God. Instead of leading their churches to function as classrooms for teaching God's Word, these pastors promote human good as the Christian way of life. All too often, sincere though uninformed believers are lured into a lifestyle of self-serving production. They do not understand that there is a great deal more to Christian service than what they visibly accomplish. So they get out there and ‘hustle for the Lord’ instead of inculcating God's Word and growing up spiritually. They are oblivious to Satan's manipulation and unaware that they are not glorifying God.

Believers consumed with the production of human good often become crusaders to whitewash the devil's world. When they set out

to right what they believe is wrong with secular society, they are easily drawn into Christian activism: the use of illegitimate or illegal methods to impose either real or alleged Christian ideals upon the general populace. The zealous crusades of Christian activists may involve unlawful public protests, civil disobedience, vigilantism, and even terrorism. Such conduct adopts an end-justifies-the-means philosophy to accomplish supposed good for the masses. Activists pursue a noble end often to the detriment of divinely ordained rights to privacy, property, prosperity, and freedom of individual volition (Rom. 13:1–2; Titus 3:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:13). Ironically, Christian activism furthers Satan’s cause in alienating the unbelieving world and exalting man’s efforts instead of God’s grace.

Not only are more and more Christian churches promoting both legitimate and illegitimate forms of service at the expense of doctrine, but some pastors and their congregations have also become openly critical of consistent, sound Bible teaching. They deride doctrinal believers with statements like, “You sit on your hands, hiding in doctrine, never doing anything for God,” or “Christianity needs less doctrine and more works. Forget doctrine, get involved,” or “There is no fruit bearing in your life.”

These ‘fruit inspectors’ fail to recognize that without doctrine in the soul and the filling of the Holy Spirit, there is no such thing as effective worship or Christian service. They cannot grasp the principle that momentum in the spiritual life comes from thinking with divine viewpoint and that the greater the believer’s momentum, the greater his production of divine good and glorification of God in the angelic conflict.

Christian service is indeed our responsibility and privilege. Our production of divine good is an expression of the capacity in the soul that develops from living in God’s Word. Where positive volition and readiness from growing in grace and knowledge exist, the Lord opens doors for our particular service. We serve the Lord by doing a right thing in a right way. His way!

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Col. 3:23–24)

## *Tempting Believers to Worry*

A third element in Satan's strategy against the believer is to neutralize doctrine and doctrinal application through the mental attitude sins of worry and anxiety.<sup>77</sup> Worry is a great weapon in the hands of Satan. With it he persuades the believer to ignore or doubt the promises of God's Word, the sufficiency of God's grace and love, and the superiority of God's plan for the believer's life.

Worry is a mental attitude sin of self-torment and anxiety regarding almost anything in life. It is a disquieting state of mind involving illicit or undue concern, a state of restlessness and agitation, which produces mental disturbance, uneasiness, foreboding, and painful uncertainty. The believer consumed with worry anticipates only the worst results: danger, misfortune, trouble, disaster, death.

There is simply no basis for worry. Worry is a sin that cuts off fellowship with God in the Christian life (2 Tim. 1:7). Worry distracts from the spiritual life and is detrimental to spiritual growth. Worry blasphemes the character of God and says in effect that He is not capable of taking care of you. Every moment that you worry, you are a poor testimony for the Lord. Instead of being a flaming torch in the devil's world of darkness, you reduce yourself to a pit of smoldering ashes, producing thick smoke and making the darkness even darker.

Jesus Christ addressed mental attitude sins and worry with His disciples, commanding them not to "be anxious" over the details of life, such as food, water, or clothing (Matt. 6:25–31). This is the principle of logistical grace, God's complete provision for all believers.

"For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom [believe in Jesus Christ] and His righteousness; and all these things [logistical grace blessings] shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious [stop worrying] for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself." (Matt. 6:32b–34a)

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77. Mental attitude sins are a category of personal sin that includes pride, envy, jealousy, bitterness, hatred, vindictiveness, implacability, guilt feelings, fear, worry, anxiety, and self-pity (Prov. 8:13; Isa. 41:10; Phil. 4:6; 1 John 2:11). Mental attitude sins are the most destructive to the spiritual life. They can quickly initiate a cluster of sins that develop into "chain-sinning." See Thieme, *Isolation of Sin*, 12–14; *Mental Attitude Dynamics*.

The basis for logistical grace is possessing the righteousness of God, provided at the moment of salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ. God does not bless you because of what you do. God blesses you because you have His righteousness and because you are in His family and His plan. “All these things,” every physical and spiritual need, the necessary details of life, are faithfully supplied by “your heavenly Father.”

Logistical grace keeps believers alive (Ps. 68:19–20; 116:8a); supplies basic life support such as air, food, shelter, clothing, transportation (Matt. 6:11, 25–34); provides protection in the devil’s world (Ps. 4:8; Rom. 13:4; Heb. 1:14); and enables spiritual growth (Matt. 4:4; Eph. 1:3). All believers are sustained and protected by God’s logistical grace as long as they live on this earth.

Christ told the disciples to stop worrying about tomorrow, “for tomorrow will care for itself.” Logistical grace emphasizes the principle of living today—living one day at a time and each day as unto the Lord, not handicapped by the past and not concerned about the future. Put all problems in the Lord’s hands and remember to sort out the difference between the essentials and the details. Doctrine is an essential; clothing is a detail.

Paul reiterated Christ’s mandate to the Philippian believers, who were constantly afflicted with worry and anxiety.

Stop worrying about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall garrison your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6–7, corrected translation)

The principle is that only God’s peace makes it possible to face any circumstance free from worry. The word “peace” (εἰρήνη, *eirene*) as used in this verse means “benefit” or “prosperity.” God’s peace is a spiritual prosperity, contentment, a special benefit to those who keep advancing. His peace provides the objectivity to think clearly, to function in His plan, to glorify Him. He knows our failures, problems, and needs—both spiritual and material—and He has already solved everything through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). So what is the antidote for worry?



Casting all your anxiety [worries, problems, difficulties, frustrations] upon Him, because He cares [keeps on caring] for you. (1 Pet. 5:7)

“Casting” (ἐπιρίπτω, *epirripto*) is in the active voice, meaning you, the believer, produce the action of the verb. When the stress of fear and worry intrudes on your soul, you must cast—or hurl—your problems, your troubles, your worries, your difficulties, and your frustrations on the Lord. Throw them all on His back! Now you are no longer working. He is! The fight no longer needs to be yours. The mechanics of “casting all your anxiety” are the steps of the faith-rest drill—claiming the promises of the Bible and concentrating on the doctrine stored up in your soul until you are stabilized.<sup>78</sup> The Lord wants you to watch Him execute His promises. He commands you to “stand still” and watch *His* deliverance (Ex. 14:13, KJV).

“Do not fear, for I am with you;  
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,  
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”  
(Isa. 41:10)

You must never let down your guard. Satan is a predator, hungry to immobilize and devour the unwary. He incites anxiety so that spiritual momentum is destroyed from the inside. You must recognize the symptoms and effects of fear and vanquish their destructive tendencies. Confess, isolate, forget, and move on from these sins to restore stability and contentment and rely on the promises God has given.<sup>79</sup> Stop worrying! Resume God’s plan, purpose, and will for your life.

Worry in the heart of a man weighs it down,  
But a good word produces a superabundance of happiness.  
(Prov. 12:25, corrected translation)

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78. The steps of the faith-rest drill are discussed in Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 110–17; *The Faith-Rest Life* (2004), 53–55.

79. Thieme, *Isolation of Sin*, 9–12.

## *Hindering Christians from Doing God's Will*

When Satan succeeds in persuading the believer to ignore or doubt the Word of God, there is little opposition in the next phase of his attack: getting his subject to ignore and bypass the will of God. For this reason, Scripture exhorts the believer to “not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

Understanding divine guidance is a significant issue, for a believer often asks, “How can I know God’s will? How can I be guided by Him? What is God’s will for me in this crisis, difficulty, or problem in my life?” Divine guidance is the doctrine of determining the will of God. Divine guidance is the communication of divine will through divine revelation—the complete canon of Scripture. The Greek word for “will” is θέλημα (*thelema*), and when used with reference to God’s will for the believer, it refers to the purpose or plan He designed in eternity past (Eph. 6:6b). Many Scriptures deal with the principle of divine guidance. For example,

For Thou art my rock and my fortress;  
For Thy name’s sake Thou wilt lead me and guide me.  
(Ps. 31:3)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you  
should go;  
I will counsel you with My eye upon you. (Ps. 32:8)

For such is God,  
Our God forever and ever;  
He will guide us until death. (Ps. 48:14)

The question of the will of God for the individual believer falls into three categories. The *viewpoint* will of God—What does He want me to think? Divine viewpoint from Bible doctrine (Prov. 23:7a; Isa. 55:8–9; 2 Cor. 10:5). The *operational* will of God—What does He want me to do? This involves everything a Christian should do to glorify God: rebound, learn and apply doctrine, pray, be grace oriented, and produce divine good. The *geographical* will of God—Where does He want me to be? This should never be considered apart from the operational will of God. If the believer is *doing* what God wants him to do, he will eventually wind up in the *place* where God wants him to be.<sup>80</sup>

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80. Thieme, *Divine Guidance* (1999), 1–8.

The only way to know the will of God is to hear and understand what He reveals in the Bible. There is no divine guidance apart from advancing in the knowledge of God's Word and being empowered by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Carnality, ignorance, and lack of spiritual growth prevent the execution of God's will, and this creates casualties in the angelic conflict.

To better understand how Satan uses every distraction available to hinder believers from doing God's will, consider a particular failure of the Apostle Paul. At one point in Paul's ministry, he chose to pursue his own desires. God had designated him as the apostle to the Gentiles and commanded him to go to the burgeoning young church in Rome. But Paul had become sentimental and nostalgic. He longed to reunite with his old Jewish friends and colleagues in Jerusalem. Overcome by emotion, he rationalized a justification for the trip; he would personally accompany a monetary offering collected by the Gentiles for the destitute Jewish believers. Despite three warnings by the Holy Spirit (Acts 21:4, 10–14), Paul postponed going to Rome and instead departed for Jerusalem. His consequences for ignoring divine will would be devastating.

So how did Paul fail? He made a decision to execute his own will over God's instruction. By neglecting the viewpoint will of God, Paul was blinded to God's geographical and operational will. God needed Paul in Rome in order to continue teaching the unique Church Age doctrines to the Gentiles. Paul thought it more important to go to Jerusalem to tell the Jews about the Gentiles' tremendous response to his teaching. The road to Rome was God-centered; the road to Jerusalem was self-centered.

Regardless of the disobedience of the great Apostle, God's will would be accomplished. In time God would bring Paul back to His plan through a series of painful events. Paul eventually arrived in Rome in chains, but he did arrive at the place where God wanted him to be.

Satan seeks to entice believers to ignore God's Word, which prevents them from recognizing God's will for their lives. He especially targets advancing believers like Paul, arguably the greatest communicator of Church Age doctrine. Much to Satan's delight, Paul, at this particular point in his ministry, was deterred from God's will.

As a believer in Christ you must always be on guard for veils that obscure the will of God for your life. You must never ignore the circumstantial indicators God uses to direct you. If there is unexplained

suffering or failure in your life, if your plans do not seem to be working out, this may be God's way of getting your attention and steering you back onto His path. Remember, when you are straying and out of fellowship, God *still* has a plan for your life. When you fail, when you sin, the will of God is 1 John 1:9—rebound and keep moving. It is up to you to reorient to His perfect, all-knowing will, for “the LORD longs to be gracious to you” (Isa. 30:18).<sup>81</sup>

### *Discouraging Occupation with Christ*

As believers, our standard of happiness is not based upon any human factor in life. Our standard of happiness—the concentrated focus and contentment of the mature spiritual life—is based upon occupation with Christ. Only Jesus Christ taking first place in our lives will stop Satan in his tracks.

Occupation with Christ is maximum personal love, devotion, and respect for the Savior. To love others personally, we have to know them and their thinking. Likewise, we cannot love Jesus Christ until we know Him and how He thinks. And since we cannot see Him, there is no way to understand or love Him apart from knowing what He reveals of Himself in His Word.

When we grow to understand and then love the Lord Jesus Christ through His Word, our attention rivets on Him. He is our role model, the vital pattern for our lives. The Lord becomes our closest companion, influencing our thoughts and actions. As we live for Christ our priorities conform exclusively to His thinking. Arrogant self-centeredness is replaced by genuine humility and capacity for life. Once our spiritual lives depend solely upon encouragement from Christ, we cease to depend upon people for love, happiness, or support. Contentment characterizes our attitude regardless of circumstances. Problems fade away as the lusts and desires of the sin nature are overruled by occupation with Christ (2 Cor. 5:14a). We become spiritually self-sustaining. Not even suffering, disaster, shock, or pressure can dim the illuminating presence of the Lord Jesus Christ within us. The Apostle Paul describes this pinnacle of the spiritual life.

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81. Ibid., 18–22.

According to my earnest expectation and hope [absolute confidence], that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil. 1:20)

Since occupation with Christ is the key to claiming victory in the angelic conflict, the devil's objective is to promote various distractions that replace Christ as the focus in life. If we become preoccupied with self, people, wealth, or environment, frustration and misery are guaranteed. Fixing our eyes on anything other than Christ is buying into the fallacy of the cosmic system and opening the door to demon influence.

As Paul taught the Ephesians, believers whose lifestyles abandon the thinking of Christ walk “just as the Gentiles [unbelievers] also walk, in the futility [*μωταλότης*, *mataiotes*] of their mind” (Eph. 4:17). This *mataiotes*—an emptiness, or vacuum, in the soul—opens up and draws in thoughts of satanic propaganda and doctrines, perpetuating confusion and discontent.

### EYES ON SELF

The believer whose eyes are on himself is preoccupied with his own feelings, desires, and unrealistic self-image. Self-absorbed, he becomes hypersensitive and makes an issue of himself on every occasion. This hypersensitivity, an inordinate self-consciousness, divorces him from reality. The result is often paranoia and a consistent lack of consideration for others.

Instead of responding with humility, this believer reacts to circumstances with either self-pity or pride. He complains or panics in adversity, denies personal responsibility in failure, and neglects to orient to God's grace in success. Whether his self-esteem is deflated or exaggerated, he is perpetually discontented, bitter, implacable, even self-righteous and judgmental. Inevitably, he makes bad decisions from a position of weakness and plunges headlong into the chaos of the cosmic system.

Even the great spiritual giant Elijah was discouraged from occupation with the Lord and encouraged to be preoccupied with himself. Faced with a death threat from Satan's dupes, Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah succumbed to fear and fell into the trap of self-pity. No

longer in the operational will of God, he allowed the pressure of adversity to transform him into a carnal weakling. He moped and whined, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life" (1 Kings 19:4b).<sup>82</sup>

Jeremiah chapter 9 presents another example of eyes on self, this time with even more devastating and far-reaching results. The context of the passage describes the national disintegration of Judah, which had reached its peak following an eleven-year period of rejecting God's Word. The Jews had experienced great prosperity, but over time they lost sight of God's grace and turned their eyes inward. They became prideful in their own conceits. They thought they knew it all! They even transferred their worship of the Lord God of Israel to Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. In pronouncing His wrath upon the nation, the Lord warned His people not to boast of themselves but rather of the source of their blessing (Jer. 9:23–24). Paul made the same application to the Jews of his day. He commanded those who were boasting to "BOAST IN THE LORD" (2 Cor. 10:17). Boasting in the Lord is depending upon Him and realizing that He is the source of all blessing and prosperity.

### EYES ON PEOPLE

All believers at one time or another become distracted by other people. Yet a steady focus on others can lead to disorientation in the angelic conflict. Eyes on people is an inordinate preoccupation with others, whether instinctively disliked or greatly admired. The believer with eyes on people is consumed with the failures, strengths, thoughts, and actions of those in his periphery. Instead of concentrating on the Word and applying it to his own soul, his mental focus is one of comparing himself with others, competing with others, lusting for others' attention, conforming others to his standards, or tearing others down.

The believer with eyes on people has unrealistic expectations. He overlooks the reality of the sin nature and becomes frustrated and intolerant when not treated the way he thinks he should be treated. For example, when confronted with someone he views as inferior, he reacts in self-righteousness, denies his own weakness, and often attempts to bully his subject into more acceptable behavior. When confronted with someone admirable, he succumbs to iconoclastic or

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82. Elijah's failure is elaborated in Thieme, *Old Sin Nature vs. Holy Spirit*, 8–15.

role-model arrogance. That is, he imposes impossible standards upon his revered subject and then reacts with disenchantment and even antagonism when that person's weaknesses inevitably emerge. In either situation, unrealistic expectations result in a chain of arrogance-related mental attitude sins, including jealousy, bitterness, implacability, revenge motivation, anger, hatred, and self-pity. With these invisible shackles on the soul come the verbal sins of slander, gossip, maligning, and judging.

A particular danger is preoccupation with other believers. This can lead to discouragement and bitterness toward God and Christianity, sometimes to the total rejection of doctrine. Even the most mature believers upon whom we may set our sights will eventually reveal their feet of clay. In fact, some will be clay from the waist down, and if we set our eyes on them, we will be the ones to shatter. The Word of God warns,

“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind  
And makes flesh his strength,  
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.” (Jer. 17:5b)

God has given us just so much life on this earth, just so many heartbeats. By our own arrogance we destroy wonderful opportunities for happiness and blessing, and we do it by living in the cosmic system. Satan is successful when we get our eyes on people. What then is our defense? Eyes on the Lord!

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of  
faith . . . that you may not grow weary and lose heart.  
(Heb. 12:2–3)

When our eyes are on the Lord, we are not frustrated, angered, or disillusioned by people who do not meet our expectations or who mistreat us. Rather, we extend His attitude of grace—the antithesis of arrogance in the cosmic system—toward everyone with whom we are involved, whether friend or enemy, companion or stranger, believer or unbeliever.

### *EYES ON CIRCUMSTANCES*

The trap of thinking “the grass is greener on the other side” is another dangerous distraction for the Christian. Miserable are believers

who are preoccupied with their circumstances rather than occupied with Christ. They convince themselves that their problems would be solved if only they lived in a different city, married a different person, or had a better upbringing, education, or career. They spend their energy on changing their current situation or blaming something or someone else for it.

Who encourages and supports this agenda? None other than his majesty, the devil. His cosmic system seeks to distract us from God's plan and focus our attention on our environment. The world he rules is swarming with psychologists, sociologists, politicians, and even Christians who harp on altering circumstances as the solution to life's problems. When we fix our eyes on our surroundings and personal predicaments, when we hustle around trying to find relief while ignoring God's all-sufficient plan, our souls remain in a state of turmoil. We get upset and disturbed, fall apart, feel guilty, and are just overall discontented with life.

Remember the woman in the Garden? She had a personal relationship with the Lord in a perfect environment, she had a perfect man in marriage, and she even shared in his power over God's creation. Still, she blew the whole thing. Why? Because the woman was dissatisfied in her soul. She lusted for more power and control and therefore had no capacity to enjoy her tremendous blessings. By taking her eyes off what God provided and listening to Satan's offer of self-enlightenment, she made herself vulnerable to deception and confusion. Adam, of course, followed the woman's lead and was also distracted from God's perfect provisions. This situation will be demonstrated once again in the Millennium when, under the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ, man will revolt against yet another perfect environment (Rev. 20:7–9).

God's Word declares throughout that true happiness—an enduring inner contentment, peace, and stability—cannot be rendered by any set of external circumstances. The only environment capable of changing life is that which is developed in the soul. True happiness is produced by continuous application of doctrine. Happiness is not a fleeting emotional experience but rather a consistent contentment. It is that internal, moment-by-moment appreciation for all God provides through the person and work of Christ. The inner tranquillity derived from occupation with the Lord conquers human unhappiness and



unrest and generates tremendous capacity to enjoy the circumstances of life, whatever they may be (John 15:11; James 1:2–4).

David, in one of the darkest hours of his life, faced a set of circumstances that would cause many believers to panic and desperately long for greener pastures. Not only had David experienced the unfaithfulness of many friends, but now his beloved son Absalom had rebelled against him (2 Sam. 15–18). Absalom’s well-organized army had driven David from his palace in Jerusalem into the wilderness. David fled for his life with nothing but a sword, a few faithful followers, and scarce provisions. He appeared to have lost everything: his crown, his wealth, his friends, his loved ones. In reality, he had lost nothing. David set his eyes on the Lord and drew upon his stockpile of doctrine to sustain his soul. In the midst of this seeming disaster, he wrote twelve magnificent lines of Hebrew poetry, beginning with, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want [cannot and do not lack anything]” (Ps. 23:1).

These words had meaning for David and have application for us as believers living today. Our only defense against cosmic pressure to get our eyes on circumstances is to be occupied with the Lord. Only then are we able to live without becoming sidetracked or overwhelmed. If there are any people on the face of the earth who ought to be calm and courageous, exhibiting joy, strength, and impact under any circumstances, it ought to be those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Our lives never depend on who or what we are but on who and what Christ is.

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things [handle any circumstance] through Him [Jesus Christ] who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:12–13)

### *EYES ON WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS*

Many believers become casualties in the angelic conflict when they depend on money and material possessions as their source of fulfillment and happiness. Proverbs 28:22 describes such a believer as one with an “evil eye” who “hastens after wealth.” An “evil eye” is a

soul lacking in doctrine. Hastening for wealth is materialism—the excessive desire for things, whether for a more expensive car, a more ostentatious home, designer clothes, or just more money. It is a craving that precludes the contentment, peace, and stability of occupation with Christ. Much like an addictive drug, the snare of materialism amounts to a ceaseless roller coaster ride between exhilaration and misery.

The believer with eyes on wealth and possessions chases what he does not have. He aspires to greater wealth and bigger, better things; but when he acquires them, he is still unfulfilled and unhappy (Eccl. 5:10). The boredom and emptiness in his soul quickly return. Since no amount of possessions can fill the vacuum created by the neglect of doctrine, he inflicts upon himself perpetual frustration and divine punishment. His frantic search for happiness through materialism only guarantees more unhappiness, as he becomes enslaved to the details of life (Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:17). Spiritually bankrupt, material wealth becomes his desperate means to strength, power, self-worth, approbation, and love. The Book of Hebrews warns,

Let your character [lifestyle] be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.” (Heb. 13:5)

This verse is often misunderstood to mean money is the root of all evil. Notice, however, what really creates evil and its distraction: “the love of money”—avarice, cupidity, and the inordinate lust for wealth. There is nothing inherently wrong with making money or acquiring personal possessions. In fact, temporal blessings frequently accompany spiritual blessings. When Bible doctrine takes first priority in life, there is genuine capacity to enjoy and appreciate material gain. But if love for money supercedes occupation with Christ, the result is a pitiful, discontented slave to the object of lust. The principle is this: Money is a useful servant but a harsh and cruel master.

For by what a man is overcome [things which control him], by this he is enslaved. (2 Pet. 2:19b)

The Christian life is designed so that whether you have a little or a lot, you can be free from one of the cosmic system’s greatest contaminations—materialism. Your contentment, peace, and stability

are built on the advance of your Christian life, and by this you are able to come to your senses “*and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26b). If “content with what you have,” you will never be driven by the consuming desire for either amassing wealth or escaping poverty. You will remain focused on the true source of blessings, knowing that He will never desert or forsake you.

### *Promoting Fear of Dying*

One of the enemy’s favorite plays for making doctrine inaccessible for application is to create fear, especially the fear of physical death. Fear of dying destroys the believer’s capacity for blessing and happiness. It questions God’s wisdom regarding the believer’s purpose on Earth and his departure for eternity. Fear of death cannot prevent dying, yet it *can* prevent living the spiritual life and developing love for God. The fear of dying ultimately destroys the opportunity to glorify God.

The believer need not fear death. It is God’s victory (1 Cor. 15:54). There will be no more sorrow, tears, pain, or death—the old things of the temporal life will have passed away (Rev. 21:4). The departed believer will be face to face with the Lord, “absent from the body” that is “perishable,” and raised to one that is “imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:42; 2 Cor. 5:8). He will live forever in the many dwelling places of the Father’s house, which Christ has prepared (John 14:2). For the believer who lives in the confidence and light of this guaranteed eternal future, fear of dying is one of Satan’s flimsiest threats. In fact, living and dying are part of the same package for the spiritual life.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain [profit].  
(Phil. 1:21)

The mature believer lives life fully adjusted to God’s person and plan, eager for whatever life has to offer (Ps. 118:23–24). Through grace and doctrinal orientation, he knows that only God’s sovereign decision can determine the time, place, and manner of his departure from Satan’s domain (Ps. 31:15). He lives with the complete assurance that apart from God’s perfect timing, nothing can remove him from this life—no person, no circumstance, not even the devil and all the forces

of evil (Job 5:26). With absolute confidence he anticipates God's perfect provision of dying grace, the final, glorious experience of God's grace on Earth, the last tactical victory of the believer in the angelic conflict (Ps. 116:15).<sup>83</sup> Whether the dying period takes a year, a month, or merely a second, his death-shadowed valley is filled with peace and tranquillity, no matter how painful the circumstances. This believer looks back upon life with no regrets or guilt and with great satisfaction; he looks forward to the eternal rewards reserved on deposit for him (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:4). After he passes into eternity, the impact of his intrepid life delivers a salute from the grave to those still living.<sup>84</sup>

Not all believers glorify God in their attitude toward dying. Those who succumb to Satan's cosmic agenda of fear view death as the antithesis of happiness, safety, and security. Terrified by the unknown, the unprepared believer frets over how and when death will occur. He lives life trying to avoid dying—consumed with preserving health and youthfulness or averting situations that hold any potential for danger. Some, like Peter at Gethsemane, have even denied their faith in Christ rather than face death (Matt. 26:69–75). Failure to overcome this horrible fear and anxiety in the living phase results in walking through the inevitable “valley of the shadow of death” without benefit and without divine blessing (Ps. 23:4). Trepidation only intensifies the agony of dying. Fear of dying becomes a source of intensified pain that in many ways is worse than any physical pain the body can render.

Without God's provision of dying grace, there can be no testimony to loved ones or to others. The dying phase, then, is merely the final increment of divine discipline administered for disorientation to the Word of God. The believer who rejects God's grace, who disregards Bible doctrine, who chases the “wisdom of the world,” has fallen for cosmic lies (1 Cor. 1:20b). Once again Satan is victorious. He has succeeded in obscuring a believer's focus and nullifying his witness, this time through the fear of dying and death.

As a believer you should never fear death. Neither your death nor the death of a loved one should ever be a source of worry or despair. Grief is normal—fear is sin. Your only concern should be preparation

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83. Thieme, *Dying Grace* (2004), 14–17, 24–28.

84. The salute from the grave is further discussed in Thieme, *The Unfailing Love of God*, 103–6.

for death, and the preparation for death is the same as for life: Bible doctrine, Bible doctrine, Bible doctrine!

Should a doctor say, “You have a serious illness . . . you are a terminal case,” remember this: God provides in grace the resources needed to cope with any disaster in life. He just as easily supplies the grace needed in dying. God has designed His plan so that dying and death are a wonderful adventure, a fantastic finale to a spiritual life lived in the plan of God.

God has seen fit to make dying the reflection of living; your attitude toward death reveals the quality of your attitude toward life. If you fail to renovate your thinking with divine viewpoint, you resign yourself to Satan’s plan and stumble down the road of self-induced misery right into the dying phase of life. But if you learn and utilize the grace provision of God’s plan, you will travel up the glory road to dying grace. You are the one who says either yes to a pitiful, miserable crawl into heaven or yes to the walk across the high golden bridge of dying grace.

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. (Rom. 14:7–8)

## *Chapter Seven*

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# DEFENSIVE ACTION BY BELIEVERS

THE BELIEVER'S OBJECTIVE IN LIFE is to know and love God through the attainment of spiritual maturity. How does the believer reach this assigned objective? He makes a decision to renovate his mind in order to think with the mind of Christ. In other words, he consistently learns and metabolizes Bible doctrine. Doctrine in his soul produces spiritual momentum and the capacity to love God, to execute His plan, and to serve Him while defending against the unrelenting assaults of the angelic conflict. The knowledge of God becomes a protective fortress against the determined angelic antagonists.

Satan, in search of victims, carefully observes Church Age believers. The devil is the most powerful creature in the universe, yet he is not omnipotent. Neither is he omnipresent, although he skillfully commands a vast and highly organized army of demons involved in unceasing, worldwide operations. These hostile forces conduct reconnaissance and execute schemes that disguise the truth and distract believers. How is Satan's agenda targeted against believers? In the most insidious ways. He lures Christians into the cosmic system by appealing to the trends of the sin nature and by using deceptively cunning forms of direct influence in the believer's life.

Against our adversary, we as believers are never commanded to go on the offensive. We are in no way authorized to attack Satan's forces. We are not to run around trying to get rid of demons, 'bind' or rebuke Satan, or eradicate his influences in the world around us. We are not

capable! The incarceration of Satan will only be accomplished by Christ upon His return at the Second Advent (Rev. 20:2).

The New Testament epistles, written to instruct Church Age believers on every aspect of the Christian life, contain no mandates or instructions for casting out demons. Offensive action, the “authority to cast out the demons,” was a divine prerogative temporarily delegated to only a few during the time of the apostles (Mark 3:15). Furthermore, this power from God must not be confused with the bogus pagan ritual of exorcism, alleged to evict demons by means of uttering religious oaths.<sup>85</sup>

Christian activism is another example of taking the offensive against Satan and his cosmic system. These actions are not Christ-centered but man-centered. They are motivated by the idea that social engineering and protesting, sometimes to the point of violence, can eliminate evil from the devil’s world. Christianity is not spread by activism but by evangelism. Activists think they are solving problems, but what are they doing? They are destroying human volition—imposing themselves on others. They deny individuals the freedom either to succeed or to fail. Such attempts are contrary to the will and plan of God and are never part of the spiritual life.

The mission of defeating demons and their influence belongs strictly to God. We must avoid the arrogance of assuming a power that we do not possess. Victory over Satan’s operations cannot be attained by magic formulas or incantations, by human works or self-effort. We were created inferior in strength and power to the angels, including Satan and his fallen legion. On our own, apart from God’s grace provision, we are too weak to counter the craft and power of this superior foe. Our protection comes from the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit and through maintaining our spiritual lives. Only defensive action against Satan is effective. Utilizing the power of God to defend ourselves is the order of the day for the Church Age!

Submit therefore to God. Resist [ἀνθίστημι, *anthistemi*]  
the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

There are two divine commands in this verse: “submit” and “resist.” Our only legitimate offensive action is to “submit” to God by consistent cognition and inculcation of Bible doctrine. Our defensive

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85. Thieme, *Satan and Demonism*, 67–71.

mandate from God to “resist” is the application of metabolized doctrine to life. The Greek verb *anthistemi*, translated “resist,” means “to stand your ground against” and confirms our defensive posture. In a military context, *anthistemi* connotes a strongly entrenched position. Fortified with the principles of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to stand our ground against the devil and his troops. God promises in James 4:7 that Satan will flee from those who utilize divine protection. In the First Book of Peter, God stresses the importance of sustaining our defenses:

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist [*anthistemi*, hold your ground against] him, firm in *your* faith [doctrine]. (1 Pet. 5:8–9a)

To resist the devil and his demons, we are given two more commands: “be of sober spirit” and “be on the alert.” “Sober” (νήφω, *nepho*) means “vigilant or stabilized,” to be aware, well-balanced, self-possessed under all circumstances. *Nepho* denotes a stabilized mentality, free from mental attitude sins. It is this sound-mindedness, this orientation to divine viewpoint, that keeps us vigilant and “on the alert,” wide awake and prepared for an enemy probe. Satan and his evil forces are relentless. Though they flee in the presence of a strong defense, they repeatedly return for another shot at raiding and harassing, hoping to catch us in an unguarded position. Even when the greatest warrior, Jesus Christ, decisively defeated Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, the devil departed from Him only “until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). We must never go to sleep at our guard posts, lest we “give the devil an opportunity” to take us by surprise (Eph. 4:27).

Encouragement for our warfare against Satan is found in 1 John 4:4, where we are told, “Greater is He [Holy Spirit] who is in you than he [Satan] who is in the world.” Withstanding Satan’s assaults demands dependence on God, who has provided spiritual armor and weaponry for every one of us. That which God provides has no weaknesses. Clothed in divine power and protection, we can face the complexities of the devil’s world from a position of strength, as opposed to a position of human weakness armed with emotion and ineffective activism. Only by utilizing our God-granted spiritual resources can we resist Satan’s forces.



## THE ARMOR OF GOD: EQUIPMENT FOR THE CONFLICT

In Ephesians 6:10–17, the Apostle Paul presents a military metaphor to teach the principles of defense in the spiritual realm. At the time of the writing of Ephesians, Paul was in Rome under house arrest. He was in the company of the elite Praetorian Guard at all times (Acts 28:16). This distinguished corps of soldiers inspired the Apostle to establish a comparison to the spiritual realm. The Roman uniform provided the perfect illustration of the grace provisions and protection God has designed for the Church Age believer. The battleground for the spiritual life is the soul. When the armor of God is in place, the soul is protected from the onslaught of Satan's brigades. Just as the Roman soldier could face his enemies with these tools of warfare, so the Christian warrior equipped with his full armor can withstand the unseen foe.

In Paul's description of the great conflict, the Christian soldier is given his orders (Eph. 6:10–13) and then issued his equipment (Eph. 6:14–17). The Apostle uses freely the imperative mood, a reminder that the Christian soldier is to obey. Such obedience has its roots in faith, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith is the source of obedience, obedience is the source of soldierly discipline, and discipline blossoms into spiritual victory. The first command to the believer is therefore barked out with all the staccato force of a Prussian sergeant drilling the Potsdam Guard: Be Strong! In the Lord! In the Power! His Might!

Prior to defining the individual pieces of our combat gear, beginning in Ephesians 6:14, the Apostle Paul reports the enemy's full organization and position in verse 12:

For our struggle [spiritual combat] is not against flesh and blood [human beings], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. (Eph. 6:12)

Satan and his forces are located not only in the heaven and the stellar space but also on planet Earth itself. They are in our midst. In this reality is the reason to heed the commands of verses 11 and 13:

Put on [ἐνδύω, *enduo*] the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against [ἵστημι, *histemi*] the schemes [strategies] of the devil. (Eph. 6:11)

Therefore, take up [ἀναλαμβάνω, *analambano*] the full armor [πανοπλία, *panoplia*] of God, that you may be able to resist [*anthistemi*] in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm [*histemi*]. (Eph. 6:13)

These two verses deliver the Christian army's standing order for defensive action. The Greek verb *enduo* in the imperative mood is a mandate to "put on, equip, clothe oneself." The believer is to clothe himself with the full armor of God. In verse 13, the imperative of the verb *analambano*—"take up, pick up"—again commands the believer to use his volition for defense. He must pick up and put on the divine equipment! Paul's language makes reference to a soldier picking up his equipment from the ground and strapping it on for battle. The idea is putting on the armor and leaving it on permanently. This uniform is never to be removed. The heavenly depots are stockpiled with spiritual combat gear unclaimed and unused by believers who are ignorant of or indifferent to the armor. Not wearing that gear always results in spiritual vulnerability.

Clothed in our spiritual armor, we have the ability to "stand against" or "stand firm." Paul's threefold repetition of *histemi* and its derivative *anthistemi*, "to resist" (Eph. 6:11, 13–14), emphatically reinforces the commands in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8–9a to remain on the defensive under these combat conditions.

We hold our forward position by standing firm against the strategies of the devil. Satan uses false doctrine and temptations of the sin nature in order to distract us from the plan of God. Any time or occasion the prowling devil seeks to devour our defensive line is "the evil day," stated in verse 13. Sooner or later all of us face enemy assault. In fact, until the Rapture, "the evil day" of satanic attacks will continue without reprieve. There can be no neglect of the armor if we intend to maintain our defenses. The doctrinal ground upon which we stand must be held.

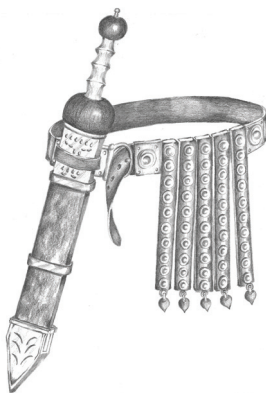
The ancient Roman warrior who inspired Paul's metaphor kept his arms at the ready. His equipment was precisely stacked in camp so that he could quickly put it on and be armed and ready to move into battle position. At "the sound of the trumpets, the motions of the colors," he

instantly stood to, ready to repel any assault.<sup>86</sup> Protected by his complete armor and properly trained in the expert use of his weapons, he fought with great courage and skill. “For, as the well trained soldier is eager for action, so does the untaught fear it.”<sup>87</sup> This same combat eagerness and fearlessness can be attained by the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and inculcated with Bible doctrine in his soul. Dependence upon each piece of battle equipment, magnificently delineated in verses 14–17, is crucial for victory. By divine order, then, the Christian soldier must,

Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:14–17)

*“Having Girded Your Loins with Truth”  
(Ephesians 6:14a)*

Implied by “girded the loins” is the soldier’s belt, the basic and central item worn by the Roman legionnaire. It consisted of a leather girdle worn around the waist, studded with metal plates, and fastened with a buckle. Suspended from the belt were the scabbard for the sword and loops for ropes and rations; all were easily accessible as needed. Thick strips of leather hung down from the belt to help protect the soldier’s lower body. Greek literature and statues portray the soldier’s most valuable possessions attached to this belt.



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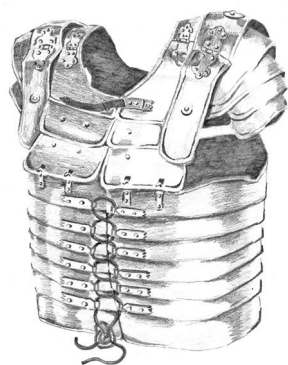
86. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *The Military Institutions of the Romans*, trans. Lieutenant John Clark (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1960), 87.

87. *Ibid.*, 59.

Paul wrote about the belt first and foremost because he understood its fundamental importance. For the Roman soldier, the belt was the key to the rest of the *panoplia*, or full armor. For the Christian warrior, the belt of truth is the foundation of the armor from God. It signifies the means of how we stand, how we build our defenses in the spiritual life. With truth! Girded with the strength of Bible doctrine! This most vital provision comprises the entire realm of Bible doctrine, all its truths and all its categories. The Christian warrior who buckles on the belt of truth that God intends for him to wear is preparing his fortification through knowledge and obeisance to Scripture: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18a).

*“Having Put on the Breastplate of Righteousness”  
(Ephesians 6:14b)*

Together the breastplate and the belt became the basic body armor. It was the belt that held the breastplate securely in place, even as it supported the heavy leather strips and other accessories. So solid and sturdy was this ancient coat of mail that it stood upright by itself and was frequently used as a campstool. Its primary purpose, however, was the protection of every part of the soldier’s torso, from his neck down to his waist. It was the ancient Kevlar vest.



The Roman soldier’s breastplate was usually constructed of leather and often overlaid with metal strips or mail. Shaped like a sleeveless coat, it covered both chest and back, fitted the shoulders, and was fastened down the front by means of a series of studs and slots. Back hinges gave the body armor a degree of flexibility, and the metal offered added protection for the vital organs. Many breastplates were inscribed with the wearer’s rank and decorations. Persians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians wore linen breast plates. Others used leather or even horn. In contrast, the Roman soldier’s cuirass of metal afforded much better protection.

The Christian warrior dons a breastplate of righteousness. Held in place by the belt of truth, the breastplate is entirely dependent upon the accumulation of Bible doctrine in the believer's soul. The word "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaïosune*) refers here to *experiential righteousness*—growing spiritually in order to live a life in obedience to the operational orders of God (1 Tim. 6:11). It is experiential, since it is the result of the continuous process of living the spiritual life. This righteousness is not morality or good deeds. It is not a superficial piety but rather a way of life in the soul, a righteousness from spiritual growth that characterizes and protects the maturing Christian. Totally divorced from self-righteousness, it is the product of grace orientation and divine viewpoint. It represents inner virtue, the integrity attained "by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2b).

It took time and conditioning for the Roman soldier to fasten on his breastplate and become accustomed to the weight of the ancient armor. So it is with the Christian warrior. The more we are trained in the grace and knowledge of God, the more time we spend filled with the Holy Spirit and the less time we spend in carnality. With God's Word as our foremost priority, we progressively think with the mind of Christ, and we develop capacity for stability, contentment, and grace and doctrinal orientation in all circumstances, whether adverse or prosperous. This capacity becomes an impervious barrier to the enemy, who prowls around waiting to exploit any spiritual weakening.

The believer who neglects to put on the breastplate of experiential righteousness opens himself to defeat. In the persistent absence of doctrine, the sin nature dominates thinking and spiritual advance reverts to spiritual decline. No longer can the breastplate protect the "heart," the mentality of the soul, from being overwhelmed with disastrous false doctrine.<sup>88</sup> Formerly positive, this now carnal believer thinks human viewpoint as he is absorbed into the cosmic system. Propelled further down the road of spiritual decline—reversionism—

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88. Although the word "heart" in the Bible, from the Hebrew לֵב (*leb*) and the Greek καρδία (*kardia*), sometimes refers to the physiological heart, it is frequently used for that part of the mentality of the soul called the "right lobe," the locale for thinking divine viewpoint (1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 23:7). See Thieme, *Mental Attitude Dynamics*, 53.

he sets his mind “on the things that are on earth” and thinks evil in his heart (Col. 3:2b; Matt. 9:4b).<sup>89</sup>

To avoid such tragedy on the spiritual battlefield, the positive believer sets his “mind on the things above” (Col. 3:2a). He realizes that God’s standards cannot be met apart from renovated thinking. Where experiential righteousness exists, the cosmic system does not. Just as the body armor of the Roman soldier protected him from fatal attacks, so the Christian’s body armor deflects the enemy’s debilitating blows of counterfeit truth. Wearing the breastplate of righteousness, the advancing Christian warrior mounts an essential defense to offset Satan’s assaults.

*“Having Shod Your Feet with the Preparation  
of the Gospel of Peace”  
(Ephesians 6:15)*

No matter how sophisticated our weapons of war may become, warfare demands the presence of the infantry. Infantrymen throughout history are conditioned to travel extensive distances to perform the most difficult missions—mostly on foot. It is no wonder that one of the first lessons any infantryman learns is to take care of his feet. If his feet are not in top condition, fully protected from the looming afflictions of frostbite, trench foot, and blisters, the infantryman can become a casualty. Needless to say, combat boots are indispensable.

The Roman infantry soldier was an inspiration to the Apostle Paul. These men were consistently required to march, fully armed, ten miles to and from camp. They were conditioned to cross vast distances by foot to execute their mission. The Roman infantrymen were called *caligati*, based on the name of their heavy footgear, the *caligae*. Similar to sandals, *caligae* were made of hobnail-studded leather soles, half an inch thick. These were bound securely to the foot, over

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89. Reversionism is the way of life the believer chooses when he turns away from God’s plan, will, and purpose for his life and returns to a former belief, a former viewpoint, a former lifestyle. The reversionist has not lost his salvation, but he is under the influence of Satan’s cosmic system (1 Tim. 4:1). By his own volition, he involves himself in sin and evil and suffers the consequences of self-induced misery and divine punishment (Heb. 12:4–15). See Thieme, *Reversionism*.



the instep and around the ankles, with thick leather thongs. Strips of cloth or fur placed inside the sandals served as socks. Undoubtedly, this intricate piece of gear was as vital to the *caligati's* performance and survival as the weapons he carried.

By comparison, the 'feet' of the believer must be well equipped and protected for his critical mission. He must be shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The Greek verb ὑποδέω (*hupodeo*), translated "shod," means "to tie or bind on footwear," which is a necessary preparation for the foot soldier. The footgear of preparedness is the Gospel. The Christian soldier must arrive on the battlefield ready to go into action, ready to present the Gospel to a lost and dying world. The phrase "of peace" emphasizes the doctrine of reconciliation—the work of Jesus Christ on the cross that removes the barrier between God and sinful man, replacing enmity with peace (Rom. 5:11; 2 Cor. 5:18–19).<sup>90</sup> Every believer in the Lord's army must have his spiritual combat boots laced up at all times, ready to move out, deliver the Gospel, and walk in His service (Eph. 2:10).

All Church Age warriors are called to full-time Christian service, of which witnessing, or personal evangelism, is a critical component (Prov. 11:30b; Acts 1:8).<sup>91</sup> Effective witnessing is more than our obligation; it is our privilege to tell others of the Savior. Just as the leather, hobnailed sandals carried the Roman legionnaire to his posts of duty in the far-flung corners of the empire, so the spiritual combat boots prepare and protect us in relaying the good news of the Gospel to unsaved mankind. Whether our commission takes us to the remotest parts of the earth or simply within the confines of our own home, we must be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks" (1 Pet. 3:15), for "the light of the gospel" breaks through the darkness of unbelief (2 Cor. 4:4).

The Gospel message is an enemy of Satan. Why? Because the good news of salvation refutes his arrogant charge that a loving God could

90. Thieme, *The Barrier*, 31–33.

91. Thieme, *Witnessing* (1992).

never condemn His own creatures. Consequently, the devil is as intent on obscuring the Gospel as God is on revealing it. Armed with religion, humanistic philosophies, the promise of security through materialism and achievement, and hostility toward anyone and anything identified with Christ, our adversary and his legions perpetually seek to veil the “gift of God” (Eph. 2:8) to the unbelieving world.

To counteract this ceaseless offensive, we must be fortified with information from a thorough knowledge of the doctrines of salvation. Regardless of the particular words spoken, witnessing demands accurate content: Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone! Even in the face of strong opposition, the Gospel must be presented with bold clarity (1 Thess. 2:2). Most importantly, witnessing demands the filling of the Holy Spirit, who provides us with wisdom and sensitivity for Gospel presentation. It is the Holy Spirit who wields the Word of God to penetrate the soul of the unbeliever and activate “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

With the above conditions met, our boots are securely fastened. We can confidently say, “I am eager [I am ready!]” (Rom. 1:15). Shod with the preparation of good news, we are protected from the obstacles that seek to thwart its delivery. We will not be intimidated by hostility or threat of persecution. We will neither compromise truth nor be discouraged by false doctrines of salvation. We will not succumb to fear of failure or ridicule. We will simply traverse the rugged terrain of the devil’s world in anticipation of the fruits of our labor: the joy of seeing souls saved in time to the everlasting glory of Jesus Christ throughout eternity.

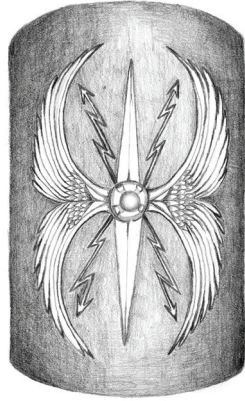
*“In Addition to All, Taking Up the Shield of Faith”  
(Ephesians 6:16)*

The Roman soldier’s shield, measuring four feet by two and one-half feet, covered most of the body. The shield was constructed of a double thickness of planks joined together with glue derived from the hides of bulls. The shield’s outer surface was then wrapped with canvas and covered with calfskin. Along the top and bottom edges, the shield had an ornamental metal rim made of iron, which protected the shield from



being damaged when set on the ground. The rim also helped ward off the cutting strokes of enemy swords in combat. The shield was fitted with an iron boss in order that it might deflect the more destructive blows of stones, long javelins, and fire missiles.

To protect the believer in every exigency of life, God issues him a shield far surpassing that of the Roman soldier—"the shield of faith." Faith removes dependence on self and substitutes dependence upon the one who is the source of joy and strength, the Lord Jesus Christ. R. C. H. Lenski summarizes the use of the shield to extinguish the blazing arrows of Satan:



Hold up to the devil, not merely your believing or subjective faith, but the Word, the doctrine, the pertinent Scripture passage, the objective content of faith, of course, also with your whole heart believing, relying on its truth and power.<sup>92</sup>

This reference to the shield of faith points to the function of the faith-rest technique—a spiritual regimen whereby the believer is able to overcome any mental distress or concern, like fear, anger, or worry, and rapidly recover mental stability in the face of adversity. Execution of the faith-rest drill requires claiming a biblical promise, gleaning from this promise a relevant doctrinal rationale, then reaching a doctrinal conclusion.<sup>93</sup> The result is a confident attitude that the Lord's perfect provision is the solution.

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deut. 31:6)

The word of the LORD is tried;  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. (Ps. 18:30b)

92. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1937), 670–71.

93. A rationale is an underlying reason, justification, or explanation. Every biblical promise is backed by a doctrine or series of doctrines. Using a doctrinal rationale is a logical process of moving toward a biblical conclusion.

If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? (Rom. 8:31b)

Many a Roman fighting man lost his life because he was caught without his shield. Likewise, too many believers become casualties in the angelic conflict because they fail to pick up and carry their spiritual shields of faith. They have no Bible doctrine residing in their souls. Consequently, they lack the doctrinal rationales of the faith-rest drill and cannot repel the cosmic missiles hurled against them. Their confidence in God's grace and provision departs. The finest shield cannot protect a Christian warrior as long as it remains on the ground. Why be exposed to the enemy when such a fantastic piece of armor is available for the defense?

"You will be able" in Ephesians 6:16 is the future active indicative from δύνάμει (*dunamai*), which anticipates the battle and indicates a training period before the use of the shield. This is exactly the way it is in the Christian life. The believer begins by learning basic biblical promises, then he gradually advances to more complex doctrines. He may use doctrinal rationales including (1) the essence of God rationale, focusing on the attributes of God's very nature that guarantee His promises and the believer's security; (2) the logistical grace rationale, emphasizing God's faithfulness in supplying His children's needs; and (3) the plan of God rationale, affirming the believer's place in God's eternal purpose and describing the divine assets provided to fulfill one's spiritual destiny on Earth.<sup>94</sup> The very first time the believer picks up his shield, he may do so tentatively. However, once he discovers that doctrine and promises help deflect problems and difficulties of all kinds, his confidence increases. The shield of faith becomes more effective through constant training and use.

Armed with his faith-shield, the believer is able to extinguish the "flaming missiles," or fire arrows, the incendiary bombs of ancient warfare (Eph. 6:16). Notice who has an entire arsenal of these flaming missiles at his disposal: "the evil *one*," Satan. His psychological weaponry includes fear, worry, boredom, loneliness, bitterness, disappointment, adversity, and yes, even prosperity. In prosperity, the believer has a tendency to let down his guard. He can so easily become blinded to the source of his blessings and to the importance of

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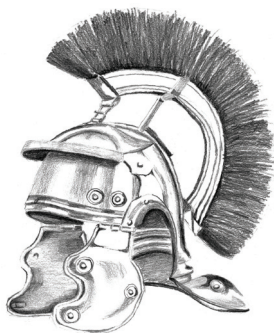
94. Thieme, *The Faith-Rest Life*, 53–54.

Bible doctrine. The believer must keep in mind that for all Satan's power, for all his devices, Satan has no weapon powerful enough to destroy or penetrate the shield of faith. His blazing arrows fall harmlessly to the ground.

*“And Take the Helmet of Salvation”  
(Ephesians 6:17a)*

The helmet is armor placed on the head for protection. With the exception of the standard-bearer, who was permitted to wear a wolf's head, every man in the Roman Army, from the highest officer down to the last private, wore a helmet.

While most ancient warriors wore helmets of lightweight, breathable cloth or leather, the Roman helmet was made of bronze, as metal proved the best protection against head injuries. Fitted over an iron skullcap lined with leather skins, the Roman helmet covered the back of the head and was reinforced by a back plate to safeguard the soldier's neck. Instead of a visor, this helmet had a small metal peak jutting out in front to deflect the downward blows of the opponent. Hinged bronze cheek pieces held the headpiece securely in place. Atop each helmet was a ring into which was placed a crest of horsehair or feather plumes, the color of which marked the soldier's cohort or legion. For instance, the helmet of the Praetorian who was guarding Paul would have borne a gold crest.



Just as the Roman helmet sheltered the soldier's most vital part, so the helmet of salvation shelters the believer's most vital part, the soul. The soul is the immortal, immaterial essence of man that comprises the real person. The characteristics that make up the essence of man's soul are self-consciousness, mentality, volition, and conscience. The mentality of the believer's soul is where he thinks divine viewpoint. It is the center of knowledge in the spiritual life, "for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7a, KJV). It is therefore apropos that the Roman helmet was chosen for this illustration.

Since Paul is addressing the believer, the “helmet of salvation” does not refer to the act of being saved but rather to the believer’s assurance of his eternal security. The helmet reminds the believer that salvation is an undeserved gift from God and guards against the lies that seek to undermine confidence in this irrevocable status. In other words, by taking up the helmet, the believer protects his soul with the biblical doctrines of salvation. He lives in the light of eternity and stands on the conviction that there is nothing he can do to cancel salvation—no sin, no failure, no renunciation. How great is God’s grace and immutable promise! This brings confidence in facing the enemy.

And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.  
(John 10:28)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38–39)

Each part of the Roman helmet is analogous to a doctrine of salvation. For example, the skullcap’s skin lining emphasizes the saving work of Christ on the cross.<sup>95</sup> The first Biblical reference to skin in connection with salvation is found in Genesis 3:21: “And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” Skins are the result of the sacrificial shedding of an animal’s blood. Adam and Eve were covered in skins that depicted Christ’s future sacrifice. By the shedding of His blood—the substitutionary spiritual death—Jesus Christ covered, or made atonement for, man’s sins. Therefore, at the moment of salvation God is free to impute His absolute righteousness, which covers man’s vulnerability, the nakedness of his spiritual death.

In Scripture, bronze is frequently associated with judgment (Ex. 27:2, 6; 38:2; Num. 21:9; Rev. 1:15), so the bronze casque points to the fact that Christ was judged by God for our sins. Gold typifies deity (2 Chron. 4:19–22), and the golden crest expresses that Christ was

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95. The skullcap lining specifically illustrates the doctrines of redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation. See Thieme, *The Barrier*, 4–6, Appendices D and E.

God manifest in the flesh. The plume identified the cohort or legion to which the soldier belonged. In this analogy the plume identifies the Church Age believer as part of Christ's legion (1 Pet. 2:9). Finally, the cheek pieces, which secured the helmet in battle, portray the Christian warrior's eternal security, guaranteed by the immutability of God.

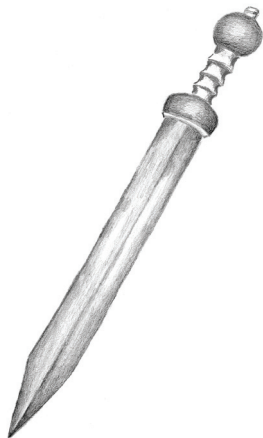
The believer who fails to strap on his helmet of salvation is easily rendered *hors de combat* in the Christian life. He falls right into the trap of one of Satan's favorite pieces of propaganda: Salvation can be lost. Such a casualty lives in anxiety, without confidence, repeatedly rededicating himself and reaffirming his faith. Only a colossally arrogant believer would presume that his sins or failures are greater than the work of Christ on the cross and that he could cancel what God has accomplished. Neither God nor man nor angel can cancel or destroy the believer's unbreakable, eternal relationship with God. The subjective preoccupation with the loss of salvation not only blasphemes God but also squanders the opportunity for spiritual growth.

The believer who wears his helmet lives with the conscious reality of God's greatest demonstration of love and grace through Christ. Armed with the doctrine of eternal security, the believer leaves the settled issue of salvation behind, puts his life in the Lord's perfectly capable hands, and advances in the plan of God.

*“The Sword of the Spirit, Which Is the Word of God”  
(Ephesians 6:17b)*

Having donned the helmet, nothing remains but to grasp the sword. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” is Bible doctrine. Bible doctrine is the believer's defensive weapon, empowered by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As the divine author of the Word of God (Heb. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:21), the Holy Spirit guarantees the accuracy of the Scriptures in the original languages (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16). He is also the Mentor who teaches the believer (John 14:26; 15:26). Our human intelligence alone cannot comprehend spiritual information, so God the Holy Spirit provides the necessary ‘spiritual IQ’ for our finite minds to understand the revelation of the infinite wisdom of God. Every word of Scripture is valuable and necessary for living according to God's truth, the basic protection against Satan's cosmic system.

Swords have always been symbolic of warfare and slaughter, and many kinds of swords existed in the ancient world. Earlier swords were made of bronze; those of later periods were forged of iron. Although other individual weapons were in general use—the bow, the spear, the javelin, the mace, the sling—the sword was the basic weapon for close combat.



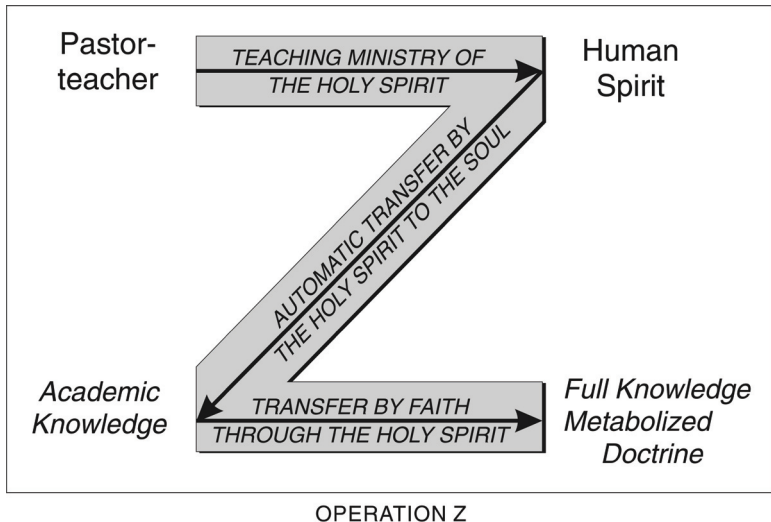
In Ephesians 6:17, Paul uses μάχαιρα (*machaira*)—the general Greek word for a sword. In the context, *machaira* refers to the classic Roman short sword, called *gladius* in the Latin. Paul observed the Praetorian Guard carrying this weapon. Vegetius describes it as a “two-foot blade, about four inches wide, two-edged, pointed, carried by a belt.”<sup>96</sup> Short, light, and maneuverable, the *gladius* never left the user off balance or vulnerable. He could thrust or parry and slash to the left or right without having to regain his balance. Most importantly, the sword’s

double edge, converging to a point, made every inch of its blade effective in combat. Many an arrogant opponent’s boast dissolved into a death rattle as the valiant legionnaire caught the barbarian unprepared to parry the thrust of this destructive, deadly weapon.

Against the believer’s enemies, the power of the sword of the Spirit is unsurpassed. Why is this so? Because “the Word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12a, corrected translation). God the Holy Spirit makes its truths understandable and usable by every believer with positive volition through the function of the grace apparatus for perception (GAP). The mechanics of GAP are called Operation Z. These are the mechanics through which spiritual phenomena become doctrine understood and believed in the soul of the believer.

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96. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *The Military Institutions of the Romans*, 20.



Under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, doctrinal information communicated by a pastor-teacher is transferred from the believer's human spirit to his soul as "academic knowledge." Using the believer's positive volition, God the Holy Spirit then graciously converts academic knowledge into "full knowledge" as nourishment for spiritual growth.<sup>97</sup>

However, even the mightiest weapon is ineffective in the hands of an unprepared, undisciplined user. The Roman recruit was well aware of this reality and, consequently, was compelled to master the use of his sword through long hours of sweat and drill. In order to wield his blade in the heat of battle, he had to cultivate strength, wrist control, elbow and shoulder agility, and expert footwork. He had to learn the vulnerable areas of his enemies and perfect the accuracy of his cuts and thrusts.

Likewise, the Christian warrior must persevere in mastering the use of the sword, God's Word. He must utilize the power of the Holy Spirit and gain spiritual strength through persistent training under the authority of a pastor-teacher. He must systematically learn the categories and intricacies of doctrine in order to make correct application to experience.

97. Thieme, *The Unfailing Love of God*, 47–51.

Executing the faith-rest technique, thinking and using doctrinal rationales, and parrying false doctrine all represent proficiency in the use of this defensive weapon.

Though the Roman sword was an ingenious device, as long as it remained sheathed, its power to devastate the enemy was potential. To become useful in the believer's life, the doctrines contained in the Word of God must be unsheathed from the printed page and transferred to the soul. The believer must *apply* the doctrine as his sure defense. The Christian warrior who wields the "sword of the Spirit" will not be ambushed or rendered defenseless, even against the formidable antagonists warring in the angelic conflict.

### *Put on the Full Armor*

The soldier in the ranks cannot see all parts of the battlefield and cannot keep abreast of the changing tactical situation. Panoramic strategy is the responsibility of the commander. Implicit obedience is the responsibility of the soldier of Christ, so that the plan of the Supreme Commander might be executed. The greatest victory of submission resulted from the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was "obedient to the point of death" (Phil. 2:8b).

As a Christian warrior you *must* pick up, put on, and leave on the full complement of spiritual armor and weaponry in order to defend against your enemies. If your attitude toward the teaching of God's Word is negative, you will not pick up or put on the full armor. If you rely on your own strength and human energy, if you operate apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit and cognition of Bible doctrine, you will be caught off-guard and unprepared, unable to resist the evil one. The spiritual battlefield lies strewn with casualties who disregarded God's mandates and provisions. You reap that which you sow.

Let destruction come upon him unawares;  
And let the net which he hid catch himself;  
Into that very destruction let him fall. (Ps. 35:8)

Donning the *full* armor of God is the defensive attitude of the believer who is an effective witness for the Prosecution in the angelic conflict. This is the believer who persistently renovates his thinking to the mind of Christ. He is never off-balance or defenseless. He possesses



the capacity to persevere in the face of overwhelming odds. Consistently utilizing the assets God has provided for defense, he submits to the will of God through the filling of the Holy Spirit, he knows the will of God from the Bible doctrine in his soul, and he grows in the will of God by the advance to spiritual maturity. This is the Christian warrior who represents the Lord Jesus Christ to a fallen world and glorifies God to the maximum in both time and eternity. Follow the command!

Gird your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:13b)



## *Chapter Eight*

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# HOW CAN A LOVING GOD ETERNALLY CONDEMN HIS CREATURES?

THE IMPUGNING OF GOD'S ESSENCE began with Satan's prehistoric appeal of his just sentence and will continue through the end of human history. The very arrogance that ignited the devil's revolt defines his policy of human good and seeks to separate God's love from the function of His righteousness and justice. In this desperate attempt to discredit the Creator's infallible nature lies the basis for the angelic conflict. As the ruler of this world, Satan is dedicated to perverting God's love in the minds of man and thereby perpetuating the question, "How can God who loves the world so much be so unfair as to condemn anyone to an eternal lake of fire?"

Scripture reveals the answer to this otherwise unanswerable question. God in His awesome glory can never compromise any attribute of His character. If He did, He would not be God. He cannot therefore compromise His righteousness and justice—His standards and fairness—in order to deal with imperfect creatures solely out of love. The solidarity of God's attributes is behind everything He thinks and does.

"The Rock! His work is perfect,  
For all His ways are just;  
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,  
Righteous and upright is He." (Deut. 32:4)

Never have God's love and perfect fairness been more dramatically portrayed than in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross. God the Father, demonstrating His unfathomable love toward undeserving creatures, "made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21). His justice imputed all human sins to Christ and judged Him in our place. His righteousness approved of the perfect God-man and accepted His substitutionary sacrifice, with the result that God can now provide salvation to mankind through grace (Rom. 5:8–9). This is the coordinated operation of God's essence.

"For God loved the world so much, that He gave His uniquely born Son, that anyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the person of the unique Son of God." (John 3:16–18, corrected translation)

The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23b)

When a person accepts Christ as Savior, in grace God the Father imputes to him His own perfect righteousness and eternal life (Rom. 3:22). On the other hand, when a person rejects the free gift of salvation, he chooses to rely upon his own works and good deeds. Relative, human righteousness can never measure up to God's perfect righteousness. Thus God's justice condemns the unbeliever because what God's righteousness rejects, His justice must judge. If He did not condemn the unbeliever to the lake of fire forever, God's essence would certainly be compromised.

So in response to the age-old charge of Satan, *God is just as fair in casting the unbeliever into the lake of fire as He is in providing the believer with eternal salvation.* Human history evidences that no one goes to the lake of fire except by his own negative volition. Those who escape eternal condemnation do so strictly by their personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The angelic conflict was initiated by the free will of the angels, and the conflict will be resolved by the free will of man. Angels observe man's positive volition as he first receives salvation through faith in

the finished work of Christ and as he then demonstrates the sufficiency of God's provisions through daily study and appropriation of His Word. In the intensified angelic conflict, God has made it possible for believers to be transformed into victors as they meet the enemy offensive with stability, confidence, and enduring occupation with Christ.

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20–21)

## *Appendix*

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# ELECT ANGEL ORGANIZATION

### I. Introduction

- A. The conclusion of the prehistoric angelic conflict in heaven yielded two opposing forces: those angelic creatures who remained obedient to God, the elect, and those who did not, the fallen. The true size of these angelic armies is indeterminable but likely in the hundreds of millions. Of the elect forces David said, “The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands” (Ps. 68:17*a*); and in Gethsemane, Jesus said, “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53); and the Apostle John “heard the voice of many angels around the throne . . . and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11).
- B. These myriads of elect angels in the heavenly protocol are a well-defined organization. Created to glorify God, they perform various duties in heaven and on Earth: heralding and issuing divine plans and policy for human history, executing declarations and judgments, battling the demonic hordes as combatants in God’s heavenly army, and ministering to believers on Earth.

- C. They are commanded by Jesus Christ, “the LORD of hosts” (Ps. 46:7), and composed of three descending ranks: the six-winged seraphim, who lead in worship and command the elect angel armies; the four-winged cherubim, who guard God’s holiness; and the wingless elect angels, who serve as messengers, guardians, and soldiers.
- D. There is much we do not know about elect angels. God has revealed glimpses of their functions and hierarchy primarily in the Books of Daniel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Luke, and Revelation.

## II. Seraphim

### A. Definition and Description

- 1. Seraphim (שֶׁרָפִים, *seraphim*) are the super-royalty among elect angels. Like stars for military generals, an insignia of six wings distinguishes the seraphim as the highest ranking angels in the universe.
  - a. They are described in Isaiah 6:2: “with two he covered his face,” depicting integrity and humility in divine worship; “with two he covered his feet,” depicting respect for divine authority; “and with two he flew,” depicting rapid mobility in the communication of divine policy.
  - b. The rank of seraph was created after the fall of Satan as a reward to those angels who achieved spiritual maturity.
- 2. Seraphim have two roles:
  - a. As leaders of heavenly worship, to glorify God.
  - b. As angelic heralds, to function as messengers between God and man.

### B. Highest Ranking Seraphim—Archangels

Comparable to four-star generals, archangels perform the most critical and distinguished duties with regard to divine proclamation and judgment.

#### 1. Michael

- a. The title of archangel is specifically used with Michael in Jude 9 as he “disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses.”
- b. Michael commands the army of angels who defend Israel.

- 1) He is referred to as Israel's prince in Daniel 10:21.
- 2) In the Tribulation, "Michael and his angels" will wage heavenly warfare with "the dragon and his angels" and specifically defend the believing Jews from the wrath of Satan (Rev. 12:7; cf. Dan. 12:1). Michael will throw Satan and all fallen angels out of heaven and then lead the elect angels in combat against the demon armies.

## 2. Gabriel

- a. He was commissioned to explain to Daniel the vision of the ram and he-goat in Daniel 8:16 and the prediction of the seventy-week eschatology in Daniel 9:21.
- b. He was sent to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11–19).
- c. He was sent to the virgin Mary to announce the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26–27).
- d. Called "an angel of the Lord" in Luke 2:9, he brought the news of the First Advent to the shepherds.
- e. He is "*the* archangel" whose voice command will assemble living believers at the Rapture, as "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven" to meet them "in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

## C. Other Seraphim in Scripture

1. The angel "with a burning coal in his hand" who ordained Isaiah (Isa. 6:6–7).
2. The "four living creatures" stationed in the throne room of God (Rev. 4:6–8), who proclaim the judgments of historical disaster (military, religious, economic, social, national, natural, disease) of the Tribulation (Rev. 6–18).
3. "The strong angel" of Revelation 5:2, 10:1, and 18:21.
4. The messenger sent from God the Father to God the Son in Revelation 14:15. This angel takes messages from God the Father in the "temple which is in heaven" (Rev. 14:17) to the cloud where the Lord Jesus Christ sits prior to His tribulation judgment on Earth.
5. The angel with "power [authority] over fire" who "came out from the altar" (Rev. 14:18).

6. The angel described as “another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory” (Rev. 18:1).
7. The voice coming from the throne (Rev. 19:5).
8. “An angel standing in the sun . . . saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God’” (Rev. 19:17*b*). This is an announcement inviting all the carrion birds to feast on the flesh of the armies defeated by the Lord at the end of the Tribulation.
9. The angel with the key to the Abyss on his way to lock up Satan for the duration of the Millennium. “And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss [in Hades] and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of [seized] the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him” (Rev. 20:1–3*a*).

### III. Cherubim

#### A. Definition and Description

1. The word cherub [כְּרוּב (*cherub*), pl. כְּרוּבִים (*cherubim*)] means “covering angel,” an angel who guards or protects. Cherubim are high-ranking, four-winged angels (Ezek. 1:6, 11; 10:1–22).
2. Cherubim are guardians and representatives of God’s holiness, which is a combination of His perfect righteousness and absolute justice.
  - a. Some of them serve in God’s immediate throne room to worship and praise Him.
  - b. Their job also entails both warning and execution of divine judgment on any client nation to God, as well as protecting children, believers, and nations.

#### B. Cherubim in Scripture

1. Cherubim placed “at the east of the garden of Eden . . . to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24).
2. Golden images of two cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:17–20; Heb. 9:5). One represents God the Father’s righteousness; the other, His justice.



3. The messenger of judgment (2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10).
4. The four cherubim, one at each wheel of the chariot of fire (Ezek. 1; 10).
5. Lucifer, described as “the anointed cherub” (Ezek. 28:14–17).
6. The “twenty-four elders [angels]” seated on twenty-four thrones surrounding the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 4:4). These cherubim, “clothed in white garments,” are honored and decorated with robes and golden crowns. Falling down before the Lord in humility and subordination to His authority, the twenty-four remove their crowns and present them to the Lord (Rev. 4:10).
7. The angel of Revelation 7:2, who issues a restraining order to the four angels of Revelation 7:1.
8. The angel with the “golden censer [shovel]” (Rev. 8:3).
9. The “seven peals of thunder,” teachers of eschatology (Rev. 10:3–4).
10. The “angel flying in midheaven” in charge of all evangelism in the Tribulation (Rev. 14:6).
11. The angel who announces the fall of “Babylon the great [ecumenical religion in the Tribulation]” (Rev. 14:8).
12. “Another angel, a third one,” who warns of worshipping the “beast and his image” and receiving “a mark on his forehead or upon his hand” (Rev. 14:9). The “wrath of God” awaits those who convert to ecumenical religion during the Tribulation (Rev. 14:10).
13. The angel who carries a sickle and administers judgment in the last half of the Tribulation (Rev. 14:17, 19).

#### IV. Wingless Elect Angels

##### A. Definition and Description

1. Wingless angels make up the majority of the angelic creatures. Only seraphim and cherubim have wings as badges of rank.
2. Wingless angels perform three general missions: as messengers of judgment, as guardians, and as soldiers.

##### B. Wingless Messenger Angels in Scripture

1. The two angels who spent the night with Lot and then destroyed Sodom (Gen. 19:1–25).
2. The destroying angel of 2 Samuel 24:16.

3. The “band of destroying angels” of Psalm 78:49.
  4. The “executioners of the city” and the “man clothed in linen” in Ezekiel 9:1–11.
  5. The four angels who restrain “the four winds of the earth” (Rev. 7:1).
  6. “Seven angels who had the seven trumpets” (Rev. 8:6).
  7. “Seven angels who had seven plagues” (Rev. 15:1).
  8. Guardian angels (Ps. 91:7–14).
    - a. Psalm 91:11–12 explains the function of guardian angels: “For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, Lest you strike your foot against a stone.”
    - b. There are three categories of guardian angels.
      - 1) Guardian angels of children. All children have a guardian angel to protect them during childhood (Matt. 18:10).
      - 2) Guardians of all Church Age believers (Heb. 1:14).
      - 3) Guardian angels of client nations (Dan. 10:13, 20).
- C. The Heavenly Host
- The remaining non-distinguished, non-ranking, rank-and-file elect angels comprise the army, all under command of “the LORD of hosts” (1 Sam. 4:4), “the Lord Sabaoth” (Rom. 9:29; James 5:4). “Sabaoth,” translated “hosts” or “armies,” are the unknown number of wingless, elect angels who function as combatants, protectors, and worshipers (Ps. 148:2; Luke 2:13).

## Glossary

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**anti-Semitism** An antagonism or vicious hatred directed toward the Jews as a nation or race. The author and sponsor of this enmity is Satan, whose strategy is to annihilate God's chosen people in order that God's covenant with Abraham cannot be fulfilled.

**Armageddon** The last battle of the last campaign of the last war of human history. At the Second Advent, Jesus Christ will defeat the forces of Satan that have gathered to annihilate Israel.

**arrogance skills** Interrelated mental attitudes of a believer preoccupied with self to the exclusion of the plan and will of God. The arrogance skills are *self-justification*, *self-deception*, and *self-absorption*. Self-justification means, "I am right and everyone else is wrong." In self-deception, a believer fails to acknowledge his flaws, failures, or sins, often projecting them onto others in his periphery. Self-absorption is total preoccupation with self, resulting in hypersensitivity, extreme self-consciousness, and a lack of consideration for others. As the believer cycles through the arrogance skills, divine viewpoint is obscured and mental attitude sins—including bitterness, hatred, and jealousy—increase (James 3:14–16).

**barrier** The insurmountable, invisible wall that separates sinful man from perfect God and prevents man from having a relationship with God. Six bricks comprise this barrier: sin, the penalty of sin, physical birth, man's relative righteousness, the perfect character of God, man's position in Adam. This barrier is removed by the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. See also **propitiation**, **reconciliation**, **redemption**.

**carnality** The absolute status of a believer out of fellowship because of unconfessed sin in the life. A believer in carnality has expressed faith alone in Christ alone and possesses an eternal relationship with God, but in carnality, this believer has lost the filling of the Holy Spirit and is controlled by the sin nature. The grace solution to carnality is rebound (1 John 1:9). Antonym: **spirituality**

**client nation** A national entity in which a concentration of spiritually mature believers sustains the nation through which Jesus Christ controls history and God furthers His plan for mankind. God specifically protects this representative nation so that believers can fulfill the divine mandates of evangelism, custodianship and communication of Bible doctrine, providing a haven for the Jews from anti-Semitic persecution, and sending biblically orthodox missionaries abroad.

**Communion** The only mandated ritual for the Church Age, a worship ceremony in which the believer concentrates on the person and saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23–26). Christ commanded, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24*b*). The bread represents the impeccable humanity of Christ, whose body carried man’s sins on the cross; the cup represents His blood, the substitutionary spiritual death of Christ on the cross. The only requirement for the believer to partake of the communion elements is fellowship with God through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

**cycles of discipline** Five incremental divine judgments upon a client nation saturated with negative volition, apostasy, reversionism, and evil. A client nation under judgment moves from a state of declining health and loss of personal freedoms, to economic depression and breakdown of law, to its ultimate and complete destruction and enslavement by foreign enemy forces (Lev. 26: 14–39; Deut. 28:15–68). See also **client nation**.

**First Advent** The appearance on Earth of the Second Person of the Trinity as the God-man, undiminished deity and true humanity in one person. The First Advent encompasses the thirty-three years between the birth of Jesus Christ and His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Synonyms: Incarnation, Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union

**grace apparatus for perception (GAP)** A nonmeritorious system of spiritual comprehension empowered by the filling of the Holy Spirit. GAP enables every believer to understand, learn, retain, and apply the whole realm of Bible doctrine, regardless of education or human IQ. See also **Operation Z**.

**Hades** A literal location where certain fallen angels, departed unbelievers, and departed believers reside during parts of history. Hades contains four compartments: (1) *Paradise*, where departed Old Testament believers resided until Christ transferred them to heaven after His resurrection; (2) *Torments*, where the souls of unbelievers temporarily reside until the Great White Throne Judgment; (3) *Tartarus*, the prison for the Nephilim until God permanently casts them into the lake of fire; and (4) the *Abyss*, the prison for certain fallen angels and the place where Satan will be bound for a thousand years following the Tribulation.

**hypostatic union** The union of two natures, undiminished deity and true humanity, in the person of Jesus Christ. Both natures are inseparably united without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. Undiminished deity took upon Himself true humanity in order to be the Savior, the mediator between God and man, the great High Priest representing man before God, and the human King of Israel in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. The hypostatic union continues forever in resurrection body.

**legalism** Man's attempt to gain the approbation of God by conforming to a strict code of ethics, morality, or religious ritual. The legalistic unbeliever seeks to earn salvation through human works. The legalistic believer practices a pseudospirituality apart from the filling of the Spirit. Motivated by arrogance, legalism confuses morality with spirituality and results in the production of sin, human good, and evil.

**Mosaic Law** A legal code and system specifically for the Jews of Old Testament Israel; the Law was never given to the Gentiles. These statutes and ordinances, revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, established policy for the ethical and civil life of the Israelites, both

believers and unbelievers, and also defined the spiritual life of believers. This code, however, was never a means of salvation or spirituality. The three-part law, recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, consists of Codex I: The Freedom Code (Decalogue, or Ten Commandments); Codex II: The Spiritual Code; and Codex III: The Establishment Code (civil statutes and judgments).

**Operation Z** The divinely ordained mechanics of the grace apparatus for perception (GAP) through which spiritual phenomena become doctrine understood and believed in the soul of the believer. Under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, doctrinal information communicated by a pastor-teacher is transferred from the believer's human spirit to his soul as academic knowledge. Using the believer's positive volition, God the Holy Spirit then converts academic knowledge into full knowledge as nourishment for spiritual growth. See also **grace apparatus for perception**.

**propitiation** The saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross whereby God's wrath regarding the sins of man is satisfied. See also **barrier**.

**reconciliation** The saving work of Christ on the cross that removed the barrier between God and man, replacing enmity with peace. See also **barrier**.

**redemption** The saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross whereby every human being is purchased from the slave market of sin and delivered to the freedom of grace (Rom. 6:22; 1 Pet. 1:18–19). See also **barrier**.

**Second Advent** The triumphant return of Jesus Christ to Earth at the end of the seven-year Tribulation, at which time the Lord will slaughter the world forces arrayed against Israel at Armageddon, imprison Satan for a thousand years, and establish His millennial kingdom on Earth.

**spiritual death** Man's status of total depravity and separation from God, beginning at the moment of physical birth. Originally created

by God with a body, soul, and human spirit—spiritually alive—Adam and the woman lost their human spirit and became spiritually dead the moment they sinned. Adam’s original sin resulted in the total depravity of his progeny—the fall of mankind. Every human being, with the exception of Jesus Christ, is born physically alive but spiritually dead, no human spirit, unable to have a relationship with God and understand Bible doctrine. The only solution to man’s spiritual death is regeneration, to be “born again” into spiritual life.

**spirituality** The absolute status of the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and thereby in fellowship with God. Spirituality and carnality are mutually exclusive. At any given time a believer is either spiritual or carnal, controlled by either the Holy Spirit or the sin nature. Antonym: **carnality**

**strategic and tactical victory in the angelic conflict** Jesus Christ won the strategic victory by His substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection. Triumph in the angelic conflict was secured. The believer attains tactical victory by pursuing an advance to spiritual maturity. Tactical victory glorifies God and complements the strategic victory of our Lord.

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