

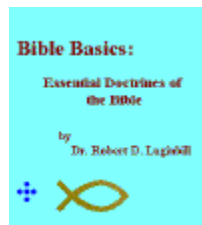
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**Bible Basics:
Essential Doctrines of the Bible**

Part 2A

Angelology: the Study of Angels

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God's creation of angelic beings, the rebellion of some, His plan and ultimate victory.

In speaking of angels, He says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."
Hebrews 1:7 NIV

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Introduction: The subject of angels has long fascinated mankind, not just believers but unbelievers, and not just dedicated believers bent on spiritual growth, but also those with "itchy ears" for this subject (but not necessarily for other teachings of the Bible). The purpose of this study is to give an essential overview of what God would have us to know about angels based upon what is actually contained in His Word.

I. The Purpose, Creation and Nature of Angels

1. The Purpose of Angels:

1) God, the Creator, existed before His creation (Jn.1:1-3). It is important to remember that angels, for all their temporary superiority to mankind, are creatures too. God, the Creator of the universe, of time and of space, existed (and exists) before the universe and outside of it. Angels, on the other hand, as creatures, can only exist within the creation, and are, therefore, subject to time and space. Though their capabilities currently surpass those of human beings, they are still "fellow servants" of God, and subordinate to Him in every way (Rev.19:10; 22:9).

Before the mountains were born, or you gave birth to the earth and world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

Psalm 90:2

2) God was self-sufficient before He created the universe, and is so now (Is.40:21-26). God did not "need" to create the universe, or angels, or mankind, or anything, for that matter. He is perfect and has no needs whatsoever. This was true before His first act of creation, and remains and will remain so throughout the course of creature history and into eternity.

God, who created the universe and everything in it, even He who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples our hands have made, nor is He ministered to by the hands of men (as if He needed anything from us) – [on the contrary], He is the One who gives life and breath and everything else to us all.

Acts 17:24-25

3) God's purpose in creating angels and mankind is for His glory and our good (Is.43:7; Eph.1:5-6; 1:11-12). God is the Potter, and all we His creatures are the clay, created for the praise of His glory, and His glory we shall praise on that day of eternity and forevermore (Is.29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer.18:4-6; Rom.9:21).

But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand.

Isaiah 64:8 KJV

This is true not only of His creatures who respond to Him and follow Him and His Son, but also for those who have rejected His authority and His Son (Rm.14:11; Phil.2:10-11):

By Myself I have sworn. From my mouth a righteous word has gone forth, which will not be revoked, that every knee will bow to Me, and to Me every tongue will swear. And so they will acknowledge Me: "Only in the Lord are righteousness and might." Before Him will come all who raged against Him and they will be put to shame.

Isaiah 45:23-24

Moreover, angels and mankind alike will praise Him for all His marvelous deeds on our behalf, for He is glorified by blessing us. This is the God with whom we have to do!

To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!

Revelation 5:13b NIV

2. The Creation of Angels:

At some undisclosed time following His creation of the heavens and the earth, God created the angels (Ps.148:2-5; Col.1:16). This event took place after the original *ex nihilo* (i.e., "out of nothing") creation of the universe described Genesis 1:1, and before the restoration of the earth (described also at Job 38:4-7) which followed God's initial judgment upon the universe because of Satan's rebellion (the results of which are described in Genesis 1:2 and following). God created all angelic kind at this time (including Satan and all those who would eventually rebel against Him). Though some would come to choose against Him, all the angels were originally created holy (Deut.33:2; Ps.89:7; Mk.8:38; Lk.9:26). God gave each of them distinct duties and definite domains in which to exercise specified authority delegated by Him (Col.1:16; Eph.6:12; Heb.1:7 & 14; Jude 6).

3. The Nature of Angels:

1) Angels are finite beings: As created beings, angels are dependent upon time and space. Though more powerful (2Thes.1:7; 2Pet.2:11), mobile (Gen.28:12) and knowledgeable (2Sam.14:20; Acts 7:53) than mankind, they are neither omniscient (Matt.24:36), nor omnipotent (Rom.8:38), nor omnipresent (Dan.10:13).

2) Angels are finite in number: Angels are often described as the "host of heaven" and otherwise compared to the innumerable stars (e.g., Job 25:3; Ps.103:20-21; Is.40:26 w. Lk.2:13), but although they are a highly organized group and quite numerous, it should be understood that they are not infinite in number, however large that undisclosed number may be (Deut.33:2; Ps.68:17; Dan.7:10; Heb.12:22; Rev.5:11). Further, angels are not subject to death (Lk.20:36), nor do they reproduce (Mk.12:25), leading us to the conclusion that their number has been the same since their collective creation.

3) Angels are different from human beings in significant respects: Unlike human beings, angels do not grow old, or hungry or tired. Angels are thus not subject to many of the more obvious material restraints that limit human activity and are, for the most part, completely invisible to us. However, angels can at times appear in bodily form (as in the

case of the announcement of Christ's birth: Lk.2:8-15), and can also affect the material world with great power (consider the angels who control the winds: Rev.7:1-3).

4) Angels are similar to human beings in significant respects: Like human beings, angels possess personality and individuality (as evidenced, for example, by joy: Job 38:4-7; Lk.15:10; desire: 1Pet.1:12; and choice: Jude 6). And like us, they are created to serve and worship God for His glory (Ps.103:20-21; 148:2; Matt.4:11; Heb.1:14; Rev.4:8).

5) Angels are temporarily superior to mankind: In terms of power and ability, the present angelic superiority to mankind is obvious in every passage of scripture in which they are described. This current angelic superiority significantly also extends to the area of longevity. While mankind is enjoying a sequential residence on earth (generation following generation), angelic kind has been experiencing a continuum of existence in heaven, even before the creation of Man. This longevity, combined with the fact that angels (though creatures like Man) are not subject *to the same degree* to the restraints and necessities of time and space that encumber mankind, undoubtedly contributes to their superior knowledge and wisdom as well. By its very essence, therefore, the angelic nature is superior to our *present* earthly human nature in terms of appearance, intellect, power, mobility and authority (2Pet.2:11).

6) Angels will ultimately be inferior to mankind: Angels will not always be superior to mankind. Just as our Lord's humanity is, in resurrection, superior to angels in every way (Heb.1:4 - 2:18), so also we are destined to share that superiority with Him in our resurrection (1Cor.6:3; Heb.2:5).

7) Angels are acutely aware of and involved in human affairs: The involvement of angelic beings in human affairs is part and parcel of their role in promoting (or, in the case of the fallen angels, opposing) God's plan for human history (see "Satan's Rebellion" immediately below). On a more personal level, however, angels are also apparently extremely interested in observing human behavior in general and in the playing out of God's plan in particular (1Tim.3:16; 5:21; 1Pet.1:10-12). This is particularly true in the case of the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. They were present at His birth (Lk.2:13-14), temptation (Matt.4:11), resurrection (Lk.24:4), ascension (Acts 1:10-11), and return (2Thes.1:7), evidence which underscores angelic interest in the most crucial phase of God's plan, namely the life and work of the Messiah. By observation, angels are learning (to their joy in the case of the elect angels, to their sorrow in the case of the fallen angels) about the wisdom, the power, the grace and the mercy of God (cf. Lk.15:10; 1Cor.4:9; 11:10).

8) Angels should neither be worshiped nor disrespected: In any discussion of angels, it is important to keep in mind both their present superiority and their eventual subordination to us. Angels are not to be disrespected (Lk.10:20; 1Pet.2:10-12; Jude 8-10; cf. Rom.13:7), but neither are they to be worshiped (Rev.19:10; 22:9; cf. 2Kng.17:16; Jer.19:13; Col.2:18). This is especially important in regard to fallen angels. God counterbalances their evil efforts with the work and ministrations of His holy, elect angels. Therefore, although we are to have a healthy respect for the Adversary and his potential to oppose us (2Cor.2:11; Eph.6:11; 1Pet.5:8), we are not to be unduly terrified

by him and his minions. And while we are to have an awareness and appreciation for the positive function of the elect angels on our behalf, we are not to be inordinately fixated upon them (especially since both their persons and their work are invisible to us). In neither case should we "go beyond what is written" in the Bible about angels, whether through excessive fear of Satanic influence or an exorbitant fascination with the ministrations of the holy angels.

II. Satan's Rebellion and World Rule

The rebellion of the devil and his angels against God is a most important subject in the consideration of eschatology, the biblical study of the events of the end times. This is because Satan's rebellion is central to the whole course of human history as well as to God's final resolution of history, beginning with the Tribulation. Mankind is, in many ways, God's response to the devil, and the devil's repeated attempts to destroy mankind are, necessarily, connected inextricably with God's plan to defeat Satan through the agency of mankind (in the Person of His Son). It is therefore not too bold a statement to say that it is impossible to understand human history, from the divine point of view at any rate, without taking into consideration the satanic rebellion and role mankind plays in God's response to it.

1. The Occasion of the Rebellion:

1) Satan's original status: Satan was originally the top ranking angelic creature endowed with extraordinary honors. He preeminently reflected the glory of God as "Lucifer" (Is.14:12); he was the very model of symmetry (Ezek.28:12); he was blessed with the greatest wisdom (Ezek.28:12); he was adorned with magnificent paraphernalia (Ezek.28:13); he was, in short, the "anointed cherub", entrusted with the highest angelic responsibility and in highest position of honor (Ezek.28:14).

2) Satan's Character: Contrary to much popular opinion, the devil was not created evil. Indeed, God created Satan "blameless", as Ezekiel 28:15 tells us. This is a critical piece of information, because through this scripture we are assured that the devil's decision to sin was not some inevitable action originating with God, but was instead a free-will decision on Satan's part. Satan was created without sin, and with no necessity to sin. He and he alone is the one who bears the complete responsibility for all the trouble he has brought upon his fellow angels, upon humanity, and upon himself. God bears none of the blame for Satan's fall. Satan took the opportunity of using the free will God gave him to reject God and follow instead the path of evil.

3) Satan's Sin: In his instructions to Timothy regarding the essential qualifications of pastors, Paul concludes by warning that the potential candidate should not be a neophyte (i.e., one new to the faith and spiritually immature). Otherwise, Paul says, such a person might easily "become puffed up" (i.e., blinded by arrogance) "and so fall into [the same] condemnation as the devil [did]" (1Tim.3:6). In Paul's caveat, pride, that is, an unwarranted sense of superiority, when indulged creates a breeding ground for further sin. This was certainly so in Satan's case. The devil's exorbitant pride over the qualities and attributes given him by God (Ezek.28.17) was allowed to corrupt his entire thought process and led in turn to his plotting against God (Is.14:13-14; Ezek.28:17b).

The eventual result was a full scale rebellion. The substance of Satan's corrupt thinking, a sinful pattern of thought which (as is so often the case) inevitably resulted in sinful action, is recorded for us by Isaiah:

For you said in your heart, "I will ascend heavenward. I will set my throne above the stars of God. And I will take my seat on the mount of assembly on the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High God.
Isaiah 14:13-14

4) Satan's Fall: Ezekiel 28:15-18 describes the process by which the devil put his arrogant plan into practice, tracing the matter backward at first from the result to the cause:

In all your ways you were perfect from the day of your creation until unrighteousness was found in you. In ***your extensive conspiring***, you were filled with wickedness, and you sinned. So I cast you from the mountain of God as one profaned, and I blotted out [your memory] from among the stones of fire, O covering cherub. Your heart became haughty because of your beauty, [and so] you destroyed your wisdom on account of your splendor. So I cast you to the earth, and I made a spectacle of you before kings. In the abundance of your iniquity, in ***the unrighteousness of your conspiring***, you profaned the sacred places entrusted to you, so I made fire come out of your midst which devoured you, and I made you like the dust of the earth in the eyes of all who beheld you.

Ezekiel 28:15-18

Arrogant pride, attributed specifically to Satan's high esteem for his own appearance, is at the root of the thought pattern described in Isaiah's five "I wills" (Is.14:13-14; see above). Persistent and obsessive preoccupation with his own loveliness over time had a corrupting influence upon Satan's whole mental attitude, neutralizing, then effectively destroying his conscience, his character and his wholesome fear of God (cf. Eph.4:19; 1Tim.4:2). This arrogance led to a complete perversion of the devil's thought process, and these mental attitude sins blossomed into overt activity; specifically, they led to the canvassing of his fellow angels for support in rebelling against the Lord (i.e., "your extensive conspiring" and "the unrighteousness of your conspiring"). The judgments described here are largely yet future, but, since the devil's fate is certain (since it has been decreed by God), they can be described as already having taken place.

5) Satan's coup d'État : As would-be usurper of God's throne, Satan found himself in a delicate position. When he conceived his nefarious ambition, he was on his own. Even in his unparalleled arrogance, he realized that he would need help if he were to be successful in his attempt to dethrone the Lord of the universe. Satan did have some advantages. As the preeminent and highest ranking angelic creature (not to mention the most impressive), the devil had considerable influence and authority over the other angels. None would be likely to rebel from the Lord instantaneously on Satan's say-so, but, with proper preparation, it might be possible to sway some of his fellows. The devil's plan was not to overthrow God by force (for such a course of action was a complete impossibility, as even Satan with his inflated sense of self saw clearly enough),

but rather to effect a coup d'état . By winning over the allegiance of the angels, Satan thought to present God with a fait accompli which He would be powerless to reverse. For if the angels were to choose Satan over God, the devil seems to have felt secure that this fact in itself would protect him from divine retribution.

It is evident from the events that followed the conception of his plan that the devil was indeed able to bring a large proportion of angels (one third in fact: cf. Rev.12:4) over to his way of thinking about God's probable reaction to any such coup d'état (an appropriate name for an overthrow of authority based not upon a contest of relative force, but rather upon political intrigue). For before any of the angels followed him, they would need to be convinced of the prospects of success: had they instead been certain of swift retribution from the Lord Almighty, it is fair to ask how many would have voluntarily enlisted into Satan's cause. There had to be something more, however. Satan's own motive of universal rulership is clear enough, but his potential followers would have to be wooed. Paradise, after all, could not have been so terrible as to force them into rebellion against God for its own sake, and the obvious fact that, in spite of Satan's assurances, at least *some* element of risk would be involved in betraying God could not have been lost on them. Satan needed a platform, one persuasive enough to convince his contemporaries to throw in their lot with him and take the risk of eternal condemnation.

6) Satan's Platform: This necessity of a positive platform, a goal that could tempt his audience and incite their lust, was even more important than convincing his would-be followers that rebellion against God would be safe and meet with success. But what do angels lack, and what could they possibly want that it is not lawful for them to have? Angels are not affected by the elements, as we are, not plagued by disease or the ravages of time, not in any need whatsoever that might incite the lust for acquisition that so inflames mankind. Yet it is precisely in that fact which liberates the angels from all the cares and concerns we humans feel so intensely that Satan found his chief selling point, the prime inducement to his fellow spirit-creatures to gamble their eternal futures and bind their fate to Satan's forevermore: namely, their lack of a physical body.

While we humans possess both a spiritual and a material part, angels, are primarily spiritual creatures. The absence of true corporeality such as we humans possess is in many respects a blessing for it spares the angels the pain, suffering and tears which are the common heritage of mankind since the fall. But this lack of corporeality seems to have left many of the angels wondering what might have been as they observed the animal life of the original earth prior to its cataclysmic destruction as a result of Satan's rebellion (and subsequent restoration during the seven Genesis days; see section 2.b below).

From everything we know about the angels from scripture, possession on their part of animals and of humans is contrary to the will and the law of God in every way. Satan observed the curiosity and interest of his fellows towards corporeal sensuality and applied the universal principle of sinful motivation treated above: they didn't have bodies and, moreover, were forbidden to possess the bodies of other creatures; therefore they *wanted* them, wanted to experience first hand the sensual, corporeal life "that had

been denied them" (according to satanic propaganda). Clearly, God was not going to stand by and allow a wave of possessions contrary to His commands (much less any program of breeding and genetic manipulation that may be evidenced by the hominid portion of the fossil record). The only way to "escape" the rather pure spirituality God had "inflicted" on them was to fall in behind a new leader and take what they wanted in defiance of God.

God rained down complete destruction on the world of that time, but it is interesting to note that there are number of biblical passages which demonstrate that the lust of the devil's followers for bodies which most approximate their own essential shape is still very much alive:

1. Angels have no strictly material bodies of their own: Without taking possession of the bodies of other creatures, angels are unable to fully experience the material world in any sensual way. Paul's list of "bodies" in 1st Corinthians chapter fifteen mentions "heavenly bodies", but by this he clearly means the planets. Significantly, he does not mention angels. Many passages stress the spiritual (and hence non-material) nature of angels (Heb.1:7; 1:14; 2:14-16 [esp. v.16]). This radical difference from human (and animal) kind helps to explain how angels are occasionally called "gods" (i.e., having more in common with the spirituality of God than the materiality of Man: Ps.8:5; 82:1 & 6). Angels are not "flesh and blood" as we, in our material part, clearly are (Eph.6:12). When our resurrected Lord appeared to His disciples and was taken for a ghost, He commanded them to "touch Me and see that a spirit (*pneuma*) does not have flesh and bones as you see Me having" (Lk.24:39). The word He used, the Greek *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), is the same word used for angels wherever they are deemed "spirits" (e.g., Heb.1:7 & 14). No stronger confirmation could be asked to show that angels are different from us in this main, crucial point of corporeality (and, therefore, in the enjoyment of all that is sensual).

2. The Serpent of Genesis 3: It is no accident that when we first encounter Satan in scripture, he has taken possession of a material creature, the serpent. We can assume from the context that this especially "subtle" creature was Eve's special pet, and a perfect vehicle for the devil's seduction. But was his possession of the creature necessary to accomplish his goal (any more than his possession of Judas was: cf. Lk.22:3)? What we can say is that possession of the bodies of material creatures is part of Satan's normal modus operandi, and indicates that this is more than something the fallen angels "have to do" to accomplish their nefarious purposes. Rather, it is something they dearly *desire* to do.

3. The Angelic Infiltration of Genesis 6: As both Jude 6 and 2nd Peter 2:4 make clear, "the sons of God coming in to [mate with] the daughters of men" was a Satanic attack of immense proportions which violated God's ground rules for the resolution of the angelic rebellion in human history. The direct mixing of angelic and human seed is clear-cut proof of the desire on the part of Satan and his followers to attain the (for them) unattainable: corporeality.

4. The Legion of Demons and the Swine: In Mark chapter 5, when Jesus cast the demon legion from a single man, these fallen spirits "begged" Him to "send us among the pigs; allow us to *go into them*" (v.12). There is very little to explain their motivation for this request until we accept that these satanic angels, being deprived of their human home, were desperate to regain *some* material adobe, be it ever so mean.

5. The Wandering Spirit (Lk.11:24-26): The return of the "wandering spirit" to the man he had previously possessed is a likewise telling case that only fully makes sense when we take into account the "addiction" the fallen angels have to the corporeality which, as part of our nature, we understandably take for granted. The demon goes through desolate places seeking "rest" (i.e., another willing subject to inhabit), but when it is disappointed in this hope, it returns to its "house" (Greek *oikos*). The terminology used here is significant, for in 2nd Corinthians 5:2, Paul calls our coming resurrection body, the super-material home in which we shall spend all eternity with the Lord, a "dear-house from on high" (Greek *oiketerion*, the diminutive of the very word used for house above being used in a [grammatically] familiar sense). *Our* material abodes, the bodies that house our spirits now and then, are given to us by God, but it is the devil's plan, and his prime inducement to his followers, to take by force the homes that properly belong to others.

Satan's false gospel to the angels who fell with him was one of "deliverance" from their non-sensual state. He found them curious about the experience of material existence, and inflamed this curiosity into outright lust and rebellion, so that they became obsessed with the possession of material bodies, and addicted to the experience (in the same way that many of our fellow human beings are destroyed by drugs). Therefore, the widespread and dishonest trade of Ezekiel 28:16 & 18 is better translated "canvassing" or "campaigning". Satan found his issue and seduced a large part of angelic kind with it.

2. God's Judgment on the Universe:

Scripture neither mentions nor records the length of the interval between God's confrontation of Satan's coup and His judgment upon the primeval world, but it is entirely possible that this period was aeons long in human terms. Such a grace interval would demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt who had chosen for God and who for Satan, as the devil commenced his earthly reign over what had been the original paradise, the original "Eden" (i.e., the pre-Adamic earth). Given the demons' longing for physical bodies and the integral part in Satan's plan that the satisfaction of that desire played, it is not unreasonable to suppose that much of the fascinating fossil record we now possess from that archaic earth is a result of the devil's manipulation and misuse of earth's original fauna for just such purposes: the Bible's identification of Satan with reptiles (dragons, serpents), and his obvious fascination with the same (cf. Gen.3), make the possibility of this theoretical satanic origin of the terrible, powerful creatures of pre-history all the more conceivable.

Eventually, earth came to bear no resemblance to the primal paradise the Lord had created *ex nihilo*, and when no further purpose would be served by additional delay, but, to the contrary, the devil and his angels had emphatically confirmed their evil and

rebellious intentions, God Almighty executed an awesome judgment upon the pre-historic earth. By delaying judgment, He had demonstrated to all angelic creation how pitifully inadequate Satan's efforts were, how hollow his promises, how tyrannical his rule. Now was the time to put an end to the devil's "experiments", to turn out the lights in the universe, and to leave the adversary and his followers to contemplate in terror what God would do next. In a terrifying judgment, all life on earth was annihilated and the universe, originally resplendent and luminiferous, plunged into utter darkness (an event which must have been incredibly traumatic for all the angels, creatures of light that they are). This entire period of prehistoric angelic existence, the devil's revolt and first earthly reign, and God's subsequent judgment upon the earth are summarized in a mere two verses in the book of Genesis, or, more correctly stated, fall into the "gap" between Genesis 1:1 (which speaks of the original creation) and Genesis 1:2 (which describes the earth subsequent to judgment and prior to the seven days of *re-creation*):

Before all else, God created the heavens and the earth [original creation]. **But** the earth came to be ruined and despoiled – darkness lay upon the face of the abyss while God's Spirit brooded over the surface of its waters [all as a result of God's judgment in response to the devil's revolt].

Genesis 1:1-2

The ruination and destruction of the earth under Satan's pre-historic rule is aptly described by the Hebrew phrase *tohu wa-bhohu* (i.e., "ruined and despoiled": ובהו וחרו). Many creative (and misleading) translations have been offered in an effort to remove the difficulties caused by a literal translation of this phrase. For the description of earth in this devastated condition causes obvious problems for the summary-statement interpretation of verse one: how and when could the earth have been so ravaged if no gap is to be understood between verses one and two? Moreover, the words *tohu* and *bhohu* always refer to "emptiness", "uselessness" or, "worthlessness", that is to say, a confused, chaotic state, inevitably the result of some cataclysm, and usually one that has been brought on by divine judgment (cf. Deut. 32:10; 1Sam.12:21; Job 6:18; 12:24; 26:7; Ps.107:40; Is.40:17; 41:29; 44:9; 45:19; 49:4; 59:4). Finally, the state of the earth in Genesis 1:2 described as in "darkness" is really only understandable when a judgment of this sort is assumed to be the source of the darkness. For God is a God of light (1Jn.1:5), and everything He creates is perfect, while darkness is synonymous with evil (Eph.5:11; 6:12; 1Jn.1:6; 2:11), and is a characteristic result of divine judgment (Is.5:30; 8:22; Ezek.32:7-8; Acts 13:11).

3. God's Restoration of the Earth:

While Genesis 1:1 thus describes the original, *ex nihilo* creation of the universe, the second verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:2, split grammatically from verse one with an abrupt, adversative construction (in the Hebrew), propels us untold eons forward in time from the original, awesome act of creation, and moves us to the other side of the Genesis gap, describing for us the state of the universe as it existed before God *re-created* the earth.

Original creation had been marred by Satan's revolt, and cast into darkness by God's judgment upon the rebellious angels. In order to make the universe habitable once more *for creatures with physical bodies* (the attempted possession of which was a major issue in Satan's pre-fall propaganda), a *re-creation* of the earth was essential. Genesis 1:3 - 2:3, the account of the seven days, is a description of this renewal of the heavens and the earth. The objective behind this process of the seven days is also quite clear: the creation of Man. Everything God accomplishes within the period of re-creation is specifically designed to make life supportable for this His second category of creature possessed of free will (and ultimate replacement for the devil and his angels). That the seven days are indeed a *re-creation* distinct from the original creation of Genesis 1:1 can also be seen from the following:

- 1) The presence of the heavens and earth in place at Genesis 1:3 shows this is re-creation: As God begins to work on the earth in Genesis 1:3, earth (and the heavens in which it exists) is already in place, an impossibility unless this is a re-creation (for if it describes the original creation, where then did the earth come from?).
- 2) The presence of the angels during the seven days shows this is re-creation: The angels are present too (also necessarily having been created at some earlier time – before the Genesis gap – an impossibility unless this is re-creation), "shouting for joy" at the reconstruction of the earth (Job 38:4-7).
- 3) God's pronouncement of His acts as "good" shows this is re-creation: God, being God, creates *only* what is good in the first place. Bringing light out of darkness, dry land out of only sea, life out of lifelessness, are all acts of bringing something good out of something "not good" (i.e., darkness, sea, lifelessness). The pronouncement "and God saw that it was good" is a stamp of divine approval on the restoration of what had been originally good and now was restored to its "good" condition following an interval of judgment upon evil (Gen.1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
- 4) God's construction of the firmament argues that this is re-creation: In Genesis 1:6-8, God constructs the firmament which separates the "waters above" from the "waters below", and calls this firmament "heavens". Now it can hardly be that we are meant to understand that prior to this constructing of the firmament, the earth, above which this firmament is set, had nowhere to exist, or that the light and darkness, after separation, or the waters, prior to separation, should be understood as having existence, yet somehow not existing in the heavens (for they can only be understood as existing *within* the universe). Indeed, both the heavens at large and the earth had already been created in Genesis 1:1. This interpretation is strengthened both by the fact that rather than "creating" the firmament from nothing, the language of Genesis 1:7 specifies that God "made" it from something.⁽²⁾ Therefore, since there was already a universe, the formation of this firmament can only be seen as an act of *re-creation*.
- 5) Re-creation explains appearance of age: The Genesis gap is the most likely explanation for the perceived contradiction between the biblical account of the seven days and the fossil record. The exact space of time between Genesis 1:1 and God's creation of the angels, or between their creation and Satan's fall, or between God's

judgment on the original Eden-earth and His restoration of it in Genesis 1:2 are not recorded for us anywhere in scripture and could well encompass untold eons of time (a commodity which is felt and measured much differently in the angelic sphere, after all). In addition, there is also the point that when God creates, He creates in mature perfection. The plants, animals, and people (Adam and Eve) created during the six days are all created in a mature status, thus giving the appearance of age. It is no great stretch to see the restored "heavenly lights" and reconstructed earth benefitting from a similar, complete creation that might well give every impression of a lengthy geological history that does not in fact comprise real time, in our limited understanding of it:

By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God, so that what we see (i.e., the material world) ***has not come into being from the things we now see.***

Hebrews 11:3

For it escapes their notice in maintaining this, that heavens existed long ago and an earth formed by the Word of God from and through water – [and that it was] through these [waters] that the world of that time was deluged by water and destroyed. Now the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire by that same Word (of God), preserved for the day of judgment and the destruction of godless men.

2nd Peter 3:5-7

6) Re-creation is analogous to other divine restorations: Adam's fall resulted in a curse on the earth that is analogous to (though not nearly so devastating as) the Genesis gap judgment (Gen.3:17-19). Nevertheless, all creation now "groans" in anticipation of the removal of the curse, a phenomenon to come at the return of Christ which also parallels the restoration of earth in Genesis 1:2 (Rom.8:19-22). A few of the many other such instances of the pattern of divine judgment followed by gracious restoration include: 1) the renewal of the earth after the flood (Gen.8-9); 2) Joseph's deliverance from prison and restoration to his family (Gen.45); 3) Israel restored to the land after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1); and 4) the most significant and spectacular restoration of all: the reconciliation of sinful Man to God through the redemptive work of the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. esp. Rom.5:6-11). Suffice it to say that our God is a gracious God who may hold just judgment in the one hand, but always has merciful restoration in the other for all who will repent and return to Him. The restoration of the devastated earth was a clear sign to Satan and his followers that their slanderous insinuations that God would be unable or unwilling to provide for reconciliation were about to be undeniably refuted.

7) Re-creation is focused on Man as a replacement for Satan and his angels: Finally, all of God's work throughout the seven days is focused on Man (an eventuality which can only be understood as a response to the devil's revolt, and must thus follow original creation):

- Day 1: Light out of darkness, necessary to sustain life.

- Day 2: Atmosphere, also necessary for all life.
- Day 3: Dry land, essential for any animal life, and for Man; vegetation as a source of food, materials, pleasure, etc.
- Day 4: Lights to "serve as signs": for the ordering of human life in necessary increments of time.
- Day 5: Other creatures: enriching human life.
- Day 6: Land animals and livestock to support and bless human life; finally, Man.
- Day 7: God's Sabbath rest: Man requires a breathing space to fellowship with God.

4. God's Replacement for Satan:

The Bible's teachings about the purpose, nature and creation of Man are properly the subject of part three of our Bible Basics series. It should be mentioned here, however, that in Genesis 1:26-30 the creation of Man is the culmination of God's work. The process begins with the divine conference of the Trinity announcing God's decision: "Let Us make Man in Our image, according to Our pattern" (v.26). Man is then created in the image of God (v.27), blessed and given rule over all other creatures on earth (v.28), and provided with food (v.29; as are other creatures: v.30). The creation of Man, along with an environment to support our lives in these physical bodies, is clearly the purpose and goal of the seven days of God's restorative work in the world. Only after the earth has been restored to viable conditions, Man created upon it and placed in charge of it, does God conclude that all He has made is "**very** good" (v.31: the Hebrew adjective *me'odth* being added only here to God's evaluations of His various acts during the seven days as "good"). Even the pattern of the seven days is one that suits and reflects the subsequent history of mankind, with each day standing for one millennium of human history and with the seventh day signifying the millennial rule of Christ (this principle will be explained in more detail in Part 5 of this series). The fact that God's restorative work during the seven days is entirely focused on Man also argues for Genesis 1:2 beginning a process of *re-creation*, for Man, specifically through the God-Man, Jesus Christ, is meant in no small part as a replacement for Satan and his fallen angels.

Besides being an indication to the devil and his followers of their ultimate fate, the Lord's cataclysmic judgment upon the world also served to demonstrate the faithfulness of the angels who had rejected Satan's appeal. They trusted instead in God, that He would somehow not allow His universe to remain cloaked in darkness and devastation, and they were not disappointed. For truly, the Lord's solution was an eventuality which

Satan and his followers did not expect in their wildest imaginings: the complete *re-*creation of the heavens and the earth in seven literal days, accompanied by the creation of something completely new: Man, a creature who would be God's means of exposing all of Satan's slanderous lies, a creature who, while possessing obvious limitations, had what Satan and his demons coveted most: a physical body to house his spirit.

5. Satan and the Fall of Man:

In addition to the detailed treatment of this topic found in part three of the Satanic Rebellion series, the fall of mankind as a specific topic will also be covered in part three of the present series. It is only necessary to emphasize here what should be plain from a simple reading of Genesis chapter three, namely that although Adam and Eve were guilty, they almost certainly never would have fallen without the devil's crafty intervention. The specific tactics used by Satan in this first attack upon mankind serve as a kind of paradigm for us explaining his methods generally (see the two cited studies for details). In its barest essentials, his deception of Eve focused upon her misunderstanding of the Word of God, specifically, both the exact nature of God's commandment to refrain (which Satan distorted) and the purpose for it (which was really for their good, contrary to the devil's lies). His indirect attack upon Adam, on the other hand, was aimed at Adam's lack of faith in God, specifically, his doubts about God's ability to solve the problem of Eve's fall (without taking matters into his own hands). One moral to this most famous story is that while we as individual human beings may be self-aware, the devil is almost always more aware of our weaknesses than we are (through the process of simple observation of the way in which we live our lives). It is very clear from even a cursory reading of Genesis chapter three that it is complete folly for us to engage the devil in a conversation, either directly (as Eve had done), or indirectly (as with Adam's response to Eve). And it is important to note that Satan himself does not have to be visible for us to make this mistake (indeed, he was not in either Eve or Adam's case). It is enough for us to engage in consideration of any satanic influence (of which this world is full) to open ourselves up to successful temptation and attack. For when it comes to temptation, Genesis chapter three makes it unmistakably clear that we members of the human race are at an appalling disadvantage faced with the devil's wiles. Flirting with sin and evil is, quite simply, a game we can never, never win. Our first parents could not – and they were not disadvantaged by the sinful nature that works against us from the inside. Only with God's help and the through the resources that God provides (the Spirit and the Truth of scripture in particular) is it possible for us to resist the crafty assaults of the adversary, and, generally speaking, this usually involves forcefully turning our backs on him and his, in whatever form or manifestation.

6. The Limits of Satan's World Rule:

We must be careful to avoid two extremes in our consideration of the devil's strategy and system for world control. On the one hand, it is painfully obvious to all who delight in the works of the Lord that Satan's strategic and administrative skills cannot be

compared to God's. Attempting to find complete consistency or ultimate brilliance in Satan's modus operandi is a fool's errand. On the other hand, it would be equal folly to underestimate the present ruler of this world. The reactive strategy or "plan" which he has adopted to combat the inexorable divine plan of God is indeed doomed to failure, and the organization he has imposed on this corrupted world in his partial control is highly imperfect, to say the least. Nevertheless, he has in the course of human history caught the majority of mankind in his toils, and done inestimable damage to believers of every stripe as well. It is only through the grace, the power, and the providence of God that we who have chosen for Jesus Christ can win the victory of faith over our arch-enemy.

Not until the middle of the Great Tribulation will the devil and his angels be cast from heaven once and for all (Rev.12:7-17). Until that time it is the earth where such conflict as there is between the angelic forces of God and Satan respectively is taking place. Just as the elect angels appear before God at certain appointed times (the so-called "assembly of the holy ones", i.e., of the angels; cf. Job 15:8; 38:7; Ps.29:1ff.; 89:5-7; Jer.23:18 & 22), so too there is evidence that the fallen angels on occasion present themselves before God (cf. 1Kng.22:19-22; Job 1:6; 2:1; Zech.3:1). This combination of facts (i.e., spiritual warfare on earth and a sort of "truce" in heaven) demonstrates that while there is indeed a conflict of the most deadly seriousness being played out between God on the one hand and the devil and his forces on the other, the latter nevertheless continue to abide by certain mandatory restrictions and commands on account of the awesome might and irresistible power of God. Satan is therefore "free" to act on earth, but only within very distinct parameters laid down by God and well-known to the devil and his angels. These "rules of engagement" allow the devil and his minions to tempt mankind in a variety of ways, but generally do not allow overt attack upon human beings without specific consent (cf. Job 1:12; 2:6; 1Cor.5:4-5; demon possession is a unique case wherein an individual first must yield up his will for possession to occur).

1) Satan was allowed to play the role of tempter in the garden of Eden: In addition to furnishing the garden with a test of obedience in the form of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan was not only allowed to observe these new creatures destined to replace him and his followers, but also to provide them with false information. Picking his target and lies carefully, Satan took full advantage of his opportunity to subvert mankind and was successful in inducing our first parents to choose foolishly against God.

2) Adam forfeited his God-given rulership of Eden/earth at the fall: Adam and Eve's subsequent expulsion from the garden of Eden and their subjection to the curse of mortality were not the only negative consequence of their actions. Adam also lost his position as undisputed regent of the Lord's re-created earth, serving under the delegated authority of God.

3) By instigating the fall of Man, Satan has usurped the rulership of earth: As we have seen, Adam's right to rule earth in God's place was given to him by the Lord (Gen.1:26-28; Ps.8:5-8; cf. Heb.2:5-9). Scripture records no such grant to the devil. Indeed, even Satan himself supports the proposition that he is currently in control of the world as a

result of Adam's forfeiture and fall. While in the process of attempting to persuade Christ to "worship him", the devil showed our Lord all the kingdoms of the world and proclaimed . . .

"I will give you all this power and all their glory – for it has been **surrendered** to me and [so] I [can] give it to whomever I please."

Luke 4:6

The Greek word *paradidomi* (παράδιδωμι) in this passage indicates that Satan's reign over the earth was not wrested from God or awarded to the devil, but was rather relinquished by Adam, abandoned, abdicated, given over by default, or "surrendered". The devil, therefore, has temporarily usurped or "snagged" dominion over planet earth. To put the matter in legal terms, Satan's rulership of the earth is based only a *de facto* control – his reign has never been and will never be a *de jure* one.

4) Satan is now allowed a wider range of influence over mankind: The sphere within which the devil now operates on earth is much larger than was the case in the garden of Eden. Instead of a single tree to test the hearts of mankind, we now face an entire world filled with multifarious temptations. And instead of the limited lying influence of the devil (in possession of Eve's shining serpent), satanic lies and influences are ubiquitous in this world we inhabit, ranging from the patently obvious to the almost invisibly subtle. The limited avenue of opportunity in the garden of Eden proved to be sufficient for Satan to instigate humanity's corporate fall in Adam. Small wonder then that with exponentially greater access to mankind and a freer reign to exercise his influence that the world "lies in his [sphere of influence]" (1Jn.5:19). The devil also has an extraordinary advantage in his quest to lead humanity astray: the sin nature that now resides in the flesh of all of Adam and Eve's descendants (Christ being the sole exception). For the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1Jn.2:16), universal manifestations of mankind's collective heart, are tailor-made for satanic exploitation. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the devil has kept our sinful tendencies in mind in constructing his world-wide system of temptation, deception and control. It should come as no surprise, then, that the world is the terrible place that it is, given the evil resident in the heart of Man, and Satan's ability and opportunity to exploit that evil.

5) The limits of Satan's control over the world: The devil's dominion over the world is in some ways analogous to a hostile power's temporary control of territory conquered during a protracted war. Similarly, Satan's rulership of the earth is temporary, and must be maintained by force and vigilance. Satan's control over earth is restricted by the will of God, that is to say, the devil can do that which and *only* that which God allows him to do. Much as he clearly would have liked to, Satan was not permitted to lay a finger upon Job until God expressly gave His consent, and, despite his unique sufferings, Job never was completely destroyed, because God would not allow it (Job 1 & 2; 42:12ff.). Satan's request to "sift [Peter] like wheat" was denied in response to a prayer on his behalf by our Lord (Lk.22:31-32), and there are at least two New Testament cases of rebellious believers being "handed over to Satan", plainly indicating that the withdrawal of God's

protection had to be sought by apostolic intercession before the devil could have free rein with them (1Cor.5:5; 1Tim.1:20; cf. Ps.78:49; 109:6).

A prime reason for Satan's malevolent will being restricted by God's gracious will is *our free will*. The existence of mankind cannot be fully understood without reference to Satan's rebellion against God. A primary purpose for our creation was and continues to be God's replacement in the family of God of unwilling fallen angels with willing human beings. Much to his surprise, Satan's successful seduction of our first parents did not head off this inevitable eventuality – it merely changed the circumstances and timing of the filling up of the full number of willing worshipers from the ranks of human kind. It goes without saying that if humanity could be eliminated from the earth, or be subjected to a degree of manipulation so severe that the exercise of a free will choice for God would be impossible, God's plan (not to mention our eternal future) would have been in jeopardy. Therefore while God allows the devil to operate within a wide range of latitude in this world which Satan claims as his own, his sphere of operations is not absolute, and is unquestionably more restricted in the case of those of us who have chosen to become followers of God than it is in the case of those who have chosen to become followers of Satan.

It is important to note that the Bible never actually proclaims Satan the "ruler of the earth". The devil is "ruler of the cosmos (i.e., world: Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11)", but his rule is not one of physical, material occupation in the sense of an invading army visibly and corporeally on the scene, holding sway on the earth. A simple visual inspection of our surroundings confirms this obvious fact. Satan's rule over the world of mankind is instead exercised largely *through* human beings, by means of demonic influence and possession. This point helps to explain a number of passages that deal with the devil's current rulership of the world:

- Ephesians 2:2 calls Satan "the prince of the power of the air", and, "the spirit who is now working in the sons of disobedience". The devil's sphere of influence proceeds from the air around us rather than proceeding from a material and visible earthly presence. He and his followers are spirits and their influence on mankind largely of a non-material nature (influencing and, occasionally through possession, compelling, but altogether invisible).
- Ephesians 6:12 says that "our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but with . . . spirits of evil in the heavenly places". This passage likewise identifies the devil's realm of power and influence as off of the physical earth (though nonetheless powerfully influential).
- 1st John 4:4 tells us that He who is in us "is greater than he (i.e., the devil) who is in the world". For Satan is in the world exercising great power, but he is not directly and physically administering planet earth.
- 1st John 5:19 states that the "whole world is in him", i.e., under the devil's non-material *influence* rather than his corporeal control.

- 2nd Corinthians 4:4 calls Satan the "god of this age", also emphasizing the non-material nature of his control. He is further said to have "blinded the eyes of unbelievers" indicating the means and method of his influence, not a physical compulsion generally, but a spiritual deception that induces human beings to turn away from the one, true God.

Thus the devil's kingdom is predominately an immaterial (or "spiritual") one, "hovering over" the human kingdoms of the world, and using demonic influence of varying degrees to produce the desired effects. Mankind is still "in charge" of physical planet earth in a sense (cf. Ps.8:4-8; 115:16), but is far inferior in power and intelligence to angelic beings. Left to our own devices, we could no more hope to get the better of a spiritual encounter than we would from a material one (should the devil be allowed to attack us in this way). But God has graciously laid down very specific boundaries that preserve our existence and ability to exercise free will in this life, in spite of the massive power of the devil's forces, and provided safeguards which prevent the devil from running amok in human affairs.

6) The conscience as a restrainer of satanic influence: The first of these safeguards, common (at least initially) to all human beings, is today most often termed "the conscience". Subsequent to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve acquired an internal, mental and emotional sensitivity that was capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, between good and evil. God graciously constructed the necessary test of their obedience in such a way that disobedience would provide them with this essential internal compass, a mechanism without which moral navigation through a satanic world would be impossible, especially for persons in a sinful state. Once the protection of the perfect environment of Eden had been removed, and the entire world transformed into one big tree of testing, as it were, an "internal guidance system" became necessary gear for the human race. For while in the garden there was only one, very straight-forward test about which the Lord God had given specific instruction, the devil's world would be full of all manner of tests and temptations, ranging from the completely obvious to the quite subtle. Without some way of judging the rightness and wrongness of our actions (both potential and completed), we human beings would be completely at the devil's mercy, master of deception that he is. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulted in our first parents acquiring just such an ability, the conscience, and they have since physically passed this capability down to all of their offspring (Rom.2:12-16).

The conscience, therefore, is a universal, God-given aspect of our common human nature capable of evaluating the goodness (and evil) of the phenomena we encounter in this world, and is especially concerned with our own behavior. It is not really a separate organ, but a facet of the heart (the inner person as a complete combination of body and spirit). All this is obvious from the very existence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from the consequences of Adam and Eve's partaking of its fruit, and from the effect of the fall on human behavior ever since: we not only "do wrong" as a result of the sin now inherent in our mortal bodies, but we also **know** when we do wrong, at least until the conscience is so seared that its function is lost or even perverted (cf. 1Tim.4:2). Before evil can find a comfortable home in our hearts, the conscience must first be

suppressed. As sinners by nature, we are predisposed toward wrong, but thanks to God's gracious provision (initially through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and subsequently by inheritance from our first parents) we are also born with an inner compass which, until we willfully de-magnetize it, will point in the general direction of the good, and which, if we conscientiously calibrate it with God's truth, is capable of giving us very clear and specific guidance. Conscience, then is a universal barrier in the hearts of all human beings that must be broken down before the devil can exert his influence and will.

7) Law and nationalism as restrainers of satanic influence: In addition to the internal check that conscience provides on the devil's manipulation of mankind, God also limits Satan's control of human affairs by law (cf. Rom.2:14-15; 13:1-5; Tit.3:1; 1Pet.2:13-17), by nationalism (cf. Gen.11:6; Deut.32:8; Job 12:23; Ps.74:17; Jer.18:7-10; Acts 17:26-28), and by direct divine intervention (e.g., any of the myriad occasions of the Lord's direct annihilation of Israel's enemies). Since God's destruction of the tower of Babel (cf. Gen.11:6), law and nationalism have been and continue to be the two major *visible* barriers that keep Satan from complete world domination.

Law is an outgrowth of conscience, a society-wide codification of our collective impulses to protect what is right and restrain what is wrong, built on tradition, experience and experimentation, but always for the general purpose of good. Not that any system of law has ever been perfect (with the sole exception of *the* law handed down to Moses by God Himself). Imperfect human beings produce imperfect systems of governance, but the *fact* of orderly, generally good-oriented legal authority is definitely from God in every legitimate case (i.e., where crime is outlawed and punished, while good behavior is protected and rewarded):

Therefore it is necessary to be subject [to authority] not only because of this severity, but also ***for conscience' sake***.

Romans 13:5

Nations are made by God (cf. Gen.11:6-9; Deut.32:8; Job 12:23; Acts 17:26-28). The term "nationalism", however, is considered by some to be applicable only to comparatively modern times (i.e., the eighteenth century forward). But whatever term one prefers, the differentiation of peoples (according to language, culture, geography etc.) is a phenomenon which goes back thousands of years (specifically, to the post-Babel diaspora of the nations).

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided the sons of men, He established the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:8

Nationalism also acts as a serious check on the devil's earthly operations. This can be seen clearly enough by considering the horrendously evil state of affairs into which the entire world had fallen prior to the great flood. A universal society, with an identical culture and language (as the antediluvian world was) is much easier for the devil to control and manipulate: as in the case of a single biological entity, as soon as any virus

invades it, the disease quickly spreads and infects the entire organism. A one-world state thus offers no more resistance to gross forms of evil, once initially penetrated. A multi-national world, however, is more resistant to Satan's influences, precisely because of its diversity. Communism, or Nazism, or sexual libertinism, or what have you, must be introduced and promoted in every country individually, giving time and space for resistance to whatever new strain of evil the devil is currently promulgating.

For from one man [Adam], [God] created the nations of mankind, that they might inhabit the entire face of the earth. And He predetermined both their appointed times and the boundaries of their settlement, that they might seek God, if perhaps they might even [deign to] grope after Him and so come to find Him – for He is not far from every one of us.

Acts 17:26-27

This last passage makes clear that nationalism has been important, not only in the preservation of human life on earth, but also in the greater purpose for which mankind has always needed to be preserved: to seek and find God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Satan styles himself "ruler of the world", and so he is – but not without limitations. God is ultimately the One in control of the history of the nations (cf. Is.10:5-7; 10:15; Jer.10:7; Dan.2:21), but the devil does his best to undermine the barriers that keep them separate (yet can only do so within God's permissive will):

Those who look at you will contemplate you; they will consider you: "Is this the man who confounded the earth, **who weakened the nations**? He made the world like a desert, and trampled its cities underfoot. He did not let its prisoners go home.

Isaiah 14:16-17

8) Satan is now on the defensive: God's plan for the defeat and replacement of the devil through Jesus Christ has been rolling irrepressibly forward ever since Adam and Eve departed from the garden. Moreover, since the Kingdom of God became imminent with the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ in human form (without diminution of His deity), the devil has stepped up his operations (Matt.11:12), and these will find their most intense expression during the Great Tribulation when he is finally excluded from the heavens, once and for all (Rev.12:7-17).

Thus this has never been an uncontested struggle, and, indeed, Satan's ultimate defeat at the hands of Jesus Christ was prophesied by God before human history outside of Eden began:

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are accursed, more than any beast or wild animal. You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. And I shall place hostility between you and the woman, that is, between your seed and her Seed. He [Christ] will attack you head-on [so as to destroy you], but you will attack Him from behind".

Genesis 3:14-15

Christ's "head-on" or mortal attack on Satan and his kingdom began at the cross and will be effectively completed at the second advent when the Son of God returns to regain complete, direct control of the earth for Man on behalf of God as the God-Man. Even until that time, moreover, Christ is nonetheless the *de jure* authority over all the earth (Ps.110:1; cf. Ps.82:8; Jn.5:27; 1Cor.15:27):

Then Jesus came over and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**, so go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them [with the Spirit] into the Person (i.e., "name") of the Father and [into the Person] of the Son and [into the Person] of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you".

Matthew 28:18-20a

Christ's parable of the growing seed (Mk.4:26ff.), and mustard seed (Mk.4:30ff.) depict the spread of the militant Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, a veritable invasion of the devil's realm in the person of believers who are not of this world or subjects of Satan in any way, but are instead by the blood of the Lamb citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (Jn.17:16; Eph.2:19; Phil.3:20; 1Pet.2:9 & 11).

The imminence of the Kingdom of Heaven means also the concomitant imminence of the devil's removal. Christ came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn.3:8b; cf. Heb.2:14), and even before His sacrifice at the cross spoke of Satan's impending fall from heaven (Lk.10:18), a prospect made even more secure by His triumph on the cross (Col.2:15). This assurance that our adversary the devil is on the point of defeat is a part of normal Christian encouragement (Rom.16:20). It is also a the fulfillment of God's judgments against Satan dating back to his original fall:

Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned [already].
John 16:11

Now that Christ's victory is secure, we await only the completion of the calling out of the full number of Christ's Church (and the prophesied events of the last days), until Satan will be completely expelled:

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the prince of this world be driven out.
John 12:31

Until the devil is removed from the world (and sin removed from mankind) the world will never be a truly "good" place (cf. Matt.12:29). Indeed, even after a thousand years of Christ's personal rule, Satan will be allowed one last attempt on mankind, and will in comparatively short order bring about the rebellion of a large portion of the earth's population against our Savior's perfect regime (Rev.20). This will be the last time sin and Satan team up. From this point on God will create a new heaven and a new earth "in which righteousness dwell", where there is no more devil and no more sin nature (mankind existing at that time only in a resurrected, perfected state). No, God is not going to "fix up" this present world, but will instead create a new, perfect one, where every trace of sin and evil have been burned away forevermore:

For on that day the heavens will burst into flame and dissolve, and the elements will catch fire and melt. But we are awaiting ***new heavens and a new earth*** just as He promised – [a world] where righteousness dwells.

2nd Peter 3:12b-13

On that blessed future day, we descendants of the first Adam who have in this world trusted in the Last Adam (our Lord Jesus Christ), we who have a share in Him will also share in the new, blessed world to come, replacing Satan and his followers in a restored, complete family of God. When Christ shall have defeated the devil once and for all, and turned His Kingdom over to the Father (cf. 1Cor.15:28; Rev.21:1ff), then God's reign on the new earth will begin at last, never to be challenged again.

7. Satan's World-System:

The world that Adam and Eve entered after their expulsion from the garden of Eden could not have been more different from the perfect environment they had so recently taken for granted. Instead of abundant prosperity, ready at hand, they had entered a world of limitation, shortage and scarcity. Instead of a world where all their needs were instantly provided for without any effort on their part, back-breaking toil was now necessary for survival and uncertainty for the future entered into the equation. Life was now a matter of pain, sweat, tears and trouble. Our first parents would also now experience for the first time the full gamut of destructive and sinful emotions, including fear, jealousy and hostility. The domestic tranquility that had reigned in Eden as a matter of course would now be infected by anger, frustration, bitterness and resentment. Before too many years had passed, Adam and Eve would even come to see one of their own children murder his brother. And finally, in crowning futility, when they had lived out their finite years, the ground would receive them back to itself as the Lord God had proclaimed. Death would put an end to all they had worked and striven for in the sorrowful interim.

But God did not leave them orphans on the earth, completely bereft of all hope and of Himself. In the same judgment that rendered our first parents mortal, God also promised them the Seed who would one day crush the head of the serpent who had deceived them. Christ's sacrifice was also foreshadowed in coats of skin with which He graciously clothed them, replacing the garments born of their own efforts with symbols of the coming One who would one day die in their place (discussed in Part 3). Thus before they even left the garden of Eden, God had given Adam and Eve a new tree of life to replace the one they had forsaken: that is, the cross of Jesus Christ (foreshadowed in the animal skins and in the prophecy of the Seed). Like their descendants after them, Adam and Eve were thus given the opportunity to regain the spiritual relationship with God lost at the fall. He Himself would make the promised sacrifice that would blot out sin and destroy the advantage the devil had gained, crushing Satan's head first at the cross and making a final end of him at the conclusion of history. It only remained for our first parents to accept our Lord's generous offer of boundless grace, trusting in Him for their deliverance from the inevitability of the grave, the unavoidable reality which had now become life's central issue.

From a spiritual point of view, life remains essentially the same for us today as it was when our first parents trekked out of Eden some six thousand years ago. The critical issue for every human being is identical now to what it was then: we must all choose whether or not to accept through faith God's solution to the problem of sin and death (in the person of His Son Jesus Christ). And just as Adam and Eve were left in the world beyond the point of faith, so also we today are not immediately transferred to our heavenly home after salvation, but remain here in the world to prove our faith, to grow in it, and to help others do the same. But this world is no Eden. As followers of God and believers in Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven for feeling ill at ease in this present world where we scarcely even belong, for it is not a place where the knowledge of God abounds and the will of God is always done. On the contrary, this parlous world through which we pass lies largely under the influence of the evil one (1Jn.5:19).

This world is the devil's world, a world which we believers are merely passing through as temporary sojourners. We are striding forward day by day toward the promised land, carrying the cross of Jesus Christ. We are marching toward Zion on a holy pilgrimage, living for Jesus Christ (2Cor.5:7-10; Phil.1:21), eager for the day when we shall be with Him forever (2Tim.4:8; Tit.2:13; cf. 1Cor.16:22; Eph.6:24 Rom.8:23). Until that time, we wait for something better as homeless wanderers (Heb.13:13-14; 1Pet.1:1; 2:11) in a world which finds our perspective and our hope worthless, even idiotic (1Cor.1:18-31; 1Cor.3:18-21). But by our faith and the actions that faith produces, we show the world that we are not of it, do not love it, and acknowledge that we have no true part in it – except for the God who is the focus and the object of our love all the days of our sojourning here in the devil's inhospitable desert (cf. 1Chron.29:15; Ps.23; 39:12; 63:1; 84:5-7; 119:19; Heb.11:37-38).

1) The Vanity of this Life: In His judgment upon Adam and Eve, God laid down the fundamental calculus of human life outside of the garden: that we must earn our bread through sweat and toil throughout our short lives and afterwards return to dust (Gen.3:16-19). The curse of a life filled with difficulties followed by an inevitable death will only be removed when God has brought history itself to an end (Rev.22:3). In the meantime, the cycle of painful birth, thistles and thorns, and return to the ground from whence we were originally taken is destined to repeat for us, one and all.

"Utter futility! Utter futility!" says the teacher, "Everything is futility!"
Ecclesiastes 1:2

Many men strive for things that cannot be achieved, for even with prodigious effort, achievement is not really within the power of Man to control:

The race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise, or wealth to the brilliant, or favor to the learned, but time and chance happen to them all.
Ecclesiastes 9:11 NIV

And of those who do achieve what they have set their hopes on, many of them will lose what they have striven for, since everything in this life is ephemeral (cf. Is.40:6; Matt.6:19-21; Lk.12:14-21; 12:33; Jas.1:10-11; 5:2; 1Pet.1:24; 2Pet.3:10-13):

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

Ecclesiastes 9:12 NIV

And of those who do manage to retain what they have striven for all the days of their lives, death will ultimately bereave them of all their precious accomplishments. For death, in particular, makes a mockery of all human achievement:

What profit will a man have if he gains the whole world but loses his life?

Matthew 16:26

The ultimate loss of life is the common heritage of all mankind, so that Jesus' words are particularly penetrating: unless some solution can be found to the overarching problem of our physical mortality, even achievement on a level unsurpassed in human history is essentially meaningless. Indeed, one may even make the argument, that the greater the achievement, the greater the futility, on account of the correspondingly greater loss involved at death. Along with life, the poor lose only their poverty in death, but the rich, successful person loses the things esteemed most in this vain, secular world. Death thus renders all secular achievements essentially pointless:

Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.
Psalm 49:16-17 NIV

Apart from God, nothing we do is truly original (Eccl.1:10). Nothing we do will ultimately be remembered (Eccl.1:11). Despite all our efforts, death will snatch away from us all we have gained in this life "though we had named lands after ourselves" (Ps.49:11b), and we will be oblivious to the fate of our prized possessions after our departure (Eccl.2:17-21). Nothing is secure. Nothing is forever . . . apart from God.

It is in this connection that our Lord commanded us to look beyond the hollow rewards of this life to the true rewards, eternal in the heavens, which come from God:

Don't stock up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and corrosion eat them away and where thieves dig through and steal them. But stock up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor corrosion eat them away and where thieves neither dig through nor steal them. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

The heathen quest for "myth-happiness", that is, satisfaction in life apart from God, is vain for two primary reasons: 1) apart from God, very little *can* truly satisfy; 2) apart from God, security can never be guaranteed. Beyond the simple, God-given pleasures of food, family and labor, the attainment of successive plateaus of wealth, fame, power or pleasure may entertain for a brief moment, but like a feast to a man with a full belly, they quickly lose their appeal, thus spurring the myth-happiness faithful on to the next level of dubious achievement as the cycle progresses on its never-ending way:

- Fame fades; no one can continue to capture the public eye forever; all glory is fleeting, and death eventually reduces all its remnants to dust (Eccl.1:11).
- Pleasure sates easily; no experience can be savored forever, like tears in a bottle; no experience can be exactly repeated or guaranteed for the future; and though one were able to push enjoyment into areas never before experienced, even these would eventually mock the practitioner, when in the end satisfaction drains away, leaving death to bring an end to pleasure altogether.
- Power is inevitably circumscribed by human limitations (among other things: Acts 17:26-27), and while its accretion may feed arrogance, arrogance' appetite is a bottomless sea that can never be satisfied; and death eventually sweeps away even the most powerful ruler.
- Wealth likewise can never be sufficient; the more one has, the more obvious it becomes to the possessor that, after an initial flush, all the fame, pleasure and power it can provide do not ultimately produce lasting satisfaction; the more wealth, that universal secular solution which myth-happiness proclaims will certainly bring joy, the more frustration when joy is not achieved.

Without the confident hope of life after death, what is the point of living long and prospering when afterwards one dies? Can a long life and the experience of material prosperity really soften the blow of death for the unbeliever when it finally arrives? It may do so for the living who feel less grief for someone who has died peacefully in a good old age and in a prosperous state, but does past experience, however blissful, really make the loss of everything an easier pill to swallow? While the average unbeliever generally makes a habit of ignoring the possibility of his own death (until it comes suddenly upon him), one thing is sure: no amount of achievement or wealth can forestall the inevitable:

Why should I fear in troubling times, when I am surrounded by the wickedness of my deceivers, those who trust in their wealth and boast in their great riches? Surely, no one can redeem a man [from God's hand], no one can pay a ransom to God for him. For the redemption price of a life is too precious for Him to relent forever, that one should live on forever, and not see corruption.

Psalm 49:5-9

While human beings are only too willing to accept the idea of the mortality of *others*, a sense of personal immortality, or, more correctly put, an ability to procrastinate mentally until the very moment of death, is the rule when one examines one's own life. Just as "somebody else's troubles" cause little anxiety, so the eventuality of death is always in another man's court, until the actual termination of life (at which point contemplation and re-examination is, needless to say, too late). Great wealth may help to postpone the inevitable (at least people seem to think that it can), but no matter what fastidious care we are able to take of our lives and persons, the delay achieved will ever

be laughably insignificant (Matt.6:27). So despite the fact that our ephemeral nature is the prime lesson of life, human beings persist in running after wealth and accomplishments until some mythic, personal Eden be achieved, ever hedging in their gains and themselves, as if the brief moment would or could last forever. But in the absence of the hope of the resurrection, the hope of myth-happiness achieved and preserved continues to be the holy-grail of the unbelieving life, that, and the equally vain hope that grasping the brass ring for a few short moments will somehow take away the sting of death.

From time to time, we are all attracted to the vanities of the world. We all stray from the steep and narrow path that leads to true deliverance. We sin, we fail, we fall; but we believers are called to wash ourselves clean from the world's pollution, not to wallow in it, to grow closer to God, not to keep Him at a distance. Our sin nature is in fact our adversary's greatest ally. The "lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" that percolate through our corrupt bodies are ever present opponents that attract us to the meaningless things of life and will, if not mastered, draw us into the same life of vanity and futility we have escaped through God's grace in Jesus Christ (cf. 2Pet.2:20-22; 1Jn.2:16). As Christians, we are not here in this life to love the world, but to love God; we are not here to mold ourselves after the world, but after God:

Don't be a lover of this world, nor of what is in this world. If anyone is a lover of this world, a [genuine] love for the Father is not in him.

1st John 2:15

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by this renewal of your thinking (i.e., through obedience to the Word of God; cf. v.1), so that you may discern what God's will for you is, namely what it is good, well-pleasing, and correct [for you to do].

Romans 12:2

As believers, we still have to live here in the devil's world in order to fulfill the purpose God has for our lives. Like all human beings, we feel the pull of myth-happiness, the lie that tells us there can be satisfaction *apart from God* on the other side of our multifarious lust. But with God's help, through the truth of His Word and the anointing of His Holy Spirit, we have ample resources, both the knowledge and the power, to resist the lie (Jn.8:31-32; Gal.5:16-17). Such behavior is completely unintelligible to the unbelievers amongst whom we move (1Pet.4:4). But the devil understands: we are true servants of the God he has defied, and his blood enemies by nature. For this reason alone, we will never, *can* never be at home here on earth as long as Satan exercises any measure of control. As long as this earth is in any sense "the devil's world", all who have sworn their allegiance to Jesus Christ will find it to be enemy territory.

2) The Hostility of the Devil's World toward Believers: From the moment we turn away from the hollow manner of life handed down from generation to generation (1Pet.1:18), and turn instead to the living God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to Him, and at the same time alienated from the world. There can be no middle ground. Either we are friends of God, or friends of the world (Jas.4:4). Satan has done his best to structure the kingdom he tenuously controls and its mode of operation

to invite compromise and involvement in the activities and values he sponsors. But God is holy. God is righteous. God is absolute, and the issues He puts before us (of accepting salvation first, and following Jesus Christ ever afterward) are equally absolute. To be sure, Christians sin, Christians stumble, Christians fail; but our imperfect obedience does not change the fact that God's standards are unbending, unsullied and perfect in every way:

You adulterously unfaithful people! Don't you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world establishes himself as an enemy of God.

James 4:4

This world, often referred to in the New Testament by the Greek word *kosmos* (κόσμος, cf. "cosmos"), is and has been since the fall of Adam and Eve a place by nature antithetical to godly values and godly lives. In no small part for this very reason, scripture often refers to the physical earth, its population, and its present system of diabolical governance under the all encompassing title of "the cosmos" (*kosmos*, Greek κόσμος), that is to say, "the world". For "the world" sums up not only geographic planet earth with its human population, but also the entire system of satanic influence with which the devil has been manipulating mankind since the first day our original parents fell into sin. This scriptural designation is both fitting and important, because it is truly impossible to separate one from the other, and extremely dangerous for Christians to try. Only God can sever the monstrous tie between the devil's system of influence and administration (i.e., "Satan's world-system") from the anthropological-geological earth. Sever the two He will, but through His own might in Jesus Christ when He returns to crush Satan under His feet (Rev.20:1-10). Until that future time, everything the world is represents a threat to those who believe in Christ, to those who follow God and not the devil. Christians ignore to their peril this reality of the world's essential evil and hostility towards them.

The devil's world will never be healed; the devil's system will never be successful in bringing in perfect environment apart from God. Indeed, Satan's *kosmos* is not at all designed to do so – it is to the contrary constructed to *appear* to have the betterment of humanity as a prime objective, in order to further the devil's plans of enslaving and misleading as many people as possible. While masquerading as a kingdom of light, Satan's world is entirely a kingdom of darkness, and so the Bible describes it, making abundantly clear the distinction between God's world to come and the present cosmos of evil (cf. 2Cor.11:14; 1Pet.2:9):

[God the Father], who rescued us from the power of darkness and delivered us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Colossians 1:13

The theme of light and darkness in the Bible is critical to understanding and appreciating to what an absolute degree the world is not only vain and pointless, but utterly evil. For just as the original cosmos, a place of brilliant light, was plunged into literal darkness at Satan's fall, so following the fall of our first parents this present world

became morally dark, and irremediably so (cf. Rom.5:12 "sin entered the *kosmos*"). As a result, this evil world is now the devil's "kingdom of darkness", and in it there is no "light" whatsoever apart from God. In biblical terms, light is a very clear and potent metaphor for truth and holiness, while darkness, on the other hands, is an equally powerful symbol of the lie and of all that is sinful and repugnant to God. In His grace, God has always made the light of truth visible and available to mankind, even in the midst of Satan's light-less world, and this light of truth has always been embodied in His Son:

In Him was life, and this life was the light of men. And this light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not quenched it.

John 1:4-5

Jesus Christ is the true light of world, the embodiment of all truth, the living Word of God, the One who illuminates the sinful darkness with blinding, holy light (cf. Jn.12:46).

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12b

In this regard, Christ is clearly pictured as invading an enemy kingdom, a kingdom where evil and darkness reign. He is "sent" as the world's Savior (1Jn.4:14); He "comes into the world" as the true light (Jn.1:9-10); He "conquers the world" (Jn.16:33), and ultimately "triumphs" (Rev.5:5). The Bible's symbolism of Christ as diametrically opposed to the world we now inhabit is striking and unyielding: light to darkness.

It should come as no surprise, then, that we who become "light in the Lord" (Eph.5:8) have from the point of salvation forward little in common with the world in which we walk. We believers in Christ are no longer "of the world" (Jn.17:14-16), but are sojourners and aliens in a strange and hostile environment. The corollary to this principle is equally true and equally compelling: just as we have chosen God over the world, so the world has little use for us who have rejected it. The fact that the present *kosmos* is under the devil's influence makes this eventuality the more understandable (1Jn.5:19). As soon as we stop playing according to Satan's rules, we are no longer his subjects, but only interlopers in his realm. Thus we lose all further consideration on the part of the world and its ruler. By choosing Christ, we gain our lives, but lose the world, thus incurring its undying hostility (Matt.16:26):

I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.

John 17:14-16

This hostility on the part of the world towards believers is complete and absolute. As those who reflect the light of God's truth (2Cor.3:18), believers naturally stir the resentment of those whose deeds are evil, those who love darkness and hate the light (Jn.3:19-20; 1Jn.3:12). No one has ever challenged the world and its evil more than did

the true light, Jesus Christ. And there can be no greater example of the fact that the world as a system of evil is incurable than what the devil's kingdom did to our Lord and Master. Though He was the true light of the world, the One who not only told the truth but *was* the truth, the One who came into the world to save all those in the world who would turn to Him, He was nevertheless crucified by the world (cf. Acts 3:13; 13:27-28; Rom.3:11; 1Cor.2:8; 2:14-15; 2Cor.4:3-4; 1Jn.3:1). As the Light of the world, He naturally incurred the world's hostility, because He exposed the world for its utter and unrepentant evil:

And this is the [basis for] judgment: the Light has come into the world, yet men loved the darkness more than the Light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who commits detestable practices hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds be exposed [for what they really are].

John 3:19-20

As His followers, we Christians are targets of the same hostility, when we walk as He walked, for in so doing we reflect His light in an ungrateful world (cf. Matt.5:14-16; Phil.2:14-15):

Though the world hates you, know that it came to hate Me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own. Now because you are not [a part] of the world, but I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you.

John 15:18-19

A world steeped in sin, populated for the most part by people who want no part of God (cf. Eph.2:1-3), and ruled by the devil will never be a "comfortable" or "friendly" place for those who choose to follow Jesus Christ. Of this we must be sure. There is perhaps no greater mistake a believer can make than to assume that he or she can ever have any true peace with this world and its diabolical sovereign (Jas.4:4; 1Jn.2:15-17). This is one reason why peace and prosperity are potentially harmful to the believer's spiritual equilibrium. For the devil is at work in "good times" too. Indeed, he does some of his most effective work on such occasions. Followers of Christ need to remember that the world is not an essentially "friendly" place where bad things happen only from time to time. Rather, it is an entire cosmos of evil where darkness reigns, a mad beast that can never be tamed, only destroyed (as God shall eventually do: cf. 2Pet.3:10-12). We owe a great debt of gratitude to God that in our time we have been the beneficiaries of much divine restraint, but during the Great Tribulation the true nature of the world and of him who currently rules it will become manifest to all. Until that time, we Christians should be ever vigilant not to allow "good times" to blind us to the true nature of our relationship to the world. We are journeying through enemy territory, as did our Lord (1Jn.4:17b). God is our life, our love, but the world does not know Him (Jn.17:25). Therefore it does not understand us, sees us as weak and foolish (1Cor.1:28-29; cf. 1Cor.3:18-19), and is even resentful of us (Jn.15:18-19; 17:14; 1Jn.3:13). We are not "of" this present evil world (Jn.17:14-16), but in Christ have been delivered from it (Gal.1:4; Col.1:13), and crucified to it (and it to us: Gal.6:14; cf. Col.2:20). As citizens of the kingdom of heaven and as ambassadors of Christ, we still remain in it (Jn.17:15; cf. 2Cor.5:20; Phil.3:20; 1Pet.2:11), but are not to be conformed to it (Rom.12:2). From

God's point of view, the world is filled with spiritual pollution and moral corruption (2Pet.1:4; 2:20; Jas.1:27); as long as we are in it, we will have trials and tribulations (Jn.16:33), but through Him we will overcome the world (1Jn.4:4; 5:4-5) and come to judge it (1Cor.6:2).

3) The Devil's World a Spiritual Battlefield: There is another dimension to be considered beyond our alienation to the world, beyond its essential futility, and beyond the enmity between it and us: the world is also a battlefield where the struggle between Satan's present kingdom and the coming kingdom of heaven continues to be played out in deadly earnest (as has been the case since the devil's fall).

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against [angelic] princes, against [angelic] authorities, against the cosmic powers of this [present] darkness, against evil spirits in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12

So far then from being capable in any way of essential betterment or rehabilitation, the world is a combat zone where the devil and his minions, visible and invisible, are waging war against the plan of God. Therefore, we who have chosen for God through Jesus Christ are all combatants in this largely unseen conflict, like it or not, perceive it or not. We are living out this temporary life of the flesh on a battlefield, and cannot separate the two. We may choose to be poor soldiers in the fight; we may seek to avoid the fray as far as possible; we may (as many have done in the past and even more are predicted to do in the future) go "A.W.O.L." from our Lord or even desert to the enemy. But the fact remains, no matter how we choose to respond to it, that this world is the prime battlefield of the struggle between God and the devil, and that this truth has more to do with the texture, course and purpose of our individual Christian lives than the things our eyes can see, than the things the world tells us are really important.

Endure hardship with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2nd Timothy 2:3

Satan has never and will never lose sight of his objective to hinder and oppose in every conceivable way the plan of God for salvation (which necessarily entails his replacement). Therefore as soldiers in the army of the Son of God, we believers are of no inconsiderable interest to Satan.

Stay sober and stay awake [on guard]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [as you are].

1st Peter 5:8-9

We are more than interlopers in Satan's realm. We are chosen by God, choosers of Him, and eventual replacements for the devil's followers. We are sons of God whose continued existence here is a testimony to the power and faithfulness of God and a continual reproach to the devil. We are soldiers of truth, who seek to know, to live, and to proclaim the truth, whose very presence here on earth contradicts the devil's lies and

threatens to undermine all that he seeks to accomplish. For nothing shatters the power of darkness like light.

The night is close to over, and day is near at hand. So let us put aside the works of darkness and put on [instead] the armor of light.

Romans 13:12

It is therefore foolish to assume that we believers can somehow remain aloof from the unseen conflict that rages around us, especially since Satan's system can be seen in full operation throughout the world. Moreover, the devil and his forces, both human and angelic, are operating with the clear and discernible objective of opposing the kingdom of heaven with all possible means, and will be doing so with an increasingly desperate sense of purpose as the ultimate day of reckoning draws ever nearer.

Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come to down to you, having great anger, because he knows that he has [only] a short time [remaining].

Revelation 12:12

But when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8b

We may not always have a precise understanding of the enemy's specific tactical objectives in all the complicated web of human (and angelic) affairs – after all, our (military) intelligence as to the particulars of individual situations is necessarily limited. But scripture does make clear that we believers are primary targets of all the devil's martial assets, and that we are to order our lives accordingly. Failing to understand the dangers the world really poses, failing to maintain a conscious alertness as to our role as Christians in it, or, worst of all, falling into the devil's most insidious and effective trap of trying to improve "cosmos diabolicus" (the devil's *kosmos* or world), are mistakes that can put our entire Christian walk, our entire faith at risk. We have enlisted in the army of Jesus Christ, and until He calls us home, or the final trumpet blows, we have a fight on our hands here in the enemy's territory:

Fight the good fight of faith.

1st Timothy 6:12a

I give you this command, Timothy my child, in accordance with the prophecies that were made long ago about you, that you conduct a good [military] campaign, one that is in keeping with them.

1st Timothy 1:18

I have fought the good fight. I have completed my course. I have kept the faith.

2nd Timothy 4:7

When our life in the world is viewed in this light, we can see Satan's cosmos entirely for what it is: a battlefield wherein our adversary the devil has established many hostile fortifications, land-mines and booby-traps. It is a dangerous place garrisoned by his forces of darkness, an area under hostile fire wherein we are combatants. It cannot be

emphasized often enough that the world is therefore not "fixable" any more than a combat zone can be "fixed" in any way before the enemy who disputes its control has been utterly defeated. At the second advent, Jesus Christ will return in glory to completely vanquish the forces of Satan, human and angelic. Until that day, as long as we campaign here on the devil's earth, we must fight our battles on the spiritual plain with the "sword of the Spirit", the Word of God (Eph.6:17):

For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but are powerful for God, for the destruction of strongholds, destroying sophistries and every presumption that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought prisoner so as to obey Christ.

2nd Corinthians 10:4-5

After the fall, when our first parents accepted God's gracious offer of salvation, they "hit the beach", so to speak, becoming, in effect, invaders of the devil's realm. From this time forward, the devil would hold as his enemies any and all who would choose to follow God, to think and act contrary to the manipulative system of lies that Satan has developed to keep as much of humanity as possible enslaved to his will. Amid the setbacks, the trials and the tears, amid the harsh realities of life as Christians in the middle of the devil's realm, it is tremendously important that we learn this essential principle of Christian soldiering: whatever happens, you must not take things personally. As Jesus told us in very plain language, the world opposed Him, and so it will oppose all who belong to Him as well (Jn.15:18-19). This struggle for control of the earth, for the salvation of those who walk in darkness, for the spiritual advance and growth of all who follow Christ, this struggle is **not** about us individually; this struggle is about Jesus Christ. Despite the economic and technological "prosperity" that characterizes our present day and age, from a spiritual point of view we live in some of the toughest times the Church has ever experienced. The devil's system has never been so close to dominating world thinking and controlling world culture; and never since the tower of Babel has Satan been closer to forging a world-wide uni-culture (based on his intricate and multifarious lies). Everything that is in any way connected to the truth is under increasingly heavy assault from the forces of cosmos diabolicus. Under such trying circumstances, it is absolutely imperative that we who believe the truth, who love the truth, who serve and seek the truth, not take the devil's assaults on us personally. Because of the nature of the world as a battlefield in the conflict in which we are now embroiled and our status as followers of Jesus Christ, we must expect tribulation to be the rule, not the exception:

[They were] strengthening the hearts of the disciples, and encouraging them to remain in the faith, and saying "We must pass through many tribulations to reach the Kingdom of God".

Acts 14:22

Remember this principle I taught you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

John 15:20

Indeed, all who are willing to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
2nd Timothy 3:12

Beloved, don't be alarmed at the fiery ordeal which has befallen you and is putting you to the test – as if something out of the ordinary were happening to you. But to the degree that you are [truly] participating in Christ's sufferings, be joyful about it, so that at His glorious revelation, you may also rejoice with great gladness.
1st Peter 4:12-13

This "sharing of the sufferings of Christ" (cf. Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5-7; Phi.3:10; Col.1:24; 1Pet.4:13) is only occasionally the result of overt and obvious persecution for being Christian. More often than not, it comes instead from invisible, demonic sources or through human agencies in ways that are not overtly connected to attacking us for our Christianity *per se*. Satan has many minions, many means of turning up the heat on all who are determined to follow Christ in the midst of his kingdom and in despite of his lies.:

Stay sober and stay awake [on guard duty]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [as you are].
1st Peter 5:8-9

As believers in Christ, followers of Christ, ambassadors for Christ, indeed "little Christs" (as the name Christian indicates), we need to understand that the resistance, attacks and persecution we receive from our adversary the devil *are not personal*, any more than enemy artillery fire on a strictly human battlefield is meant for any one soldier in particular. Now the fact that Satan's attempts to discourage us, seduce us and even to destroy us are not personal do not make them any less deadly. The point is, like soldiers in combat, we need to be able to react to the "shot and shell" in an impersonal, highly professional way. We simply cannot afford to allow our morale to be seriously damaged or even destroyed by the devil's inevitable assaults. We are not unique. As the passage from 1st Peter quoted above teaches very plainly, *all* believers are subject to the same type of treatment. Satanic opposition is, quite frankly, a normal and continual part of the Christian life. Certainly, these assaults will take a variety of forms; certainly, they will differ greatly from time to time, from place to place, and from individual to individual. But the fact of their occurrence is a given. As long as we march across this battlefield, we are going to be subject to enemy fire, of greater concentration and intensity to the degree we increase in the effectiveness of our Christian lives (growing spiritually and helping others to do likewise).

This struggle is not about us, but we cannot avoid being completely involved in it as long as we hold our position on planet earth. With the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and session of our prince leader Jesus Christ (Heb.2:10; 12:2), the devil has lost his last opportunity to attack our Lord directly. We are the next best thing. And while we are hardly the exclusive targets of satanic operations in this world, we believers are nevertheless special "targets of opportunity", whom the devil delights in tripping up,

then accusing in the presence of God (Rev.12:10). When we are being "hit" by set-backs, suffering, even disaster, we, as potentially very emotional creatures, need to remember this principle of "not taking things personally". Like Job, we don't know, *can't* know now the exact purpose that our individual episodes of suffering have in the plan of God; and like the unseen chariots that Elisha revealed, we can't see the forces that God is deploying in our defense and support. Our job is to continue to advance up the hill God has given us to assault; we should expect the enemy to fire back (why wouldn't he?). What we cannot afford to do is to become disoriented by the experience and take this satanic opposition personally, "as if some strange thing were happening to us" (1Pet.4:12-13), or as if we were the first to fall under the devil's fire (1Pet.5:8-9).

This is, admittedly, a difficult perspective to maintain, but a very important one nevertheless. Most notable in scripture in this regard is the example of Job, who – after enduring tremendous and tremendously unexpected suffering with a patience that was destined to become proverbial – finally made the mistake of taking the experience personally in the end (as a result of the cold comfort doled out by his supposed friends). We can certainly understand Job's reaction, his vehement "Why me, God?", but we must also acknowledge that God has preserved his story for us for a very important reason: whenever we find our ourselves under grinding, unexplained and unexplainable pressures, we need to be extremely careful *not to blame God*. When we groan, and moan, and complain about our lot, we are not far different from the soldier who is convinced that trench foot was invented by the enemy to plague him personally, or that his adversaries are shelling the position in order to kill him personally. Such notions are ridiculous. But how much more ridiculous is it for believers who profess to trust God, who claim to know something about His mercy and grace, to whine and complain that "God isn't listening to me!" or ask "Why did God let this happen to me?" Job didn't realize that the intense suffering he was forced to undergo was in fact an incredible compliment. For God had in fact singled him out from all the believers of his day to reproach the devil:

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth: a blameless man and righteous who fears God and turns away from evil.

Job 1:8

Like Job, we too are in the dark about the particulars of the unseen conflict that rages around us. We know so very little about what is happening in heaven or in the invisible angelic realm here on earth that it is incredibly foolish (not to mention wrong) for us to ascribe our problems and difficulties to some indifference on God's part – the very God who sacrificed His own Son to save us from hell. He did the most for us then; will He not also take heed of all our other problems as well (Heb.13:5-6, and cf. Rom.5:8)? We may know intellectually that He provides for us and protects us, we may also have believed this essential principle, but it is certainly a different matter to apply this truth when we fall under intensive enemy fire. It is all too easy to become focused on ourselves and our problems (massive and seemingly insoluble though they may be), and forget why we are here and who we are here for; it is all too easy to take our suffering personally, and, if we are not careful, once we head down this slippery slope to blame God. We are here for

Him, for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; we are here to serve God. We have pledged our lives to Him. Indeed, we claim to wait in eager anticipation of the next life, the eternal life that we have been promised by the Father and the Son which has been pledged to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13-14). Death, the inevitability that makes a mockery of life on this earth without God, no longer has any terrors for us, or so we say, for to us to die is gain (Phil.1:21), a blessed entrance into the real, eternal life we yearn for, into an everlasting fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, into reward, refreshment and ultimate resurrection. If the worst that the devil and his world can do to us is to hasten our exit from this life of tears into the next with all its joy and glory, then why do we often behave as if this world and our residence in it will go on forever?

Between this life and the next, we are here to serve God in whatever way He desires. There has never been a problem or a disaster or a heartache that He has not known about – long before the earth was made; and there has never been any situation that He has not made provision for – long before Man walked the earth. He is perfect; His plan is perfect; His provision is perfect. These are simply facts – to those who believe. God could have taken us home to Himself immediately at the point of our entrance into His family through faith in Jesus Christ, but He has left us here, in the devil's world, on this battlefield called earth, to soldier on according to the Word with which we have been entrusted. The world being what it is (as we have seen), and given the implacable nature of our adversary the devil, opposition, resistance and suffering are not the exception for Christians, but the norm. One of the biggest mistakes we can make as we proceed on this journey, this mission, is to forget where we are (the world), why we are here (to serve God), and what our Christian growth will cost (intensifying opposition from the adversary). The last thing we can afford in this dangerous and hostile place and in the face of such a wily opponent is to take the devil's harassment personally.

All this takes faith, and faith requires diligent intake of God's Word consistently applied to life in order to grow. Only through the continuation of this irreplaceable process do the realities of heaven begin to become more real than the ephemeral "realities" our eyes behold. But once we have grown to this perspective, we may honestly say as Job did "the Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will be opposed by the devil, but if we stand our ground the victory will be ours (Jas.4:7). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will be tested, but God will never allow the pressure to intensify beyond what we can actually bear (1Cor.10:13). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will know sorrow and suffering, but God will never leave us without superabundant comfort (Jn.16:7; 2Cor.1:3-7). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, when our race is finally run, we shall be able to look back on this short life and say with the apostle Paul that though in every way we were oppressed, we were not completely distressed, that though we were without lavish means, we were not left totally without them, that though we were persecuted, we were not left completely in the lurch, and that though we were thrown down, we were not destroyed (2Cor.4:8-9). When we came forth into this world, it was not the garden of Eden we found, but a battlefield where our enemy the devil held sway. May it be said of us all that in this life we served honorably – even with distinction – the One who enlisted us into His service by His own blood.

Endure hardship with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on military campaign becomes involved in the affairs of normal life. [He avoids such things] that he may please the one who enlisted him.

2nd Timothy 2:3-4

4) Satan's System of Propaganda: Satan's world-system is an administrative philosophy designed to secure and increase his control over human kind for the purpose of opposing God's plan to replace him and his followers. In this section, we will be concerned with the specifics of Satan's world-view for mankind, an all encompassing system of lies, carefully crafted for maximum seductive effect, a mesh of doctrines, teachings and ideas that the devil has employed since the expulsion from Eden and designed to delude and enslave humanity. We have termed this system "Satan's *world-system*" in order to better correlate the idea with the Greek word *kosmos* ("world"), the term that most frequently references in the Bible the devil's system of anti-truth.

As Christians, we are to have as our focus in this life the Word of God, both the living Word, Jesus Christ (Jn.1:1-5), and the written Word, the Bible (2Pet.1:19-21). Truth, therefore, is at the very center of our earthly lives (Ps.119), and we walk according to what our God tells us is true, not by what our eyes see (2Cor.5:7), for everything in this life is passing away, but God's Word is forever (Is.40:6-8; 1Pet.1:23-25). Satan's world-system is predicated on the principle of opposing this basic tenet of all orthodox, Christ-centered thought. For it is the primary objective of the devil's system to reverse this perspective, to turn humanity's focus completely around and fix it firmly instead on this earthly life. For Satan, every human being who looks away from God and towards this world instead is a triumph, just as for God, every person who turns his gaze away from the devil's dark world unto Jesus Christ is a victory:

"[I am sending you to them] . . . to open their eyes that they might turn away from darkness and toward the light, even from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of their sins and a share among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Acts 26:18

Stay sober, stay awake! Your adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion searching for someone to devour.

1st Peter 5:8

As he proved in his cunning seduction of so many of his fellow angels, Satan has a tremendous grasp of how best to prey upon his fellow creatures. He understands his subjects (angelic and human alike) and does not shrink from boldly exploiting any and all weaknesses. A common theme in his approach is his focus upon whatever it is that one of his intended victims lacks: the angels lacked physical bodies, so he promised these to them (the fact that engineered, possessed bodies would never have amounted to the real thing doesn't concern the devil, only that the lie he is selling be believable). Adam and Eve lacked the knowledge of good and evil, so he tempted them to acquire it (no matter that it meant their ultimate physical death). Following the fall, human beings are, in many respects, much easier targets for Satan. Instead of a narrow window in

which to attack (where the temptation is in no way connected with necessity: i.e., physical bodies for angels; the knowledge of good and evil unnecessary for perfect humans in paradise), human beings outside of the garden of Eden face a wide range of potential shortages and needs as a result of our now universal mortality and the curse God has placed upon the ground. Add to this the fact that the devil has a natural ally on the inside of each and every one of us (i.e., the sin nature), and it is not difficult to see how Satan's system of false promises and lies has been able to make so many converts throughout the course of human history – the vast majority, in fact, of all human beings who have ever lived. Yet God has never left Himself without a witness; all have had a choice; in every generation there have been those who have heard the small still voice of truth and turned away from the devil's system unto God (1Kng.19:12; Acts 14:17; 17:27), a remnant according to the election of grace (cf. Rom.11:5).

Even for believers, however, temptation emanating from the devil's system continues to be an issue throughout life for obvious reasons: 1) pressure from the sin nature: salvation brings forgiveness for sin but does not eradicate the sin nature resident in our corrupt flesh, which will continue to remain a source of spiritual vulnerability for us throughout this earthly life (Gen.8:21; 1Kng.8:46; Ps.130:3; Rom.7:18 & 24; Jas.1:13-15); 2) pressure from the now corrupt world: our physical mortality (the ultimate result of our internal corruption) coupled with the inherent nature of the world outside of Eden (prone to shortages and requiring hard labor to provide sustenance as a result of God's curse in sharp contrast to the garden: Gen.3:17-19) are urgent vulnerabilities which keep up a constant physical and psychological pressure.

Just on the basis of these two primary sources of internal and external pressure (which largely drive secular human behavior in this life), much of the depraved and godless conduct that is human history would no doubt have come about even without the devil's help. But, inasmuch as it is in his interest to oppose divine influence in his realm, Satan has developed a tactical scheme and philosophy of administering this world calculated to maximize the blinding of mankind so as to 1) lead us away from truth, away from God; and 2) lead us to do his will instead of God's.

The devil's main tactical aim is to increase his influence and control over humanity (individually and collectively), and he mercilessly exploits any opportunity, any weakness to do so. The essence of his approach, the premier weapon aimed at the battleground of the human heart (the mind-spirit interface) is ***the lie***. Satan is the deceiver of the whole world (Rev.20:1-3), and the father of lies (Jn.8:44). These titles are suggestive of his central tactical objective: to obscure ***the truth*** in any and every way. Satan's world-system, however, is no mere disinformation campaign. The devil is (and always has been) out to win the "hearts and minds" of all human beings. He is very well aware that we can be influenced, pressured, and tempted physically and emotionally as well. Much of his system is directed toward the body with the purpose of affecting the heart thereby. The satanic world-system is for that reason a network of interconnected lies, emotional appeals and physical pressures which, at their most effective, are difficult to disentangle.

Satan's world-system is the lie writ large, extending like a spider's web into every corner of the globe, into every area of human activity, and thus making its way into every single human heart (as far as the devil can bring that to pass), blocking, denying, opposing God's truth however, wherever and whenever it can. It is important to note at the outset that the satanic world-system encompasses not only behaviors that anyone and, indeed, almost everyone would view as satanic, and areas that are generally acknowledged as sinful, but also very many areas that are normally deemed "good". In his choice of tactics the devil has no scruples. He will encourage any and all behavior – what men may see as good or what they may see as bad – in order to block God's truth and thus increase his own influence in the world.

Since the fall, three facts have stood at the very foundation of human experience:

- 1) Universal mortality: the reality of death for all (Gen.3:19b).
- 2) Universal depravity: the reality of sin in all (Gen.2:17 [spiritual death – see Part 3]).
- 3) Universal temptation: the reality of the devil against all (Gen.3:15).

Because of Adam's sin, we shall all die physically. Because of Adam's sin, we are all born with the physical presence in our bodies of inherent sin, that is, the "sin nature" (which in every case – except that of the virgin-born Christ – works its way out in the practice of sin). Because of Satan's usurpation of Adam's rule over the earth, we are all subject to the attacks of the evil one.

These three essential realities of human life, made clear even as Adam and Eve were being expelled from Eden (Gen.3:14-19), are the basis for three all-important corollary principles that establish the ground rules for restoring and building our relationship with God.

- 1) We need God (we cannot turn death into life).
- 2) We are not God (we cannot expiate our own sin).
- 3) God does not need us (we cannot substitute anything for His Word so as to help Him).

This basic calculus of human existence was made clear to our first parents at the fall, and there is every indication that they accepted the truth of it. In His awesome grace, God promised, and has since provided in the flesh, a substitute to wipe away death by carrying our sins – and there is no substitute for Him. Adam and Eve knew 1) they needed God, 2) recognized immediately their own inability to atone for what they had done, and 3) accepted the promise of Him who would die in their place rather than attempting to solve the problem by their own actions (evidenced, among other things, by their acceptance of the coats of skin provided through symbolic sacrifice: Gen.3:21).

Nevertheless, most of humanity has in fact lived their lives as if the **opposite** of each of the three basic principles listed above were true. A large part of the reason for this is the

system constructed by Satan to turn these essential truths of human existence on their head, and to replace them instead with a system of lies to blind mankind to the truth, a *world-system* designed to capture and ensnare as much of human kind as possible. Satan's *kosmos* is thus based on a complex system of propaganda which he and his demons foster throughout the world, a clever and elaborate network of lies that at their root are simple refutations of the basic truths 1) We need God; 2) We are not God; 3) God does not need us:

- **Satanic Lie #1: "I don't need God":** By all rights, the reality of death should bring every human being to the realization that without God there is no hope. But in the course of human history the devil has been very effective at using the fear of death to enslave humanity (Heb.2:14-15). This is because in our post-Eden world life is lived very close to the edge. Without work and effort by the sweat of our brow there is no bread, and without bread, there is nothing to sustain life. Fear is therefore a major element in our collective psychology outside of the garden, because we are all aware that without material means, life will not, cannot be sustained. Satan concentrates on intensifying this worry in hopes of turning mankind away from the issue of ultimate mortality towards the everyday problems of survival instead. It is a very common and a very human reaction to ignore the big problem (impending death with no solution) and to focus instead on the immediate smaller ones (how to provide food and clothing today). But as our Lord has told us, this is turning things inside out. We should first seek the kingdom (God's solution to death in eternal life through Jesus Christ), then everything else we need to survive in this short life will be added to it (Matt.6:25-34). But when the devil's teachings are accepted instead, unsaved humanity strives instead for material success (Matt.6:32), so that whether out of failure and panic ("God isn't helping me; I need money, not God"), or out of success and self-confidence ("I have helped myself; I have money; I don't need God"), the true need for God to deliver us eternally is blindly overlooked in the quest for temporary substitutes that can provide only temporal sustenance. This first satanic lie always seeks to undermine the authority of God by undermining His truth. We know from His Word, we all know from the way He has constructed the universe and from the obvious inevitability of death that we need God more than anything else, but the devil tells us that there is no hope of eternal life and so no point in seeking God, so that we may take our eyes off of truth and focus them on life's material needs and distractions instead.

the lie: *I don't need God.* What counts are my physical needs, not my spiritual ones.

the truth: *We do need God.* Without Him and His help we are powerless in the face of death.

analog lie: *There is no need of God.* There is no help from God, so I have to help myself.

analog truth: *God provides for our needs.* First seek the kingdom, then all will be provided.

the lie's impetus: *Worry.*

the lie's manifestation: *Greed.*

Jesus' response to Satan: *Life does not come from bread alone, but from obeying God's Word.*

Jesus' model prayer for us: *Give us today our bread for today.*

The opposite virtue: *Faith.* Trusting in God rather than in possessions.

The opposite vice (1Jn.2:16): *Lust of the flesh.* Trusting in possessions rather than God.

The lie's true object of worship: *Things.*

The lie's blind-spot: *Being in denial about death and mortality.*

The reality: *Even if you gain the world, there is no eternal life without God.*

- **2. Satanic Lie #2: "I am like God":** Once we reject the truth that our lives are completely dependent upon God and that He is the only hope for eternal life, once we take matters into our own hands and begin to worship the work of our own hands, once we come to believe that success in providing for ourselves in this material world can somehow compensate for our complete impotence in the face of impending death, it is a small step to believing that the will we are exerting is equal to God's will. For after we once reject God's will to learn the lesson of this world's futility and of our hopelessness without Him in the face of our mortality, we necessarily become reliant on our own will in place of His. After God's authority was destroyed in Eve's eyes, the temptation to "be like God" was great, and just as she ate of the forbidden fruit in anticipation of becoming divine but only became alienated thereby from Him who is divine, so also we, by substituting our will for God's will in this life come to think in our heart of hearts that we are the true "masters of our fate" on an equal par with God. Just as the devil used fear to instill in us desperation about our material needs in order to cause us to focus upon this temporary world instead of the eternity which should be our main concern, so in this second lie the devil appeals to our subjective pride. In ignoring our eternal needs we ignore God. In this second lie, by taking unjustified pride in our own abilities, accomplishments, and will, we reduce God in our thinking to our own level. With the first lie, we think we have no need of God who is greater than we are. With the second lie, we become so self-secure that we now see ourselves on an equal footing with God. Though we have been given free will by God to respond to Him in this life, we now use our will as if we were God, responding to the devil's lie and our own pride instead. Putting ourselves in the place of worship instead of God (for that is what arrogance and pride amount to) results in seeking our own glory instead of Gods, glorying in our own accomplishments, instead of realizing that they have come from God, and attributing the gifts, abilities, and successes we have to ourselves instead of God (Deut.8:18). Satan's second lie in this progression encourages us to love self instead of God, and to do so requires not only that we ignore God (as in lie #1) but that we take this to the next step and belittle Him (for that is what comparing ourselves to Him amounts to). In responding to lie #1 we ignored our own mortality and our need for God's help to overcome it so as to think we had no need of God at all but material things instead. In

responding to lie #2 we ignore our own sinfulness and our need of God's help to overcome it so as to think that we are not sinners at all but crave praise for ourselves instead. A large part of this lie and, indeed, an essential component of it is Satan's preaching of relativism. For only by denying the absolute nature of good and evil could we ever deceive ourselves into thinking that we are good (and only by being good could we possibly be "like God"). As the devil convinces us to worry about the material concerns of the day instead of the "distant" day of death, so after we buy into this second lie we begin to believe that instead of being concerned for the eventual judgment upon our sins that we have true worth that ought to be praised. In falsely building up our righteousness in our own eyes we necessarily impugn God's righteousness. By substituting our own flawed character as worthy of praise (and blinding ourselves to our inherent sinfulness) we necessarily impugn God's perfect character.

the lie: *I am like God*. I don't need a Savior, rather I should be praised (worshiped) for my good.

the truth: *We are not like God*. Without His help we are only worthy of condemnation not glory.

analog lie: *I deserve the glory*.

analog truth: *The glory is God's*. God honors those who honor Him.

the lie's impetus: *Subjective arrogance*. Excessively arrogant pride directed toward self.

the lie's manifestation: *Self-glorification and self-promotion*. Crediting self instead of God.

Jesus' response to Satan: *Worship belongs to God alone*.

Jesus' model prayer for us: *Forgive us our debts*. We are unworthy and in need of forgiveness.

The opposite virtue: *Love*. Esteeming God and His children rather than ourselves.

The opposite vice (1Jn.2:16): *Boastful pride*. Loving oneself and the world's glory.

The lie's true object of worship: *Self*.

The lie's blind-spot: *Being in denial about personal sin and sinfulness*.

The reality: *No accomplishment removes your sin or makes you like God or worthy of His glory*.

- **3. Satanic Lie #3: "God needs me"**: The first satanic lie seeks to blot out the issue of our mortality (based on inherited sin), and instead to establish our independence from God (based upon our own efforts). The second satanic lie seeks to blot out the issue of our sinfulness (evidenced by our own personal sins), and instead to

establish our goodness apart from God. This third satanic lie seeks to blot out the issue of the incurably evil nature of the world (steeped in creature rebellion and irretrievably sullied by it), and instead to suggest the possibility of establishing a new man-made Eden on earth (both personal and collective) . . . by *helping* God! By the time we have bought into this third lie we have moved from worshiping things and worshiping self to worshiping what we esteem, what we do, what we make. We create an idol (a personal good or goal), and glory in its accomplishment. That good or goal is not God's good or goal, but we assume in doing so that our intentions trump God's desires. We assume that God needs us to accomplish this good or goal, and that without us it wouldn't be, couldn't be done. We assume that we are helping God, but in reality we are only helping the devil. Our lives will never be "fixed" apart from God, through His work and His truth. And this world will never be "fixed" apart from God, through His Messiah and in His Kingdom. But by the time we have bought into this third lie, we have jumped from confidence in self instead of God and esteem for self instead of God to looking to self for ultimate truth instead of to God. In reality, of course, we end up relying on, esteeming, and looking to the devil (but that of course is the purpose of this integrated system of deception). As outrageous as it is to assume that we pitifully limited human beings could ever rise above the sin and evil that is in us and create our own personal paradise on earth (individual or collective), it is really a small step from assuming that we have no need of God and that we are in fact equal to Him (the essential logic that flows from believing the first two lies) to assuming that our view of the world and of our lives is "better" than what He proclaims in His Word, to assuming, in effect, that we are superior to God (though we would never put it in these terms, that is what such behavior amounts to). For when we try to "help Him" apart from His will, when we determine that it is for us to decide what is good to do for the world and for ourselves (apart from what He wills), how are we not establishing ourselves and our standards as superior to Him? While this may seem not only an outrageous but unlikely mind-set, it is in fact the principle upon which the majority of the world's population is currently operating. For whether in the social, political, or religious realms, the majority of mankind is of the opinion that what they are doing is "good", even though it is patently obvious to any Christian that most of what is happening in the world is far from good in the divine definition of that word. But most people and most groups are adept at justifying their actions – not on the basis of divine standards of truth (for the truth of God reproves and corrects us and moves us back to the truth when we respond and repent), but on the basis of their own self-constructed standards, standards that are generally flexible enough to bend to whatever they desire at any time, standards that are really diabolical at their base. But it is important to understand that it is what God says is good which is really good, and that, conversely, just because we may say something is good does not make it good. This third satanic lie is based upon denying the truth that God's will is the issue, not our will, that God's righteousness is the perfect standard, nor our own pathetic self-righteousness. It is, of course, right and proper for every Christian to want to please His Lord – **but only according to His will**. When Paul went to Damascus with every intent to have the leaders of the Christian community there arrested and brought back to Jerusalem for trial and what amounted to judicial murder, on some level, at any rate, he felt that he was "doing good" and "helping God" by working to eradicate this blasphemous sect (cf. Jn.16:2). In reality, of course, he was persecuting

Jesus Christ and His church (Acts 9:5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15; Gal.1:13), the cause to which he would later devote his life and for which he would ultimately lose it. Jesus Christ is the only true good – the center and focus of all God's solutions, the number one thing that the devil would like to replace and substitute for. "Doing good" apart from Jesus, worse yet, "doing good" while denying Jesus subverts the entire purpose of the plan of God for history and for the lives of every individual. For only in Jesus Christ is there any solution to the mess we sinful human beings find ourselves in, that is true whether the issue be our own personal lives or this world as a whole. Only through faith in Him and His work on the cross are we saved and delivered from the sin, the evil, the disease, the death that characterize this world. Only through His glorious return and coming Kingdom based upon His victory at the cross will this world ever be straightened out. Claiming to be able to do good apart from God, to be able to improve a world that God has long ago marked for complete destruction in order to burn the evil out of it entirely, is, in essence, to deny the need for a Savior, to deny the need for God's help, to proclaim arrogantly instead that we are somehow able to "help God" by these paltry activities, and, in reality, to help the devil instead.

the lie: *God needs me.*

the truth: *God does not need us – we need Him.*

analog lie: *It is possible to improve things in the devil's world apart from God.*

analog truth: *Only God can improve our lives; only God can fix the world.*

the lie's impetus: *Objective arrogance.* Excessively arrogant pride projected on the world.

the lie's manifestation: *Self-righteousness.* Looking to oneself for truth rather than to God.

Jesus' response to Satan: *Do not put God to the test.* He tests us.

Jesus' model prayer for us: *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

The opposite virtue: *Hope.* Confidence in God's ultimate solutions rather than in our own.

The opposite vice (1Jn.2:16): *Lust of eyes.* Viewing the world as your kingdom instead of God's.

The lie's true object of worship: *Satan.* Seeking to replace God makes you the devil's pawn.

The lie's blind-spot: *Denying and seeking to replace God's control of history.*

The reality: *Seeking to change the world apart from God merely advances Satan's kingdom.*

5) The integrated Satanic world-system: The three basic lies treated above form the essential propaganda system for Satan's implementation of his rule over the world. The three are progressive (in the order listed above) and, when accepted, serve to mutually reinforce each other:

- **lie #1:** The devil turns need to greed (the fears and pressures of life are at its root).
- **lie #2:** The devil turns self-awareness into self-worship (subjective arrogance is at its root).
- **lie #3:** The devil turns our desire for God into a desire for pseudo-good (objective arrogance and self-righteousness are at its root).

The lie is the basis for Satan's world system. He gained a following through the lie that seduced many of his fellow angels. He re-gained control of the earth through the lie that corrupted Adam and Eve. He exercises control over his cosmos through the lie that seeks to ensnare all of mankind. Our common human responses to the devil's propaganda, namely greed, pride and self-righteousness, culminate in an integrated system of organized sin and evil that is better known as the chaos called "human history". Human history (as opposed to the plan of salvation which God is carrying out in the course of history) is not really progressive at all from the divine point of view, but actually and inherently regressive. Without organization and help from the evil one, this would not necessarily have been the case. Given active divine restraint of gross evil (the flood being one prime example), and given the internal mechanism for evaluating right and wrong contracted at the fall from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (that is, the conscience), the sensible efforts of good and just men may well have moved humanity "forward", or at least have retarded its decline. As it is, however, human kind and human civilization are accelerating on the downward spiral that has been our track since being expelled from the garden of Eden. The wide-spread fallacious assumption that we are now somehow better off than mankind of ages past certainly does not proceed from a divine or even a humanistic, moral point of view. True faith in God is in shorter supply and in more diluted form than ever before in the history of the world, and the progression of evil, one may even say the astounding invention of new and more elaborate forms of evil and their widespread distribution and availability, is in greater supply and in more concentrated form than ever before. This trend will continue, through the dark tribulational period ahead, until the return of our Lord. How is it then that though our present world boasts less self-discipline and self-control than ever before, and at the same time more crime, more sin, more demonstrable evil, and more opportunity for the exercise of these vices (along with an ever greater ability to rationalize them) that we can even think in terms of progress? The answer, of course, is that in terms of "human achievement", things are surely *different*. We do live in an era of change, technological-economic, socio-political, even religious change. And while most Christians would rightly see some of these things as obviously bad (increase in occult activities, dilution of genuine faith in and adherence to the Bible, for example), many more of the changes that masquerade as advances are anything but benign.

To cite but one example, recent reports indicate that more time is logged on the Internet in pornography and sexually deviant activity than any other single use. Many of you access these studies via the Internet, and there are other positive uses for the medium, not to mention morally neutral ones, but there is no question about the fact that this technological "super-highway" for information is being used by Satan in a most aggressive fashion. Technology is a tool, but a tool in the hands of a sinful person is at best a morally ambiguous thing. Add to this equation a world system constantly influencing us toward sinfulness, self-love, and, finally, active evil, and technology becomes merely a means of accelerating the devil's implementation of his will. We are not Luddites. We cannot stop technology nor do we wish to try. Indeed, we use technology for God's work and our own. But we would be foolish to bestow too much praise upon it, for, like almost all "progressive" forces in history, it is in truth helping to cement the devil's hold on his world and advance his plans for the enslavement and destruction of the human race.

Dearest to the devil's heart, as we mentioned above, is the establishment of a one-world state for "good" (wherein all of God's built-in restraints to protect human freedom of will could be abolished – a phenomenon which God will not allow to happen until the dark days of the Great Tribulation). Thanks in great part to this materialistic "progress", the realization of this wicked dream is closer than ever before. Part of the reason for this is that such techno-cultural progress is inevitably coupled with a corresponding *spiritual* regression. The reason for this is simple. The more we depend upon ourselves and our human abilities, the less we are interested in God and all that He does for us. Technological and scientific "progress" require no moral progress at all. Indeed, all our collective accomplishments on this score (minuscule from the standpoint of all that is in the universe, not to mention from the true point of comparison, the Creator of the universe) have helped to alienate mankind from God, creating a false sense of mastery over the material world (though death remains and suffering has, in some cases, intensified). If we are not careful to take the true spiritual realities of life into consideration (the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, first and foremost), it is all too easy to let this dependence upon our technology undermine our reliance upon God.

Plunging headlong into the myth that scientific, technological, social, cultural human progress is the ultimate value is merely helping the devil to build the new tower of Babel. Faith in technology (instead of faith in God), hope in political solutions (instead of God's solutions), and love for human cultural accomplishments (instead of for God and the sacrifice of His Son) are common variations on the devil's theme of working to make heaven on earth. But cutting God out of the equation is not only impossible – it is foolhardy. For only God can satisfy the true needs of humanity: forgiveness, spiritual peace, and eternal life. Satan's offer of a re-won paradise here on earth is insanely laughable for sinful, mortal creatures. Or it would be, if so many had not bought in to this myth. It is the height of absurdity to openly flaunt a disbelief in God (despite the limitless witness He has reserved for Himself in every aspect of His creation), while at the same time proclaiming unreserved faith in sinful mankind's "progress". The pseudo-trees of life offered by the devil merely hold out false hopes. In worshipping progress, we

are merely establishing a new system of idolatry here on earth behind which has a new god: the devil.

Satan's integrated world system has inserted its tentacles into the entire woof and warp of human life. For our purposes, however, it will be helpful to concentrate on three well-recognized categories of human experience where the devil's influence bleeds through most perspicuously.

1. Religion and the Occult: This area is perhaps the most obvious of Satan's infiltrations of influence into the world of mankind, since it is in the field of religion and the occult where the devil opposes the truth of God most directly.

I am the way: the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.
John 14:6

Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Before Christ, those who sought Him looked forward to the promise of the cross, from Adam and Eve and their coats of skin onward (bespeaking Christ's work through symbolic animal sacrifice). After Christ, we look back to His saving work for us on the cross (commemorated in the ceremony of communion). But before or after the cross, Christ has always been the only way to God. All other religious, occult systems, doctrines, groups, cults and the like are false paths. To approach God, we have to do it God's way, and His way is a narrow way, the only true Way, His Son Jesus Christ. Only pure and unadulterated faith in the Son brings salvation, forgiveness of sins, and the promise of resurrection. This cannot be achieved by good works, by self-sacrifice, or by ritual. It cannot be achieved by membership in any organization. Salvation comes through faith in Christ alone.

Despite the hyper-materialistic nature of the world in which we live, human beings have a spiritual side and a deep and abiding need to satisfy this essential part of their makeup. Only a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ can truly satisfy this need, but the devil, recognizing the drive for spirituality in mankind, has developed a kaleidoscopic variety of alternatives. These run the gamut from staid and traditional religions to outlandish, mystical or cabalistic activities. The devil is anxious to find something for everyone, anything to intrigue the spiritual side of man, anything but the truth of Jesus Christ. Any and all religious activities which do not put Christ in the undiluted center of things put Satan there by default. For by helping to still the innate desire to seek their Creator, such activities merely perpetuate separation from Him.

Organization is one of the keys to satanic false religion. The devil knows well that people will do things in a group that they would never do on their own. Corollary to this and equally important is the principle that if enough people are doing something in a highly organized manner, then an air of legitimacy will be lent to the enterprise, a false patina of orthodoxy, in effect, that will help to blind initiates new and old to the fact that God and Christ may in reality be entirely absent and the organization subtly evil in every way. Once enough people become involved in such religious organizations, a momentum and critical mass is achieved that allows pseudo-groups to present to the world a false picture of spirituality (even though in truth God is not in their midst at all). It is also a common human failing that once we become involved in something, once we have

"thrown good money after bad" long enough, we come to have a vested interest in believing the lie we have been sold. For if we admit we have "been had", we not only look foolish, but all our sacrifice has been in vain. For these reasons, organizations make good targets for the devil. Even legitimate, originally God-fearing Christian groups can and have historically succumbed to Satan's infiltration: succeeding generations of followers and leaders alike are almost never as dedicated and clear in their thinking as the original founders, and when tradition and organization come to be as or even more important than the Word of God, it becomes an easy matter for the devil to gain a foothold.

There are a number of common factors, present in varying combinations, that connect paganism, cults, the occult, and organized pseudo-religion. First and foremost is the fact that by denying the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they are fellow participants with the devil in the process of "blinding the minds" of potential believers (2Cor.4:4), "stealing the seed" of the gospel out of hearts which are seeking God before they can turn to God in Christ and thus be saved (Lk.8:12): Some other derivative characteristics one often finds in Satan's substitutes for the true worship of God through Jesus Christ include:

- Emphasizing "secret doctrines", mysteries, and esoteric materials.
- Seeking to minimize the sting of death, denial of final judgment, denial of hell.
- Substitution of another god or gods, whether of a different name, or so perverting what the Bible says about the one true God that it amounts to the same thing.
- Promise of "becoming a god" or "like God" or otherwise transcending the mortal plane.
- Denial of the need for a Savior, substituting works or reincarnation.
- Focus on ritual and rote worship instead of true communion with God.
- Emphasis of feelings or ecstatic behavior over scripture.
- Odd, alienating, isolating behavior.
- Intolerance of other opinions and dogmatism not based upon true biblical authority.

False teaching within the flock of true believers in Christ is a particularly perfidious satanic attack that requires special, individual treatment. As the Body of Christ, the Church universal (those who genuinely follow Jesus Christ) understandably comes under more severe pressure and more insidious attack than any other segment of humanity. Often unable to persecute and destroy the godly outright, Satan reverts to false teachers and false doctrines, hoping to turn believers in Christ from the true path. Though in every age of the Church (and, indeed, since the serpent in the garden) there have been false teachers and false doctrines ready to compromise pure faith in the truth of God's Word, a trend toward intensification of this insidious phenomenon in these last

days is prophesied in scripture. It would be hard to underestimate the importance for the believer of being forewarned on this critical issue. The reader's careful attention, therefore, is sought in examining these pertinent scriptures (see also Col.2:16-23; 1Tim.4:1-5; 2Tim.2:23-3:9; 2Pet. 2:1-22):

I entreat you, brothers, to mark those who are creating conflicts and pitfalls contrary to the doctrine you have learned, and stay away from them. For such men do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own stomachs, deceiving innocent hearts with their fancy sermons.

Romans 16:17-18

For men of this sort are false apostles, workers of guile, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And it is no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. So it comes as no surprise that his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be according to their deeds.

2nd Corinthians 11:13-15

[*Let us grow spiritually*] . . . that we may no longer be immature, swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit.

Ephesians 4:14

The Spirit explicitly says that in the end times certain men will rebel from the faith, giving their allegiance [instead] to deceitful spirits and demonic doctrines. With their own consciences seared away and speaking with the hypocrisy of men [who peddle] lies, they will [instruct their victims] to refrain from marriage, and to keep away from certain foods . . .

1st Timothy 4:1-3a

These [false teachers] must be silenced – they are the sort who disrupt entire households by teaching things they should not, for the sake of disreputable gain.

Titus 1:11

And there arose among the people false prophets, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who shall introduce destructive false doctrines – even denying the Master who bought them – and bringing swift destruction on themselves. And many will follow their lascivious ways so that the way of truth will be subject to blasphemy on their account. And in their greed they will exploit you for profit by means of their fraudulent teachings.

2nd Peter 2:1-3a

With eyes full of adultery and on the lookout for sin without restraint, they entrap those insufficiently grounded (in the truth). They are accursed children whose hearts are well-trained for greed. Having left the straight way behind, they have wandered astray and followed the way of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the pay that comes from unrighteous behavior.

2nd Peter 2:14-15

Who is the liar if not the one who

that Jesus is not the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

1st John 2:22

For certain men have slipped in among you unawares, men who long ago were destined for this very doom, ungodly men who substitute lasciviousness for the grace of our God, and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 4

Certain essential characteristics of these false teachers can be summarized from the passages above:

- 1) They have always been present, but as we approach the end of the Church age, will become more prominent, more numerous, and more influential.
- 2) They have a facade of righteousness, but are in truth steeped in sin under the surface (though this may be covered with the ascetic veneer of the white-washed tomb: Matt.23:27).
- 3) They are out for their own profit, advantage and pleasure, utilizing their followers as chattel rather than genuinely caring for them.
- 4) They teach things which are not biblical but have been manufactured to gain a following and to promote their own ends (though they may claim a scriptural basis).
- 5) They falsely pretend to be servants of the Lord (though in reality they only serve themselves, and Satan).
- 6) They deny Jesus Christ as Savior (though they may fill their speech with His name, they deny salvation through faith in His name alone).

This last characteristic, the "Christ test", is the most basic and most essential criterion for ferreting out false teachers, but its employment is also becoming an ever more subtle matter as charlatans increasingly try to make capital out of our Lord's name. That the words "God" and "Christ" come easily to a person's lips does not guarantee that they are believers and followers of God and Christ according to the will of God as set forth in His Word. As L.S. Chafer pointed out, "denying the Master who bought them" does not mean that false teachers will necessarily deny the person of Christ – they may only (surreptitiously) deny the work of Christ and the need for His death to cleanse us from sin (or deny His true humanity, or deny His deity, e.g.).⁽³⁾ For it is true that there are many ways to deny Him in fact while giving the appearance of embracing Him. Wrapping their lies in cocoons of hypocrisy, giving their false teachings bright and shiny "white-washed" coverings, cleaning the outside of the pot, the outside of the tomb, but brimming with abomination within are all tell-tale characteristics of false teachers concerning which our Lord Himself warned us to beware (cf. Matt.24:4-28; Jn.10:1-18).

Ultimately, only Biblical Christianity is of God – all else is of the devil. Between the false extremes of materialism and superstition stands the truth of the Word of God.

Occult practices (easily and normally separated from religion) are also becoming increasingly pervasive, accessible and influential in our world. All such acts and activities, no matter how innocent they may appear, are extremely dangerous. It is a much smaller step than people are generally willing to believe from the Ouija board, the horoscope and the tarot card to the destruction of one's faith and complete enslavement by demon forces. Occultism is a more direct acknowledgment of and allegiance to Satan than even false religion is. For in such activities there is a relatively clear understanding that the devil and demons lie directly behind such blatantly anti-God practices. A partial list of such activities includes the aforementioned Ouija board, horoscopes, tarot cards, voodoo, angel worship, demonism, Satanism, chanting, magic, witchcraft, spells, potions, curses, amulets and charms, superstitious actions and behaviors, attributing anything to "luck", fortune telling, anything related to "seeing into the future", visions and dream-interpretations (apart from God), divination from any sort of "-mancy", any system of false taboos, secret wisdom, special day worship, mediums, seances, hypnotism, any ecstasies, mind-reading, psychics, false tongues, "channeling", trances, psycho-kinetics, drugs, all mind- or consciousness-altering substances or activities, anything to do with ghosts or vampires, graveyard fetishes and the like. The preceding list does not make any claims of being complete: forms of direct demonic involvement of this kind are becoming more numerous by the day (and more popular too). The fact that we human beings collectively seem to be losing our outrage, disgust, fear and suspicion of such activities merely heightens the danger, both of their expansion, and of the rapid enslavement of those foolish enough to become involved with these things on even a seemingly superficial level. In reality, there is no such thing as superficial involvement with evil. All such dalliances amount to spiritual adultery:

Can a man take fire into his lap and not have his clothes burned up? Or can a man walk on [hot] coals and not have his feet scorched?

Proverbs 6:27-28

All such things are, for good reason, forbidden by scripture (cf. Deut.18:10-12; 2Chron.33:6; Jer.27:9; Mic.5:12; Gal.5:20), for behind them lie real and effective satanic influences (cf. the case studies of Jannes and Jambres: Ex.7:11; 8:7; Balaam: Josh.24:10; the witch of Endor: 1Sam.28:15; the man of sin: 2Thes.2:9). It is in this connection that we should note that occult activities are very closely related to pagan idolatry (a phenomenon on the verge of mounting a comeback). The Bible is particularly intolerant of idolatry, the out-and-out worship of demons by other names (Deut.32:17; Ps.106:37; Acts 8:9ff.; 13:6ff.; 16:16ff.; 19:19ff.; 1Cor.10:20; Col.2:18; 2Thes.2:9-10; Rev.13:14).

2. Politics and Society: Scripture is clear in stating the importance of organized authority to suppress and punish lawlessness (Rom.13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1Pet.2:13-17). Additionally, separate governments promote freedom and preserve the opportunity for mankind to seek and worship God (impossible under one-world rule: Gen.11:1-9; Acts 17:26-27; cf. also Dan.10:13; Is.14:16-17; Ezek.28; Ps.2; Rev.16). The new millennium is opening with a series of disturbing trends which see the basic purpose for government

(protection of rights, punishment of evil-doers) being undermined, and government being used instead for the advancement of evil purposes. Relativism in law, reluctance to punish criminals, the increasing venality of justice, the intrusion of political and social agendas into the legal arena, the use of law and politics to address social issues in perverse ways with no regard to underlying principles of justice, the blanket application of faulty and un-biblical sociological principles by fiat without regard to individual cases – space does not permit an exhaustive treatment of the issue. It is enough for believers to read the "signs of the times" (Matt.16:3), and understand the gathering momentum of the satanic forces around them. It is also important for believers not to react to the point of being caught up in the devil's machinations. Satan is presently experiencing great success in captivating believers and honorable unbelievers with a number of modern socio-political "causes" that appeal to the self-righteous crusading instinct in us all. While it is understandable that believers should shudder to see many of the degenerate trends engulfing modern society, Satan in his crafty way makes use of this reaction too, and is always thrilled when he can persuade people (especially Christians) out of boredom or lust for an exciting challenge to attack the symptoms of social degeneration rather than being concerned with the root causes and the one true solution. Turning to Jesus Christ and deepening our relationship with Him through faith in Him and His Word (and the application of that faith to our lives and ministries) is the only way to have "impact" for God. Buying into Satan's propaganda lie #3 and trying to make the world a better place "for God" by one's own self-righteous efforts is not of God and therefore only furthers the devil's purposes.

As in our discussion of the occult, the number of bizarre and anti-God cultural aberrations sprouting up in modern society are too numerous and ubiquitous to mention comprehensively. One rule of thumb: anything touted on a bumper sticker probably should be included on any such list of what to avoid. Vegetarianism, animal rights, anti-meat, anti-fur, anti-almost anything, drug use of all sorts, gambling, sexual aberrance, celebrity worship, glorification of athletes and athletics, most (if not all) of what appears on television, fantasy of all kinds, most (if not all) of what can be heard on the radio – one could go on at length. To put it in perspective, the Bible has nothing good to say about any human cultural activities (with the exception of those related to worshiping God, almost exclusively related to the construction of and worship in the tabernacle and temple). Culture inevitably involves some sort of mimesis, that is, a mimicking of some aspect of life to entertain (whether the level be gross, sublime or somewhere in-between). All such mimesis is, by definition, not the truth, not really "real". Whether it be Disney or depravity we are "watching", there is an element of unreality there, an artificiality, a lie, to be specific, and attention to lies is anything but healthy from a spiritual point of view. It is, to be sure, very difficult to avoid exposure to such influences, but we should at least be aware that the influence is there. Science fiction, to cite one particularly egregious example, may be "fun", but it leads (especially in the simple-minded) to the horrendous and anti-God belief that there actually *might be* some other focus to the divine plan than the conflict in which we are presently engaged on this earth. Such speculations and beliefs are an insult to God and to His Son who came *here* to save *us*. In sum, political, societal and cultural contacts and associations can no more be avoided in this world than can the air we breathe or the

food we eat (1Cor.5:9-10), but it is incumbent upon us as believers to be aware of the influence they wield and the threat they pose, and so to approach them with appropriate circumspection (1Cor.15:33).

3. Economics and Technology: For believers, economics and technology are, of all the areas of modern human activity, arguably the most difficult from which to maintain a healthy degree of separation. These all-pervasive forces are inseparably interwoven with the need for us to earn our daily bread by the sweat of our brow. And, in turn, these two powerful forces interweave with culture, politics and society, thus making Satan's integrated system a tar-baby of sorts, that is virtually impossible to stay completely clear of (monastic movements failed in this in the past – how much more so today!). Ever since Cain (cultivation: Gen.4:1-18), Tubal-Cain (techno-crafts: Gen.4:19-22), and Nimrod (urbanization, specifically, his one-world ziggurat construction project: Gen.10:8-12 with 11:1-9), satanic fostering of science, technology and "enlightenment" has paid the devil dividends. Modern rationalistic materialism has, in fact, reached such a pitch that any belief in the spiritual, non-material dimension is considered "ignorant". Mass communication, technological advance and economic globalization are moving ever more rapidly toward the diabolic dream of one integrated world – a world where there are no fire-walls to resist the implementation of the devil's will (a horrible prospect destined to come to full fruition in the Great Tribulation). Faith does not oppose development in these areas, but it is a fact that increased reliance upon *and faith in* techno-economic progress cannot help but undermine faith in God – it is impossible to serve two masters. Possibly the best example of this is the phenomenon of modern medicine. As believers, we understand that God's will is paramount (Matt.6:10), and that His plan has taken all the various circumstances of our lives into account (Rom.8:28). We know that He is a God who heals (Ps.103:3), and yet we also know that He gives us means to deal with the needs and problems of life (cf. Acts 10:15). For the believer firm in his faith, modern medicine presents less of a problem, but the issue is a subtle one. It is all too easy for the general public (and for the medical establishment itself) to see medicine as the new religion, hospitals as the new temples, and doctors as the new priests, even gods. For it is (obviously) in the sphere of and the fear of death (and, therefore, of life-threatening illness) where our mortality is most acutely felt, and it is exactly this fear of death that is one of the devil's main weapons for the enslavement of humanity (Heb.2:15). Just as excessive worry about the economic means of life (food, clothing, shelter) is used by the devil to induce fear and turn us away from trusting in God (cf. Matt.6:25-34), so also Satan makes use of excessive worry about threats to our health to persuade us to rely on medicine more than on God as the solution to our problems. But while these two worries are similar and have similar consequences when allowed to triumph over faith, fear for the loss of one's health is potentially more spiritually dangerous to the degree that 1) except in times of severe catastrophe, provision of the rudimentary means of life is far easier for the individual than retrieval of health is likely to be, and 2) the consequences of health-threats in normal times are also likely to be more immediate and more dire (not to mention more painful). Improvements in medical technology have only served to heighten this spiritual vulnerability, for in history past, the limitations of medicine made the issue much more clear, namely that without God's help there could be no healing. From a believer's point

of view, the choice a mere century ago was rather more straightforward: seek what medical help was available – a means like any other – but trust to God for deliverance. Today, without question, this is still the issue (and the proper approach), but increases in medical effectiveness, increases in cost out of all proportion to results (the mortality rate, for instance, remains at 100%), morbid media preoccupation with health issues and concerns, and growing "options" available for the sufferer (with no guarantees) have all contributed to a climate of growing fear of illness, over-estimation of the worth of medicine, and a concomitantly increasing threat to faith – not from disease, but from an unhealthy reliance upon the magic religion of medicine. As believers, we know we are going to die, but we also know that this is not the end of the story – we *look forward* to the day of our release when we will be with Jesus forever (Phil.1:20-23)! We are not going to live forever in these corrupt bodies – we wouldn't want to. The resurrection bodies we shall receive after the pattern of our Lord are beyond anything we could ask or imagine (Eph.3:20-21). So while there is certainly no harm in making sensible use of available medical technology to help deal with legitimate health concerns, we have faith in God's provision while we are in these bodies, and we know for certain that we will depart from them in the Lord's good time. What is harmful is to succumb to the very real pressures of the current medical climate (whether in the grips of disease or out of the fear of disease), and making the terrible mistake of trusting medicine more than God.

6) The believer's perspective: It is important for believers to remember that we are not "missing out" on anything by following God. It is important because everything in the devil's world-system militates against us exercising pure, uncompromising faith. In every place, in every sphere of life, the siren-song of Satan's *kosmos* seeks to draw us away from *really* believing God, from *really* seeking God, from *really* knowing God, and from *really* walking with Him day by day. By way of contrast to the devil's kingdom, there was a nation where belief in God, where deep abiding faith in Him was the rule, not the exception. The example of Israel (past and future) is the precedent which all present-day believers ought to emulate, for it is this cultivated olive tree into which we wild olive branches have been grafted (in company, of course, with the present-day remnant of believing Jews). This was an entire nation that (for many of its citizens during much of its history) *really knew and trusted God!* Close attention to the Psalms of David or the Law of Moses or the examples of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Hannah, Elijah and Daniel (to name but a few) shows how *real* God was to these great believers of the past. In this last generation of the Church, the influence of anti-"superstition" science and technology and the world-wide explosion of information has certainly engendered a "know-it-all" attitude and a general belittling of God, not just among the masses of unbelievers, but sadly among those who style themselves believers as well. This failure to recognize who and what God *really* is, the magnitude of Him, the glory of Him, is exactly the mind-set that the devil seeks to cultivate.

The coming Kingdom of God is so much more desirable than anything the kingdom of this world has to offer, the glory of God is so much more satisfying than any glory we could receive ourselves in this ephemeral world, the power of God is so much more real than anything the science and technology of this world can generate, that it behooves us as believers to be careful not to give undue attention to the cheap substitutes of this

world, to worship them, in effect, instead of the One who possesses the true kingdom, the true power, and the true glory. As believers, we are warned not to love this present age (2Tim.4:10), not to love this present world (1Jn.2:15), and not to be conformed to it (Rom.12:2), but to love God instead and be transformed by Him (Matt.22:37-38; Rom.8:29). In keeping our focus on God (and off of the devil's world) there is great profit (1Tim.6:6). After all, what price, one might ask, can be put on eternal life? And, once we are secure in our salvation, can the most dramatic accomplishments, the most extensive acquisitions in this life really be put in the scales with even the slightest, smallest bit of eternal reward? The tiniest bit of praise from God as we stand before Him is without question more valuable than the most vociferous and widespread of accolades possible in this life. And if we believe all this, should we not then live as if we did?

8. Satan's Strategy (to counter the Plan of God):

God's plan of salvation in the promised person of Jesus Christ caught Satan completely by surprise. With the commencement of human history outside of Eden under the promise and potential of salvation, God's plan for the final disposition of Satan and his followers began its ineluctable forward march. Left unopposed, it would only be a matter of time before human beings, now in a sinful state, would do from weakness what fallen angels would not do from strength, namely, respond to the gracious offer of a Savior and return to a merciful God. Faced with this inevitable progression, Satan's only possible alternative, his only recourse in the face of God's plan for redeeming willing humanity through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, was to oppose the plan of salvation in every possible way and with every available means at his disposal. As redemption through Jesus Christ summarizes the plan of God for human history, so opposition to faith in Christ is not only at the heart of the devil's world system, but is also the guiding principle in his reactions to the grand movements of the Plan of God as they become manifest to him.

Following the commencement of human history after Eden, the devil, as we have seen, was left without a strategy. Being a mere creature, and having no actual use for mankind, any strategic operations on his part are of necessity merely reactions to God's actions. To put it another way, he really has no grand plan of his own – except to try and stop God's plan. Having been thwarted in his attempt to halt the progress of the Plan of God through his seduction of Adam and Eve (failing to anticipate God's promise of redemption through the woman's Seed), the devil has now been left with little choice but to oppose the ultimately unopposable Plan of God for human history. Despite the essential futility of their actions, the devil and his forces are and always have been extremely active in their attempts to turn mankind away from God. Every human being – and believing human beings in particular – have always been important "targets of opportunity". But in addition to this general policy of using any and all means to deceive and to destroy humanity at large, Satan has also concentrated significant resources throughout the course of human history on more specific "prime targets", inevitably important for him because of their importance in the Plan of God, and it is this reactive counter-strategy that forms our subject here.

1) Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim): The devil's first counter-attack on the plan of God had the potential of being just as effective as the outright elimination of the human race, namely, its pollution to point of no longer being truly human at all.

Unable to prevent the inevitable replacement of himself and his followers that was taking place in the persons of saved human beings, the devil cunningly surmised that if he could introduce a measure of impurity into the human line, once that impurity had affected the entire human race, there would be no more *true* humanity, no pool of legitimate replacements, and, most importantly, no possible way of bringing his ultimate nemesis, the Seed of the woman, into the world.⁽⁴⁾ The means whereby the devil sought to accomplish this (and came within eight persons of doing so) was to promote the cohabitation of his followers with human women.

1. Genesis 6:1-2: Angelic Cohabitation:

Now it came to pass that when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God (i.e., the fallen angels) noticed the daughters of men, that they were beautiful. So they took wives for themselves from all whom they selected.

As the passage above indicates, the period before the great flood was a time of rapidly increasing population growth, with the new inhabitants of the earth now separated from the fall (and the prophecies given to Adam and Eve) by many years and many generations. It was also a time of little spirituality outside of the direct line of Seth, a circumstance which was to provide the devil with his opportunity for attack.

Everywhere else in scripture the phrase used here, *beney ha-'elohiym*, "sons of God" (along with its variants), refers not to men but to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 [anarthrous]; Ps.29:1 [cf. Ps.103:20; 148:2]; and Ps.89:6: *beney-'elim*). But the "sons of God" mentioned here are exclusively *fallen* angels. Clearly, the people of that time had sons as well as daughters, but their female progeny are singled out because they became the objects of the attentions of these "sons of God". They were the main point of interest for the devil's minions because it is the female who carries the essential seed of our humanity (witness the virgin birth).

There are three New Testament passages which reference the events of Genesis chapter six, and all three clearly link *fallen angels* to the activities here described:

It was also by means of the Spirit that [Christ] visited the **[angelic] spirits** in prison (i.e., in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory]. [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed judgment) while the ark was being built.

1st Peter 3:19-20a

For if God did not spare **angels** when they sinned, but plunged them into Tartarus with its gloomy pits (i.e., the Abyss), preserving them for the [day of] judgment, and did not spare the antediluvian world, but kept safe Noah and the seven with him when He

brought the flood upon the ungodly inhabitants of the world, and condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction, reducing them to ashes and making them an example to those bent on similar ungodly behavior, and rescued righteous Lot who was tormented by the depraved lifestyle of those lawless men – for through the things he saw and heard just by dwelling among them this righteous man was damaging his righteous way of life day by day on account of their lawless deeds. For the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment – especially those who in their lust pursue the polluting of the flesh and so despise [God's] divine authority.

2nd Peter 2:4-10a

Although you know all these things, I want to remind you that though the Lord saved [all] His people from the land of Egypt at the first, in the end He destroyed those who proved unfaithful, and **the angels** who did not keep to their own realm but deserted their proper habitation He has imprisoned with everlasting chains in the gloom below (i.e., in the Abyss) in anticipation of the judgment of that great day, just as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities, for they all prostituted themselves in the same manner as these [angels] did, having pursued sexual relations [lit. "flesh"] that were inappropriate for them (i.e., outside of the natural order). [And so it is that] they have been appointed an example, and incurred the penalty of eternal fire.

Jude 5-7

Note that all three New Testament passages make reference to the imprisonment of fallen angels (in the Abyss) on account of their activities just prior to the great flood. Moreover, the second two (2Pet.2:4-10 and Jude 5-7) clearly connect this activity with illicit sexual behavior comparable in its outrageousness (though not identical, obviously, in its specifics) to that practiced in Sodom and Gomorrah. Finally, the third passage (Jude 5-7) is quite specific in stating that this intermarriage of fallen angels with willing human women constituted an unauthorized abandonment of the rightful angelic sphere (one reason for the severe, temporary judgment inflicted upon the perpetrators of these acts). Although angelic cohabitation with human woman may seem unlikely, even bizarre in a vacuum, in the context of the devil's strategy to resist God's plan in every conceivable way the enlistment of some of his more reckless followers to pollute (and thereby effectually destroy) the human race bespeaks a certain cold logic. This is especially true when one considers that the success of this operation would have removed the possibility of God's eventual carrying out of the judgment already proclaimed against the devil, because it would have made the birth of the promised Messiah, the woman's *pure* human Seed, an impossibility.

Genesis 6:1-2 (quoted at the beginning of this section) leaves unstated the obvious background to these events. Rapid expansion of the human race brought with it an increased carelessness about acknowledging (let alone following) God and His natural law. Of this we may be sure, for it is just this expanding depravity of human behavior, seen here on earth for the first (though certainly not the last) time that forms the basis for a divine displeasure so extreme that the great flood becomes the only acceptable remedy (Gen.6:5-8; 6:11-13; see below). These conditions provided Satan with his first major strategic opportunity since his success in corrupting Adam and Eve. Apparently

prohibited from direct, outright destruction of human beings (otherwise he would long ago have taken this obvious remedy), and stymied in his abortive attempt to have human beings slaughter each other to the point of extinction (by God's prohibition of murder in the wake of Cain's killing of Abel), he now found himself confronted with the intriguing prospect of introducing a fatal disease, so to speak, among the growing ranks of the spiritually weak. If he were not allowed to *give* such a disease to humanity (and thus destroy us apart from our free will), Satan discerned that granting us *an opportunity* to contract such a disease would be a different matter. Offering the possibility of cohabitation with some of his followers would be an attractive leaven that would soon infect the whole lump. To abide by the principle of preserving human free will in the unseen conflict that rages around us, it would only be necessary to make these initial liaisons voluntary. The insidious nature of the plan was that this seed, once planted, would quickly spread. Although the majority might refuse such abominable joining in the first place, there would be some who would accept or even seek such alliances given the "talented" offspring that would be produced. And the situation would ever be such that a refusal would only be a temporary "win" for humanity, while an acceptance would be a permanent "loss". Once the angelic seed was introduced into the human gene pool, sooner or later every human family would become infected and spread that infection (always by choice), until at last there would be no possibility of a pure line for the Messiah.

Despite its attractive possibilities, the plan presented problems as well. God's reaction vis-a-vis tainted humanity is well-known: that is, His extermination of such monsters by means of the world-wide flood. Less celebrated, but equally as awe-inspiring, is His reaction to the angelic participants in Satan's scheme to irrevocably pollute the human race. Following these events, all fallen angels guilty of cohabitation with human beings were punished with the most severe penalty possible this side of consignment in the lake of fire. The penalty for "not keeping to their own realm" was to be plunged into the lightless Abyss (1Pet.3:19; 2Pet.2:4; Jude 6), a terrifying prospect for these creatures of light, even in their fallen state. This awful prospect motivated the "legion" of demons who had possessed the demoniac at Gadara to beg Christ frantically not to have them confined to that terrible place (Lk.8:31; cf. Jude 6; Rev.9:1-11; 9:13-16; 20:1-3; 20:7).

We may surmise, therefore, that just as humans are induced into illicit sexual activities in full cognizance of the possible repercussions, so some of the fallen angels were induced (no doubt by the devil) to take this action, even though it must have been quite clear that swift and sure judgment from the Almighty was likely to follow. Satan, by all indications (there are still "legions" of demons loose in the *kosmos*), was unable to convince all of his followers to act recklessly in this fashion, and probably did not want his best lieutenants to do so in any case. Nevertheless, the events described here show that he was able to find a cadre willing to "abandon their first estate" and risk the consequences that in the event did befall them. We have already noted above the desire of fallen angels for physical bodies of their own (a desire the devil exploited to the full in garnering support for his rebellion), and we may see these events as corollary to that principle. The selection process, of which Genesis 6:2 makes a particular point, certainly points in this direction (i.e., the fallen angels carefully "*chose*" certain women). Important as well is the fact that these verses betray no idea of force, indicating that the

liaisons were voluntary on the part of the women involved, and, given the involvement of patriarchs in the marriages of that time, of their fathers.

2. Genesis 6:3: the Spirit's Restraint:

And God said, "My Spirit will not strive with Man forever in their sinful manner of life – for this [is the way of] flesh. Therefore his days shall be 120 years."

The divine displeasure evident in the verse above (very odd if the two preceding verses were only relating normal human procreation which had been divinely commanded in Gen.1:28) follows directly on the heels of the intermarriage described in Genesis 6:1-2. Verse three suggests a double judgment of the most extreme severity. In a mere 120 years (brief by the extended life spans of the time), God would all but bring the human race to an end. And for the progeny of those who would survive in the postdiluvian world to come, the longevity Man had previously experienced (nearly a millennium in some cases) would be reduced to a scant 120 years, and this would be a maximum norm scarcely ever approached, and only rarely exceeded. Even in such dire judgment, however, God's gracious nature is clearly perceptible, because for the one family of believers left on earth (i.e., that of Noah), the 120 years were an important grace period that gave the necessary time for the ark – God's chosen means of deliverance – to be completed. It is ever thus that by the patience of our God we are delivered (1Pet.3:20; cf. Is.48:9; Rom.2:4; 2Pet.3:9; 3:15).

3. Genesis 6:4: the Nephilim:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and afterwards as well (i.e., both before and after the start of the 120 grace period before the flood). For when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, they bore to them those "mighty-ones" (i.e., the Nephilim) whose names are famous from ancient times.

The transliteration of the Hebrew word Nephilim (*nephiliym*: נפילים) is standard practice now (cf. the NASB and NIV) on account of the clear unacceptability of the Septuagint's "giants". However ineffective this parallel drawn from Greek mythology may be, the Septuagint's interpretation is clearly correct in the sense that it recognizes these "creatures" as not entirely human (as the Greek giants were not). By the time we reach Genesis 6:4, interpretations which try to make these Nephilim entirely human have run into a host of difficulties. In the verse above, the extraordinary nature of these creatures is directly related to the fact that they are the progeny of the "sons of God", a mention that makes little sense if these "sons of God" were normal human beings. The etymology of the word *naphiyl* (Hebrew: נפיל; Nephilim is actually in the plural) is also enlightening. The root, *naphal* means "to fall", and the *qatiyl* noun formation here is passive in nature as is generally the case (cf. *asiyr*, אסיר, "one in bondage" or "prisoner", and *mashiyach*, משיח, "one sent" or "Messiah"). The meaning "fallen ones" is directly in line with our understanding of the passage so far, for the Nephilim were a) "fallen" from the ranks of pure humanity; b) the offspring of fallen angels; and c) fallen in the spiritual sense as well, giving no indication of desiring a relationship with God, a conclusion to

which we are forced by their failure to respond to His gracious 120 year delay of judgment (for only Noah and his family entered the ark).

4. Genesis 6:5-7: the Divine Assessment:

Now the Lord saw that Man's evil had spread abundantly on the earth – indeed, the underlying intent of all his innermost thoughts was invariably evil. So the Lord regretted that He had made Man on the earth, and it grieved His heart [that He had done so]. And God said, "I shall wipe Man whom I have created off of the face of the earth, both Man and beast and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air, for I regret that I made them."

In our own time as well mankind is universally disposed toward evil because of the sin that resides in our mortal bodies as a result of our descent from Adam. However, the intensity of evil described here – evil that leaves no place for anything else and is untouched by any other consideration – is a clearly unprecedented state of affairs in terms both of the concentration and of the homogeneity of the evil involved. There can be little doubt that this rock-hard dedication to evil which had become the rule on earth was a result of the majority of mankind at this point being of mixed seed. From their angelic progenitors these "mighty men" had acquired that quality of adamant fixation of purpose common to the angelic race (and treated above) in addition to the talents and stature that gave them the fame they still enjoy today.

It is also important to note the vast difference between the human and divine assessments of the situation on the antediluvian earth. While mankind is impressed, even fascinated with the likes of the Nephilim, individuals of exceptional prowess (whether physical or otherwise), God is concerned with the heart, with the individual's attitude toward Himself and His truth. These pre-flood "supermen" may be the stuff of human legend and may continue to capture the imagination of mankind today, but to God their complete lack of respect for Him and a total absence of any desire for a relationship with Him were causes of profound regret. Indeed, despite the fact that these semi-humans were in many ways gifted beyond anything today imaginable, and would be objects of extreme veneration and emulation by the present day inhabitants of earth, God's response to their inveterate evil is completely the opposite: they must be wiped from the face of the earth.

God's profound regret and grief expressed here are not in any way to be understood to mean that He was "surprised" by these events (for history is entirely dependent upon Him and His decrees). These events are related to us in language that we can understand. Even though we cannot hope to fathom the true depths of God and His love, we can see from these expressions His merciful purpose for mankind – even for these rebellious, partially angelic humans – and His profound lack of pleasure in their failure to accept that mercy, for He does not desire any of His children to perish (1Tim.2:4).

The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise (as some think); rather He is ***exercising patience*** for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring

all instead to come to repentance.

2nd Peter 3:9

Patience, in the italicized phrase above, is from the same Greek root as the verb Peter had used in his first epistle to indicate the patience of God during the 120 year grace period that preceded the great flood (1Pet.3:20: *makrothumia* vs. *makrothumeo* above). Even in the face of such intense, intractable evil, God went the extra mile to provide an opportunity for repentance before visiting the ultimate judgment upon the world of that time. Truly, ours is a God to be feared, both for the ineffability of His unexpected mercy upon the undeserving (Ps.130:4), and for the ineluctable and devastating power of His judgments upon those who systematically refuse it in their wickedness.

Or do you esteem as being of little account this truly valuable tolerance He [is exercising towards you] in [all] forbearance and patience? [If you do, it is] because you fail to realize that it is this very tolerance of God that is leading you to (i.e., giving you the opportunity for) repentance.

Romans 2:4

And consider the Lord's patience towards you as [leading to your] salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul has written to you, according to the wisdom given to him.

2nd Peter 3:15

God's great patience, God's great provision, God's great love and desire for the human race of that time to turn to Him was, in the event, despised, forcing the issue of His terrifying judgment. Only after it has been demonstrated for all to see that, in spite of extraordinary patience and provision, the human race had become irredeemably corrupt, did the deluge begin. That judgment, of course, was a total one, exterminating not only all of polluted mankind, but all lesser creatures as well, leaving not even a hint of pollution by association to survive. But God does not blot out the righteous with the wicked. One man had turned to God, and so by his righteousness (the righteousness imputed by God to those who turn to Him: Gen.15:6), stood in the gap for our entire race.

5. Genesis 6:8-10: Noah:

But Noah had found favor in the Lord's eyes. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations (i.e., of pure human seed). Noah, moreover, made a habit of walking with God. Moreover, Noah was the father of three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

In stark contrast to his contemporaries who wanted nothing whatsoever to do with God, Noah aggressively pursued a relationship with Him, seeking Him, finding Him, following Him, and, finally, coming to serve Him in the unique way for which he is now so famous. This attitude of responding to God in all that He initiated gained for Noah God's favor, a treasure more valuable than anything else on earth (and still to be sought in the very same way). Noah was not of mixed seed (his purely human pedigree is the point behind the Hebrew phrase *tamiym hayah bdhorothayv*, "perfect in his generations"). This fact, it is true, redounds to the glory of his parents and forefathers

who did not succumb to the temptation of intermarrying with the semi-angelic seed. But Noah had also in his own right forsaken this disastrous course at a time when, due to the intensification of evil mentioned in context and the spread of the angelic strain to nearly all of the human race, such intermarriage must have been more difficult to avoid than ever before. God honored Noah's steadfastness, providing a wife for him of equally pure human stock, and blessing them with three boys born during the final 120 years before the flood (compare Gen.5:32 with Gen.7:6), for whom God would provide acceptable spouses as well. We can only guess the degree to which Noah was ridiculed, ostracized and threatened for such "stubborn aloofness". But for anyone who truly sought and followed God, the alternative course of action would have been unthinkable, so clearly and obviously would it have violated the natural law of God (cf. Lev.19:19; Deut.22:9). By resisting the temptations of his day, and by persistently following after God wherever He led, Noah became prepared for the ministry God had in turn prepared for him: that is, to stand in the gap for the entire human race.

Now it was through the ark that God chose to effect the physical deliverance of that remnant of the human race from which we all derive (i.e., Noah, his wife, their three sons and their three wives). But it was *Noah*, after all, who built the ark, and that fact is far more important in God's eyes than any wooden structure ever could be. God, of course, could have plucked this family from the rising waters through any number of miraculous means. Instead, He chose to make use of Noah's faith and *faithfulness*. Given the mammoth nature of the task, it must have taken Noah the better part of the 120 year grace period that preceded the flood to build this vessel capable of containing not only himself and his family, but a remnant of all the world's animal population as well. And while it is this fabulous structure which has captured the attention of posterity since that time, the really amazing part of the story is that Noah persisted at this seemingly impossible task, day after day, and decade after decade, sticking faithfully to the charge that God had given him. We can scarcely imagine the opposition and active discouragement he encountered from the world for this faithful dedication to the Lord's command, but, in the end, God vindicated Noah, His "preacher of righteousness" (2Pet.2:5), and his work of witness to God in the most dramatic possible way.

It is interesting and important to note that, although in our own discussions of such things it is scarcely possible to say the name Noah without mentioning the ark in the same breath, yet in the frequent references to Noah in the Bible (following the Genesis account of the flood), the ark is generally not even discussed (Is.54:9; Ezek.14:13 & 20; Matt.24:37-38; Lk.17:26-27; 2Pet.2:5; the exceptions are 1Pet.3:20, where the mention is not substantive, and Heb.11:7, where the focus is upon Noah's reverent response to God's command in building it). The reason for this is obvious enough: the ark and the "animals two by two" are the parts of the story that impress human beings, but God was impressed by Noah's heart, by Noah's faithfulness. It was as a result of this previously proven character that Noah was chosen to build that most famous vessel as a means of deliverance not only from the coming flood, but also from the perverse generation that had made the deluge a necessity (1Pet.3:20: they were saved *through* the water [i.e., brought safely *through* it and so delivered from the threat of that generation]).

6. Genesis 6:11-13: Divine Judgment and Divine Deliverance:

Now the earth was ruined before God because the earth was filled with wrongful violence. For God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way [of life] upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with wrongful violence on their account. So, behold, I am about to ruin them completely along with the earth.

The continual evil in the collective thinking of mankind that had attended the permeation of the angelic strain throughout the human gene pool had produced a deadly side-effect that made the destruction of the antediluvian civilization an absolute necessity: that is, a culture of "wrongful violence" (Hebrew *chamas*: חַמָּס). Intimidation, it would certainly seem, will have been an additional factor in the rapid disintegration of the pure human stock, making Noah's determination to keep himself and his family pure all the more noteworthy and commendable. Since this endemic violence had essentially compromised the principle of free will, and since the mixed population of that time had universally rejected God (despite the witness of impending judgment given by the construction of Noah's ark), God determined upon an equally complete destruction of them and their world by means of a flood which the Bible takes pains to show was universal in nature (Gen.7:17-24). Thus ended Satan's first major counter-attack, an assault which came within a single family of accomplishing its goal – though with God, the most slender thread is an unbreakable bond. Deprived of its fabulous trappings, this direct angelic interference in human affairs was essentially an attack on human freedom, beginning with overwhelming temptation and ending with overwhelming violence. Following the destruction of the earth and the mixed seed that had resulted from this gambit, all the fallen angels directly involved in human procreation were imprisoned in the Abyss, a fearful prospect for these creatures of light, and no like design has been attempted since on any scale, large or small.

2) Satan's postdiluvian attack on human freedom (the Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:1-9):

The devil's second major counter-attack focused entirely upon the issue of human freedom. For Satan was (and is) well aware that, short of destroying the human race (outright or through genetic pollution), the best way to stop mankind from turning to God is to compromise our ability, our freedom to do so. The Tower of Babel incident occurred no later than one hundred years after the great flood (as we know from the naming of Peleg: compare Gen.10:25 with Gen.5:32 and 11:10-16). By this time, the family of Noah had expanded rapidly. The descriptions given in Genesis chapters ten and eleven paint a picture of a post-flood population boom progressing at a pace beyond anything the world had yet seen, a fact no doubt attributable at least in part to the decreasing life-span and consequent shortening of generational intervals (cf. Gen.11:10-24).

As in the pre-flood world (cf. Gen.4:17; 4:21-22), this expansion of population was apparently accompanied by concomitant "advances" in technology and civilization (cf. the urbanization of Gen.10:10-12) – and by a concomitant decline in the general level of interest in and concern for God. Thus is it ever so. It was not long after this process had gathered momentum that Satan launched his next major counter-attack, inspiring the

premier political leader of that day, Nimrod, to fuse this growing population into a united, one-world society. Such a development, still somewhat inconceivable in today's multi-cultural world, would provide tremendous advantages for the devil's objective of turning mankind away from God. A highly cooperative, highly homogenized, highly centralized society need only be shifted in a godless direction once. For once the worship of the only true God is deemed anti-social and made illegal, it becomes an easy matter to discourage it entirely under such circumstances – especially in the absence of any alternative society on the face of the earth where religious "dissidents" who had chosen for God might find refuge. One cannot therefore imagine a more ideal scenario for the devil's squelching of faith than to bring about a single unified, top-down state in charge of all human affairs on earth. For from this beginning it would be but a short step to eradicating all faith on earth by taking away the freedom of those who might choose to exercise such faith.

That Nimrod was the human genius behind this satanic plan is evident from a comparison of Genesis 10:8-12 with the account of the tower of Babel at Genesis 11:1-9. First, the tower is built in the very place of Nimrod's initial urban power base: the plain of Shinar (that is, Babylonia: Gen.10:10; Gen.11:1). Since this is one the place where all humanity is concentrated in the century following the flood, his supremacy in creating a political and urban structure for the rapidly expanding human race cannot be ignored.

Secondly, Nimrod is the only major political figure distinguished in scripture operating at the time of the "division of the earth" (Gen.10:8-12). He is the grandson of Ham through Cush, while Peleg, the great-grandson of Shem through Arphaxad and Eber, saw the earth divided in his days. Assuming roughly equivalent generations, Nimrod would have been older than Peleg, and could thus have been in a position to foment the building of the tower by the time of Peleg's birth. And as the builder of the most important cities of his day, it seems impossible that any such world-wide cooperative activity such as the construction of this infamous tower would have been possible without his approval and support.

Thirdly Nimrod is singled out by the Bible for his active hostility toward God at this time:

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod. It was [this Nimrod] who became the first "mighty-one" (i.e., famous and prominent individual) on the earth [after the flood]. In particular, he was mighty at hunting [men] in opposition to the Lord. For this reason we have the proverb "[To be] like Nimrod, mighty at hunting [men] in opposition to the Lord".

Genesis 10:8-9

Nimrod is the first to be called *gibbor* (Hebrew: גִּבּוּר) since the destruction of the Nephilim (Gen.6:4; a fact also emphasized in the genealogy of 1Chron.1:10). The word *gibbor* means "mighty" not only in terms of physical strength, but also in the sense of fame or prominence in other areas as well. The Nephilim, it will be recalled, were apparently gifted with any manner of human talents and abilities, and were possessed of almost overwhelming attractiveness. In a similar way, Nimrod was not a *gibbor chayil*

(that is, a "mighty man of valor", talented as a warrior, the most common application of the word in the Hebrew Old Testament). Rather, Nimrod's prominence lay in the sphere of political persuasion, and that is why the verses above carefully spell out the area of his "mightiness", namely "hunting [men] against God". That the "hunting" here referred to does not pertain to the taking of animals for sport is plain to see. God's covenant with Noah after the flood authorized the use of animals for food (Gen.9:3), save only that the blood, a symbol of life in general and the work of Christ in particular, had to be drained off in a specific way (Gen.9:4). There is thus no reason that literal hunting should be in any way "against God" (the meaning of the preposition *liphney* here). As indicated by his success in organizing the growing population of the earth into cities (initially, Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calnah, all on the plain of Shinar: Gen.10:10), Nimrod's amazing talent lay in his ability to persuade men to follow him, to "hunt" and capture their hearts, similar to the way in which Absalom "stole the hearts" of the men of Israel as a first step in fomenting rebellion against his father David (2Sam.15:6; "fishers of men" is the righteous antithesis: Matt.4:19; Mk.1:17). This ensnaring of his fellows' will was clearly "against God" as the sequel shows, and it is more often the case than not that, where political mass-movements are concerned, their entire purpose and foundation are, when stripped of all facade, anti-God in the extreme.

Fourthly, the very name Nimrod means, in Hebrew, "let us revolt". We may surmise, therefore, that Nimrod was not this individual's original name, but that it was changed (as so often was the case in Old Testament times) to reflect the crowning characteristic of his personality as well as the most significant event of his career. The rallying cry that became the name by which history knows him, that is, "Nimrod", is reminiscent of the similar call to arms that will be raised by the leaders of the final revolt against God, the Gog-Magog rebellion (Rev.20:7-9):

Why are the nations forming into a mob and the peoples [of the earth] grumbling idly. The kings of the earth are assembling and its princes are gathering together – **against** the Lord and His Anointed One, [saying] "**Let us** pull off Their chains, and cast Their cords from us!"

Psalm 2:1-3

Finally, Nimrod's career is clearly split into two phases in Genesis 10:10-12. The second phase, directed not at the plain of Shinar (where all of mankind was concentrated in the century after the flood), but to the more northerly climes of Assyria, must reflect God's frustration of Nimrod's original, more grandiose scheme. Following the defeat of his attempt to forge all humanity into one indivisible whole, Nimrod continued to put his special talents to work in the north.

The ambitious agenda of creating a single world-wide state capable of retaining its hold upon the growing population of the earth required more than an individual of preeminent political abilities. It required a rallying point, a unifying symbol that would at once capture the imagination of the postdiluvian world while at the same time providing sufficient motivation for collective action. In the selection of the famed "tower of Babel", Nimrod (unquestionably under the careful guidance of the devil) chose just such a symbol. This massive and impressive construction project could not help but be

the universal subject of conversation in the uni-cultural, uni-lingual world of that time. Like the ark, it was unique and (to this point) completely unprecedented. Unlike the ark, however, which had, after all, been commissioned by God as a sign of impending judgment (as well as a vehicle of deliverance from that judgment), the tower of Babel was not only not *of* God, but was instead decidedly *anti*-God. This is true for a number of reasons.

First, the main objective sought by Nimrod and his diabolical master in the pursuit of this project was to parlay the universal cooperative effort of the tower's construction into a future (enforced) unanimity of action on the part of all mankind. Once the precedent had been set and sufficient time had passed in such a unified, all-out effort, the roots of a monolithic world state would have been firmly set (compare the securing of the Roman Empire through the lengthy reign of Augustus). It would have been a short step for Nimrod and his cadre of sub-leaders from overseeing this lengthy, all-consuming construction project to assuming complete political control.

Secondly, based upon the use to which similar structures were put in later times (specifically, the ziggurats), celestial worship – the worship of demons in place of the true God – was undoubtedly a major hidden purpose in the tower's construction (for the symbolism of a tower reaching into the heavens clearly betokens an attempt to make contact with the gods). After political unification had been cemented, the symbolic center-piece of the new collective would be used for pagan religious activity. This pagan devil worship would (as in later times in Babylonia) be a mandatory part of life in the new society, and, as this would be the only society on earth, all true spirituality would forever be fatally compromised.

Now at this time [a century or more after the flood] the entire world spoke a single language and had identical customs. And it so happened that in their expansion eastward they found a [favorable] valley in the land of Shinar (i.e., Babylonia) and took up residence there. And they began to say, every man to his friend, "Come, let's make bricks and fire them." Now these bricks they used in place of [dressed] stone, and they used tar in place of mortar. Then they began to say, "Come, let's build a city for ourselves – and a tower whose top will reach to the heavens. That way we can establish our identity and not be scattered over the face of the entire earth".

Genesis 11:1-4

The specific description in Genesis 11:4 of the "popular movement" to build the tower of Babel is the best testament we have to the uncannily persuasive powers of Nimrod. For the budding population of earth has taken his words and plans as their own ("Let us build . . ."). Now, clearly, this focused idea did not spring into the minds of the human family en masse of its own accord. It must have originated with someone, and the sole individual of the period reported by the Bible to be actively involved in the promotion of urbanization (before and after the tower incident) is Nimrod, who plainly found a way to further this plan on a "grass roots" level and thus be in a position to cast himself in the role of a humble facilitator of the popular will rather than of a high-profile dictator. Another interesting point about his strategy to be gleaned from the narrative is the fact that the campaign to found Babel and build the tower was advanced very much in the

manner of similar politically-correct, "good"-covered-evil schemes of our own day. Part of the population bought the idea immediately, then began to coerce their more reluctant neighbors to take part ("And they began to say, *every man to his friend*"), indicating that peer pressure has always been an important element in political persuasion. Furthermore, the plan did not start with the tower, the mostly clearly anti-God element of Nimrod's design.

First, collective action in general construction is secured ("Let us make bricks . . ."). Second, in a classic "bait and switch" maneuver, the construction of a city is put forward as a worthy construction objective, with the tower, the real focus of the operation, disguised as a subordinate "after-thought". We can see how the promise of a large urban center would have appealed to the post-flood generation, who had been a strictly rural civilization before Nimrod came on the scene, but who had doubtless heard about the antediluvian cities and would only naturally be desirous of reduplicating such inventions (Gen.4:17). Now cities and urbanization, like technology, are not evil in and of themselves. But as with many things in life, that which is allowable is not always beneficial to our spirituality (1Cor.6:12; 10:23). Many things in life, by their very nature, bring with them increased potential for temptation and turning away from God (and, because of the diversity of our sin natures, these things often differ from person to person). As the sequel shows, the building of Babel did in fact have terrible spiritual consequences for the reasons addressed above.

Third, for those who were not fooled about the importance of the tower in the plan to build Babel, and who had the character to resist the intense peer pressure to join in this whole-world effort, Nimrod provided an attractive incentive and rationale for the need to construct such an edifice: without the tower, so the claim went, the heritage and history of the human family would be lost. Unless some extraordinary step were taken, their identity as a distinct people would be obliterated by the passage of time and by the rapid growth and dispersal of a population that by and large had not even second hand knowledge of the pre-flood civilization. Thus Nimrod's appeal also played craftily upon the common human tendency to wish to preserve its roots, a characteristic no doubt all the more open to exploitation on account of the recent memory of the world-wide flood which had eradicated every tangible trace of the antediluvian civilization.

Lost in the enthusiasm of the moment (by all but the unnamed, unsung faithful few) was the fact that this attitude, let alone this act of creating a monument to themselves, flew in the face of any true faith in God. He is our Father, and our names are known forever by Him (Is.56:5; 62:2; 65:15; Lk.10:20; Rev.2:17). We are written in His book (Ex.32:32-33; Ps.139:16; Dan.12:1; Phil.4:3). Everything on this earth is dust, destined for destruction (1Pet.4:7; 2Pet.3:12), and the idea of preserving ourselves through preserving our "name" is a fatal vanity (cf. Lk.12:25). The tower of Babel, therefore, in addition to providing a framework whereby all future generations could be influenced and coerced into ignoring God, was essentially a monument of ***anti-faith***, for its express purpose was to do what only God can do (i.e., preserve human life and identity forever), and its very building a blasphemous statement to the effect that God could not or would not do so. The tower of Babel was thus a complete rejection of faith in the covenant made by God with Noah, wherein He pledged never to wipe out mankind

again, replacing as it did the amazing rainbow of promise with a man-made edifice of dirt.

Now the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men were building. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people and they all speak the same language. And since they have actually begun to accomplish this thing, in the future they will not be restrained from anything which they have contrived to do. Come, let us go down and confuse their language in that place so that no one will be able to understand his neighbor's speech". In doing so, the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the entire earth, and they stopped [cooperatively] building the city. For this reason, the city is called Babel, since there the Lord changed the universal language of the earth to babble, and from that place the Lord scattered [humanity] over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:5-9

By confusing the common human language of the time, God rendered world-wide cooperation and the godless objectives it inevitably pursues impossible. So it will remain until the advent of antichrist, when the new technological tower of Babel that is currently under construction (i.e., the incipient one-world techno-society) will make such activities as world-wide persecution of believers a possibility again. For by His confusion of human language, God restrained "accomplishment" of this most offensive and evil kind, and thus God delivered those who resisted the idea of preserving life and identity apart from God. God always leaves a remnant of believers for Himself (Rom.9:27; 11:1-5), which, in this case, must have included Noah and Shem, who both outlived Peleg in whose days these events took place.

3) Satan's attack on the line of the Messiah (Anti-Semitism): The third satanic strategy of anti-Semitism, or, more precisely, a systematic policy of attempting to eradicate all Jews from planet earth, has been in play since the day of Abraham's circumcision, and will continue until the devil is removed from the world. This strategy can be divided into three phases: 1) before Christ; 2) the time of Christ; 3) after Christ.

Before Christ, the Jewish people were a special target of the devil because of the fact that the Messiah was destined to come from Israel. If he could not eliminate, corrupt or subject the human race to his complete control, destroying the line of the Promised One would suffice to bring the plan of God to an abrupt end. Complete annihilation of the Jewish state and the Jewish people was the only sure way to accomplish this objective, and so it was that Satan devoted considerable resources to attacking Israel, both internally and externally. Internally, Israel became the target of every corrupting influence the devil could bring to bear (one needs only read the prophets, especially Jeremiah, to get a sense of the idolatries into which she was led), while externally Satan worked tirelessly to array the nations of the world against her for the purpose of her destruction (consider, for example, the concentration of his agents in neighboring nations: Dan.10:13; 10:20).

The Messiah was the object of Satan's destructive intentions throughout His earthly life. From Herod's attempt to destroy Him (Matt.2:1-18; the devil undoubtedly had a part: cf.

Rev.12:4), to the devil's personal, intensive temptation of Christ (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lk.4:1-13) and attempts to oppose Christ (Matt.4:11; 16:23; Mk.8:33; Lk.4:29-30; Jn.7:30; 8:59; 10:39), to his active role in the betrayal of Christ (Lk.22:3; Jn.13:2; 13:27), Satan spared no effort in undertaking to frustrate the Father's plan for Him.

Since the time of Christ, Israel has continued to be a prime focus for the devil's destructive attentions, though for a different reason. Although Satan failed to prevent the coming of the Messiah by extirpating the people **from whom** He was to come, he still has hopes of rendering His second coming pointless by eradicating the people **to whom** He is destined to return. For without Israel's continuation as a people, there would be no possible way of fulfilling the many specific promises made to them by God, the majority of which will only be brought to complete fulfillment under the millennial reign of Christ (e.g., the regathering of the nation, to name but one: Is.49:8-26). Without an Israel for the Prince of Israel to rule, the devil would have effectively frustrated God's plan.

Needless to say, all the devil's efforts in this regard will ultimately prove ineffective. Nevertheless, as events of recent and current history show only too well, he is continuing to pursue this strategy. But woe to those who allow themselves to be used by him in this way (Is.27:7).

For I shall bless those who bless you, but those who utter curses against you I shall lay under a [true] curse, and thus will all the families of the earth be blessed through you.
Genesis 12:3

No weapon forged against you shall prosper. And you shall reprove every tongue that rises up to judge you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and My vindication on their behalf, says the Lord.
Isaiah 54:17

For thus says the Lord of hosts, "In later times He [the Father] shall send Me in glory against the nations who have plundered you (for whoever touches you touches the apple of My eye). At that time, behold, I shall wave My hand against them, and they will be plundered by their slaves. In this way you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.
Zechariah 2:8-9

The many prophecies of the Lord's future retribution against all who would harm or damage Israel are paralleled by numerous historical examples. The principle of God using others to discipline His people – but of holding this instrument to close account – can be seen in the case of Assyria, the "rod of His anger" (Is.10:5), of whom He says,

When the Lord has finished all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes."
Isaiah 10:12 NIV (cf. vv.5-19)

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and many nations and tribes large and small were used by the Lord in Old Testament times to scourge His people when they strayed far from Him, but

always with the purpose of bringing them back to Himself, and never to utterly destroy them. In each instance, it was the oppressor who was, in the end, chastened far more severely than Israel, the original object of wrath. In modern times as well the examples of Russia (imperial and communist) and Nazi Germany stand as vivid reminders of the results of active antisemitic agendas. It is well for those who follow Jesus Christ to consider that, although the suffering of Jews in this Church Age may be the result of divine visitation (according to the same pattern of chastisement to turn His people back to Him in truth), the consequences for those used in such a capacity remain dire indeed. Disputes between the Lord and Israel are very much a "family affair" and so, as in the analogy, it is wisdom to avoid becoming involved.

Judging from the continual backsliding and idolatry of the Old Testament nation Israel (trends continually denounced by the prophets), and from the "hardness in part" that holds sway over the greater part of Israel today (Rom.11:25), it is plain that "all Israel is not Israel" (Rom.9:6), and that we can therefore expect the Lord to continue with His work of discipline for the gracious purpose of repentance and salvation. But we must never forget that this "special attention" is a blessing (for some have always responded), and one that the Lord provides uniquely to this people who are "beloved because of the fathers" (Rom.11:28). For although a Jewish genealogy does not automatically bring salvation (Rom.9:30-32), this valuable heritage does bring a special consideration, a special oversight from God Himself (Zech.2:8-9; Rom.11:28).

Much then does it behoove us who are of the "wild olive tree" to respect and to pray for those of the "natural olive tree", and to be exceedingly circumspect in all our dealings in this regard. And we should do this not only to avoid falling under the same judgment that Israel's persecutors have suffered in the past. We should adopt God's own attitude of **objective compassion**. For while no one shall come to Him apart from Jesus Christ (Jn.14:6), He nevertheless desires all men to be saved (1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9). How much more then is this true in the case of the descendants of Abraham, the original heir of His promises, "from whom is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom.9:5)! If we are truly walking in love as Christians should, showing the same consideration for all our neighbors as we do for ourselves and adopting God's attitude of desiring and working for the salvation of all who will accept it, then this approach presents no problem whatsoever.

To the Jew first, and also to the Greek (i.e., gentile).
Romans 1:16; 2:9; 2:10

4) Satan's attack on the body of Christ (Persecution of the Church): Since the resurrection, ascension and session of Jesus Christ, the devil's primary focus has been Christ's body on earth, His Church. Having been defeated in all three of the campaigns discussed above, the devil is faced now with the sure and certain prospect of being replaced along with his followers by the Church as it continues to grow apace. The reality is that Satan has therefore been reduced to fighting a futile rearguard action in the vain hope of somehow staving off the inevitable. In spite of this, the opposition the devil is now visiting upon true believers world-wide is all the more furious as he attempts to prevent the growth and completion of the Church. This means opposing

believers and attempting to prevent our spiritual growth, but it also means taking all possible measures to try and prevent unsaved humanity from coming to the light of Jesus Christ.

The main target during this era, however, is true Christian orthodoxy. Wherever believers are seriously attempting to pursue a close and genuine relationship with their Lord, we can expect to find active opposition. There is a point of view which suggests that major persecutions of the Church are largely a thing of the past, but such opinions are not informed by events today taking place in countries such as China, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt and Iran (to name but a few of the more prominent and well-known examples) where to be and to walk like a true Christian is still to take one's life in one's hands. Even in places where no such direct threat of persecution exists at the moment (such as the United States), more subtle forms of attack are being employed (the increasingly corrosive and hostile popular culture, for instance). One thing is certain: as long as the Church Age continues, the devil will continue to make a priority of targeting Christians who are advancing spiritually in an attempt to dissuade others from following suit.

Stay sober and stay awake [on guard]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [as you are].

1st Peter 5:8-9

5) Satan's supreme offensive (the Tribulation): Although the Church Age may for the most part represent for Satan a hard-fought rearguard action, its last seven years, the Tribulation, will be the time of his ultimate and most potent offensive prior to the return of Jesus Christ. We should not underestimate the fury he will unleash during this last battle of the Church Age.

Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come to down to you, having great anger, because he knows that he has [only] a short time [remaining].

Revelation 12:12

But when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8b

Jesus' question in this second quote is an indication of the intensity of pressure that will be brought to bear against believers during the final seven years that precede His return. During the Tribulation, his "final offensive", the devil will hold nothing back, but will instead take risks he has never before dared (including personal ones involved in his dangerous gambits vis-a-vis antichrist: compare Gen.3:15; 6:4; 2Thes.2:9; Rev.13:3-4; 13:12; 13:14; 16:13-14; 17:8; 17:11), committing all the resources he has thus far husbanded to this one last attempt at thwarting the plan of God. Specifically, he will undertake the elimination of the Jews, and of the whole community of believers on earth, setting in motion the train of events that will bring about open hostilities with God Himself, both in heaven (the "war in heaven" of Rev.12:7), and on earth (Armageddon: Rev.16:14-16). That his utter defeat is a foregone conclusion does not in

any way alter the fact that, as a result of his massive effort, the Tribulation will be the most difficult period which humanity has ever experienced, one in which a careful walk with God will be more important for the believer's spiritual safety than ever before.

If anyone [is marked] for captivity, he is going into captivity. If anyone [is marked] for death by the sword, by the sword [he must] be killed. Therefore endurance and faith [on the part] of [my] sanctified ones is [called for].

Revelation 13:10

6) Satan's last battle (the Gog-Magog Rebellion): The devil will launch one last offensive before being confined to the lake of fire forever. At history's end, he will be released from the Abyss for a short period of time – a final demonstration on God's part of Satan's intractably evil character (Rev.20:7-10). For immediately upon his release the devil will set to organizing the population of a world at peace and experiencing the most profound prosperity in its history under the universal rule of Jesus Christ to rebel against the Anointed One (Ps.2; Matt.13:26; Matt.22:1-14; Rev.20:7-10). In this last battle, the devil's strategy comes more clearly to the fore than ever before: he will attempt (unsuccessfully) to directly unseat his divine Replacement, Jesus Christ.

From the divine point of view, it may be observed that Satan's actions seem to make little sense. For he is fighting against God in all these operations. And even though he has the advantage of attacking the weakest link in the plan of God, sinful mankind, with God in control even this weak reed becomes an unbreakable rod of iron (Gen.18:14; Matt.19:26; Lk.1:37; 18:27). The devil's "madness" is thus of the same sort we see commonly in the human race (the rule, really, and, unfortunately, not the exception). It is a madness born of arrogance (which corrupts all true thinking), a madness that blinds itself to the reality of God, His eternity, His power and His mercy, and substitutes self in His place. In all the diabolical undertakings given in synoptic form above, God has always been in charge in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord who is blessed forever. Through Him we too shall have our share in the ultimate victory.

For everything that has been born from God overcomes the world. And this is ***the victory*** that has overcome the world: our faith [in Christ]!

1st John 5:4 (cf. v.1)

But thanks be to God who gives us ***the victory*** through our Lord Jesus Christ!

1st Corinthians 15:57

In all this we are ***decisively victorious*** through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

9. The Angelic Order of Battle:

"Order of Battle" is a military term generally used to denote the force structure of a particular combatant in any given military campaign. The term is appropriate for our discussion of the devil's forces, given that angels are organized into "*hosts*" (i.e.,

"armies", the Hebrew word *צבא*, *tsabha'*: compare Judg.9:29 with 1Kng.22:19), and that God's angelic forces will one day "*do battle*" with and defeat Satan's forces (Rev.12:7-17).

1) The current heavenly truce: In the middle of the Great Tribulation, God will cast the devil and his angels from heaven once and for all (Rev.12:7-17). Until that time, however, such conflict as there is between the angelic forces of God and Satan respectively is taking place exclusively on the earth. For not only do the elect angels regularly appear before God (the "assembly of the holy ones" or angels in Ps.89:5-7; cf. Job 15:8; 38:7; Ps.29:1ff.; Jer.23:18 & 22), but there is also evidence that the fallen angels too present themselves before God at certain appointed times in company with the elect angels, and, one may infer, after the same organizational pattern that obtained before their fall (cf. 1Kng.22:19-22; Job 2:1; Zech.3:1):

Now the day came when the sons of God (i.e., all the angels, elect and fallen; cf. Gen.6:4) came to assemble themselves in the presence of God. And Satan also came into their midst.

Job 1:6

The continued assembly on the part of Satan and his rebel angels indicates what may be gathered from a number of other passages of scripture, namely that there exists in the angelic realm a certain obedience of necessity on the part of the devil and his followers toward God (cf. Jas.2:19; 1Pet.3:19-20; 2Pet.2:4; Jude 6). This is not in any way a choosing for God from the heart, but rather an enforced response (along the lines of the restrictive rules of engagement that govern the limits of demonic activity on earth: cf. Job 1:12 & 2:6).

2) The Kingdom of God versus the kingdom of Satan: God's Kingdom has existed since the original creation. The fact that it is not at this time materially and physically visible on earth does not in any way diminish its spiritual role, either in the past, or in its even more significant present role (as witnessed to in the person of all those who are citizens of the Kingdom though here on earth, that is, believers in Jesus Christ in whom Christ dwells). The physical reestablishment of God's worldwide Kingdom on earth, prophesied until John the baptist (who first heralded its coming: Matt.11:12), then offered in the Person of Jesus Christ (and rejected by His own countrymen: Jn.1:11), will not take place until our Lord's return, finally to become permanent and unchangeable when the Father returns to take up His residence with His children in the New Jerusalem on the new earth, with every enemy being finally defeated and annihilated (1Cor.15:24-28; 15:50-57; Rev.21:1ff.).

Currently, this world is the devil's world, that is to say, the *kosmos* of sinful mankind under the all pervasive dark influence of Satan and his forces. Scripture is very careful not to ascribe this present, sinful world-order to God. It is certainly true that in an absolute sense this world belongs to the Lord, and that His authority, witness and influence here in the devil's *kosmos* are definitive (e.g., Job 41:11; Ps.24:1; 29:10; 33:10-11; Is.40:22). But in keeping with God's plan of allowing every moral creature the chance to choose to follow Him of their own free will, Satan has for the present been allowed a significant latitude of operation in order to test the hearts of sinful mankind, so much so

that Christ in particular regularly refers to "the world" as an area of Satan's influence and control (e.g., Jn.12:31; 14:30; 15:30; 16:11). Therefore by referring to the "devil's world", we are in no way denying nor undermining the Lord God's absolute dominion in every part of the universe; but to fail to recognize the devil's vast and pernicious influence on earth as it is presently constituted would not only be a mis-statement of the teachings of God's Word, but also a dangerous underestimate of the perils that surround us because of that influence.

It is important to note that this "rule" over the earth on the part of the devil is: 1) a usurped rule (based on his dethronement of Adam); 2) a rule depending entirely on God's permission (to make the issue of free choice clear); 3) a rule limited in the main to influencing human beings to follow himself and his will instead of God and His will; 4) a rule which is temporary, soon to be abrogated at the return of Jesus Christ.

God is not at present theocratically administering the world in an outright and absolute manner. He did so in the past (before Satan's fall, and on the re-created earth before Adam and Eve fell); He will do so in the future (during Christ's millennial rule, and to an infinite degree in the eternal state which will follow it). However, during the six thousand years between Eden and Christ's return, this world populated by sinful people, is, to a very large degree, under the devil's control by way of his extensive and powerful influence over every heart that does not belong wholly to God.

The devil has clearly constructed his rule and his kingdom as an antitype to God's rule and God's Kingdom. Establishing a "replacement realm" has been part and parcel of Satan's plan ever since he decided that his position of "Covering Cherub" was not grand enough for his abilities and sought to replace God in his pre-historic coup d'état . When called into the presence of the Most High, the devil promenades as if he were on an equal footing with God (Job 1:7; 2:2). He styles himself (and so is called) the "ruler of this world" (Jn.14:30; 16:11), and represents himself on earth as being a god in his own right (2Cor.4:4); in this capacity the devil is the real object of worship for all false religions (Rom.1:25; 1Cor.8:5-6; Rev.13:4-12). The devil has a "throne" or center of worship on earth (Rev.2:13), earthly servants (2Cor.11:15; cf. 1Tim.5:15), and legions of angels organized for battle. During the Great Tribulation, he will also have an earthly pseudo-Messiah who will rule over a world-wide satanic kingdom, destined to be destroyed by Christ at His return (Dan.2:44; 7:27; Rev.11:15). In this world, the devil's world, only those of us who have chosen the Kingdom of God over the kingdom of the devil have been delivered from his most terrifying power, that is, the power to blind the eyes of the unbelieving and lead them to destruction; only those who have trusted in Christ have been rescued from Satan's realm:

To open their eyes, and to turn them away from the darkness and into the light, and **from the power of Satan** unto God.

Acts 26:18

[God is the One] who rescued us **from the power of darkness** and transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son.

Colossians 1:13

[Jesus Christ], who gave Himself on behalf of our sins, that He might deliver us **from this present evil age** according to the will of our God and Father.

Galatians 1:4

In keeping with our observations about the limitations upon the devil's powers and abilities, it is important to note several key differences between Satan's realm and the Kingdom of God:

- God's Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (Dan.2:44); the devil's kingdom is temporary, and its demise is imminent (Jn.12:31; 16:11; Rom.16:20).
- God's Kingdom is universal (Ps.47:2-3); the devil's kingdom is confined to this world and limited in its control here (Rev.11:15).
- God's Kingdom is one of eternal life (Rev.21:6-7); but in the devil's kingdom, fear of death is an important element in Satan's continued control (Heb.2:14-15).

During His first advent, Christ bore witness that His Kingdom would not take literal possession of the world until the appointed time (Matt.25:34; 26:29; Jn.18:36; Acts 1:3-8; cf. Dan.7:22). Until He comes again, the nations of the world are often heavily influenced by the devil and in his nominal control. But in spite of the devil's considerable influence, we must not forget that history is ultimately in the hands of the Lord. All that Satan does, he does only through God's permissive will and, in the end, he cannot hinder the inexorable progress of the plan of God in even the most minute way. The Lord God Almighty is the One who is truly in charge of all that happens in history; He is the real ruler of the nations (cf. Ex.19:5-6; Ps.9:7-8; Is.40:23):

Who will not fear You, O King of the nations? For You are worthy [of such respect].
Jeremiah 10:7

[This has been decreed] that [all] living may know that the Most High reigns over the kingdoms of mankind, and that He bestows [this authority] upon whomsoever He desires, even elevating the lowliest of men [to power].

Daniel 4:17b

Seven years will pass you by until you recognize that the Most High reigns over the kingdoms of mankind and bestows them upon whomsoever He desires.

Daniel 4:25b

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Daniel 4:34b-35 NIV

3) The organization of holy angels (including titles, ranks and functions): Just as God, who is completely capable of doing everything Himself, chooses to dispense much of His

grace through faithful human beings in the visible world, so also in the invisible world much of what transpires on our behalf is accomplished by God through His angelic servants (Ps.104:4; Heb.1:7; 1:14). Much of what the Bible has to say about angels, holy and fallen, is couched in military language and terminology. Among the military terms used to describe angelic groupings are the words "hosts" (1Kng.22:19; Neh.9:6; Ps.103:21; 148:2; Dan.8:10; cf. Lk.2:13), "army" (Lk.2:13; Rev.19:9), "legion" (Matt.26:53; Mk.5:9; Lk.8:30), and "band" (Ps.78:49). This is not surprising when one considers that there are no non-adult angels and they never grow, so that there is no reason why every male angel would not be permanently capable of military-like functions (and so be permanently organized into military formations, at least for the duration of the devil's rebellion). Just as the Israelite assembly was, when "numbered", a warrior assembly (Num. chap.1-2; cf. Deut.1:15), so it is only natural for the angels to be characterized in the same way. For not only is God the Lord of the armies of Israel (Josh.5:13-15; 1Sam.17:45) and King of the nations (Job 12:23; Jer.18:7-10), but He is also "Lord of Hosts", that is, commander of the angelic armies (e.g., Ps.84:3; Is.6:5; Am.5:14-16; Zech.1:3-17):

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and his left.

1st Kings 22:19 NIV

The Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to His divinity a true human being ever since the virgin birth, is *not* an angel. It is, however, important to remember at this point that along with being Head of the Church (Eph.1:22; 4:15; Col.1:18), He is also Head (and Creator) of all angelic kind (Eph.1:21; Col.1:15-20; 2:10; Heb.1:1-4). It is in His capacity of "**the** Angel of the Lord" (i.e., God's supreme heavenly "messenger" [the meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words for angel] – not, in His case, an actual angel) that Jesus Christ appeared as the visible representative of the Godhead prior to His incarnation. For He who is "the Son of Man" (Matt.8:20; 9:6; 26:64; Mk.14:62; etc.), is also the King of all human kings and Lord of all angelic lords (Rev.17:14; 19:16; cf. 1Cor.8:5; 1Tim.6:15), and the "first born of **all** creation" (Col.1:15-18; cf. Rom.8:29; Heb.1:6; Rev.1:5), His titles and authority having been confirmed by His victory on the cross (Matt.25:31; 28:18; Eph.1:20-21; 3:10; Phil.2:9-10; Col.2:15).

Scriptural references as to the specifics of angelic organization and hierarchy are even fewer than is often supposed. Many common assumptions about the arrangement of angelic organizational structure are based on extra-biblical sources rather than on what scripture itself has to say on the subject. Here is an overview of what we can say about the hierarchical structure of the elect angels of God:

1. **Cherubs**: The titles cherub (Ezek.1:5-26; 10:1-22), seraph (Is.6:2-7), and "living creature" (e.g., Rev.4:6-9) all refer to the same order of angelic creature, namely the four attendants of God's chariot-throne. This is the highest angelic rank. Cherubs (Heb. *cherubh*, כְּרֻב) take the lead in worshipping God (Is.6; Rev.4:8b; 5:8 & 14; 7:11-12; 19:4), act as intermediaries for God (Rev.6:1-7; 15:7), and control access into His presence (compare their depiction on the veil that guarded the holy of holies of the tabernacle: Ex.26:1; 26:31, and their guarding of the "way to the tree of life": Gen.3:24). The cherubs

are usually seen in close connection with the "chariot-throne" of God (represented by the "mercy-seat" above the ark of the covenant; cf. Ex.25:17-20). God sits "enthroned" between the cherubs (Ps.80:1), and it is there "between the cherubim" that He met with Moses (Ex.25:22). The seraphim of Isaiah chapter six, and the "living creatures" of Revelation (especially Rev.4:6ff.) are representations of these same creatures. In all of these instances, the creatures depicted are multi-winged angels, closely associated with God's throne, engaged in worshiping Him as they shield (and sometimes propel) His chariot throne. The living creatures, whose multiple faces bear an undeniable similarity to the cherubs of Ezekiel, praise God with the refrain "holy, holy, holy" in the exact manner of the seraphs of Isaiah (Is.6:3; Rev.4:8b). The Hebrew word *seraph* (שרפ) most likely means "burning one" and this designation matches well the description of Ezekiel who notes that "the appearance of the creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches" (Ezek.1:13; for this fire imagery compare Deut.4:24; Ps.104:4; Ezek.1:4; 10:2; 28:14; Rev.4:2-6). It is a tragic irony that Satan, having once been entrusted with this guardianship of God's holiness, should now, by his own treachery, be fated to an eternal existence shut off from the presence of God, seeking in the meantime to deny mankind access to the Father which was once his special prerogative. In contrast to Satan, Christ by His loyal fulfillment of the Father's plan in sacrificing Himself for us has gained for us access into the holy place, past the cherubim, and into the presence of the Father (Rom.5:2; Eph.2:18; 3:12).

Satan was the "covering cherub", that is, the ultimate "imperial guard", charged with warding off all that is profane from the exquisite holiness of God (Ezek.28:14-16). He was Lucifer, the "morning star" (Is.14:12), who, though he was the preeminent creature, his position of honor has now been occupied by the Son of Man (and true God), Jesus Christ, the "Bright Morning Star". Satan's unique guardian role has been taken on by the four holy cherubs, each of whom depict in their persons four important aspects of Christ's unique Person and work:

- Bullock-face: (Gentiles): Christ promised to all humanity in general as Savior.
- Lion-face: (Israel): Christ promised to Israel in particular as Messiah.
- Human-face: (Church): Christ come in person in the flesh in humility as the Servant.
- Eagle-face: (Millennium): Christ come in person in the flesh in glory as the King.

a) Their Number: The cherubs are, according to the above discussion, four in number, and are almost always described as such. The one true exception to this rule is their depiction on the mercy seat. This exception is entirely understandable when it is considered that the mercy seat and the temple depictions are essentially two dimensional representations. Since the cherubim stand by the sides of God's chariot-throne in pairs (when carrying the throne), only two cherubs are fully visible to someone viewing the scene from the direct forefront, and so it is that they are represented in that context (cf. 2Chron3:10 where in Solomon's temple the addition of the two cherubs on

the back wall of the holy of holies at a right angle to the two cherubs on the mercy seat has the effect and possibly the purpose making four cherubs visible).

b) Their Wings: The wings of the cherubim are described as numbering six in Isaiah and in Revelation as well. Ezekiel's mention of only four wings is to be accounted for by the fact he is describing the cherubs as they are in the process of transporting the chariot-throne of God (not the case in either Isaiah or Revelation where the throne is at rest). The "wheel-with-a-wheel-within-it" which Ezekiel describes as being by the side of each cherub (Ezek.1:15-18; 10:9-13) is, in actuality, the additional set of wings providing rotary locomotion to the chariot wheels (thus giving the appearance of a "wheel within a wheel" in each case; cf. Ezek. 3:13). The description of these "wing-powered wheels" overheard by Ezekiel and recorded in verse thirteen of chapter ten as the "whirlwind wheels" (Hebrew: *galgal*: גלגל) is most revealing in this respect, for this image (i.e., of a funnel cloud) portrays substantial three dimensional depth just as a circularly rotating pair of wings (one from each side of the cherub) would possess, but which wheels alone would not. This also explains why the wheels are "full of eyes", a characteristic of the cherubs' wings: the rapidly rotating wheels with the pair of wings interlocked gives the appearance that the eyes are part of the wheels (compare Ezek.1:18 and 10:12 with Rev.4:6 and 4:8).

c) Their Symbolism: As mentioned above, all four cherub-faces symbolize Jesus Christ, with each representing that aspect of His historical mission at the forefront during the age for which they stand.

- The bullock face (Gentile age) is a picture of Christ the suffering Servant. The bullock not only bears burdens (as Christ bore our sins: cf. Is.53:4), but is also the most esteemed sacrificial animal, whose blood was shed under the Old Testament economy as a symbolic representation of Christ's promised work on our behalf (Lev.1:5ff.).
- The lion face (Jewish age) is a picture of Christ as the promised Messiah. The lion is the symbol of the tribe of Judah (Rev.5:5; cf. Gen.49:9-12), and has a messianic connotation throughout the Old Testament (cf. Num.23:24; 24:9). The generation of Israel to whom He came was ready to embrace the lion (the Messiah as avenging warrior), but stumbled over the bullock (the Messiah as self-sacrificing servant).
- The human face (Church age) is a picture of Christ as the incarnate, visible Savior of the world. He is **the** Son of Man (Matt.9:6), the archetypical human being who is truly human in every way apart from sin (Heb.2:14 with 4:15). He is the last Adam (1Cor.15:45). The Church, composed of all believing Jews and gentiles, is His body here on earth, not yet glorified as indeed He was not glorified until after His work on the cross was completed (Jn.17:1-5).
- The eagle face (Millennial age) is a picture of Christ exalted in resurrection and victorious in battle. Glorified by the Father for His victory at the cross (Eph.1:19b-23), following His resurrection and ascension He is now seated at the right hand of God the

Father until the day of His return (Ps.110). At that time (the Second Advent), He will fulfill all the messianic prophecies recorded in the scriptures and will rule the world in glory for a thousand years (Eph.3:10-12; Col.1:20). With its connotations of forbidding majesty and awe (Deut.28:49; Jer.48:40; 49:22; Ezek.17:3; 17:7; Dan.7:4; Hos.8:1; Hab.1:8), the eagle is an appropriate symbol for Christ's majestic and awe-inspiring double victory, first at the cross (with its accompanying resurrection, ascension and session at the Father's right hand), and ultimately at the Second Advent (Matt.24:28; Lk.17:37; compare the picture of the glorified Christ at Rev.1:12-16).

d) The Number of their Faces: Of all human features, the face is at once one of the most memorable and expressive, making it a most effective means for the type of symbolic representation discussed above. Although their bodies resemble human form (Ezek.1:5), the faces of the cherubim are unique and four in number. These faces stand symbolically for the various aspects of our Lord's earthly ministry just described. In this way, the faces of the cherubim reflect the glory of the Son of God instead of their own glory, just as, ideally, the world should see the face of Christ in us, His servants, when we walk as He commanded us to do (2Cor.3:18; cf. Matt.16:24; Jn.13:15; 1Cor.11:1; 2Cor.2:15; Gal.4:19; Eph.5:1; 1Thes.1:6; 1Pet.2:21).

All four faces of the cherubim are entirely obscured in Isaiah (Is.6:1-7), because as the cherubs hover over the throne of God, they cover their faces with one set of wings (so as not to look upon the glory of God). In Ezekiel (Ezek.1:4-26; 10:1-22; 41:18-20), the cherubs (along with their wing-wheels) are positioned under the chariot throne, so that no veiling of their faces is necessary. All four faces, as a result, were visible to Ezekiel. In Revelation (Rev.4:6-8), the cherubs encircle the throne and are part of it (i.e., in direct contact with it), but are not positioned so as to provide locomotion (i.e., they have rotated into a guardian position). Here, they are roughly on the level of God's throne (i.e., not completely below it as in Ezekiel, nor hovering above it as in Isaiah). As a result, we may surmise that they are seen by John covering all but their outward looking face (so that he can describe them as if they had only one face). In actuality, therefore, each cherub in all three passages possesses all four faces: that of a man on the front, an eagle on the back, a lion on the right and a bullock on the left (as in Ezek.1:6-9). From the viewer's perspective, however, each cherub may seem to have only one face, since only one of the faces is generally visible at any given time (cf. Ezek.10:14, where it states literally in the Hebrew that "**the** face of the first one was . . . [etc.]", although Ezekiel is previously quite clear about the fact each cherub has **four** faces: Ezek.1:6-9).

e) Their Order: Ezekiel's initial description of the faces in verse ten of chapter one proceeds in a natural and understandable order, making mention of the forward looking face first (that of a man), then moving to the right and left sides (the lion and the bullock respectively), and finishing with the rearward-looking face (the eagle). Ezekiel 10:14, by way of contrast, is not a generic description of a single cherub, but rather an account of the entire college of four as they carry God's chariot-throne.

Each had four faces. The face of the first was [that of a] cherub; the face of the second [was] the face of a man; the face of the third [was] the face of a lion; the face of the

fourth [was] the face of an eagle.
Ezekiel 10:14

In this second description, Ezekiel's account thus moves around the chariot-throne in a clockwise fashion (left-front, front-right, right-rear, rear-left), mentioning the outward-looking face in each case. Ezekiel begins with the cherub stationed on the left-front corner of the chariot no doubt because this angel was closest to his view, for the chariot-throne is described at this point as standing south of the temple (Ezek.10:3), while Ezekiel himself was positioned near the temple's entrance (viz., to the north of the chariot-throne: Ezek.8:16). His description of this cherub, elsewhere with the bullock face, as having "the face of a cherub" may be explained by fact that in the Hebrew culture the *cherubh* (cherub: Hebrew כְּרוּב) must have generally been understood as having the appearance of a bullock, precisely the reason why Ezekiel made such a point of articulating that the genuine, heavenly cherubs had *four* faces, only one of which resembled a bullock. The order of the cherubim given in Revelation 4:7 of Lion, Bullock, Man, Eagle, is thus consistent with what is found elsewhere in scripture (i.e., Is.6:1-7; Ezek.1:4-26; 10:1-22; 41:18-20). In Ezekiel's description, the cherubs are actually in contact with the chariot-throne while flying, in Isaiah's description, the cherubs (called seraphs) are disengaged and flying, and in Revelation, the cherubs are in contact with the throne (though they have apparently shifted), and are not flying but are instead "in the midst" of the throne (Greek: *en meso*: ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου). As to the order per se as given in Revelation 4:7, John lists the cherubim in the following manner right, left, front, rear. This is similar to what Ezekiel does when describing the four faces of the individual cherubim in the tenth verse of chapter one, but not identical. For while Ezekiel sandwiches the left and the right in between the front and the rear, John, on the other hand, shifts this order, giving the left and the right, followed by the front and the rear. This change of order (from the more natural order of Ezekiel) is due to the fact that, in the book of Revelation (the "unveiling of Jesus Christ", its literal title), it was appropriate for John under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to list the faces of the cherubim so as to reflect these symbolic representations of the Person and work of our Savior in respect to their specific relationship to the overall Plan of God. Therefore the ranking in Revelation 4:7 (Lion-Bullock-Man-Eagle) has the following significance:

- The symbol of the historical Age of Israel is placed first.
- The symbol of the coming Kingdom of Israel is placed last.
- These two symbols enclose the two symbols of the predominantly gentile ages, of which . . .
- The symbol of the Age of the Gentiles is placed first.
- The symbol of the Church Age (where gentiles are grafted into Israel) is placed next to it.
- Thus Israel and Kingdom Israel enclose the gentiles and the mystery gentiles (Eph.3:6).

The symbolism thus rendered of Israel enclosing the gentiles and the gentiles fulfilling Israel is at once powerful and appropriate, for Christ, whose Person and work these four ages and their corresponding cherub-faces represent, is the One who fills and completes everything in every way (Eph.1:23; cf. 1:9-10).

f) Their intimate connection with the throne of God: As the highest ranking angelic creatures, it is appropriate for cherubim to be closely associated with God's heavenly throne, so close, in fact, that a bit later they are described as essentially one with that throne. For just as the Lamb is "in the middle of the throne" (Rev.5:6), so the four cherubs are identically described as "in the middle of the throne" (Rev.4:6). It is true that in the verse just cited, the "four living creatures" (i.e., the cherubim) are also described as being "around the throne" as well as "in the middle of" it, a combination of characterizations which nicely describes their position as guardians proportionally positioned around the throne (from which positions they also provide this "chariot throne" with locomotion, their wings being closely interlocked with its wheels: Ezek.1:4-26; 10:6-17; cf. Is.6:1-6; Rev.4:6; 4:8; 4:9; 5:6; 5:8; 5:11; 5:14; 6:1; 6:6; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4):

The Lord reigns. Let the nations tremble. He is enthroned above the cherubim. Let the earth shake.

Psalm 99:1 (cf. Ps.80:1; Is.37:16)

2. Elders: Next in rank behind the cherubs are the angelic elders (Greek: *presbyteroi*, πρεσβύτεροι). In terms of their physical location, they are closest to the Father after the cherubs (seated around the chariot-throne of God which the cherubs bear). In terms of their description, they are associated with royal paraphernalia (crowns and thrones: cf. Is.24:22-23; Rev. 4:4; 4:10; 5:5-6; 5:8; 5:11; 5:14; 7:11; 7:13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4). Given that they are described in regal terms, we may assume that these (kingly) elders are mimicked in Satan's system by the "thrones" mentioned in Colossians 1:16. Though never a set number, there always existed in Israel as well a multiplicity of elders, chiefs or "nobles" of the twelve tribes. In his capacity of guardian cherub, Satan was adorned with nine jewels comparable to the twelve jewels found on the breastplate of the high priest of Israel, where each jewel represented one of the twelve tribes liable for military service (Levi being excepted). In a similar way, we may assume that the nine jewels born by the covering cherub represented the nine original divisions of the angelic order. Revelation 12:4 describes the great dragon (the devil) as sweeping away a third of the stars of heaven and casting them to the earth, referring both to the angels who followed him during his pre-historic rebellion and to believers who apostatize to follow his antichrist during the Tribulation (cf. Dan.8:12-13; Matt.24:10-13; 2Thes.2:3; 1Tim.4:1). This combined reference to fallen angels literally cast down to the earth on account of prior judgment at the Tribulation's mid-point and fallen believers figuratively cast down on account of apostasy in the Great Apostasy of that period can be best appreciated by a comparison of the two most telling passages where the actions of the devil and his earthly surrogate (antichrist) are described in comparable terms:

And [the little horn (i.e., antichrist)] magnified himself against the host of heaven [both categories], and he cast down to the earth some of the host [fallen believers] and some

of the stars [fallen angels], and he trampled them underfoot (i.e., their association with him is their downfall).

Daniel 8:10

And [the dragon's] (i.e., the devil's) tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven (i.e., both fallen angels and fallen believers) and threw them to the earth (i.e., their rebellion or apostasy and consequent association with them in their fall).

Revelation 12:4a

Combining this information with the likelihood that angelic organization is predicated on clans or tribes in a manner similar to Israel (based upon the analogy of similarities between the memorial gemstones born by both the covering cherub and the high priest), and that, as in Israel, clans and tribes tend to act corporately (cf. the corporate rebellion of the ten tribes after Solomon's death: 1Kng.11:26ff.), we may posit that this rebellion of one third of the angels also occurred in a corporate fashion, and therefore involved three of these original nine angelic clans (the "third" of Rev.12:4). This left six loyalist clans, and we may understand the twenty-four angelic elders as clan leaders, with four elders for each of the six angelic divisions remaining faithful to God and rejecting the devil's appeals for rebellion (cf. Rev.4:4). The postulate that each clan should have four elders is strengthened by the consideration that the number four is a particularly common and important angelic number (i.e., four cherubs: Rev.4:6-9; four charioteers: Zech.6:1-8; four restrainers of the winds: Rev.7:2; four destroying angels: Rev.9:13-15; four craftsmen: Zech.1:18-21). Since this college of elders must post-date Satan's rebellions (because it is based upon six clans rather than nine), we should also understand these twenty-four angels to have gained their positions through meritorious service in the cause of our Lord. This should serve as a reminder to all who consider it of the great value of being and remaining loyal to the Lord, and of the exceptional benefits promised to those who excel in the struggle in which we are now engaged.

3. Archangels: "Archangel" is a Greek word, a combination of the two roots *arch-* (rule/ruler) and *angel-* (angel), and is almost certainly a translation of the Hebrew word *sar*, meaning prince or chieftain. In Daniel chapter 10, Michael is referred to several times in the Hebrew as *sar*, and this word is rendered in the Greek of the Septuagint alternately as *archon* and *angelos*. Along with Michael (Dan.10; Jude 1:9), Gabriel is the only other elect angel mentioned by name in scripture (Dan.8:16; 9:21; Lk.1:19; 1:26). For this reason and because in Lk.1:19 he is said to "stand before God" as do the archangels of Revelation 8:2, we may be sure that Gabriel is an archangel as well. Furthermore, the mention of other unnamed *sariym* ("princes") in addition to Michael in Daniel chapter ten indicates a plurality of archangels beyond these two (Dan.10:13; 10:20-21; 12:1). We can also glean from the usage in Daniel chapter ten (as well as from the use of the word *sar* for human leaders elsewhere in the Hebrew Old Testament) that *sar* ("prince" or "archangel") is a martial office. The situation outside of the book of Daniel confirms this impression:

a) the archangel of 1st Thessalonians 4:16 shouts a command for the dead to rise (followed by a military trumpet blast commanding assembly).

b) Michael in Jude 9 fights with Satan over Moses' body.

c) in Revelation 12:7, Michael leads "his angels" in battle against the devil and his forces, successfully driving them from heaven down to the earth.

As the last two examples indicate, Michael, as the archangel of Israel (Dan.10:13: "Michael *your* [plural = Israel] prince"; 10:20; 12:1; Jude 9; and see Rev.12:7, where the description of his victory over the devil is sandwiched inside the allegory of the "woman" Israel), holds a unique position among the unnamed number of archangels (or "princes"), both elect and fallen:

a) he is the protector of God's preeminent people (into whom we gentiles are grafted by grace: Dan.12:1; Rom.11:11-24).

b) he is the only *sar*/archangel specifically named as such (Dan.12:1; Jude 9).

c) he is not only called "one of the great princes" (Dan.10:13), but also "*the* great prince who stands over your people" (Dan.12:1).

We should also understand the angelic "rulers" or *archai* of the epistles of Paul to be archangels (1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col.1:16; 2:10; 2:15; also the "angels" of 1Pet.3:22, where the *arch-* part is left out), the *-angelos* part of their title being omitted as unnecessary (and potentially confusing) since in all of the instances cited, they are mentioned in company with other angels and angelic ranks.

Finally, the "seven angels with the seven trumpets" of Revelation 8:1-5, although not explicitly identified as such, are also archangels. For they "stand in state before God" (cf. "I am Gabriel, who stand before God" in Lk.1:19). They are also called "the" seven angels, the definite article here serving to distinguish them in rank and status. In this context we see another function of the archangels in the administration of divine judgment, heralded by the military trumpets. The archangels often have paraphernalia that is appropriate to their current mission, trumpets for proclamation (as here in Rev.8:1-5, where they serve a monitory function), the seal of God for special marking (as at Rev.7:2), or bowls for pouring out judgment (as in Rev.15:7). The archangels thus constitute a college of seven (Gabriel and Michael being the only two named in scripture), who stand before the heavenly throne, ever ready to carry out God's mandates. They are the highest ranking angels to undertake such missions on earth, the cherubs remaining with the chariot throne, and the elders before it in heaven (Dan.8:16; 9:21; 10:13; 10:20-21; 12:1; Lk.1:19; 1:26; Eph.1:21; 1Thes.4:16; Jude 9; Rev.7:2; 15:7).

4. Authorities: Along with the two following categories, the majority of scriptural mentions of these angelic offices are references to fallen angels, but the designations are valid for elect angels as well (e.g., Eph.1:21; 1Pet.3:22), so that they may be taken as part of the original hierarchical structure. "Authority" (Greek: ἐξουσία, *exousia*) is a somewhat lower rank than that of archangel, but, as their name implies, these angels are invested with significant spheres of operational authority. We may take them as high-level commanders, subordinate to the archangels (indeed, the *archai* are usually only

mentioned in tandem with the *exousiai*: 1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 3:10; Col.1:16; 2:10; 2:15; 1Pet.3:22 [where *angeloi* = {arch}-*angeloi*]), but with significant numbers of subordinates of their own. It is probable that the four angels of Revelation who restrain the winds and administer the first four trumpet judgments are of this rank (Rev.7:1-3; 8:7-12).

5. Powers: In three places (1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 1Pet.3:22), a third category of ranking angel is mentioned: that of "power" (Greek: δύναμις, *dynamis*). These are angels of some considerable ability and command authority (undoubtedly with a significant number of subordinates), higher in importance than the rank and file, yet considerable lower than the superior "authorities". In Ephesians 6:12, these angels (at least in the Satan's order of battle) are referred to as "world-powers" (Greek: κοσμοκράτορες, *kosmokratores*), emphasizing their control as limited to the devil's "cosmos".

6. Spirits: Rank and file angels, that is, angels of no special rank or position, are often referred to simply as "angels" or "spirits" (the term "demon" being reserved for rank and file angels of the devil's forces). The vast majority of angels, elect and fallen, belong to this category. Of the elect rank and file we may observe that, just as is the case in the Body of Christ, these "private soldiers" are no less significant in God's eyes or less important in the accomplishment of His plan (cf. 1Cor.12:12ff.). This becomes even more obvious when we consider some of the special functions and general services entrusted to individual spirits often designated simply as "angels":

4) Special functions of elect angels:

1. Restraining (as agents of God): e.g., of the Winds: Revelation chapter 7 (cf. Michael in Dan.12:1).

2. Watching (as agents of God): the horsemen watchers of Zechariah chapter 1, and four chariot watchers of Zechariah chapter 6 who observe events on earth on behalf of the Lord (this function is also referred to in Dan.4:13, 17, 23, under the Aramaic title of "watcher": *'iyr*).

3. Judgment (as agents of God): the seven angels with the seven trumpets (Rev.8:6ff) and the Bowl carriers of Revelation chapters 15-16 are prime examples of angels who carry out the Lord's decreed destructions (cf. also Gen.19:1ff; Ezek.9; Rev.7:3; 14:18; 16:5).

5) General service of elect angels:

1. to Local Churches (as ministers of God): We know from Revelation chapters 2-3 that local churches have individual angels assigned to them, for oversight, guidance and protection (as the context of the seven churches indicates).

2. to Believers (as ministers of God): Much extra-biblical speculation exists on the topic of "guardian" angels. What we can say for certain is that scripture does indicate a

definite role for angels in the protection, guidance and oversight of individuals (see especially Gen.32:1; 2Kng.6:16-17; Ps.91:11-12; Dan.6:22; Matt.4:11; 18:10-11; Lk.16:22; Act 12:15; Heb.1:14).

3. for Special Tasks (as ministers of God): As servants of the Lord God (Ps.103:21; Heb.1:7 & 14), angels are entrusted with a variety of tasks in the accomplishment of His will. Some of those recorded in scripture include:

a) escorting the spirits of believers to heaven [currently; prior to Christ's ascension, escort to the subterranean paradise of Abraham's Bosom] (2Kng.2:11-12; Lk.16:22).

b) escorting believers to their resurrection-rendezvous with Christ at His return (Matt.24:31; compare Lk.17:35 with 1Thes.4:16-17).

c) escorting of inspired believers in visions (Rev.17:3; 21:9-10; cf. 2Cor.12:4; Rev.4:1-2).

d) providing manna during the years of the Exodus (Ps.78:25).

e) rescuing believers (2Kng.6:16-17; Dan.6:22; Acts 5:19; 12:1ff.).

f) making proclamations and communicating with believers on God's behalf (Matt.28:5-7; Lk.2:8-15).

g) praising God (Neh.9:6; Rev.5:11ff.)

Despite the wealth of information scripture provides about angels, elect and fallen, the Bible's treatment of that subject is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. There is much more that we would like to know and many questions we would ask if we could. There are certainly grounds for the Bible's lack of full disclosure on the topic. Non-scriptural speculation throughout the ages has been responsible for many a full-blown system of angelic worship. From ancient Gnosticism to modern, more "respectable" religions, there has always been a tendency outside of true Christianity to glorify angels and so, for all intents and purposes, to worship them (exactly the result which the quondam ranking angel, Satan, has always craved for himself). Much of the Pauline epistles of Colossians and Ephesians are devoted to refuting gnostic teachings (e.g., Col.2:8-10; see also Eph.1:23; 3:19; 4:10; Col.1:19; 1:25ff.; 2:2; 2:20-23), and the epistle to the Hebrews goes to great lengths to emphasize Christ's superiority to angels (see esp. chapter 1-2). In short, as fascinating as the topic may be to some, we must never forget that angels, despite their present superiority to us, are creatures too, and that all glory belongs to the Creator (Rom.1:25):

Let no one gain control over your life, desiring to [enslave you to himself] through a show of false humility and ***the adoration of angels***, basing his approach on what he has [allegedly] seen while puffed up by his own fleshly thoughts, yet not embracing the Head [Christ]. For it is from this Source that the entire body [the Church] is [truly] supplied and instructed through [all] its joints and sinews, and [thus] produces the

growth that God has given.
Colossians 2:18-19

And I, John, am the one who saw and heard these things. And when I had seen and heard them, I fell down at the feet of the angel who was showing them to me in order to worship him. And he said to me, "**Don't do this!** I am a fellow servant of your brethren and of the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God!**"
Revelation 22:8-9

6) The organization of fallen angels (including titles, ranks and functions): The first point to be made about the devil's angels is that in terms of their substance there is no evidence that they are in any way different from the elect angels. Whatever properties, whatever abilities, whatever general characteristics are possessed by the one class seem to be entirely similar in the other. Where the two groups do differ is in their choice of allegiance(i.e., to God or to the devil), a choice which makes all the difference in their eternal status as is the case for humanity as well. The differences in organization between the two groups can be attributed not only to the sharply disparate missions of the two camps (serving and opposing God respectively), but also to definite imperfections in the devil's reorganization of his forces (versus the perfect, original organization of God).

One of the ways in which Satan built a following in his attempted coup d'état against the Lord God was by promising his potential followers a share in his rule. We may therefore posit a significant inflation of ranks and ranking officers in the devil's hierarchy partly as a result of Satan's need to reward powerful and influential members of his following with suitable plums. Since his successful (though temporary) wresting of the rulership of the planet away from mankind at the fall, the devil also seems to have divided up earth as conquered territory among his subordinates. When we hear in the book of Daniel (Dan.10:13 & 20) about "the prince of Greece" and "the prince of Persia", clear references in the context to adversarial angelic beings, we are doubtless dealing with tangible (if loosely held and impermanent) rewards bequeathed by Satan on some of his more prominent officers. Thus the kingdoms and territories of this *kosmos* have been divided up by Satan and portioned out to his minions in a highly political and therefore less than perfect way for the prosecution of his ends.

Retention and degree of domination over individual areas of the globe will then be dependent on a number of factors, not the least of which will be the ability, resourcefulness and determination of the devil's followers. That is why Satan's statement to Christ to the effect that all the kingdoms of the world have been "handed over" to him and that he is free to give them to whomever he wishes (Matt.4:8-9; Lk.4:5-7) is, like so many of the devil's lies, in some sense true (though in its totality it is a clever lie): Adam's fall did indeed leave the door open for Satan to usurp Man's God-given rule over the earth, and the devil has done so to a large degree, so much so that our Lord would call him "the prince of this world" (*kosmos*: Jn.12:31; cf. 2Cor.4:4). However, the degree to which the devil is actually able to exercise this rule is far from absolute. For it is limited by the over-arching will of God, the free will of mankind (ever protected by God through various grace means), and by the imperfections of the devil,

his followers, and their overall organization, tactics and strategy. Created perfect by a perfect God, the devil and his angels have corrupted themselves through rebellion against God, and the arrogance, jealousy and avarice under the influence of which they are now operating (to name but a few of the sinful trends manifest in their collective behavior), make for serious imperfections in their organization, tactics and strategy. We shall first discuss organization:

1. Satan (cherub level): The devil was originally a cherub, first in rank among the elect angels, and second only to the theophanic manifestation of the second Person of the Trinity, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ appearing as The Angel of the Lord. In God's system, Satan has now been replaced by the four cherubs who continually attend God. In his own system, the devil represents himself *as being God* – this is clear from all his words and deeds, from his original coup d'état which attempted to replace God, to his present representation of himself as the god of this world (2Cor.4:4; cf. Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph.2:2), to his predicted appointment and possession of the antichrist, the beast who will temporarily rule the earth representing himself to be God (2Thes.2:4; cf. Ezek.28:2). In terms of his followers, the devil is very clearly "the ruler of the demons" (Matt.12:24), and "father" of those who reject the truth of our heavenly Father (Jn.8:44). Satan, it seems, always has a headquarters on earth. In circa 67 A.D., that headquarters was in Pergamum (Rev.2:13). We might have expected Rome, but when one considers 1st century Pergamum's prominence as a site of emperor-worship as well as pagan idolatry, the choice is more understandable. The devil's power over humanity stems almost exclusively from influencing human behavior. The key to his success has always been and will continue to be the especially deadly combination of worship of himself (all false religion) coupled with the worship of live human beings (to culminate in antichrist). Scripture is not specific about previous satanic headquarters (Babylon at the time of the tower of Babel seems a likely guess), and we can only conjecture about the centuries since, but suffice it to say that wherever men are worshiped as gods and the spirit of idolatry runs high in any of its forms (Eph.5:5; Col.3:5), the devil is likely to be near.

2. Thrones (elder level): These "kings" are apparently the heads of Satan's world-wide network for administering his realm. These highest ranking of the devil's subordinates are likely much more numerous than their elect equivalents, the elders (cf. Col.1:16). For rather than sitting enthroned before God Almighty (and rendering Him appropriate worship before His throne: Rev.4:4-10; 5:6-14; 11:16; 19:4), these "kings" sit enthroned throughout the nations of the world posing as gods. In the guise of pagan deities, these high ranking members of Satan's inner-circle receive worship from men (instead of giving it to God). As the plural number in Daniel 10:13 makes clear (plural in the Hebrew as KJV; NIV is incorrect), pagan nations inevitably possess a plurality of such "kings". 1st Corinthians 8:5 also states that there are many of these so-called "gods", confirming for us the fact that high-ranking demons stand behind pagan religious practice. Amos 5:26, for example, equates false gods, idols and "kings" in this sense. Given that any worship besides that of the true God is idolatry (Ezek.14:3ff.; Eph.5:5; Col.3:5), we may expect the full complement of these "thrones" to be numerous indeed,

and present in an authoritative and influential capacity wherever excessive human enthusiasm approaches an idolatrous pitch.

3. Princes (archangel level): These are the *sarim* discussed above. Daniel 10:13 and 10:20-21 mention the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Greece", from context not only demons, but probably of equivalent rank to the angel who speaks with Daniel, and certainly of comparable power to the archangel Michael, whose help is necessary for Daniel's interlocutor to disengage and come to his help (Dan.10:20-21). Like the elect archangels, these "princes" are high ranking military officers with significant numbers of subordinates. It is likely that Abaddon-Apollyon, the demon general of the "first woe", also falls into this category (Rev.9:11).

4. Authorities (authority level): This is the only rank level for which both elect and fallen angels share a common scriptural designation. The best explanation for this fact is that authorities are high enough in rank to be uncommon, but not so high as to attract special attention in the biblical account. We only find them mentioned in combination with other demonic officials, most commonly right after the *archai*, or "princes", the demon equivalent to archangels, whose deputies the *exousiai* or "authorities" are (1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col.1:16; 2:10; 2:15; 1Pet.3:22).

5. World-rulers (power level): These are the demon equivalent to the *dynameis* or "powers". They are actually called "powers" in the majority of passages in which reference is made to them (1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 1Pet.3:22). The exception is Ephesians 6:12, where they are called *kosmokratores* (κοσμοκράτορες). The implication of their name, "those who exercise power in the *kosmos*" is that, beyond any mid-level command authority they may hold, they also exercise special powers of some kind. We may note in passing that they would likely be the type of demon behind the exercise of pseudo-miracles and satanic demonstrations of power (cf. Rev.13:13). The restriction by name in Ephesians 6:12 to this world shows that their originally God-given powers/authority are now limited to doing the devil's work in his present realm.

6. Lordships (spirit level): The word "lord" or "lordship" (note the small "l") represents the rank and file of fallen angels or demons (indicative of the "rank-inflation" in Satan's system). Known by a variety of names, demons (Lev.17:7; Matt.9:34), evil spirits (Lk.7:21; Acts 19:13), unclean spirits (Matt.10:1; Mk.1:27), and devils (Jn.6:70), the term "lordship" is employed for them at Colossians 1:16 and elsewhere (cf. Rev.17:14; 19:16), because they exercise angelic, or "lordly" power (cf. Hebrew *`el* or "mighty one" in Ps.8:5; 82:1 & 6; 138:1; Jn.10:34-35), a basic function common to all angels vis-a-vis humanity until the resurrection changes the situation. Jesus Christ, in addition to being King of the kings of the earth, is also Lord of all angelic lords, that is, of all angels of all ranks, whether elect and fallen, from the highest to the lowest (Rev.17:14; 19:16).

7. Demons are currently not at liberty: One third of angelic kind followed Satan in his rebellion against God (see the discussion under the subject of the elect angelic elders above). At present, however, the devil is operating with less than this full complement of his original supporters. As a result of their pre-flood attempt to pollute the purity of the human line (an activity which violated the parameters God had set for Satan's attacks on

mankind: cf. Gen.6:1-13; Jude 6), a large number of demons are presently being restrained below the earth in a compartment of Hades variously called Tartarus or the Abyss (Lk.8:31; 2Pet.2:4; Rev.9:1; 20:1). Some of these are destined to be released temporarily during the Tribulation (Rev.9:1-12). Judging from the request of the demon "legion" to our Lord not to throw them into the Abyss, we can say that incarceration in Tartarus for conduct out-of-bounds is an ever present possibility that prevents Satan and his followers from overstepping the limits of behavior God has set for them (Lk.8:31).

We also know of one additional large contingent of demons presently restrained: the four demon generals and their horde of some two hundred million (Rev.9:13ff.). These *sarim* (and their army) are presently "bound" within the Abyss (as opposed to being unchained yet locked in the Abyss like many of their compatriots). The river Euphrates is the site of their future release evidently because of its proximity to historical Babylon (the symbolic successor of which is most significant throughout the Book of Revelation). The reason for their double imprisonment or this point of eventual release is not specified, but, on the Genesis chapter six analogy, some egregious violation of God's ground rules for putting humanity to the test must be the root cause, probably having to do with Satan's attempt to forge a one-world pagan state connected with the construction of the tower of Babel (Gen.11:3-9).

8. Other individual characteristics: In our discussion of the elect elders we noted that the degree of performance of the faithful angelic orders differed (as different individuals and orders demonstrated everything from zealous to lukewarm support for the Lord in the face of Satan's attempted coup). A similar situation obtains in the case of the fallen angels in that they too are subject to personal differentiation. There are apparently varying degrees of depravity among the demons (Matt.12:45; Lk.11:26), and varying degrees of persistence in that depravity (Matt.17:21). The point should be made in this connection that the "less evil" demons are in no wise less subject to the judgment of eternal damnation because of their lesser evil: evil is evil. In the angelic realm, eternal security is based upon the decision to choose for God rather than for Satan; in the human realm, it is based upon choosing Jesus Christ over the devil's world.

7) God's employment of evil spirits: Satan and his demonic forces can do nothing apart from the permissive will of God. For His own purposes, purposes having to do with His own glory and the principle of free will, human and angelic, God allows the devil to operate within certain specified parameters. What, then, if He should use Satan and his minions in the furtherance of His plan? In one sense, *everything* that happens is part of the plan of God for the ultimate possible good (Rom.8:28). It is thus of no great moment if He should choose to make specific use of evil spirits to accomplish His own perfect will. As Christ gave instructions not to hinder any doing God's will (Lk.9:50; cf. Phil.1:18), and as the apostle Paul on occasion made use of the inclinations of demonic forces for divine ends (1Cor.5:5; 1Tim.1:20), so there are a number of instances in scripture where God clearly employs the devil's minions for His own perfect purposes, by allowing them to perform mischief that would otherwise be denied to them:

1. God's permissive testing of Job (Job 1:12; 2:6).
2. The evil spirit *sent by God* to Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem (Judg. 9:23).
3. The evil spirit *from the Lord* who vexed Saul (1Sam.16:14; 18:10).
4. The Lord inciting David to number the people through Satan (compare 2Sam.24:1 with 1Chron.21:1).
5. Micah's story of the evil spirit who volunteers to deceive the king (1Kng.22:19-23).
6. The unleashing of demonic forces to warn and to punish the earth during the Tribulation (Rev.9:1-19).

Every action Satan and his subordinates have ever taken has been fully anticipated by God and, indeed, incorporated into His plan. The fact that God can, in the furtherance of that plan, employ at will even His sworn enemies is indicative of the complete degree of control He has over all the events that are transpiring in the world (or ever have, or ever will).

8) Angelic combat: Open warfare will not break out in heaven until mid-way in the (future) tribulational period when Satan and his angels will be ejected from heaven and hurled to the earth (Rev.12:7-9). At the present time, there is an uneasy truce in the heavenly realms. Although Satan and his followers are at present free to appear before God (and the devil makes full use of this opportunity to accuse believers: Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Lk.22:31; Rev.12:10), angelic combat is apparently incessant upon the earth (consider Daniel chapter 10), with elect angels and fallen angels struggling with each other in an invisible warfare (2Kng.6:17). As non-corporeal beings, angels cannot be wounded or killed in the way that human beings can. Angelic combat therefore consists not in destroying or damaging each other, but rather in hindering each other from certain actions or, alternatively, compelling one another to certain actions. The angel who visits Daniel in chapter 10 of that book is at first kept from coming by demon opposition (Dan.10:13a), then helped (i.e., the hindering demons are forced to relent) by Michael (along, no doubt, with forces under his command: Dan.10:13b; 10:21). The actions of the unseen angelic forces supporting Elisha against the king of Aram (2Kng.6:17; cf. Dan.11:1), the (unrealized in this instance) actions of the legions of angels at our Lord's disposal (Matt.26:53), or any of the many actual angelic appearances and operations documented in scripture (and the innumerable instances not recorded in the span of human history; cf. Ps.91) all suggest the continued necessity of such combat by elect angels against satanic forces wishing to oppose God's will. Michael, for example, was not allowed to collect the body of Moses without a fight (Jude 9). Earth and, more precisely, mankind is at issue now, with Satan and the demons vying with the elect angels of God for control of the hearts of men. Jacob's vision of the angelic siege ramp or military highway stretching up to heaven to the presence of God (Gen.28:10-19; cf. Jn.1:51) makes the situation very clear: it is the earth (not the heavens) which is being contested (cf. Gen.32:2). While the world may, in the sense of gross diabolical influence, be in the power of the devil, God's overarching control is absolute, and He keeps a close watch on

the earth by means of His angelic servants (e.g., Ps.91:11-12; Zech.1:9-17; 6:1-8; Rev.7:1-4). Mid-way through the tribulation, Satan and his followers will be forced out of heaven (and restricted to earth) by elect angels under Michael's command (Rev.12:7-17).

At present, being incarcerated is the worst fate that can befall Satan's angels. The "legion" of demons about to be ejected by our Lord from the demoniac at Gadara frantically begged Christ not to have them confined in the Abyss (Lk.8:31). There a large number of demons now imprisoned (i.e., in the Abyss and at the river Euphrates: Rev.8:6-9:19) who will be joined by Satan and the rest of his followers at our Lord's return (Rev.20:1-3). Ultimately, all of God's enemies will come to occupy the lake of fire (Rev.20:10). Like reprobate human beings, the devil and his angels will not be physically obliterated, but will instead be relegated to this terrible place forever.

Our Lord, in His victory at the cross and in His resurrection, has become *in His humanity* superior to all angels in every way (cf. Eph.1:20-21; Col.1:16-17; 2:9-10; 2:15; 1Pet.3:22; Heb.1:1-2:18). As His body, the Church, we believers share in this superiority positionally and, in the resurrection, will do so experientially. This superiority is not only one of rank, but also of abilities. In terms of our future superior rank, we shall sit in judgment over individual fallen angels (1Cor.6:3; Rev.20:4; cf. Matt.19:28). It is unclear whether resurrected humans will be in any way involved in physically depositing demons in the Abyss or the lake of fire (elect angels do this where such activity is recorded: Rev.20:1-3; cf. Rev.9:1-3; 12:7-9), but given the superior properties of our resurrection bodies, we will certainly be capable of it (cf. Is.24:21-22).

9) Believers versus Unbelievers: Finally, included in the devil's order of battle are a vast number of living human beings. This is most significant, because the primary way in which the devil and his fallen angels exercise their power in the world is through their influence upon its inhabitants. Absolute dominion over certain persons by way of demon possession is certainly one extreme form of control, but an even more insidious and widespread method of swaying the will of individuals and thereby affecting the course of events is that of demon influence. Demon influence is the propagation of demon doctrines. Such influence need not be direct. Whether Satan and company wish to promulgate grossly and obviously anti-God thinking (e.g., pagan religion), or merely subtle disinformation (e.g., humanistic philosophy), it matters little whether the object has had a demon whisper in his ear or has simply read a book or watched a television show. The result, in both cases, is the same for all who believe the lie, whatever the source: enlistment into the devil's auxiliaries. Often, the battle lines are not so clearly drawn. Unbelievers, for example, to the extent that they are moral, law-abiding citizens (see section II.7 above), are in large measure useless to the devil. He can only hope to keep them from Christ, and to use their example and influence to hinder the salvation of others as well. On the other hand, nominal believers, to the extent that they have bought into one-world politics, or self-generated solutions to societal ills, can be very useful to Satan indeed. We can be sure of only one thing in regard to Satan's human auxiliaries: however long their enlistment and however vehement their loyalty, the devil will use

anyone he can to the greatest degree that he can, and has absolutely no loyalty to those who serve him or compunctions about the destruction of those who have benefitted him:

[The servant of the Lord must] in humility be correcting those who oppose him, in the hope that God may grant them to repent and acknowledge the truth, and that they may come to their senses, [escaping] from the devil's trap, though they have now been **taken captive** by him to do his will.

2nd Timothy 2:25-26

You are **of your father** the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to do.

John 8:44

And you [too were once spiritually] dead in the transgressions and sins in which you then lived your life, after the fashion of this temporal world (lit., *kosmos*), after the pattern of the ruler who holds sway in the air [around us (i.e., the devil)], **that spirit who is now at work in those who have chosen disobedience**.

Ephesians 2:1-2

[These] have exchanged the truth of God for the lie [of the devil], **and have worshiped and served the creature** [Satan] in place of the Creator, who is [worthy to be] blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:25

As soldiers in the army of the Lord, we also need to keep it in mind that these captives of the devil are our fellow human beings, men and woman for whom Christ died, and whom God desires to be saved (Ezek.18:23; Matt.18:14; Jn.12:47; 1Tim.2:4; 2Tim.2:24-26; 2Pet.3:9). Unlike purely human conflicts, where one side is out to destroy the other, God's desire is (and our desire must also be) the winning over to the love of Jesus Christ of all those who have been drafted by the devil:

We beg you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God!

2nd Corinthians 5:20

10. Satan's Tactics: By way of introduction, it will be helpful to give a quick overview of some of the most important scriptures which discuss the methods and tactics used by the devil to manipulate humanity:

Opposition to the Gospel:

And the ones beside the road are those who have heard [the truth of the gospel], then the devil comes and removes the Word from their heart, so that they might not believe and be saved.

Luke 8:12

Accusation of Believers:

Simon, Simon. Behold, Satan has asked to winnow you like wheat.
Luke 22:31

Demon Possession:

Now while the supper was in progress, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Him.
John 13:2

Demon Influence:

Then Peter said, "Ananias, why did Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and appropriate for yourself part of the proceeds of the lot?"
Acts 5:3

Blinding Unbelievers:

To open their eyes, and to turn them away from the darkness and into the light, and from the power of Satan unto God.
Acts 26:18

Punishing Wayward Believers:

[For I have already decided, i]n the name of our Lord Jesus, when all of you are gathered together with my spirit by the power of our Lord Jesus, to hand such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his body so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.
1st Corinthians 5:4-5

Among these [apostates] are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they might be taught not to speak blasphemously.
1st Timothy 1:20

Temptation:

Do not deprive each other, except for short periods by agreement in order that you may have opportunity for prayer, and may then be together again, so that Satan might not tempt you through your lack of self-control.
1st Corinthians 7:5

Plotting against us:

[I grant my forgiveness] in order that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.
2nd Corinthians 2:11

Dissembling:

For men of this sort are false apostles, workers of guile, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And it is no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.
2nd Corinthians 11:14

Harassing Faithful Believers:

And on account of my superabundant revelations, for this reason (lest I become puffed up beyond measure) I was given a stake in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to batter me, that I might not become puffed up beyond measure.
2nd Corinthians 12:7

Exploiting Unbelievers:

In these [sins] you once walked, according to the temporal orientation of this world (i.e., not living life in the light of eternity), according to the prince of the power of the air [the devil], the spirit who is now working in the sons of disobedience.
Ephesians 2:2

Menacing:

So do not give the devil an opening (lit. "place" *to attack*).
Ephesians 4:27

Deceit:

Put on the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand firm against the tricks of the devil.
Ephesians 6:11

Hindering Christian Ministry:

Therefore we wished to come to you – I, Paul did, not once but twice – but Satan impeded us.
1st Thessalonians 2:18

Exploiting Vulnerable Believers:

Don't [appoint] a novice [as pastor], lest his head swell and he fall under the [same judgment as] the devil.
1st Timothy 3:6-7

Enlisting Apostate Believers:

For some have already turned aside to follow Satan.
1st Timothy 5:15

Trapping and Dominating:

[A]nd that they may come to their senses, [escaping] from the devil's trap, though they have now been taken captive by him to do his will.

2nd Timothy 2:26

Intimidating through the Fear of Death:

Likewise [Christ] also partook of [flesh and blood] in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil.

Hebrews 2:14b

Attacking the Weak:

Therefore subordinate yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

Stay sober and wide awake. Your adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

1st Peter 5:8

Leading into Sin:

The one who is committing sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this reason the Son of God appeared, that He might put an end to the devil's deeds.

1st John 3:8

Influencing the World for Evil:

We know that we are from God, but that this entire world lies in the power of the evil one.

1st John 5:19

1) Names for the devil: Nearly all of Satan's scriptural names are descriptive designations which, in very straight forward fashion, reveal much about his character and his modus operandi:

1. Lucifer: This Latin name meaning "light-bearer" is a common translation for the Hebrew *heyel* (הֵיֵל) at Isaiah 14:12, and refers to the Morning Star. This is the only title for the devil which is not derogatory, stemming from his pre-rebellion status as the representative of God to the angels. As the One who brings God's light to the world (Jn.1:4-10), Jesus Christ has won the name "Morning Star" (2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16; cf. 2Cor.11:14). For the original "bringer of light" has become the "prince of darkness" (cf. Acts 26:18; Eph.6:12; Col.1:13).

2. Satan: The Hebrew word *satan* (שָׂטָן), connotes enmity and opposition. According to this primary name, the devil is the Enemy (cf. Lk.10:19), the Opponent (cf. 1Pet.5:8), or the Adversary (1Tim.5:14).

3. Devil: The Greek word *diabolos* (διάβολος) means "slanderer" or "accuser". According to this primary name, Satan is the one who accuses us before God and slanders God to mankind (Zech.3; Job 1-2; Rev.12:10).

4. Tempter: (Matt.4:3; 1Thes.3:5).

5. Liar: (and the father of it: Jn.8:44; cf. 1Jn.3:8).

6. Murderer: (from the beginning: Jn.8:44; cf. 1Jn.3:8).

7. Evil One: (Matt.5:37; 6:13; 13:19; 13:38; Jn.17:15; Eph.6:16; 2Thes.3:3; 1Jn.2:13f. 5:19).

8. Snake: (the snake or serpent implies treachery, danger and guile: cf. Gen.3; 2Cor.11:3; Rev.20:2). Several other related terms should be noted. Dragon, Leviathan and Rahab add the notion of monstrous size and power to the snake's other characteristics:

a) Dragon (i.e., a very large snake-like creature: Rev.12:3-17; 13:1-4; 16:13; 20:2; cf. Job 26:13).

b) Leviathan (i.e., a sea-serpent: Job.3:8; Ps.74:14; Is.27:1).

c) Rahab (i.e., a sea-monster: Job 26:12; Is.51:9).

9. Belial: or Beliar"; the name means "without profit" or worthless (2Cor.6:15).

10. Beelzebub: the name means "ruler of the flies" and is formed from the Hebrew-Aramaic word for lord (*bal, bel*) and the onomatopoeic sound of the fly (*zzzbh*; cf. Matt.12:24-27). Flies, because of their pesky nature and disgusting habits, made a good analogy for demons, of whom Satan is the current "lord".

11. Pseudo-god and world ruler: These terms describe the devil in his would-be role of master of the earth and human race, for example: "god of this age" (2Cor.4:4); "ruler of this world" (Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11); "prince of the power of the air" (Eph.2:2); "strong man" (Mk.3:27).

2) Demon Influence: the Tactics of Temptation: Satan is generally able to achieve his ends through demon influence and demon temptation without resorting to direct attack or possession. In fact, in the vast majority of cases, such influence and temptation do not even require direct demonic involvement. The world system which Satan has so laboriously constructed is by now so chock-full of ready-made temptation and institutionalized satanic influence that a sizeable, built-in momentum for perpetuating and deepening its influence on earth has already been achieved. Without divine intervention, one may hypothesize safely that no further direct demonic activity would be required for the world to continue in its degenerate direction until absolute corruption had been achieved. Satan, of course, is not satisfied with this. His only hope (and a false one at that) for avoiding the inexorable approach of God's judgment lies in the complete obliteration of faith from the earth. For this reason, continued and intensifying demonic influence (through his world system) and temptation (individual

entrapment) can be expected as the devil makes every effort to strengthen his grip on the world.

Satan has a built-in ally in each one of us: our sin nature (Jas.1:14). Luring us into sin is the basic approach for tricking, trapping and tempting believers and unbelievers alike into doing his will instead of God's (2Tim.2:26). Sin, of course, encompasses more than gross lascivious conduct. In terms of the devil's propaganda system studied above, those who buy into the lie of self-worship (i.e., "I am a god": subjective arrogance) and the lie of self-righteousness (i.e., "God needs me": objective arrogance) are ultimately the most useful to him. And Satan is always recruiting "useful" human beings. We have already made the point that demons are not allowed by God to do everything they would like to do on the earth, otherwise they would long ago have extinguished the human race entirely (the one sure way to extinguish the lamp of faith). Demons do not have their own bodies and their ability to possess human beings has been restricted by God (see below), and their attempt to create a hybrid angel-human race was crushed by God through the flood. In short, their *material* influence on the earth and human beings is limited. The most effective way the devil has, therefore, of exercising control over his erstwhile domain is to *have human beings do it for him*. In the history of the world, Satan has found no lack of individuals who, actively or passively, in full or partial knowledge, embracing or merely being influenced by the system of lies he has established, have "joined his team", so to speak, and have thus contributed to his control and direction of the world. The world "lies in the lap of the evil one" in large part because the evil one has found so many volunteers to help him rule it (1Jn.5:19).

Beyond the influence of the world system already in place, the devil also actively tempts human beings he has targeted. Scripture is limited in what it has to say on this subject, but certain basic principles are clear:

1. Acquisition of Targets: In the same way that God employs angelic watchers to reconnoiter the earth (cf. Zech.1:11; 6:5ff.), we can safely assume that Satan too employs his extensive demonic assets to "keep tabs" on as many human beings as possible. It is important that we not underestimate the amount of intelligence that the devil possesses about us, but it is also important not to overestimate Satan's capabilities: unlike God, he is not omnipresent. Scripture, however, is very clear about the fact that we are being observed by angels (Job 1 & 2; Lk.15:10; 1Cor.11:10; 1Pet.1:12).

2. Targeting: From what we know of his methodology, we can also expect Satan to be opportunistic and efficient (according to his lights) in the employment of his resources. Temptation of human beings utilizes assets, and so we can safely assume that not every human being will come under the same degree of direct, demonic temptation. Highest on the devil's priority list will be those who might serve him most effectively in extending his influence (the rich, powerful, prominent, or those possessing potential in these and other important areas). Particularly important targets from Satan's point of view are any and all individuals who are on the point of becoming believers in Christ: the devil makes every effort to remove the seed of the gospel from their hearts before they can believe (Matt.13:19; Mk.4:15; Lk.8:12). Believers are perhaps the most tempting targets, and, in corresponding fashion, we may expect that the more useful we are to

God, the higher on Satan's list we will be (cf. Job 1:8; Lk.22:31). Timing is also a key issue in the devil's selection of targets for active temptation. We should not underestimate his ability to discern either the temptations to which we are likely to be the most vulnerable or the best time for him to set the temptation in motion. Common sense tells us that if we could observe someone (even ourselves) for an unlimited time in complete secrecy, we would easily come to know (or at least be able to guess with some assurance) their specific areas of weakness and the best time to put them under the pressure of temptation (1Pet.5:8). On the other hand, it is also important not to overestimate the devil's abilities in this regard. Only God is omniscient. The devil, for example, can only guess what is going on in our hearts.

3. Tempting: Satan does actively employ a strategy of temptation against human beings, especially believers, in order to distort the truth, disrupt proper behavior, disrupt the environment for learning and applying the truth, prevent us from coming to God and following Him, disrupt our faith, destroy our witness, degrade our usefulness to God, and create a usefulness for himself (1Thes.3:5). We know from scripture that even great believers sometimes succumb to these methods (e.g., David was moved by Satan to number the people: 1Chron.21:1). It is important to remember, however, that the devil is not omnipotent. And we have it from God that He will not allow Satan to bring more pressure to bear upon us in this regard than we are able to bear (1Cor.10:13). We can summarize the most important aspects of the devil's methodology of temptation as follows:

a) Deception: At the heart of all direct temptation from the devil lurks the lie. Deception is the true key to effective temptation (Gen.3:13; Jn.8:44; 2Cor.2:11; 11:3; 11:14-15; Eph.6:11; 2Thes.2:9-12; Rev.12:9; 19:20; 20:3 & 10). For, if we knew the truth, feared God as we should, and appreciated the consequences of succumbing to temptation, we would appreciate how counterproductive, how devastating to our faith and to our lives every defeat at the hands of the devil truly is. In short, we would never do it. Satan (through his demonic servants) makes a point of masking the truth in all his efforts at temptation. This is obvious from the first case study in human experience, Adam and Eve, where the fall of our first parents into sin would never have occurred had not Satan deceived them into a false appraisal of the situation. The devil may deceive us by suggesting that some sin isn't sin at all, that some sin is necessary, or he may simply present us with an offer that is "too good to pass up", but even in this last case, we have been deceived as to the hollowness of the prize before us and the painful consequences certain to follow from turning away from God.

b) Verbal Suggestion: One of the best ways to tempt someone to sin is through suggestion and encouragement from others (cf. 2Pet.2:18-19). There is something about the human heart that leads it to eagerly embrace a suggestion from another person that it would never adopt (or perhaps even conceive) on its own. Peter's suggestion to the Lord that He put out of His mind the idea that He must suffer death is an example of the devil trying to use another human being as a lever to induce sin (as our Lord remarked: Matt.16:23).

c) Visual Suggestion: Sometimes the mere appearance of an object of temptation (or something closely related to whatever one lusts for) is enough to start the wheels of the sin nature rolling. In our mass-media world, where sin-inducing images abound (consider that advertising, for example, is almost completely directed towards stoking our natural covetousness), it is no great matter for the devil to probe our resistance by supplying the most tempting images at the most opportune time (Job 31:1; Ps.101:3; 1Jn.2:16).

d) Subconscious Suggestion: Subtle suggestion below the conscious level is also a weapon in the devil's arsenal (1Chron.21:1; cf. Matt.16:23). It is important to note that we no more have to take any heed of sinful and evil "ideas" that occur to us (only some of which are from any demonic source – our sin nature is quite capable of generating a sufficient dialogue in this regard) than we do the overt verbal suggestions of others enticing us to leave the path of truth. At some point along the spectrum of increasing openness to sin and evil, however, receptivity to such communications increases and this direct channel to demonic doctrine widens (Eph.2:2; 1Tim.4:1).

e) Coercion: Satan does not "play fair". He uses any and all means available to him. One particularly effective means of temptation is the pressure of circumstance. Fear, of loss, of embarrassment, of inconvenience, of injury, of unpopularity, of death, of anything in the face of which we feel fear, is a powerful tool in Satan's hands. By suggesting to us the terrors that may result from doing what is right (or abstaining from what is wrong), the devil is often able to manipulate us into sin and evil (and away from God's will: Rm.8:15; 2Tim.1:7; Heb.2:14-15).

f) Reassurance: For every potential wrong action, there seems to be no lack of examples of those who have acted similarly without serious consequence. Such observations are faulty, for God is a judge of perfect righteousness (cf. Ps.37 & 73 for the eventual recompense of the wicked). In addition to such apparent (though only apparent) case studies ready at hand that seem to cast doubt on the principle of divine punishment for sin and evil, the devil is always quick to supply those who are only too willing to give us verbal reassurance that what we are doing is "O.K.". After all, everybody does it, just about. And who can say whether it's "really" wrong. And, anyway, it's not really your fault – you just found yourself in a situation. Such false reassurance has a powerful tendency to undermine the resolve of those who receive it. However, relativism, avoidance of responsibility, and blaming God for the circumstances in no way absolve us from sinful or evil conduct. As believers, we ought to take great care not to be guilty of subverting the resolve of those for whom we care (a thing which is all too frequent and often done out of misguided love: we ought not to condemn the sin of others from self-righteous motivation, but we also ought not to give them false information about its consequences).

g) Sin: Temptation does not have to result in sin. When it does, it is because of our own free will choice to take the wrong path. James (chapter 1:14-15) tells us the mechanics: after being tempted, lured and baited (by our own lust), that lust then comes to fruition in sin (i.e., we succumb to the temptation), and sin in turn alienates us from God (death in a spiritual sense). The devil, being "a sinner from the beginning"

(1Jn.3:8), is well-acquainted with this process. Instead of succumbing to temptation (or, if we do succumb, instead of refusing to confess our sin, change our ways, and so recover from our lapses), we ought to remember that Christ died for these sins of ours precisely to rescue us from this present evil age (Gal.1:4)

h) Reinforcement: Failure to seek God's forgiveness and face up to our errors (through repentance, confession, and reform of our sinful ways) tends to reinforce bad behavior. As a result, we become more and more reluctant to come to the light of God's love and grace (Jn.3:19-21). Left unchecked, complete spiritual blindness (2Cor.4:4), and total negativity toward God (Job 21:14-15) can result. In the end, we become fit only for the devil's use.

4. Case Studies (Satan's two most significant temptations):

a) Adam and Eve (Gen.3): Satan's deception in the garden of Eden concentrated on heightening the desirability of the unknown by means of cleverly concocted lies.

b) The Temptation of Christ (Matt.4; Lk.4): The three temptations of Christ, the Last Adam, present a view of the devil's strategy of temptation in outline:

i) stones to bread: the temptation to do a right thing in a wrong way (food is legitimate, but God's purpose was for Christ to abstain during this period).

ii) kingdom's of the earth: the temptation to do something that seems right but is subtly wrong (Christ is certainly the coming King, but not through Satan's agency, and not in that way or at that time).

iii) jump: the temptation to act impulsively in order to justify oneself (to put God in a position to have to rescue you, in order to prove something, is wrong on all counts).

3) Demon attack: Within a restricted range, demons can occasionally make material attacks upon people and property. Although direct demon attack was widespread in times past (e.g., during the era of lawlessness preceding the Great Flood) and will be again in the future (i.e., during the Great Tribulation), during the current period of the Church, this type of demonic activity seems to be fairly limited, or at least not overtly obvious. As indicated by the examples of Job (Job 1 & 2), Micah (1Kng.22:19-23), Peter (Lk.22:31), and Paul (1Cor.5:5; 1Tim.1:20), such attacks are apparently limited to instances where specific divine permission has been obtained. Demons cannot attack arbitrarily, for God is in complete control of His creation (Jer.27:5).

Disease constitutes an important sub-category of demon attack which is to be distinguished both from it and from demon possession. Clearly, much disease has no demon involvement at all (though some illness is in fact a result of demonic assault). Also, in those cases of disease which are attributable to the work of demons, many do not involve demon possession (Lk.13:11-16; Acts 10:38). Job and Paul we know for certain were afflicted (and definitely not possessed) precisely because of their superior

spiritual status, and were not touched without God's specific knowledge and express purpose (Job 2:6-7; 2Cor.12:7-10). In the present post-apostolic pre-tribulational era of the Church – far from being able to state with certainty whether a demon-induced illness is divine punishment or an acknowledgment of superior spiritual achievement – it is impossible to say for certain even whether any given illness is a result of demon attack. The New Testament contains many instances of such cases, but it is important to remember that not only were special spiritual gifts operational at that time to deal with these unique problems, but also that a large part of the reason why such intense and visible demon activity was allowed was to demonstrate the power of God and the imminence of His Kingdom in the Person of Christ through its defeat at Jesus' hands (Acts 10:38):

Then his disciples questioned Him, saying, "Master, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but [this has happened] so that the works of God may be revealed through him".
John 9:2-3

4) Demon possession: Demon possession is an especially virulent form of demonic attack that must be addressed separately. In demon possession, a fallen angel (or several) takes up residence in the body of a morally accountable human being. In so doing, the demon gains a large measure of control over the individual in question (through that person's body). Such possession of human bodies was a major selling point in the devil's enlistment of followers to rebel against God. Fallen angels crave the sensual experience that only a physical body can provide, and it is safe to say that without divine restraint, much more such possession would occur. Demon possession does not extinguish the personality or the will of the possessed, but it does repress it to a very great degree. The Gadarene demoniac, for example, was able to bring himself to Jesus in search of deliverance despite the resistance of a whole legion of demonic inhabitants (Lk.8:26-37; cf. also Acts 16:16-18). Judas, (possessed by Satan after becoming confirmed in his decision to betray Christ: Jn.13:27), later was able to express his (pointless) regrets. Soothsayers and oracles (the witch of Endor, for example: 1Sam.28:3-19) also exhibit greater or lesser ability to maintain some sort of joint control of their persons in company with the forces that possess them.

As with demon afflictions of all kinds, demon possession is also subject to the permissive will of God. Unlike demonic attack and infliction of disease, however, demon possession also requires the willful acquiescence of the possessed. This is true even in the case of the "boy" with the unclean spirit which is sometimes taken as an exception (Matt.17:14ff.; Mk.9:24; Lk.9:37ff.). When Jesus asks the time of his initial affliction, his father replies "since he was a boy", however this phrase translates the Greek adverb *paidiothen* which means here not "from childhood" but "from adolescence", based on the word *pais* (παῖς) which is often used to make this distinction in Greek (Lk.2:43). A person has to "agree" to demon entrance in order for it to happen. This agreement need not be in the form of a conversation, but merely a conscious consent to allow an unnaturally great influence of supernatural forces into the life. Involvement in paganism, the occult and even some aspects of more "respectable" non-Christian

religions obviously helps to advance this process and make possession a more likely possibility. Any activity that surrenders the will in a supernatural context (even "socially acceptable" practices like hypnotism, Quija board use, tarot cards, etc.) helps weaken resistance to demon entrance. The fact that spiritism (necessarily involving possession) is strongly prohibited in the Old Testament demonstrates the ultimate culpability of the possessed (Lev.20:6, 27; Deut.18:10-11; Is.8:19). Demon possession, inevitably regretted after the fact, is as much an individual responsibility as is getting "hooked" on drugs, alcohol, or any other destructive behavior. As temples of the Holy Spirit (1Cor.3:16; cf. 1Cor.10:21), believers are exempt from demon possession, a principle that makes much sense when one considers that opening oneself up to overtly satanic influences (a practice antithetical to following Jesus Christ) is a prerequisite for possession (see Eph.4:17ff.; 1Tim.4:1).

You can't drink the Lord's cup [of communion-fellowship] and the cup of demons. You can't share in the Lord's [communion-fellowship] table and the table of demons.

1st Corinthians 10:21

Ending demon possession is not a simple matter, but it must be kept in mind that God is still in charge of His creation, and that He is capable of terminating all such cases whenever and however He chooses. He is also a God who answers prayer, and the prayer of those who seek Him diligently is always highly esteemed (Jas.5:16b). It will be remembered that the most difficult case of possession encountered in the gospels brings the observation from our Lord that "this kind only comes out with prayer" (Mk.9:29). As to the issue of exorcism, the word itself does not occur in the Bible, exorcism being the noun form of the Greek word "adjure", as in, "I adjure you in the name of Christ whom Paul preaches" (Acts 19:13). In the case just mentioned, the "exorcists" were not believers, and the exorcism was ineffective. Examples of believers putting an end to demon possessions (not associated with disease) are few and far between in scripture. Aside from the deliverances on this score wrought by the Lord (e.g., Mk.1:34, 1:39; Lk.4:41), we have the example of the 12 and the 72 sent forth by Him to proclaim His kingdom (Matt.10:1; Mk.3:15; 6:7; 6:13; Lk.9:1; cf. Lk.10:17), and Paul's command for the demon to come out of the slave girl with the familiar spirit (Acts 16:18). The first set of instances deal with the heralding of the kingdom of Christ (an offer that Israel of that day would reject). The incident in Acts 16 is part of an apostolic ministry establishing the Church of Christ. The spiritual gifts and abilities given to the 72 apostles of the kingdom and the spiritual gifts and abilities given to the 12 apostles of the Church were extensive and unique, wholly in keeping with the unique ministries they were to discharge. Extraordinary gifts and extraordinary events quite commonly precede important eras in the history of the world, that is, in the history of world from God's point of view. One can consider by way of comparison the exceptional events and exceptional miracles performed by Moses at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. We will next see a concentration of such events and miracles on the verge of Christ's return (in the tribulational period). At the present time, however, most such gifts and miracles are not functioning. Since "authority over the demons" is a power (or gift) only given to apostles and their associates, "exorcism" is not a valid activity for believers. The only weapon we possess to combat suspected cases of demon possession is prayer, but, as our Lord told us, this is the most powerful weapon of all (cf. Mk.9:29). Where the power of

God is involved, anything is possible. Consider, for example, Christ's expulsion of one demon from a distance (Mk.7:29). Demon expulsion is no easy matter under any circumstances (cf. the implications of Lk.11:18), and not necessarily a once and for all thing. The restless spirit who brings seven more wicked spirits back with it *reenters* the victim (Lk.11:26), and in one case our Lord specifically commanded the demon not to reenter the formerly possessed person (Mk.9:25). Demon possession only happens by acquiescence, and, even after expulsion, there is no guarantee that without turning to Christ a victim of possession will not resort to his or her former behavior.

5) Accusation of believers: The last and most despicable method of demon attack is reserved entirely for believers. Satan, as we have mentioned, engages in intensive observation of human beings, especially believers, and makes the most effective use he can of the information gathered. In the case of believers, this includes accusing them before God. Now God, of course, is omniscient, and is well aware of all our failures (knew them, in fact, before we or the universe had been created). But the devil, whose name means "accuser", delights to point out to God the sins and errors of His followers, partly to imply that God is inconsistent (which is, of course, a blasphemous lie), partly to attempt to get God to do the devil's work for him by punishing the offending believers. Scripture records this particularly offensive habit of the devil in a number of places (Zech.3:1; Job 1& 2; 1Pet.5:8; Rev.12:10). We should not underestimate this venue of attack, for Satan and his minions are powerless in the face of God's defense of us, but who can oppose God? What a joyous day it will be when the devil no longer has access to the throne room of heaven to cast his accusations against us (Rev.12:10)! Until that time, it is a most salutary thing that we have as our advocates before God both the Holy Spirit (Jn.14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and our Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous One (1Jn.2:1).

6) Resistance: It is helpful to consider that even during the early days of the Church, when the apostles operated with exceptional powers, "spiritual warfare" as it is often termed today, consisted of very limited direct contact and confrontation with demon forces. These great believers functioned on the whole in the same way that we do (read "should" do) today. They fought the good fight by seeking God, committing themselves to spiritual growth, and energetically setting themselves to the ministries God had given them. They were not overly concerned with details they could not know about a conflict they could not see (beyond certain physical manifestations, sicknesses and the like). If that was true during a time when overt miracles were being empowered for the reasons discussed above, how much more is it true today? We do gain great encouragement from the knowledge scripture gives us about the impending victory of God over the devil and our place in the struggle (cf. Lk.10:18). Many things are explained thereby, and in contemplating the unseen conflict we are guided to put this world and our lives in it into the proper, biblical, God-seeking, God-fearing perspective. But we must never succumb to a morbid fascination with such things. We must not "go beyond what is written" (1Cor.4:6), and must take care to give a wide berth to anything that smacks of the occult.

Only do not rejoice in this, that the spirits obey you. But [rejoice] that your names have been recorded in heaven.

Luke 10:20

Direct demon interaction in the world seems less obvious today than ever before. In part this may be due to a strategic decision by the devil to concentrate on using science and technology to undermine faith for the time being. But part of the reason seems also to stem from God's sovereign decision to make it so through the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit (2Thes.2:6-7). In short, when we believers are under pressure, we cannot know the precise source of the pressure (whether demonic or otherwise), but we *should* know that God is with us in any and every strait:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angelic nor human authorities, neither things present nor things to come, neither heavenly powers, be they the highest [of the elect] or the lowest [of the fallen], nor any other created thing [on this earth] will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

We can also take comfort in the many scriptures that assure us that along with an unseen enemy, there are many unseen allies, angels of God (too numerous to count) to fight this battle for us (Gen.19:11; 1Kng.19:5; Ps.91:11; Dan.6:22; Matt.4:11; Matt.18:10; Lk.16:22; Acts 5:19; 12:10-15; Heb.1:14). Unable to perceive the ebb and flow of the spiritual conflict around us, we become like private soldiers on the battlefield, only conceptually aware of what is going on beyond our individual fox-holes. Under such circumstances, the correct procedure is to walk by faith, not by sight, and to learn to trust God unfailingly (Ps.23; 2Cor.4:18; 5:7; Heb.11:1). The closer we move to God, the more we grow spiritually, the safer we shall be in this conflict, and the more effective our prayers to influence what we can see will become. The one thing that a solid understanding of the matters discussed here should produce is the conviction that every single scrap of scripture, every small opportunity to improve our relationship with God, is of critical importance, because a much larger, all-inclusive battle is being waged just beyond what our eyes can see. In all circumstances, and especially touching our demonic foes, trusting God is our main line of defense:

The Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

2nd Thessalonians 3:3

I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but that You guard them from the evil one.

John 17:15

But deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 6:13

In summary, the knowledge that we are living out our lives on what amounts to a spiritual battlefield here on this vain earth should not be depressing, but liberating. Knowing this truth "sets us free" in great measure (Jn.8:32; Gal.5:1), because in this way we come to see clearly that all the pointless things of life, things after which the world

runs with such gusto, things that in the end do not satisfy, are not the things that are really important. We come to see the world as it really is, looking with the eyes of faith to the things that are not seen (2Cor.4:18), the things that are eternal. And we have confidence that our personal victory over whatever part of the devil's world we now occupy will find its ultimate complement and fulfillment in Christ's complete victory over Satan and his cosmos when He returns.

Knowledge of the vanity of the devil's world is a clarion call to turn away from that world's evil and towards God for the only real answers there are in this life. The world and the devil supply handy false answers, but only God has the truth. The devil's realm is a vast desert in which there is nothing of value, nothing that lasts, nothing that satisfies, nothing but false directions, endless marching toward empty nothingness – only in God through Christ do we gain true direction. In this desert of a world, where almost everything else is a lie, in God, in Christ we find the cold, clear, refreshing water of truth.

Footnotes:

1. Much of the material covered here can be found in greater detail in two further series 1) [The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation](#), and 2) [The Coming Tribulation: a History of the Apocalypse](#). Readers are invited to consult these studies after digesting the material here.
2. i.e., He constructed it out of existing material rather than creating it *ex nihilo*, the verb here being the Hebrew *'asah*, not *bar'ah*: see part 2 of the [Satanic Rebellion: The Genesis Gap](#), section III.2, "The Genesis 2:4 Creation Summary".
3. *Systematic Theology* v.2, p.106.
4. For this "replacement principle" see part 2B of this series and the [Satanic Rebellion](#) series.

[Ichthys Home](#)