
***THE
WAR
OF THE
AGES***

***BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS
SERVANTS AND SATAN AND HIS
AGENTS***

BY

JOHN WADDEY

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those faithful soldiers of Christ of days past who fought the good faith and received the promised reward and those of our generation who continue the good fight of the faith as true soldiers of our King.

Thanks to Eddy Joel Silsbee for the cover design.

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INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century we see on one hand, declining faith in Christianity, Jehovah, Jesus and the Bible and on the other a resurgence of paganism, Satanism, witchcraft and Evil. As an exposed vacuum will be filled, so the mind of man who rejects faith in Jehovah and His Son will soon drift towards the polar opposite of Evil and false religion. Thus, in our day of enlightened paganism, we not only see widespread indifference to the God of Christianity, but brazen hostility on the part of many. Today, rather than just staying away from church and worship, we see people who are defiant and aggressive in their sinful state. They are writing books, letters to editors and openly defying God. A sizeable number now profess to worship and serve an ancient god by the name of Satan. Thus they join the one who in the ancient past led the angels of heaven in rebellion against Jehovah (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; I Tim. 3:6). Now Satan seeks to gather sinners of earth in a similar revolt.

The Apostle Paul wrote the saints in Ephesus that “our wrestling is not against flesh and blood (i.e. a physical combat against other humans) but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places...” (Eph. 6:12). He then told them, and us by extension, to “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (6:11). The sum of all of this is we are caught up in a great spiritual war between the forces of heaven and those of Satan’s domain.

The contents of this book were written to help God’s children better understand the enemy against whom we must do battle. It is a spiritual war wherein Satan, the prince of darkness, his evil angels, and malevolent demons aspire to defeat and take captive the army of Christ (Christians). First we remind our readers of the help we have from God’s Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts (I Cor. 6:19) and strengthens us (Eph. 3:16). We then consider the mighty Angel of Jehovah who is the champion of God’s people, leading them to victory (Josh. 5:13-15). Then we look at the legions of angels to whom God has given the responsibility of ministering to those who are the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:12-14).

The following chapters examine the many aspects of our enemy: the devil, his wicked angels and demons. The things we learn from this study will equip us to be better, more effective soldiers of Christ and more successful in the great spiritual conflict in which we are engaged. Rather than being helpless victims of Satan’s aggression, our Lord wants us to be “good soldiers” in his service (II Tim. 2:3). Rather than fleeing in the face of our enemy or hiding in fear, he wants us to fight the good fight of the faith so we can lay hold on eternal life (I Tim. 6:12). Rather than standing unarmed and helpless before Satan’s forces, He wants us to be well protected with the armor God has supplied (Eph. 6:13). He expects us to take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and storm those regions under Satan’s control and set the captives free (Eph. 6:16-17). Christ is greater than and stronger than Satan. God’s truth is stronger than error. The church will survive until the return of her Master. The kingdom of darkness will be destroyed. Through Christ we will be “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37).

George Barna has correctly observed that, “Most Christians do not perceive the church to be in the midst of the most severe struggle it has faced in centuries.” We dare not compromise the gospel to strike a peace treaty with the sinful world. We hope you will read this book, not just to satisfy your curiosity about Satan and demons, but to arm yourself for the fight. A place in God’s eternal home is reserved for every Christian who served God faithfully in the great war between the Lord Jesus and his servants and Devil and his (Rev. 2:10; 7:13-17).

John Waddey

CONTENTS

	Page
1. The Kingdoms of Darkness and Light.....	5
2. Spiritual Warfare.....	6
3. The Doctrine of Angels.....	7
4. Archangels.....	9
5. Cherubim.....	11
6. The Angel of Jehovah.....	12
7. The Holy Spirit: His Nature and Activities.....	15
8. Christians Are Led by the Holy Spirit.....	17
9. Satan: His Origin, Mission and Destiny.....	20
10. Where Did Satan Get His Great Power?.....	21
11. Are Satan and Lucifer the Same Person?.....	22
12. Satanism.....	23
13. Satan's Grand Lie.....	24
14. Satan's War Against the Seed of the Women.....	26
15. The Doctrine of Demons.....	27
16. Demons: Servants of Satan.....	32
17. The Work of Demons and Seducing Spirits.....	36
18. Demons and Idolatry.....	37
19. Can Demons Possess Us Today as in Bible Times?.....	38
20. The Crowded Road to Mysticism.....	38
21. Is Witchcraft a Reality or a Superstition?.....	42
22. Astrology.....	44
23. Paganism.....	44
24. La Santa Muerta: The Saint of Last Resort.....	46
25. Nostradamus, Soothsayer and Fraud.....	47
26. Anti-Christ.....	47
27. The Salem Witch Trials.....	51
28. How Do We Bind Satan Today?.....	52
29. To Be a Spiritual Person.....	54
30. Where Does Man's Spirit Go At Death?.....	55
31. What Are the Spiritual Hosts of Wickedness Against Which We Must Fight?.....	56
32. Our Enemy Uses Lying Signs and Wonders.....	57
33. The Power of God vs. Occult Practitioners.....	59
34. Syncretism: Revival of an Ancient Religious Practice.....	60
35. In the Wake of Evil.....	61
36. Satan: The Enemy We are Up Against.....	63
37. Satan's Bag of Lies.....	64
38. Devices of the Destroyer.....	65
39. Soldiers Who Serve in the Army of Christ.....	67

THE KINGDOMS OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

In revealing his will to us, God chose words and concepts that set truth and error in sharp contrast. Among the contrasts most commonly used are light and darkness. John writes, “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). In salvation we are delivered out of the power of darkness, i.e., Satan’s domain, and translated into the kingdom of God’s son (Col. 1:13). Throughout the New Testament darkness stands symbolically for the antithesis of God’s way.

The Christless life is one of darkness. Before becoming Christians we “were...darkness, but are now light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). Christ made the darkness of sin, ignorance, error and superstition to vanish away (I John 2:8). Christians “are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness” (I Thess. 5:5).

Darkness is hostile to the light. This is true in the material realm and more so in the spiritual. Christ was “the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended (or overcame) it not” (John 1:4-5). Jesus said, “everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov’d. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light...” (John 3:20). As Christians, our “wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness...” (Eph. 6:12). This mortal conflict between truth and error will never cease till the victorious Christ banishes darkness (Rev. 22:5).

Darkness symbolizes the ignorance of a life apart from Christ. Without light one is soon confused and lost in the darkness of a literal night. So it is in the spiritual realm. Jesus said, “Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth” (John 12:35). Jesus is the guiding light by which by following will lead us safely to our eternal home (John 8:12). Even as Israel was provided the glorious light of God to lead them from bondage to Canaan, so Christ leads us (Ex. 13:21). Whoever believes on Jesus does not abide in darkness. Those who reject him are like blind men groping along in the darkness.

Darkness describes the chaos of life without God. Paul writes, “it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Cor. 4:6). He alludes to God’s first act upon the dark chaos of the unfinished creation (Gen. 1:23). Only after God brought forth light could he make the earth suitable for living things and man. As the physical world would be chaotic without the sun so without the moral light of his Son the world would be in moral, spiritual chaos.

The immorality of the Christless life is depicted as darkness. Romans 13:12-14 reads, “The night is far spent and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof. “ Works of darkness are most often pursued in the darkness of night; such as crime, wild partying, drunkenness, adultery and abandonment. People whose deeds are evil love the darkness, like the doleful creatures of the nocturnal hours. They frolic in the shadows and then hide themselves when the light appears (John 3:19).

Darkness is always unfruitful. Paul speaks of “the unfruitful works of darkness” in Ephesians 5:11. Without light, growing things soon wither and die. So there can be no fruit of the Spirit in a life lived in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and sin (Gal. 5:22-23).

Hatefulness and the absence of love always accompany darkness. John warns, “He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light...but he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes” (I John 2:9-11). Love is like the warm, life-giving sunshine, hatred like the cold dark night. How sad to see some professing Christians harboring hatred towards a brother. Such actions are contradictory and mutually

exclusive.

Darkness is the abode of Christ's enemies and the final destiny of the wicked. Satan's domain is that of darkness (Col. 1:13). Apostate disciples are like "wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever." Wicked angels are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgement..." (Jude 6). The Lord will consign the wicked to "outer darkness" where they will be forever punished (Matt. 22:13).

Jesus gave his life to deliver us from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13). Today God is calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). Faithful Christians must continually walk in the light of Jesus' blessed gospel (I John 1:6-7). We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather even reprove them (Eph. 5:11-12). As Israel followed their guiding light to their land of freedom and rest, so may we follow Jesus the light of the world to our eternal home.

(The author is indebted to William Barclay for the heart of this lesson).

II.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Throughout the epistles of Paul and in John's Revelation we find metaphors depicting the followers of Christ as soldiers locked in a titanic struggle with the Devil and his agents. Too many contemporary Christians have failed to understand this aspect of their discipleship. They behave themselves as civilians in a neutral nation with no interest in anything resembling a conflict. This misconception has weakened the church and rendered such members virtually useless. It is time to look again at who and what we are and what is it we are about!

* Christ is a conquering king, at the head of a great army (Rev. 19:11-16). Our king's powerful weapon is the sword of truth which proceeds from his mouth (19:15). This symbolizes the message he has given us (Heb. 4:12). His troops are arrayed in white robes, symbolic of their purity. His message of truth will conquer and subdue the nations of the world (19:15).

* Every Christian, both male and female is expected to serve in the army of our king. We must engage in the good fight of the faith if we want to receive eternal life (I Tim. 6:12)

* We have a cruel and oppressive enemy, Satan, who must be resisted and driven back (I Pet. 5:8).

* Satan has in his service a vast army, committed to his cause and hostile to our Lord. His dominion is vast. The whole world lieth in the evil one (I John 5:19). Hosts of wicked spirits serve at his command (Eph. 6:12) as do millions of sinful people.

* Our warfare is not carnal as are the wars of nations. Our weapons do not include, guns, bombs and missiles, planes, tanks nor ships. "The weapons on our warfare are not of the flesh, but (they are) mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds (fortresses)...and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5).

* Ours is a war of ideas and doctrines. It is a struggle for the minds and hearts of humanity.

* Paul clearly states that our "wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). Rather than harm our enemies, we are taught to pray for them (Matt. 5:43-44) and do them good (Rom. 12:19-20).

* For our battle, our king provides us with necessary and suitable armor, both defensive and offensive. There is the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. For our shoes we have the gospel of peace. The shield of faith and the helmet of salvation complete our body armor. To strengthen all of the above we have prayer (Eph. 6:13-18). For our weapon, we have the mighty sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (6:17).

* Our mission is to set the captives free (Luke 4:18) by preaching the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). It is to deliver them from Satan's dominion (Rom. 6:17) and see them safely translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). We labor to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

* Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). It is a spiritual kingdom made up of men and women whose

hearts and minds are devoted to Christ (Luke 17:21). We seek no political, territorial or commercial control or power; only the hearts of those made in the image of God (II Cor. 10:3-6).

* The victory of Christ's army brings no destruction, suffering or ruin. Those liberated by him are inspired and encouraged to do that which is good to all men (Gal. 6:10). Where His truth prevails men embrace peace and learn the ways of war no more (Mic. 4:3). Those subject to Jesus neither kill, steal from nor oppress their neighbors. Personal peace that passes understanding is the consequence of his rule in their lives (Phil. 4:7).

* The consequences of our conflict are eternal in nature. Yes, there are blessings here, but "in the world to come we will receive a crown of life (Mark 10:30; Rev. 2:10) and everlasting citizenship in the homeland of our king (Phil. 3:20). There, all of his faithful soldiers will live with their King and celebrate his victory throughout eternity (Rev. 19:9; 21:3-4).

Are you ready to volunteer for the army of the King of Kings and participate in this great struggle for truth and righteousness? An honorable place of service in his ranks awaits you.

III.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

In our day, we hear much talk about angels. The bulk of it is gleaned from novels, magazines, movies and television. Consequently, most of it, in part or in whole, is faulty information. The unbelieving portion of our society scoffs at the idea of angels along with that of God. Yet, among this group are those who are working feverishly, hoping to discover "intelligent" life in outer space.

Angels are mentioned, throughout the Bible, as a reality. As God's believing children, we accept that as proof of their existence, since God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Thus we look to that record to learn what can be known about angels. It is the only reliable source of information on this ethereal subject. All else is mere speculation.

What Is An Angel? The word rendered angel simply means "a messenger." An examination of the uses of the word in Scripture reveals three different kinds of angels.

* There are **earthly angels**. Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia were directed to their respective "angels" (Rev. 3:2). This refers to the men who would deliver the letters to their congregations.

* In one of his sermons on Judgement, Jesus tells us that hell "is prepared for **the devil and his angels**" (Matt. 25:41). These we can label as evil angels.

* Of course there are the **heavenly angels**. In the closing chapter of the Revelation, the Apostle John was told that God had "sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 22:6). It is these that interest us most.

What is the Origin of Angels? Angels were created by Christ, in the beginning. "All things were made through him" (John 1:3). In his praise of Christ, Paul writes, "for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things..." (Col. 1:16-17). In this grand verse we find the origin of the heavenly angels. The angels were evidently created before the material universe and its inhabitants, for God asked Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth...when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy?" The angels were there to witness that marvelous event. When the innocent couple were created and placed in the garden of Eden, we read that Satan was there to tempt them (Gen. 3:1-7). He was the leader of that band of rebellious angels who because of their sin, God had previously cast down from heaven to Tartarus (II Pet. 2:4).

What is the Appearance of Angels? In their natural state, angels are invisible to the unaided human eye. The false prophet Balaam could not see the angel that blocked his pathway (Num. 22:31). Nor could Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, see the angels surrounding and protecting the city of Dothan, where he and the prophet were trapped (II Kings 6:15-17).

Elisha prayed that God “would open his eyes” and lo, he saw “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about” them.

As to their form, most often they appeared as men. Two angels visited Lot in Sodom (Gen. 19:1). To Lot and his wicked neighbors, they appeared as natural men (19:5, 12). When the Apostles reached the empty tomb of Christ, “they saw a young man sitting on the right side...” (Mark 16:5). It was an angel (Matt. 28:5). Only one mention is made of female angels and that might just be a dream or vision (Zech. 5:9-10).

Sometimes they took other forms. As mentioned above, at Dothan, they appeared as horses and chariots of fire (II Kings. 6:17). On Mt. Horeb “the angel of the Lord appeared unto (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Ex. 3:2). The author of Hebrews wrote, “Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire” (Heb. 1:7).

What are the Attributes of Angels?

* They are wise and intelligent beings, but they are not omniscient. Jesus said, “but of that day, and hour (his second coming) knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven...” (Matt 24:36). There are some things they do not know.

* They are not omnipresent. God’s angels had to travel from Abraham’s lodging to Lot in Sodom (Gen. 18:1, 16). Daniel relates that “the man Gabriel...being caused to fly swiftly, touched me...”(9:20). They seem not to be bound as we are by space and time for this entire episode occurred while Daniel “was speaking in prayer” (9:21). John writes of seeing “an angel flying in mid-heaven...” (Rev. 14:6). They are not bound by gravity.

* Angels are powerful, but not omnipotent. An angel rolled away the great stone that covered entrance of the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 28:2). An angel was able to cause Peter’s two chains to fall from his hands, he caused the great iron gate of the city to open for them (Acts 12:6-10). An angel determined to rain a plague upon the city of Jerusalem, but David’s confession, prayer and sacrifice prompted God to stay the angel’s destruction (II Sam. 24:10-25)

* Jesus said, the angels do not marry. “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30).

* Angels are holy (Mark 8:38), but they are not to be worshiped. When John “fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed (him) these things” he was told, “See thou do it not: I am a fellow servant with thee...worship God” (Rev. 22:8-9).

* Angels are accountable to the rule and authority of God. “Bless the Lord, ye his angels...that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Ps. 103:20). This means they are capable of sin and subject to punishment for so doing. Thus Peter tells us, “If God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell...to be reserved unto judgment...” (II Pet. 2:4). Sin, by its very nature, is “transgression of God’s law.” (I John 3:4).

* The number of the angels is “innumerable” (Heb. 12:22). Jesus declared he could call for more than twelve legions of angels to fight for him (Matt. 26:53). The Roman legion consisted of some 6,000 troops. More than twelve legions of angels would have been in excess of 72,000.

What is the Mission of God’s Angels?

* Of special interest to Christians is the fact that they minister unto, watch over and care for God’s children. Having survived the long ordeal of his temptation in the wilderness, “Behold, angels came and ministered unto Jesus” (Matt. 4: 11). When our Lord agonized in Gethsemane, an angel from heaven strengthened him (Luke 22:43).

* As the saints fervently prayed for Peter’s release from prison and deliverance from death, “an angel of the Lord stood by him” and brought him safely out (Acts 12:5-11). God dispatches them to answer our prayers.

* They protect us from harm. Thus we are assured, “There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Ps. 91:11). “The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7). The author of Hebrews reminds us of this truth by asking, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?” Our Master warns us, “See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

* God uses his angels as his agents in governing the affairs of his world. In his vision, John saw, “four angels, standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth” until the divine order was given (Rev. 7:1). (These winds refer not to currents of air, but to events such as wars and other

disruptions among nations.

* They are God's agents to punish wicked men and protect his people. "And Jehovah sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of valor and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria" (II Chron. 32:21-22). "An angel of the Lord smote (Herod) because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms..." (Acts 12:23).

* Angels are greatly interested in the salvation of the lost. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

* The angels of God escort the souls of departed saints to their waiting place in the Hadean realm. When righteous Lazarus died, "he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22).

* The angels will serve the Lord Jesus in the Day of Judgment. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:41). Paul vividly describes the scene "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel ..." (II Thess. 1:7-9).

What is the Destiny of the Angels? In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be an innumerable host of angels along with the saved of Christ's church who are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:22-23). In his grand vision of heaven, John saw "all the angels standing round about the throne...and they fell before the throne, on their faces, and worshiped God..." (Rev. 7:11). This is the destiny of the holy angels. But what of those who chose to rebel against the will and authority of God? The lake of fire "is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

Conclusion: This great theme exceeds our ability to fully comprehend its depth and scope. But what we have seen in this lesson fills our heart with joy, comfort and consolation. God tells us that angels are assigned to minister to us who are heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). We know not how many dangers they have helped us avoid, how many evils they have kept at bay, how many blessings that have come our way by the hands of the heavenly servants of our great God. We find great comfort in knowing that these powerful servants of our Master will be there to comfort and assist us when it is our time to depart this life (Luke 16:22). While we do not worship them, or pray to them, we do thank God for these special agents he has commissioned to minister to us as we make the journey of life.

* The heart of this lesson was gleaned from a sermon by 19th century preacher. If my memory is correct, it was by John Sweeney.

IV.

ARCHANGELS

Angels are messengers of God. Among the holy angels, the names of only two are revealed; Michael (Jude 9) and Gabriel (Dan. 9:21). Michael's name means, "Who is like God?" Gabriel means "God is powerful." The two are described as archangels.

Angels are created beings, created by Christ (Col. 1:15-16), prior to the creation of our universe and the human race (Job 38:7). They are servants of God who do His will in whatsoever assignments He gives them. They especially serve the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:13-14).

The term **archangel** (Jude 9). means they occupy a superior office above other, lesser angels. Paul mentions different orders of God's spiritual agents created through Christ: "for in him were all things created, in the heavens...things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers" (Col. 1:16). He refers to those **spiritual beings who are faithful** in service to God. Included in these would be the cherubim and seraphim (Is. 6:2; Ezek. 10:20).

When writing the Ephesians, the same Apostle speaks of evil spiritual forces against whom we must do battle. "Our wrestling is...against principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts

of wicked in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:10-13).

Michael the archangel strove to protect the Hebrews when they were threatened by their enemies (Dan. 12:1). He also fights on behalf of we Christians in our conflict with Satan. He led other angels in protecting the saints when the mighty Roman Empire made war on them (Rev. 12:7-10). Their unseen assistance gave the Christians the victory and in time brought about the demise of that powerful government.

In Daniel’s day, Gabriel was dispatched to deliver a divine revelation to the prophet. He appeared to Daniel, in a vision, as “a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded in pure gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face was as the appearance of lightening, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass and the voice of his words were like the voice of a multitude” (Dan. 10:5-6).

Gabriel explained to Daniel, “From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words’ sake. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people...” (Dan. 10:12-14).”...now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I go forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come...and there is none that holdest with me against these, but Michael your prince. And as for me, in the first years of Darius, the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him” (Dan. 10:20-11:1). Note Michael is the “prince” Hebrew people!

From these lines we conclude that part of the work of archangels was to influence the affairs of the nations of the earth that God’s will would be done one earth as in heaven (Matt. 6:10). In another place, Daniel states that “the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:17). He exercises that rule through his arch angels.

We also note that the angel Gabriel was not visible to the people around Daniel (Dan. 10:5-7). God did enable Daniel to see and converse with him (Dan.10:5-8).

Jude tells us that God dispatched Michael, the arch-angel to make sure Satan could not gain possession of the deceased body of Moses and use it for his evil purposes. One of those purposes might have been to make of it an object of worship by the Hebrew people. Other ancient people did in fact worship their departed rulers as gods. Powerful as Michael was, he was not a divine being. When he rebuked Satan, he said, “The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 9).

When the time came for Messiah to enter our world, God sent forth Gabriel to speak, first to Zacharias, the father to be of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-19). He also delivered unto Mary of Nazareth the good news that God had selected her to bear the Christ-child (Luke 1:26-38). An angel also appeared unto Joseph to inform him of God’s plan, but we are not told it was an arch-angel (Matt. 1:20-23).

When Christ returns to raise the dead and terminate our physical universe, it will be “with the voice of the archangel...” (I Thess. 4:16). Daniel tells us that Michael will be present when those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt” (Dan. 12:1-2).

Angels, no matter how great are not to be worshiped (Rev. 22:8-9). They too are servants of our God.

THE CHERUBIM

Among the many mysteries of God's book are the cherubim that are depicted surrounding the heavenly throne. These strange spiritual beings are vividly pictured in Ezekiel and the Revelation and slightly mentioned in Isaiah. Unfortunately, the King James translators call them beasts, but the Greek does not suggest that nor do their attributes reflect such an idea. Later translations are uniform in calling them living creatures or beings. The question for this study is just what are these living creatures?

THEIR ASPECT

"They had the **likeness of a man**" (Ezek. 1:5). That would be their general bodily form.

"Everyone had four faces...."

1. "They had **the face of a man**" (1:10). This suggests intelligence, like human beings possess.
2. The **face of a lion**, which suggests fearless strength and courage.
3. The **face of an ox**, suggesting service and strength.
4. The **face of an eagle**. This suggests the keen sight of this bird or its swiftness of flight to reach its objective.

THEIR BODILY MEMBERS

"Everyone of them had **four wings**" (1:6). Wings suggest swiftness and mobility to get a task done. While two wings are normally sufficient, these have four each, twice that which is necessary. They would never be disabled or hindered by infirmity.

"Their **feet were straight feet and the sole of their feet was like a calf's foot and they sparkled like burnished brass**" (1:7). Their feet were hard and tough like a cow's, thus they were able to continually do their task without their feet growing sore and weary. Burnished brass is purified and tempered. A calf's feet are hard, but feet like brass would be extra hard and able to grind any opponent into the dust.

"They had **hands like a man**" (1:8). That means that they had the dexterity and the skill of a man to do their task.

"Their **wings were joined together** (1:9). They worked together with perfect unity in serving God, never at odds with one another.

Although they were joined together, "They turned not when they went; they went straight forward. (1:9b). In normal earthly realms such is impossible but the meaning here is that the creatures were omnipresent for they could be at any place at any time and never have to leave the place they occupied. Keep this thought in mind when we seek a conclusion as to who or what they were.

The creatures ran and returned as "**a flash of lightening**" (1:14). This demonstrates the swiftness of their movement. As the lightning can streak across the heavens in a moment so could they be anywhere instantly to do God's will.

THEIR APPEARANCE

"Their appearance was **like burning coals of fire**" (1:13). **Like glowing molten metal** (1:4). This reflects their holy majesty. Every impurity would be consumed in their presence. Human eyes would be unable to dwell upon them. The glorified Christ shone as the sun (Matt. 17:2). Deity dwells in light unapproachable. (1 Tim. 6:16).

As torches give light for men to see by, so these have "**the appearance of torches**" (1:13). Flashes of lightning danced back and forth upon them and outward from them. (13-14). No man would dare draw near to such a spectacular demonstration of power, lest he be consumed.

THEIR MOBILITY

"Behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creature..." (1:15). As Ezekiel looked, the four wheels pointed in different directions. All seemed to be interlocked as one great system—a wheel within a wheel (1:16-17). Wheels suggest their mobility.

The four great wheels "had their rims full of eyes round about." The many eyes suggest that they knew all things, they

possessed **omniscience** even as Christ (Rev. 1:6).

“Their work was like unto beryl...” or topaz (1:16), which speaks of their infinite beauty.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVINE THRONE

“Over the head of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament, like the terrible crystal...stretched over their heads above” (1:22). “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of the throne...and upon the...throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above” (1:26). This was the appearance of **the likeness of the glory of Jehovah**” (1:28). The cherubim then are the **chariot of the throne of God**. When the Lord Jehovah came in judgment on Jerusalem, the glory of Jehovah mounted the throne over the cherubim and they lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth (10:18-19). The noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of a host” (1:24). This implies a fearful roaring sound when the chariot throne ascended. Such omnipotent power would strike terror in every heart that contemplated it. John says they have no rest day nor night as they praise the Holy God (Rev. 4:8). This also reflects their total power and strength.

WHO OR WHAT ARE THESE CREATURES

In 10:20, Ezekiel calls them **cherubim**. Isaiah called them Seraphim (6:6). In Revelation they are “living creatures” (4:6).

The reader will remember that the cherubim possessed **attributes of omnipotence, and omniscience and omnipresence**. But these are the attributes of deity, not of creatures. Rather than being created servants, *I suggest that they symbolize the spiritual forces of the great Jehovah himself*. They tell us he is fully able to accomplish every desire and intent of his heart in the way this visual symbol represents. Only God sees all, knows all, and has all power.

May this brief study help us to appreciate more the God we serve.

VI.

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

One of the most interesting and fascinating personalities of the entire Bible is "the angel of Jehovah." Perhaps no other Bible character is so little known or understood as he. Who is this angel of Jehovah? The answer to that question will be the subject of our study.

Characteristics of Angels

To properly understand about *the angel*, we first need to review the characteristics of angels in general. Angels are created beings. They were made through Christ in ancient times (Col. 1:16-17). Being creatures, angels are not divine in nature. They are not omnipotent, omniscient or omnipresent. Angels are holy, but they are capable of sinning (II Pet. 2:4). Their very name indicates that they are **messengers of God**. Man is never allowed to worship angels, since only God may be worshiped (Rev. 22:8-9).

Activities of the Angel of Jehovah

In the Old Testament we find at least 23 separate references to his work for God's people. In Genesis 16: 7-14 the angel of Jehovah appeared to Hagar, the handmaiden of Sarah as she wandered in the wilderness. He promised her a son and a large posterity. "And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou are a God that seeth..."

In Genesis 18:1-2 we read that Jehovah appeared unto Abraham at Mamre. "He lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him. . ." He invited them in and fed them a meal. One of them promised that Sarah would bear a son within a year (18:10). When Sarah laughed at the idea, the man claimed that nothing was too hard for Jehovah (18:14). He told Abraham that he was come down to investigate the situation at Sodom. Abraham perceived that he was the judge of all the earth (18:25). After Abraham had secured a promise from the man concerning Sodom, "*Jehovah went his way*" (18:33). Then we read that he (Jehovah) rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah "brimstone and fire..." (19:24). Notice that while he appeared to be an ordinary man, in reality it was Jehovah that visited Abraham that day.

Genesis 22:9-18 records the story of Abraham offering Isaac. Just as the aged patriarch lifted his hand to plunge the sacrificial knife into his only son, "The angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven". When Abraham saw the ram which had been provided, he called the place Jehovah-jireh (22:14). And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time...and said, "By myself have I sworn, **saith Jehovah...**" (22:16). He then renewed the covenant promise of the Messiah.

Genesis 28:10-17 tells of Jacob's dream at Bethel. He saw a ladder set up on earth and the top of it reached to heaven, "and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold Jehovah stood above it..." (The footnote says that Jehovah stood beside him). Moses tells us in Genesis 31:11-13 that it was the angel of Jehovah that was "the God of Bethel" whom Jacob saw. When Jacob was returning to his homeland he wrestled with a man throughout the night. The man said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel for thou hast striven with God . . . And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel for said he, I have seen God face to face..." (Gen. 32:22-30a). Hosea later wrote of Jacob, "In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he had power with God, yea, he had power over **the angel. . .even Jehovah, the God of hosts...**" (Hosea 12:3-5). On his death bed, Jacob blessed his sons by the name of God, the angel who had redeemed him from all evil (Gen.48:15-16).

When Moses saw the burning bush, "The angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush...and when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush...and he said, draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." When asked by Moses what was his name, he responded that it was "I AM THAT I AM" who spake with him (Ex. 3:2-14).

It was "the angel of God who went before the camp of Israel" when they made their exodus from Egypt (Ex.14:19-20). Yet in chapter 13:2 of the same book we are told that it was Jehovah who went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire.

Concerning his angel, Jehovah warned Israel, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him" (Ex.23:20-23). Note that they had to obey the angel and that he could forgive their sins.

When the Hebrews made the golden calf, God withdrew his special angel and only promised to send an ordinary angel. This so frightened and distressed Moses and the people that Moses fervently interceded for God to reconsider. Upon their repentance God did decide to send his angel to once again lead them (Ex. 33:1-3; 12-16). Isaiah comments that this was "the angel of his presence" that guided and protected them (63:9). The expression literally means **angel of his face**.

As Joshua prepared the nation to march on Jericho "he lifted up his eyes and looked, and , behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." When asked, the man replied that he was "prince of the hosts of Jehovah...and Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship...and the prince of Jehovah's host said unto Joshua, put off thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place where on thou standest is holy" (Jos. 5:13-15). Continuing the narrative in 6:2, we read that "Jehovah said unto Joshua." So this man whom Joshua worshiped was in reality Jehovah.

Three times the book of Judges records appearances of this notable angel. He appeared to the nation at Bochim to reprove them for their disobedience (2:1-5). He appeared to Gideon to commission him to save Israel from Midian. Here again the angel is called Jehovah (6:11-14). In Judges 13, he appeared to Manoah and his wife and promised them a son, Samson. When Manoah offered him food to eat the angel ordered him to "offer it unto Jehovah" as a sacrifice (13:16). "Manoah knew not that he was the angel of Jehovah. And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, What is thy name, that, when thy words come to pass, we may do thee honor? And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, "Wherefore asketh thou after my name, seeing it is **wonderful?**" (13:16-18). When the burnt offering was made "the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar" (13:20).

In II Kings 19: 33-36, Jehovah promised to save Jerusalem and king Hezekiah from the armies of Sennecherib, king of Assyria. "The angel of Jehovah went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand..."

When David sinned by taking a military census of his nation, God sent a pestilence upon the nation by his angel. "And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of Jehovah standing between earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." David and the elders fell upon their faces and prayed (I Chron. 21:9-30).

Daniel saw the angel of Jehovah in 553 B.C. while an exile in Babylon. He saw "a man, clothed in linen whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Daniel felt totally undone in his august presence. He had come to reveal the future of the nation to Daniel (10:5-14).

A Summary of Facts About the Angel of Jehovah

We have seen that passages that begin with the angel as their subject commonly shift the names to **Jehovah, God or Lord** as in Exodus 3:2-6. The angel claims God's power and authority. For example, he forgave sins (Ex. 23:4). But this only God can do (Mark 2:5-10). He revealed the future (Dan. 9:14). He had the power to judge, to save or destroy (I Chron. 21:14-15). God's people are allowed to worship this angel. But we are strictly forbidden to worship an ordinary angel (Rev. 22:8-9).

Who Then Is The Angel of Jehovah?

He is certainly not a created being. He is not a man although he often appeared as such. He is not simply a created angel. Nor is he God the Father, for John tells us that no man hath seen God at any time (John 1:18). Remember that the angel directed Manoah to worship another than himself (Judges 13:15).

The following observations will establish that this mighty angel was no less than the Word of God, the pre-incarnate Christ. The angel of Jehovah told Moses that his name was "I AM THAT I AM", but Jesus claimed that he was I AM (John 8:58).

The angel led Israel through the wilderness and provided their needs (Ex. 14:19-20). Moses reported that Jehovah directed Moses to smite the rock that the people might drink in the desert. But Paul tells us that the rock they drank of was Christ (I Cor. 10:2-4).

In Joshua, the angel is the prince or leader of Jehovah's host or army (5:14). In Revelation 19 we see the army of heaven and its notable leader. Then John sees his name which is "The Word of God" (19:11-16). In his gospel, John identifies the Word of God as the only begotten of the father who became flesh (John 1:1-3, 14).

The angel told Manoah that his name was *wonderful* (Judges 13:16-18). Isaiah in his famous prophecy of Messiah said, "His name shall be called wonderful. . . ." (9:6).

Isaiah calls him "The angel of God's presence, " which means, "of his face!" (63:9). The Hebrew writer says Christ is "the very image of his (God's) substance" (1:3). Edward Young says, "The angel of His face is the angel who is His face or in whom His face is made clear. In him the Lord is Himself present" (**The Book of Isaiah**, Vol. 3, p. 482).

Jacob saw the ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending and Jehovah standing beside it (footnote) (Gen. 28:13). Jesus declares himself to be that ladder (John 1:51).

The angel of Jehovah can be worshiped (Josh. 5:4). No mere man or created angel can be worshiped acceptably (Acts 10: 25, 26; Rev. 22:8-9). But Jesus commonly accepted the worship of men (Matt. 28:17).

The angel is repeatedly called Jehovah. But Jesus is also called Jehovah. Isaiah 43:11 affirms that there is no savior but Jehovah. But Paul in Titus 2:13 describes Jesus as our great God and *savior*. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah. We do not affirm that Jesus is the Father. We simply recognize the fact that inspired writers ascribe the descriptive noun Jehovah to all three of the sacred Godhead. The word Jehovah describes a person who is eternal and self-existent. This is true of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Daniel saw the angel in his regal glory in 10:5-6. John, the Apostle, saw the same glorious being on Patmos. He saw "one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." It was the Son of God who had been crucified but resurrected (Rev. 1:12-18).

These appearances of the angel of Jehovah in ancient times are called theophanies, i.e., when God assumes the form of an angel or a man in order to speak and act visibly and audibly with men, to provide them some revelation or guidance.

These many references demonstrate that our Lord existed from eternity with the Father, just as John affirmed in his

biography (John 1:1-3). They tell us of the Savior's activities on behalf of the redeemed during those long years when mankind groped in darkness for a guiding hand. All of that before he came as Jesus, son of Mary.

In the light of these scriptures let us honor and adore the Messiah who blest man in ancient times as the mighty angel of Jehovah and continues to do so as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

VII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS NATURE AND ACTIVITIES

No biblical theme is grander or greater than the Holy Spirit. This is true because the Holy Spirit is revealed to us as a member of the divine family, the godhead, that created and rules over creation, man and the church. Some 90 times the writers of the Old Testament refer to the Spirit of God. New Testament writers mention him some 260 times. We find the Spirit referred to or described under 39 different names or titles.

Of the many great themes of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has been the least studied and consequently the least understood by our brethren. We can attribute this to several factors.

- * Information regarding the Holy Spirit and his role in the drama of redemption is not as abundant as we could wish.
- * There is a significant amount of mystery about the Spirit and his work.
- * Our religious neighbors have built elaborate systems of doctrine and practice concerning the Holy Spirit, based on a faulty understanding of the Scripture. To avoid their misguided speculations many brethren have hesitated to pursue the subject, lest they fall into their error.
- * Some of our own teachers who were overly proud of their intellectual attainments and biblical knowledge have made it their business to attack anyone who publicly expressed views about the Spirit and his work that were contrary to their views. Their method was to brand the brother who dared to express his conclusions as a "Pentecostal" or as denominational. This successfully silence many good men.
- * The biblical training provided for most of our ministerial students has dealt with more practical matters than with some of the more profound doctrinal themes of Scripture. Their education regarding the Holy Spirit was more a drill in the mistaken views of the Spirit and his work, held by various sects, rather than a serious, in depth, study of the Spirit of God.

There are numerous **good reasons for discovering all we can about the Holy Spirit.**

- * His role in preserving the teachings of Jesus (John 14:25).
- * His role in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 8:11).
- * His role in launching the Church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
- * His role in giving us our Scripture (II Pet. 1:21).
- * His role in our salvation (John 3:5; Tit. 3:5).
- * His role in helping us grow into Christian maturity (II Cor. 3:17-18).

The Holy Spirit shares the divine nature with God the Father and Jesus the Son. When Ananias and Sapphira lied about their gift unto God, Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...thou has not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3-5). Thus we repeatedly find the Spirit linked with the Father and Son as their equal.

- * We were baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).
- * In Romans 15:30, Paul besought his readers "by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God..."
- * In II Corinthians 13:14, the Apostle said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."
- * In Ephesians 4:4-5 we are told there is "one Spirit," "one Lord," and "one God and Father of all."
- * To the Philippians Paul writes of our "exhortation in Christ," our "fellowship of the Spirit," and "the glory of God the Father" (2:1, 5, 11).
- * In Revelation 22:16-18, John writes of Jesus, the Spirit and God.

The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He has all the attributes of personhood. This we mention because some have mistakenly described the Spirit as the influence or power of God the Father or the mind or thought of the Father. To such teachers, the Spirit is an impersonal “it.” The careful student notes that male pronouns are used to refer to the Spirit. Jesus said, “When he the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you...He shall glorify me...” (John 16:13-14).

The Spirit does things that only a person can do.

- * He bears witness of Christ (John 15:26).
- * He hears and speaks (John 16:13).
- * He teaches (Luke 12:12).
- * He has a mind (Rom. 8:27) and volition (Acts 16:7).
- * It is through the Spirit that God has revealed his will unto humanity (I Cor. 2:10).

The **Work of the Holy Spirit** stretches from eternity to eternity. Christ, through the “eternal Spirit, offered himself...unto God” (Heb. 9:14). He played a vital role in the creation of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30). The Spirit will play a role in our resurrection from the dead (Rom. 8:11). In John’s vision of heaven, he saw the Holy Spirit standing before the throne of God the Father as seven lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5). Among the Hebrews the number “seven” was used to signify plenitude, completeness and perfection. Jesus promised that when the Spirit came to comfort his disciples, “he may be with you forever” (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit continues his divine ministry with us today, no longer with spectacular miracles, but leading us through the Scripture he inspired and his providential supervision.

The Spirit was involved in the virgin conception and birth of Jesus. Gabriel explained to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The Spirit of God anointed and empowered Jesus at his baptism (Acts 10:38). He raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4; 8:11).

The Christian Age is the age of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Spirit to lead his people after his departure (John 16:7-15). The Spirit’s presence with the Lord’s church is to last forever (John 14:16). He is Heaven’s agent for the administration of the kingdom of God on earth.

The Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles for their great mission (Acts 1:8). He guided them into all the truth (John 16:13). The Spirit himself provided the power to launch the church. This was manifested to multitudes by the sound like a mighty rushing wind (a tornado) and what appeared to be tongues of fire resting on the Apostles. They were baptized, i.e., immersed in his mighty power which enabled them to speak in languages previously unknown to them. With this gift they could preach the gospel to all men of all nations without delay and confirm their message by miraculous signs (Acts 2:1-4; Mark 16:20).

Every person saved, from Pentecost to the present, has received remission of sins and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). As Jesus put it, all who are saved must be born of “water and the Spirit (or) they cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Every Christian should understand “that (his) body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in (him), which (he has) from God...” (I Cor. 6:19). The Spirit strengthens the Christian in his inner man (Eph. 3:16), sanctifies him (II Thess. 2:13), and helps him to overcome and defeat the sinful weaknesses of the flesh (Rom. 8:13). He transforms saved men or women into the likeness of Christ (II Cor. 3:18). The Spirit of God helps us with our prayers, interceding for us when we need his blessed assistance (Rom. 8:26-27).

The Holy Spirit inspired, that is, gave the message and appropriate words to writers of both the Old and New Testaments. David said, “The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me and his word was upon my tongue” (II Sam. 23:2). Peter explained that “men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:22). Paul’s statement was “...unto us God revealed them through the Spirit...” (I Cor. 2:10). By the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit Paul declared, “We have the

mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2:13,16).

No Christian should claim that he understands all there is to know about the Holy Spirit. As with the Father and Son and their sovereign rule there is much that is unknown and unknowable by our finite minds. But there is a body of information about the Spirit, provided by God in that pages of our Bible. That information is totally reliable and we can read, believe and live by it. To find, accept and live by this teaching regarding the Holy Spirit will be comforting, enriching and life-changing.

VIII.

CHRISTIANS ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Paul reminded the Roman brethren that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). Thus the Scriptures teach that Christians are led by God’s Holy Spirit. While no one disputes that fact, there is great disagreement over **how the leading is done.**

Virtually all denominations say we are led by a direct supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the human soul. We would affirm that it is only by, through and with the written word of God, the Scriptures, that Christians are led. These two views are poles apart, only one can be correct. But how can we determine which is true? On this and all other questions “the opening of (God’s) words giveth light. It giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps. 119:130). So we go “to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is. 8:20 KJV).

WHAT IS THIS SPIRIT OF WHICH WE SPEAK?

In Romans 8 he is called “the Spirit of God” In John’s Gospel he is “the Spirit of truth” (14:17) and “the Holy Spirit” (14:21). Thus he is the third person of the Godhead whom we worship and serve and into whom we are baptized (Matt. 28:19).

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAK TO MAN?

The Spirit communicated directly to the Apostles and inspired men. Speaking of the sacred writers, Peter says, “men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21). The Greek suggests that they were empowered for their task even as a sailing ship is empowered by the wind. Jesus told them the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all that he had said to them (John 14:26). He guided them unto all the truth (John 16:13). On the day of Pentecost the Apostles began to speak “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Therefore, when we hear the message of the Apostles we should understand that they “preached the gospel...by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven....” (I Pet. 1:12).

The Holy Spirit speaks to us only through the written message those inspired men left behind them. No one would know a single word of God’s truth without knowledge of the Scriptures. No conversions are ever found where the Bible has not gone. If men could be saved directly by the Spirit without the gospel message, then no missionaries would be needed. Only the Primitive Baptists have taken the direct operation of the Spirit doctrine to its logical conclusion. Consequently they are rapidly becoming extinct.

Human emotions and experiences are not to be confused with a message from the Spirit. Each person’s experience is different; Mormons have different experiences than Catholics. But God is not the author of such confusion. (I Cor. 14:33). Some have exotic emotional experiences but others do not. Yet our God is no respecter of persons. Every man who fears him and works righteous in acceptable to him (Acts 10:34-35). If he were going to send direct spiritual influences upon the heart, he would in fairness send them to all men. Many of the experiences attributed to the Holy Spirit relate instructions which are contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. But God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). His message is never contradictory or confusing (I Cor. 14:33). When a man claims that the Holy Spirit told him in a dream to reach out and take hold of Jesus’ hand and he would be saved, he is in conflict with the inspired message the Holy Spirit gave the Apostles on the same subject. While none can dispute that the man had such an experience we can challenge the claim that it was of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles spoke and wrote the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). They were motivated by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21). Paul explains that he had received the Spirit which is from God so that he could know the things of God. The Spirit then guided him in combining spiritual things (concepts) with spiritual words. The result of which was inspired, inerrant Scripture (I Cor. 2:12-13). The word of God then is “the sword of the Spirit” which he uses to operate upon the hearts of men (Eph. 6:17).

TESTIMONY OF FIVE INSPIRED WITNESSES

It is amazing how millions will risk their hope of eternal salvation on a theory that is so patently at variance with God’s written revelation. To illustrate this, we raise the question “What message must a man receive to be saved?” Is it a message direct from the Holy Spirit upon the heart or some other? For the answer we call upon five inspired witnesses.

A. **Jesus’** testimony is given in John 17:20. In his great prayer for his disciples he prayed “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that *believe on men through their word.*” In this we see how future disciples would be won through the teaching of the Apostles.

B. **John’s** testimony is next given. “These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Thus with the written record of this Spirit-guided man we can arrive at saving faith in the Lord.

C. **Peter** is our next witness. He reminded his fellow Apostles how “God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe” (Acts 15:7b). Thus sinners who heard and accepted Peter’s message could be saved.

D. We now hear **Paul’s** testimony: He explains to the Roman saints that “belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Paul believed that one could have acceptable faith by hearing and receiving the word of God, i.e., the Scriptures.

E. Last, we hear **James’** testimony. He declares that “the implanted word...is able to save your souls,” if received in meekness (James 1:21). All of these witnesses agree on this fundamental point, i.e., that all one needs in order to be saved is found in the Holy Scriptures. Of course he must make a proper, believing response to them.

WHAT DO MEN CLAIM THE DIRECT OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT DOES FOR THEM?

Bro. Z. T. Sweeney, 130 years ago, analyzed and demolished the claims of those who believed in a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men. We will summarize his analysis.

The Spirit **enables us to believe.** But faith comes from hearing the word of God (Rom.10:17).

The Spirit brings us **through a new birth.** But we are begotten again by the word of God (I Pet. 1:23).

He gives us **spiritual light.** But the entrance of God’s word gives us light (Ps. 119:130).

He provides us **wisdom.** But the Holy Scriptures make us wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:14-15).

The Spirit **opens our spiritual eyes.** But the commandments of Jehovah enlighten our eyes (Ps. 19:8).

He gives us **understanding.** But through thy precepts I get understanding (Ps. 119:104).

He **quicken**s us. But thy word hath quickened me (Ps. 119:50).

The Spirit **saves us.** But the implanted word is able to do that (James 1:21).

He **sanctifies us.** But this he does through the word of truth (John 17:17).

The Spirit **purifies us.** But this is done by obedience to the truth (I Pet. 1:22).

He **cleans**e us. But we are cleansed by the words which Jesus spoke (John 15:3).

The Spirit makes us **free from sin.** But this is accomplished by obeying Christ’s doctrine (Rom. 8:17-18).

He makes us **partakers of the divine nature**. But this comes via the promise of Christ (II Pet. 1:4).

He **fits us for glory**. But this is done by the word of his grace (Acts 20:32).

The Spirit **strengthens us**. But this is done through his word (Ps. 119:28).

From the forgoing we can surely draw the conclusion that what the Holy Spirit does for man in the area of salvation, sanctification and guidance, He does by and through the medium of the inspired Scriptures.

HOW CAN WE KNOW ONE IS LED BY THE SPIRIT?

Having established that God's Spirit does not lead us in a supernatural way, we now ask how can we know one is led by the Spirit in the Biblical sense of that expression?

A. Paul writes "Walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). He then catalogues the works of the flesh in (vss. 19:21). No man is Spirit-led who indulges himself in fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envying, drunkenness, reveling or such like (Gal. 5:19-21).

B. A Spirit-led man is not under the law of Moses (Gal. 5:18), neither will he teach people to be under that law. Thus the man who claims to be led by the Spirit and yet looks to the Old Covenant for his doctrine and practice is surely misguided.

C. When one is led by the Spirit, he lets the word of Christ dwell in him richly. He teaches and admonishes others. And whatever he does in word or deed is done in the name of Christ (Col. 3:16-17). In Ephesians 5:18-20, the same writer equates this with being filled with the Spirit.

D. One led by the Spirit will bear the fruit of the Spirit in his life. He will reflect love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). While such a virtuous life alone is no guarantee of ones salvation, it is certain that one cannot be pleasing to God without these holy attributes.

E. Those led by God's Spirit will love, honor, study and obey the Holy Scriptures. In the seven letters to the churches of Asia the Lord repeatedly said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 2:7). But the Spirit's message was written in those very inspired letters from Jesus. So when we heed the message of Peter, Paul, James or John we are being led by the Spirit of God (I Cor. 14:37).

An unknown poet expressed the principle thusly:

"Feelings come
And feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving.
My warrant is the word of God.
Nought else is worth believing".

CONCLUSION

Today, the Spirit of God tells sinners to come to the Savior (Rev. 22:17). He "calls you through (the) gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2:14). That same Spirit is leading Christians who have sinned to confess their sins that Christ might forgive them and cleanse them from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). May we all gladly follow his instructions for our lives now and forever?

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IX.

SATAN: HIS ORIGIN, MISSION AND DESTINY

We live in a world charged with both good and evil. We are so created that each must determine his own destiny by choosing to do good or evil. Our Creator daily exerts his great power to prompt us to choose the good that he may bless us. Satan, the father of all evil, uses every scheme to lead us to sin. It is imperative that we be acquainted with our foe if we are to win in this desperate struggle.

The Origin of Satan

The Bible makes no attempt to prove Satan's reality or existence. It assumes this as fact. Scripture does not specifically detail the origin of Satan. However, there are some statements and truths that seem to incidentally shed light on this mystery.

Through Christ, God created *all things* (Col. 1:16). This included all things of earth and the heavenly creatures, i.e., angels. All things God created were very good (Gen. 1:31).

Some of the angels were not satisfied with their station assigned by the Almighty. They rebelled and fell from their holy sphere. Jude says, "... angels that kept not their own principality (proper habitation), he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment" (vs. 6). "God spared not angels when they sinned...but cast them down to Tartarus" (II Pet. 2:4). Paul speaks of pride being the condemnation of the devil (I Tim. 3:6). There is perhaps an allusion to this historic event in Revelation 12:7-9. There, John tells of a "war in heaven" Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon...and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down...the Devil and Satan, he was cast down to the earth and his angels...with him." Although John's application was to the struggle between the church and the pagan Roman empire, he seems to allude to some great event from the past.

Satan's Mission

Satan's mission is to alienate and destroy all men from God and make them his slaves. Hardly had the first couple begun their lives when the arch-fiend made his appearance. With diabolical skill he deceived the woman and succeeded in bringing sin and death to them and all their descendants who would follow them (Gen. 3:1-19). No wonder Jesus called him a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He is the accuser of Christ's brethren (Rev. 12:10). He dared to walk into the august presence of God and accuse faithful Job. Then with fiendish glee he set about to torment his victim and cause him to sin (Job 1:6ff). Joshua, God's high-priest, had for an adversary, Satan, standing at his right hand (Zech. 3:1). So brazen is he, that he even tried to seduce and corrupt Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). To Peter, Jesus said, "Satan hath desire thee that he may sift thee as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Unable to personally corrupt Christ, "the devil...entered into the heart of Judas" and led him to betray his Master (John 13:2).

Facts We Need to Know About Satan

Paul wrote so "that no advantage be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11). He is constantly scheming and planning to destroy us.

The devil would have you think he is a man with horns, a red suit, a long tail and pitchfork. Really he is a spiritual being who works through human beings. Nor is he a "roaring lion," but he is "as" a lion. That is, he stalks his victim in a cruel, heartless, and deadly fashion.

For his helpers, Satan has hosts of wicked spirits (Eph. 6:11-12). He has wicked men who fashion themselves into Apostles of Christ...and even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. His ministers present themselves as ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:13-15).

The evil one does not spend much time on thieves, drunkards, liars and the like. They are his already. He concentrates on good people; especially those who are Christians.

Satan is in the "religion business." He has churches (Rev. 2:9). He has a theology (Rev. 2:24). He has spiritual children (John 8:44). He has a spiritual kingdom (Col. 1:13).

Satan has usurped and controls the kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5). Because of his power over the people of the world, he is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), and the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4).

Satan hates the Church of Christ and actively persecutes and seeks to destroy it (Rev. 12:13; II Tim. 3:12).

Satan's Destiny

The destiny of Satan is clearly predicted. "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and they shall be tormented day and night forever..." (Rev. 20:10).

Conclusion

Our defense against Satan is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17), and faith in the same and its author (I John 5:4). Revelation 20:1-3 pictures Satan bound by chain. A careful reading of Christ's temptation in Matthew 4 reveals that chain to be the Word of God.

God has provided us the armor and weapons for this perpetual battle: a girdle (belt) of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, the Bible (Eph. 6:10-17). With prayer, these make us invincible. But did you notice, no protection is given for our back? We must actively resist Satan and he will flee from us (James 4:7). In spite of Satan's great antiquity, experience, power and evil devices, we can be "more than conquerors" through Jesus who loved us and died for us (Rom. 8:37).

X.

WHERE DID SATAN GET HIS GREAT POWER?

Men wonder where and how Satan was able to get his vast power? Satan is a created being. Only God is eternal. All things were created by Christ, "in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers..." (Col. 1:16). All that God created was very good (Gen. 1:31). The evil being we now know as Satan (the Adversary) was originally created a perfect, sinless spirit being, an angel. Scriptures speaks of war in heaven and Satan and his angels being cast down (Rev. 12:7-9). The Book of Jude speaks of "angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation" being kept in everlasting bonds under darkness (Jude 6) First Peter 2:4 tells of angels that sinned being cast down to hell (II Pet. 2:4).

In his "cast down" and defeated state, God chose to use Satan for his purposes. God allows him to be the counter force of evil to His own good. He gives humanity the right to make their own choices regarding good and evil. He provides the good option: He allows Satan to offer them the evil. Satan's power is limited in that he can do only what God allows.

Even though he has been "cast down" from his former station and glory, Satan is still a very powerful spiritual being...much shrewder and more powerful than we are without God's help. But remember Satan's power is limited. When he assaulted Christ in the wilderness he was unable to corrupt him (Matt. 4:1-11). Christ used the Word of God

to repel his every temptation. We can do the same. God promises us that he will not allow his children (i.e., Christians) to be tempted above what they are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). While Satan is a spiritual being of great power, we Christians have God's Holy Spirit in our hearts. He strengthens us with power in our inward man (Eph. 3:16). John reminds us that we can overcome the world, "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4).

There was a brief time in human history when God allowed Satan to have power to dominate people's lives by evil demons. At that same time, God gave Christ and his chosen Apostles power to cast out those demons (Luke 10:17-18) to demonstrate that God's power is greater than any Satan might claim. Christ said, "I saw Satan fallen as lightning from heaven! Satan's three greatest weapons are his lies, our ignorance and our pride. Christ said, "There is no truth in him...for he is a liar and the father thereof" (John 8:44-45). While truth makes us free (John 8:32), people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Pride always goes before our fall (Prov. 16:18). It was pride that made Adam and Eve listen to Satan's lie when he promised if they ate the forbidden fruit they would be their own gods (Gen. 3:4-5). It is our pride that makes us doubt and reject God's word and his authority in our lives. It is our pride that keeps us from admitting our sins. It is pride that makes us think that we don't need God in our lives.

In those lives and places where God's word is not known, ignorance, error and superstition flourish. Satan has powerful control over the hearts and minds of such people and the most diabolical things are done by some of them. When the knowledge of Scripture prevails, ignorance is abolished, superstition vanishes and the behavior of people is at its best. True, some who know lots of Scripture, still choose to do evil, but not because the Scripture teaches them to do so. They do so in defiance of it. Their condemnation is the greatest of all.

One of the great predictions and promises of Scripture is that "the devil that deceived them" will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be tormented day and night for ever..." (Rev. 20:10).

Christians who look to Christ for forgiveness and protection, who daily feed upon his powerful word, who strive to live righteously and gladly confess any failure they are aware of, have nothing to fear from the Evil One.

XI.

ARE LUCIFER AND THE DEVIL THE SAME PERSON?

While most folks tend to assume this to be the case, a careful reading of Isaiah 14:4-20 shows us that the prophet is speaking of "the king of Babylon" (14:3). Of that king he says, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star (Lucifer) (KJV). The ancient kings of the pagan world commonly claimed that they were divine, or gods. The passage sounds like a remonstrance against the Devil but the text will not allow this interpretation. In Ezekiel 28:2, the prophet speaks a parable against "the prince of Tyre." As did Isaiah, he describes that prince in terms that the careless student might conclude speak of Satan. "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth; and I set thee, so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created...I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God and I have destroyed thee..." (28:14-15). As enticing as this sounds, the prophet makes it clear that he is speaking of the prince of Tyre who imagined himself a god, not Satan.

XII.

SATANISM

Primitive people of ancient times believed in evil spirits and evil gods. These evil beings were a constant threat to people and thus were feared and avoided. But then as now, there were always a few who claimed that they could exercise the wicked power of the evil god. They were known as witches, warlocks, priests or priestesses in league with the devil. Patrons looked to them if they felt they were under a curse and needed deliverance. Also they called on them to place curses on their enemies. This belief in "Dark Powers" is still pervasive in much of Africa, Asia and South America. In Africa it is called "Juju." Here in America it is known as Voodoo.

With the coming of Christianity and enlightened civilization, most people lost their fear of witches and warlocks. They were looked upon as either mentally disturbed or eccentric hermits who were strange but powerless. Practitioners of the "dark arts" of Satanism were forced to the fringes of society and their activities were done in secret.

With the decline of Christianity here in America we have witnessed the rise of ancient Satanism. Satanism describes religious practices dedicated to Satan, the prince of evil. Worshipers view their activities as a renunciation of Jehovah, Jesus, the Bible and the church. It is a revolt against God's power and authority and especially against His standards for human conduct.

As early as 1948 Herbert A. Sloane founded his Ophite Cultus Satanas in Ohio. In 1966 Anton Levay of California organized his Church of Satan. To guide his followers and to give permanence to his movement, Levay published his **Satanic Bible** and **Satanic Rites**. By 1990 some 50,000 Americans openly identified themselves as devotees of Satan. Several hundred small groups, scattered over the nation, claim to worship the Prince of Darkness. The Internet and large numbers of foreign students living in America have enabled this evil movement to spread its influence into other nations. While a few Satanists meet formally for their rites, far more do so privately or on occasions with a few peers.

The central symbol of Satanism is the downward pointing pentagram. Followers will paint this symbol on places where they have worshiped or where they have done mischief. Religious Satanists worship the devil as the personification of evil, and as their god. Others are atheists but participate as an act of rebellion, defiance and protest toward Jehovah. They view their activities as an insult directed toward God, Jesus, Christians and the church. For some, especially teens, collegiates and young ruffians, it is an act of youthful rebellion and experimentation with that which is forbidden. For them, it is a symbolic statement proclaiming their rebellion to established authority and social values. Their peculiar dress and pentagrams about the necks, their dabbling in Satanic ceremonies are intended to shock and impress their peers and gain some modicum of respected born of fear. For most, it is youthful folly, left behind in adulthood.

In the "heavy metal" sector of rock music, several bands have presented themselves as representatives of Satan. Among them were Venom, Slayers, Metallica, Anthrax, Megadeth and King Diamond. Satanism was promoted in their concerts. This seems to have been a natural progression. Since most rock music glorified rebellion and decadent moral and social values.

There are motorcycle gangs who identify themselves as Satanists. The same is true of some street gangs. There is an genera of literature and movies that dwell on Satan, demons, witches, etc. These are designed to attract mainly young curiosity seekers but can be the door leading them into Satan worship.

Satanism usually includes rites of black magic, anti-Jehovah and anti-Christian rantings. It frequently includes the sacrifice of animals. Satanism is always decadent and hedonistic, encouraging sexual indulgence. Participants sometime steal pets from their neighbors and occasionally a larger farm animal will be stolen and sacrificed. Other things sometime associated with Satan worship include use of illegal drugs, obsession with serpents, cruelty to animals, interest in vampirism, seances, attempting to contact the dead, placing of curses on people. In a few cases human beings have been sacrificed. Satanists have been found desecrating the graves of the decease and desecrating Bibles and vandalizing

church buildings. Some young people who adorn themselves in “Gothic” style clothing are advertising their interest in Satanism.

There are two mistakes people can make when contemplating Satan, his influence and power. Some scoff at and refuse to believe that such an evil power actually exists. They attribute the whole idea of Satan and demons to ignorance and superstition. The other mistake is to allow oneself to become obsessed with Satan and his minions. This can lead either to mental illness, morbid fear or to admiring belief in Satan that leads them to embrace his evil system. In either case they suffer harm.

Many, who are well-educated, scoff and pronounce the idea of a devil to be naught but a myth; superstition based on ignorance. It is to Satan’s advantage when we deny that he exists. In the case of those who refuse to believe, Satan is left free to pursue his fiendish work without interference. Another category of people have a mythical view of Satan as a man in red tights, with horns and a long tail holding a trident. In some cases, rather than seeing him as the sum of all Evil and thus to be feared, their mythical Satan is a comic figure at which we make jokes and laugh.

Satan is a spiritual being with a host of spiritual subjects to serve him (Eph. 6:12; Matt. 25:41). He is a tempter with a thousand disguises. He can be the trendy college professor, persuading his students there is no God. He can be the attractive woman who entices a foolish man to her arms or the handsome man who uses his skills to seduce the innocent young women. He can be the crafty politician or the author of anti-Christian material, etc. etc. Whatever his guise, Peter likens him to a “roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8).

As his spokespersons seek to counter the teaching and influence of Christ and the Bible they take special delight in confusing people, undermining their moral standards and challenging Scripture. Thus they say that:

- * Satan represents indulgence rather than abstinence;
- * Vengeance rather than turning the other cheek to your enemy;
- * Man is nothing more than an animal, no better or worse;
- * Rather than sin, the carnal desires of the flesh are to be enjoyed and satisfied.

Anton Levay of the Church of Satan wrote, “Satanism is a blatantly, selfish, brutal religion. It is based on the belief that man is inherently a selfish, violent creature...that the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win.”

Satan is bold and aggressive. He did his best to snare our Lord (Matt. 4:1-11). He is like a hungry lion stalking his victim. We must resist him by being steadfast in our faith (I Pet. 5:8-9). Paul depicts the Christian as a well-armed soldier engaged in combat with Satan and his allies (Eph. 6:11-18). With his shield of faith and his sword of the Spirit (the word of God), he can meet and defeat Satan. Truth is a powerful weapon. God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus said “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). God’s truth in your mind and heart will bind Satan so he cannot reach you (Rev. 20:1-3). James urges us to “resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

XIII.

SATAN'S GRAND LIE

Satan gained a notable victory that day in Eden when he convinced our first parents (Adam and Eve) to break God's law (Gen. 3:1-6). The results were immediate and devastating. Guilt, condemnation and alienation settled upon their souls (Gen. 3:7-10). Driven from God's presence, they suffered spiritual death (Gen. 3:23-24). The curse of disease, decay and physical death followed in the wake (Gen. 3:17-19).

Adam and Eve fell because they believed a sixfold lie that Satan foisted upon them.

He denied the Reality of the Curse of Death. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"

(Gen. 2:17). Satan boldly countered saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). There are three kinds of death: physical, spiritual and eternal. All of which the Tempter denies.

Physical Death stalks every man. Satan constantly holds before gullible, doubting men visions of a fountain of youth, spiritism, reincarnation, the hope that science will defeat death. Believing the lie and running from the reality of death, many moderns make no provision for life's end (Is. 38:1).

Spiritual Death affects all accountable humans outside of Christ (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 3:23). Atheistic humanists deny the guilt of sin and the existence of God. They repudiate the law which condemns them (Rom. 4:15). The gurus of some of the Eastern mystic cults deny the reality of sin.

The Bible warns of a **second death, and eternal death** in a lake of fire for the wicked (Rev. 20:14-15). This is denied by such doctrines as purgatory, which offers escape from the fiery punishment. The annihilation of the wicked which denies the eternal consciousness of the second death (Rev. 14:10-11a). The "once saved always saved" doctrine denies future punishment for wicked men who were saved in the past. All of these are modern day versions of Satan's denial of the curse of death.

The Devil Denied the Truthfulness of God (Gen. 3:1-4). To deny God's warning was to question the truthfulness of his word. Today, the world around, men question the authority and truthfulness of his word, the Bible. Unbelieving Bible scholars boldly challenge the integrity of the Scriptures. Every religious teaching differing from God's book challenges God's personal testimony.

To Eve, Satan Denied the Loving Kindness of God (Gen. 3:4-5). He implied that God was selfish and unkind in forbidding her access to the tree of knowledge, its fruit and its gift of knowledge. With David we "give thanks unto Jehovah: for he is good; for his loving kindness endureth forever" (Ps. 136:1). Today it is the **hedonist** who argues that God is too strict in denying us the indulgence of every fleshly desire. The **feminists** say that God is unfair to women in denying them roles of spiritual authority over men (I Tim. 2:12). The **universalist** argues that no good God would deny heaven to a man who failed to keep his law. Again we are hearing Satan's lie.

The Evil One Promised Eve Special Wisdom (Gen. 3:5-6). The ancient gnostic heresy of special, hidden wisdom is yet with us. The Apostle John wrote that he had no "new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning..." (II John 5). He then warns that "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and Son" (II John 9). This is the fundamental sin of the Occult, Eastern mystical cults and even Pentecostalism and subjective Protestantism. All of these claims direct enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. Mankind finds it difficult to be content with the faith once delivered (Jude 3). Like Eve, many long to know the secret things of God (Deut. 29:29).

Divinity Was Promised if They Would Eat the Fruit (Gen 3:5, see the footnote). Surely, this has been, and continues to be, sinful man's greatest ambition; to be his own god. The king of Babylon said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will make myself like the Most High (Is. 14:13-14). Most ancient kings such as Alexander the Great and the Caesars claimed divinity. Modern Humanism reflects this same vain desire. Jean Paul Sarte wrote: "To be a man means to reach toward being God." Karl Leibkecht said: "We're storming the gates of heaven." "Man makes himself," wrote Gordon Childe. August Comte actually proposed "a Religion of Humanity complete with his own suggestion of sacraments, saints, and rituals, organized with ... churches through Europe with himself as the supreme leader" (Os Guinness, **The Dust of Death**, p. 11).

Satan Promises Men Autonomous Power. If they could be gods, then they would be completely self-governing with no obligation to any higher power. This was the sin of the men of Babel (Gen. 11:17). God demands that every knee will bow and every tongue confess Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). This destroys all vain hopes of godhood in human hearts. Rather than be self-governing, men must do the will of the Father if they would live in eternity (Matt. 7:21). Servanthood is the most difficult concept in life and practice. Freedom now is the cry of the street rebels, the anarchists, the gays and women libbers.

Satan is yet the father of lies (John 8:44). The lie is still of the same essence. His lie still alienates man from God and brings him down to the dust of death. Jesus is the only anecdote to Satan's lie. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Reject the lie, accept the Savior **now**.

SATAN'S WAR AGAINST THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

On that distant day when God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26), so that he might live forever and glorify His name, Satan resolved to defeat His purpose. He quickly corrupted Adam and Eve, robbing them of their immortality. God then promised that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head..." (Gen.3:15). Satan, undeterred, resolved to destroy the promised seed and thwart God's plan.

I. The case of righteous Able. Satan incited his brother Cain to kill his godly brother (Gen. 4:1-8). God intervened and exiled Cain and his family. Seth was then given to bear the promise (Gen. 4:25).

II. In Noah's day, Satan nearly succeeded. He corrupted the entire race, save for Noah and his family (Gen. 6:5-6, 8). The wicked population was destroyed with water, but God spared Noah and his family. The promise was vouched safe to Shem.

III. The case of Jacob and Esau. The promise was conferred on Jacob, the younger of the twins. But Esau planned to kill Him (Gen.27:41). God protected Jacob and brought him safely home.

IV. Years passed and the Hebrews were reduced to servitude in Egypt. The Pharaoh ordered the destruction of all the Hebrew boys at birth (Ex. 1:16). But God raised up Moses to deliver them. He arranged for him to be sheltered and nourished in Pharaoh's own house. There he was trained for his future mission. God rained destruction on the Egyptians and delivered Israel. The seed was saved.

V. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, defeated, destroyed and deported the Hebrew nation that bore the seed. In captivity, God preserved, protected and purified his people. Then he raised up the Persians to free them and restore them to their homeland.

VI. Haman the Agagite, counselor to the King of Persia, wanted to exterminate the entire Jewish nation (Esth. 9:24). His well-laid plan seemed unstoppable. But God raised up Esther to save them. Haman and his sons were hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai the Jew (Esth. 9:13).

VII. Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), king of Syria, attacked the Hebrews and sought to destroy their religion and bring them under his idolatrous system. He burned their Scripture, defiled their temple, and destroyed their synagogues. He forbade the practice of their sacred rites. But God raised up the Maccabean brothers to defeat his devilish plan.

VIII. Finally, Mary gave birth to the promised seed. Her son, Jesus, would save the people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Satan moved the evil king, Herod the Great, to attempt to destroy the babe (Matt. 2:13-16). When his plan was spoiled he slaughtered all the babes of Bethlehem. But the seed was protected in Egypt until Herod's death. In Nazareth, Jesus grew to manhood. This conflict is vividly depicted in Revelation 12:1-5 where the great dragon waited to devour her child.

IX. The murder of Jesus was the darkest chapter in human history. Satan succeeded in making the chosen people reject their savior and demand his death (John 19:7). They wanted, not just his death, but the most painful, degrading and humiliating death known to men. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, the Evil One thought his greatest victory had been won. But Jesus had foretold, that if he were lifted up, (like a banner on a pole), he would draw all men unto him (John 12:32). Although they took every precaution to assure that he would not escape his tomb, on the third day it was found empty. He was gone! The Roman guards kept his disciples from taking his body. The last thing his enemies wanted was for his body to go missing. God had raised him just as he had promised (Matt. 16:21). Redemption was accomplished. Satan was fallen like a star from the heavens (Luke 10:18).

X. Today this great war continues with the Satan raging against Christ's church, his people. Satan's seed are all those who knowingly and willingly set themselves at enmity with Christ and his church (John 8:44). God's seed abideth in Christ's faithful followers. Those who do not his righteousness are the children of the devil (I John 3:9-10).

No matter how fierce the struggle, we are not discouraged because "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under (our) feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20) and we will be "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

XV.

THE DOCTRINE OF DEMONS

A world in rebellion against God finds itself obsessed with the occult, devil worship, witchcraft and demon possession. Books and movies are profiteering off of this morbid spiritual degeneracy. The current interest in demons prompts us to search the Scriptures to learn what God reveals on this mysterious subject. The speculations of the curious and the impostures of the wicked who scheme and play on the credulity of the ignorant and fearful have helped to create and maintain the wild systems of demonology that have prevailed through the years (**Imperial Bible Dictionary**, Vol. II, p. 144).

What Is A Demon?

The most common New Testament term is *daimonion*, translated **demon**, ASV (**devils**, KJV). Originally *daimonion* denoted supernatural powers, generally in a good sense. The term and its cognates grew to describe both good and bad powers. By New Testament times it referred exclusively to evil beings. Some times they are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, foul spirits, angels of the devil, world rulers of this darkness, and hosts of wicked spirits in heavenly places. Also commonly used in the epistles are the terms, **principalities** and **powers**. **Principalities** is from *archai* and speaks of "angelic and demonic power" (**Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, p. 112). **Powers** is the Greek *exousia* and suggests "rulers and functionaries of the spirit world" (*ibid.* p. 278). Satan is the prince of the powers of the air (Eph. 2:2).

To the Jews, Beelzebub was the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24) (Rudell White, **Demons, Firm Foundation**, Mar. 12, 1974, p.7).

Under *daimonion*, Thayer gives the following as his second definition, "A spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men" **Thayer's Lexicon**, p.123).

Based on the writings of the ancient Greeks, some have concluded that demons are the spirits of deceased, wicked men. Hesiod wrote, "The spirits of mortals become demons when separated from their earthly bodies." Plutarch states, "the demons of the Greeks were the ghosts and genii of departed men; and that they go up and down the earth as observers, and even rewarders, of men; and although not actors themselves, they encourage others to act in harmony with their lives and characters."

Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, says, "Demons are the spirits of wicked men, who enter into living men and destroy them, unless they are so happy as to meet with speedy relief." Philo, the leading Jewish philosopher of the same period, writes, "The souls of dead men are called demons." Justin Martyr, reflects the thinking of most early church fathers when he says, "Those who are seized and tormented by the souls of the dead, whom all call demons and madmen."

Lardner sums up the above quite well with these words, "The notion of demons, or the souls of dead men, having power over living men, was universally prevalent among the heathen of these times and believed by many Christians."

After setting forth the above definitions of the word demon, Alexander Campbell cited this rule of interpretation, "Every word not specially explained or defined in a particular sense, by any standard writer of any particular age and country, is to be taken and applied in the current or commonly-received signification of that country and age in which the writer lived and wrote." (Alexander Campbell, **Popular Lectures and Addresses**, p. 386)..

The Character of Demons

In the New Testament, "Demons are...spoken of as personal, conscious, powerful, responsible agents, who perceive and understand, who hate and rage, who speak, act and tremble. Our Lord always deals with them as such" (**Imperial Bible Dictionary** Vol. II, p. 148). They are always pictured as foul, evil spirits that work harm to their victims. Demons are under Satan's controlling power. In Mark 3:22-23, the Jews charged, "He hath Beelzebub and by the prince of the demons casteth out the demons. And he...(Jesus).. said unto them...How can Satan cast out Satan?" Jesus then believed Satan to control the evil spirits. It would be good here to remind ourselves that the King James Version uses the term "devil" where the American Standard uses demon. But demons are not to be confused with Satan, the Devil.

Demon Possession

Demons did actually possess the minds and bodies of human beings in the days of Christ and the Apostles. There are at least twenty-six instances in the New Testament that speak of demon possession. A total of 80 places speak of demons in some way. In all of these we have matter of fact statements that can only be understood as accepting the reality of the affliction. A distinction is made between those who suffer some physical or mental illness or condition and those who have similar symptoms caused by demon possession. "And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons" (Mark 1:32-34). Demon possession was more than epilepsy or insanity for these are listed as maladies cured in addition to demon possession (Matt. 4:24). Certain women had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8:2). Skeptics have argued that there were no real demons, rather it was the attributing to some unknown spirit power that which was unexplainable to ancient man, or that the Lord knew better but accommodated himself to the level of knowledge of that day. How can these doubters account for the response of the herd of swine at Gadara when the demons were cast out of Legion and allowed to enter them? (Mark 5:10-14).

Possession Described

"Possession is that unnatural operation, in which one or more impure spirits, through any sort of agency, intrude into a human body, make themselves masters of the instruments of sensation, of movement, and of speech; attach the power of the soul to them, and in shorter or longer paroxysms make themselves manifest in strange sounds, gestures, and movements, for the most part of a mocking, licentious, and violent kind" (Eschenmeyer as quoted in Franz Delitzsch, **A System of Biblical Psychology**).

"The soul finds itself no longer in possession of its body, a strange something has forced itself between it and its body, and exerts a disturbing and hindering influence upon the bodily organs of the psychical life" (Ebard, from Delitzsch, **Ibid**).

"We find in the demoniac the sense of a bondage in which he does not acquiesce, of his true life absolutely shattered, of an alien power which has mastered him wholly, and now is cruelly lording over him, and ever drawing further away from Him in whom only any created intelligence can find rest and peace. His state is in the most literal sense of the word; a 'possession:' another is ruling in the high places of his soul, and has cast down the rightful lord from his seat; and he knows this; and out of his consciousness of it there goes forth from him a cry for redemption..." (R. C. Trench, **The Miracles of Our Lord**, p. 170-171).

"The distinguishing feature of possession is the complete or incomplete loss of the sufferer's reason or power of will; his actions, his words, and almost his thoughts are mastered by the evil spirit till his personality seems to be destroyed, or if not destroyed, so overborne as to produce the consciousness of a twofold will within him, like that sometimes felt in a dream" (**M'Clintock and Strong Cyclopaedia of the Bible**, Vol. II, p. 642). "This influence is clearly distinguished from the ordinary power of corruption and temptation wielded by Satan through the permission of God: Its relation to it indeed, appears to be exactly that of a miracle to God's ordinary Providence..." (**Ibid**).

Results of Demon Possession

Victims of demon possession suffered a variety of afflictions. Each case was different. We note the following examples. The man of Gadara raved and roared frightfully, was wild, fierce and dangerous to himself and others. He had supernatural strength, was insane, went naked and frequented the tombs and deserted places (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-15). One man, possessed of a demon was blind and dumb (Matt. 12:22). In another case a demon made a child dumb and dashed him down in epileptic-like seizures. He foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth and pined away (Mark 9:17-18). A young girl had a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). A man with a demon attacked and mastered two men (Acts 19:

13-16). From the frequency of its mention and the fact that "many demons were brought" on many different occasions, we would conclude that it was a fairly common experience in Palestine in the first century (Compare Matt. 4:23-24; 8:16 "Many possessed with demons," Luke 7:21; Mark 16:17-20). There is no indication that the experience of seeing one possessed with demons was a rare thing.

Demons Were Cast Out

Christ repeatedly cast out demons. Never was there a hint of failure in his exorcisms. It was proof that "the kingdom of God" had come upon the Jews (Luke 11:20). It, along with other miracles of healing, was sent as proof to John the Baptist that Jesus was indeed Messiah (Luke 7:18-22). Paul cited miracles, including exorcisms, as proof of Jesus messiahship (Acts 10:38). The Apostles themselves cast out demons and worked miracles and thus their word was confirmed to their hearers (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). James Henderson notes, "The demoniacs, recovered by his word to a sound body and a right mind, were more palpable convincing trophies of his power, and more palpable representatives of his work, than were his own disciples..." (**Imperial Bible Dictionary** p. 150).

Jesus conferred this power upon the Apostles and the seventy when he sent them out to preach (Luke 9:17-20). Some, not of the immediate Apostolic band, also cast out devils in Jesus' name (Luke 9:49). Christ did not forbid him. On the other hand, when certain Jewish exorcists attempted to use Christ's name to cast demons out, they failed (Acts 19: 13-16). They were routed by the demon possessed victim.

When Christ and the Apostles cast out demons, it was done instantly (Matt. 17:18), "and the demon went out of him: and the boy was cured from that hour." "And his daughter was healed from that hour" of the demon (Matt. 15:22-28). Paul charged the evil spirit "in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18).

Inspired men cast out demons publicly before many witnesses, both friends and enemies. Never did they charge a fee or take a collection either before or after that or any other miracle they performed. How unlike "miracle workers" and exorcists today.

It is also important to remember that those men of God who could cast out demons were able also to work other notable miracles. Jesus promised them, "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues (languages, Acts 2:6,8); they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark. 16:17-18). If a man cannot do all of these, neither can he cast out demons.

Miscellaneous Observations

Several interesting facts about demons can be gleaned from the scriptures. Jesus said in a parable, "the unclean spirit when he is gone out of man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest and finding none, he saith, I will turn back unto my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26) From this we can see:

1. Demons can exist outside of a "host" body;
2. They have intelligence and will of their own;
3. They desire to inhabit a human body;
4. A man who has been freed is liable to be repossessed if he does not fill the void left in his life with wholesome spiritual things;
5. More than one demon could possess a person. Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out of her (Luke 8:2).

From the case of the demoniac of Gadara, we learn:

1. That demons maintained a separate personality while inhabiting a victim.
2. The demons had a supernatural knowledge. They recognized Christ as Messiah.
3. They recognized Christ's power over them. "And the demons besought his saying, If thou cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine"(Matt. 8:31).
4. They preferred even the body of a pig to no host body for a habitation.

Evil spirits often recognized Christ and his power over them and publicly made this known through their victim. "And Jesus rebuked him (the demon) saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him, and the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him" (Mark 1:23-26, also Luke 4:41). Jesus addressed the demons as intelligent

beings over which he had power.

Biblical and Post-Biblical Exorcisms

By a simple command, Christ cast out demons and they fled immediately. The Apostles cast them out in the name of Christ (Acts 16:18; Luke 10:17). No magical formulae or repeated efforts were needed. What a strange contrast that record is with the exorcisms of the Jews and Catholicism.

An ancient Jewish exorcism chant went: "Burst, curst, dashed, banned be Bar-Tit; Bar-Tema, Chashmogoz, Merigoz and Isteaham" (Edersheim, **Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, Vol. 2, p. 77).

The following is a Roman Catholic ritual for exorcism from ancient times. "The priest, having arrayed himself in the official robes, first sprinkles the demoniac with holy water and then recites the prayer of the litany of all saints, the paternoster, and Psalm 53 (54 in our Bible); after this the two orations, in which he makes the sign of the cross over the demoniac and commands the evil spirit to depart by the power of the mysteries of the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost and Christ's return to judge the world. After this follows the reading of John 1; Mark 16:15-18 & Luke 10:17-19. Then the priest lays both hands on the head of the demoniac and says *Ecce crucem Domini. Fugite, partes adversa: vicit leo de tribu Juda*. After this comes the Oratio with the special formula of exorcism, Exorcizo te, immunde spiritus while the priest crosses the brow and breast of the demoniac three times in the name of the Trinity. If the spirit does not then depart, the service is begun anew" (Whitehouse, **Hastings Dictionary of the Bible**, Vol. 1, p. 812).

"Towards the end of the third century, an order of exorcists was established in the Christian church, which contributed materially to promote the growth of superstition, and led to much fraud and imposture. The practice also of a form of exorcism was introduced into the administration of baptism, on the ground, that as every one previous to baptism was in bondage to the devil, so he must in baptism be formally released from the evil spirit and be made to receive the good. The priest therefore was instructed to breathe thrice upon the face of the subject of baptism, and to say, Depart from him, foul spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Then followed another breathing upon the face, with the words, Receive the Holy Spirit through this same breathing and the blessing of God." This order still stood in the Latin ritual at the close of the 19th century (**Imperial Bible Dictionary**, Vol. II, p. 265).

The Duration Of Demonic Power On Earth

Although evil spirits and demons are mentioned in the Old Testament, we have no evidence of demon possession there like we have in the New Testament. We have nothing in our world today that resembles the demon possession described in the Bible. It seems that at that period of time when Christ and the Holy Spirit worked mightily upon the earth, God allowed Satan to exercise this added dimension of power. The repeated citing of instances by the inspired writers showing Christ's power over demons and the Apostle's like-power, indicate that this phenomena gave them opportunity to demonstrate their power over these devilish beings and so establish that God was working in and through them. Jesus said this in Luke 11:20.

"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). He came to bind the strong man and spoil his possessions (Matt. 12:29). That strong man was Satan. By Jesus' sacrificial death, the world was judged and the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31). By the cross he despoiled principalities and the powers (both terms refer to angelic and demonic powers of the spirit world) (**Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, p. 112). He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. The RSV says he disarmed these demonic powers. Paul describes the victorious Christ in triumphal parade with the defeated and captured enemies displayed behind him (Eph. 4:8). This would surely include the agents of Satan of the spirit world.

As Christ reigns in heaven, angels, authorities and powers have been made subject to him (I Peter 3:22). In his victory on Calvary and his triumph over the tomb, he brought to nought the devil (Heb. 2:14) who is the prince of demons. All of these establish the point that Christ had a great victory over Satan and his evil workers in His death and resurrection. From that point onward, demon possession diminished and soon after the death of the Apostles we have no bonafide record of real demon possession like the New Testament records. "Nor was it less natural that it should have died away gradually before the great indirect, and still greater direct influence of Christ's kingdom. Accordingly we find early fathers alluding to its existence as a common thing...dwelling upon the power of Christian exorcism to cast it out...by degrees the mention is less and less frequent, till the very idea is lost or perverted" (**M'Clintock & Strong**, Vol. II, p. 642). When the Seventy evangelists returned from the successful mission, they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject

unto us in thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:17). This seems to be predictive of the results of the wonderful triumph of the cross.

Do Demons Possess Men Today?

If we conclude people are demon possessed today, then we would be forced to conclude that supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit were needed to expel them. If that miraculous gift is still with us, would not all the others be also? (Compare Mark 16:17-18).

If sinners are demon possessed today, we would need supernatural power to cast out the demon so they could believe and be saved. But the gospel is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, we need no such miraculous power.

Paul says God will not let us be tempted above that which we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). Demon possession was beyond man's power to control. We Christians are to choose whether to obey Christ or Satan (Rom. 6:16-17). But the victims of demons were not free to choose.

When Christ came down to establish the kingdom of God, Satan was allowed the power to extend his vile influence to include the possession of human bodies and minds by his evil spirits. This then, gave Christ and his helpers opportunity to publicly show the power of God over Satan by casting out demons. Jesus said this proved that the kingdom of God had come (Matt. 12:28). When the kingdom had been fully established, when the need for supernatural gifts had been fulfilled, God's miraculous gifts were withdrawn and Satan's power to possess by demons likewise ceased. (Compare I Cor. 13:8-11).

Evil spirits still exist today, but are not able to possess minds and bodies. They along with their master suffered an overwhelming defeat in Jerusalem that weekend in 33 A.D. when our Lord was crucified and resurrected from the dead. He crushed the Serpent's head. He led captivity captive (Eph.4:8). He despoiled principalities and powers and openly made a spectacle of them triumphing over them (Col. 2:15). Today, the influence of Satan and his demons is exerted only through doctrines, seductions and temptations (I Tim. 4:1). We must arm ourselves and resist him with the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). If we resist him he will flee from us (James 4:7).

Apparent Possession Explained

One last point should be noted. What is the explanation of the apparent demon possessions of which we hear? Many strange cases are reported by travelers to benighted lands of paganism. Even some unexplained cases are seen here in the states. Having established the fact that demons are not allowed by God to afflict men today, there must be some natural explanation for the apparent cases. Perhaps it is schizophrenia, the split personality or perhaps the condition known as multiple personalities. Obsession with the occult and evil spirits coupled with ignorance of Biblical truth on the subject could lead to an imagined possession, the mind supplying all the symptoms even as in bodily illnesses. Insanity, severe nervous conditions and epilepsy might be mistaken for demon possession since those possessed in Bible times sometimes showed these symptoms. Then there are always the charlatans who simulate such things as this for the sake of gain. They often use the power of suggestion over weak minds to make them think that their condition is demoniacal.

Conclusion

Thank God that Jesus despoiled principalities and powers when he arose from the dead and ascended on high. Thank God for the truth that makes men free (John 8:32). Thank God that we may not be subjected to the horrors of demon possession today. JHW

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XVI.

DEMONS: SUBJECTS AND SERVANTS OF SATAN

We live in a world charged with evil influences and evil people. Behind the evil that is done is "The Evil One" whom we call Satan (adversary). He is the devil (the accuser of God's people). He is the god of this world, a rebellious spirit who has control of the majority of the people of the world (I John 5:19). He is "the power of darkness, as opposed to the God of light (Col. 1:13). He is called "Beelzebub" the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24). He is "the Prince of this World" (John 12:31). He is "the old Serpent, the deceiver of the whole world" who wrought great harm in Eden who still seeks to destroy all that is good (Rev. 12:9). He is like "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). He is "the Prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1). He is "the spirit of error" ever working in opposition to the spirit of truth (I John 4:6). He is "the Evil One" from whom we need to be kept safe (Matt. 6:13). He is "the god of This World" who blinds the minds of the unbelieving (II Cor. 4:4).

Every one who ventures out his door or turns on his television knows there are wicked people who are willing servants of Satan. Of what does our daily news consist? Cruelty, violence, vileness, sexual abuse of children, abuse of the elderly, decadence, pornography, drug pushers, criminal conduct great and small, pimps, tyrants, those who enjoy harming others, those who enslave others, those who murder others, aggressive wars and destruction, all are the work of those who are under Satan's dominion.

Also under Satan's dominion are wicked angels who rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. "For God spared not angels when they sinned; but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness..." (II Pet. 2:4). These "angels kept not their proper habitation..." (Jude 6). Satan and "his angels" made war against Michael the archangel and his angels but were defeated and cast down (Rev. 12:7-9). The eternal fire of hell "is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

Also in Satan's service are "hosts of wicked spirits" (Eph. 6:12). Among the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews it was commonly believed that demons were the departed spirits of the deceased of earth. In their thinking, a demon could be good or evil. In contrast, in the New Testament of Christ, demons are always described as "wicked or evil spirits" (Matt. 12:45), whose possession of human victims was always painful and destructive.

In Scripture, demons are variously described: We read of “Unclean spirits” (Matt. 12:43); “Lying spirits” (II Chron. 18:21-22); “Deceitful spirits” (I Tim. 4:1); “Spirits of error” (I John 4:6); “Wicked spirits” (Eph. 6:12); “Seducing spirits” (II Chron. 28:20). It is obviously these labels describe the evil things the demons did.

The following symptoms are attributed to those possessed by demons: Epileptic-like seizures (Mark 1:26); Loss of speech and hearing (deaf-mute) (Mark 9:17, 25); Insanity (Mark 1:24); Physical self-abuse (Mark 5:5); Self-destructive behavior (Matt 17:15); Shameless acts, such as public nakedness (Luke 8:27); Supernatural strength (Mark 5:3-4); Severe curvature of the spine (Luke 13:11-12); Blindness (Matt. 12:22); A spirit of divination or clairvoyance (Acts 16:16-18); Fierceness (Mark 5:4-5).

The nature of demons is an unsolved mystery. As mentioned earlier, Greeks, Romans and Jews, conceived of demons as the departed spirits deceased persons. Some conclude that demons are synonymous with the wicked angels allied with Satan. Still others take demons to be a different order of Satan’s minions, who were used to torment chosen victims. This last seems most reasonable to the author of this paper. Paul mentions principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness (Eph. 6:11-12).

From the New Testament we learn the following concerning demons:

1. They are wicked spiritual entities who could invade and take control of the mind and will of an innocent human being.
2. That such possession was always detrimental to the victim (Luke 9:38-42).
3. That demons are depicted in Scripture as “evil spirits” (Acts 19:15).
4. Demons had minds and knowledge independent from their victim.
5. They spoke, using the vocal apparatus of their victim (Mark 3:11).
6. They resisted being forced to abandon their victim (Mark 5:7-9).
7. When being expelled they often left their victim in a violent kind of convulsion (Mark 1:26).
8. They recognized the deity of Jesus and his power over them (Mark 5:7; Luke 4:33-35).
9. If they were to be ejected from their unwilling host, even an animal’s mind and body was to be preferred to no living host (Mark 5:10-13).
10. Demons searched for victims whom they might capture and bring under their power (Matt. 12:43-46.)
11. No mention is made of the victims of demon possession being evil prior to their possession. Demons took control of small children as well as adults (Mark 7:25; 9:17-22). Little children could have done no wrong.
12. Demons dreaded the appearance of Christ (Mark 1:23-26).
13. They are capable of believing in God and fearing him (James 2:19).
14. Demons forcibly occupied their victims and Christ and his Apostles forcibly evicted them!
15. Demons were more powerful than their victims, but Christ and his Spirit-filled Apostles were always their superior (Luke 10:17-20).
21. More than one demon could occupy and afflict an individual victim (Mary Magdelene, Mark 16:9, and Legion Mark 5:9).
22. Demons did not discriminate. Scripture records cases of men, women and children being possessed!
23. Once delivered from an evil spirit, a person could be overtaken again if they failed to allow God to fill the void in their lives (Matt. 12:43-45).
24. Paul tells us that when the “Gentiles (pagans) sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons...” (I Cor. 10:20). Moses reported that when Hebrews turned to idolatry, “they sacrificed unto demons, which were no God...” (Deut. 32:17).
25. Those possessed by demons were said to be “oppressed by the devil (Acts. 10:38).

As wicked *spirits*, they are not visible to human eyes (Luke 24:39), just as angels are not normally visible. Their presence is known only by the sacred declaration regarding them and the symptoms evident in those whom they possessed. Demon possession was usually revealed by symptoms of some dreadful mental or physical disorder. However, Scripture makes a clear distinction between ordinary illness and possession. Thus Jesus said, “Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures...” (Luke 13:32). “They brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons...And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons” (Mark.1:32-34).

History reveals that during the days of Christ’s ministry and that of his Apostles, demon possession flourished more than

at any other time in human history. Why was this the case? Keep in mind that Satan and his minions can affect mankind only when God allows them to do so (See Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). When Messiah came, one of his purposes was to “destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). Jesus said he came to “To set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 3:18). Jesus bound the strong man (Satan) and thus was able to cast out his wicked servants, his demons (Matt. 12:28-29). Casting out demons was beyond the power of any person in those days save for Christ and those serving under him. When Jesus publicly, successfully and with apparent ease cast out the demons, in all cases brought before him, it was proof that “the kingdom of God (was) come upon them” (Matt. 12:28). He had supernatural power that none other had, thus he must be their long-awaited Messiah. Even the wicked spirits confessed Christ’s divinity (Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:23-24). As Paul says, in His triumph, Christ “led captivity” (Eph. 4:8). Satan could not defeat the Savior, he could not stop him from fulfilling his mission. When the Seventy disciples returned from their mission they reported, “Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.” The Lord’s response was, “I have beheld Satan fallen as lightening from heaven” (Luke 10:17-18). Satan’s defeat was clear and evident!

The enemies of Christ, unable to explain his remarkable powers and helpless to resist them, sought to discredit him. They accused him of having a demon (Matt. 11:18; John 8:48), i.e., that he was in league with the devil! They called him Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Mark 3:23).

The exorcisms performed by Christ and his Apostles were remarkable for their simplicity. There was no incantation or ritual; no use of strange and foreign words, no repetitions. Jesus rebuked the demon, saying, “Hold thy peace, and come out of him...” (Mark 1:25). On another occasion Jesus “rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him” (Mark 9:25). Those empowered by Christ cast out the demons thusly, “I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (Acts 16:18). So powerful and effective was this simple approach that they did not have to make repeated efforts to succeed in expelling the evil spirit.

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT AND DEMONS

In our day there are three different reactions to the subject of demons:

1. Unbelievers and religious skeptics do not believe that demons ever actually possessed the minds of human beings. When they read of this in Scripture, they reason it is an attempt to explain that which was beyond the level of knowledge of those ancient days. Strange infirmities and bizarre conduct they attributed to demonic forces of evil.
2. Roman Catholics, Charismatics, uneducated believers and those who are superstitious think that demons are still possessing folks today. They attempt to exorcize them.
3. Knowledgeable Christians believe that in the first century, demon possession was a real evil to be feared. Christ and his chosen helpers could and did cast out the wicked demons. However, as the Apostles finished their work and passed from this life, true demon possession ceased and is not ours to fear today. If Satan still has this malevolent power, we Christians would be defenseless before it without the supernatural power to cast them out. This is not the case.

Most modern intellectuals and all other unbelievers deny the reality of possession. To them it was a pagan superstition born of ignorance and borrowed by the Jews. Be reminded that the Scripture presents possession as a reality, a fact. Jesus dealt with the demon possession as a reality and successfully cast the demons out of their victims. The Apostles and other empowered Christian leaders accepted the reality of possession and were able to cast the evil spirit out of its victim. This means that regarding this subject we are left with two viable choices. On one hand we have Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, the biblical writers all speaking of possession as a reality. On the other we have worldly wise men, who have no reasonable explanation of these accounts of victims of possession and their being liberated by the Lord and his helpers. They scoff and ridicule, but they cannot prove their contention.

Religious skeptics claim to believe certain portions of the Scripture which agree with their presuppositions. Other portions, such as demon possession, they reject. In reality they are also unbelievers, pretending to be Christians. They feel they know more than and are superior to the sacred record of the Bible. They forget that the words Jesus spoke will judge them on the last day (John 12:48).

There are followers of Christ who believe without discrimination. They have not taken time to properly understand God’s

Word. Hence their faith is based on inadequate knowledge and understanding. They base their conclusions on superstitions rather than facts. Their efforts to cast out demons is often comical and causes sinners to scoff.

If we believe the New Testament to truly be the testament of Christ, we must believe in the reality of demons and possession. To reject this teaching is to accuse the inspired writers of ignorance or falsehood. It is to say that the Holy Spirit who inspired them was fallible. It brings into question the omniscience of Jesus, and the Apostles who believed in demons and who did in fact cast them out of numerous victims.

What is seen today and thought by some to be demonic possession is better described as *obsession with demons and the occult*. The person becomes obsessed with the subject. He persistently dwells on it and begins to imagine that some Satanic spirit is taking control of his life. He develops deep feelings of dread, fear and anxiety concerning possession or harm by an evil spirit. Yet he still he dwells on it until psychologically, the imaginary demon seem to be real to him. He might display strange symptoms that imitate that which he has been told was true of possession. Some have suffered psychological harm from their obsession with books and movies with demonic themes and those charlatans who claim they can contact the spirit world.

Zechariah predicted that when Messiah would come, he “would cause the...unclean spirit to pass out of the land” (Zech. 13:2). To accomplish this, God gave Christ all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:20). He sent forth his Apostles empowered to “cast out demons” (Mark 16:17). They then conferred the supernatural gifts on those faithful disciples chosen to assist them (Acts 6:3-6 & 8:7). Their use of this and other “spiritual gifts” confirmed the fact that Christ was indeed with them and their message should be heeded (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4).

Today we need not live in fear of evil spirits invading and taking control of our minds. When Christ died on the cross, he “despoiled the principalities and the powers, (making) a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15). By Christ’s powerful teaching, Satan is bound and cannot harm those who refuse to obey him (Rev.20:1-2). Having firmly planted the kingdom of heaven here on earth and having given and confirmed his testimony by spectacular signs and wonders, the age of miracles ended. Along with it, Satan’s ability to take control of a person’s mind and body by demons also ceased. Today Satan can only tempt and entice you to sin, you have the power to refuse him and forgiveness is yours if you should yield to his temptations and sin. We are truly free in Christ (Gal. 5:1).

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XVII.

THE WORK OF SEDUCING SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

Paul warned Timothy of a coming apostasy caused by “giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies...” (I Tim. 4:1-2). Being a Hebrew, Paul uses the common Jewish literary device of “parallelism” to make his point. He says that a “falling away or an apostasy” would result when Christians give heed to “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” He speaks not of two different sources of error, but of one: *demons*, whom he also calls *spirits*. These demonic spirits inspire false doctrines that seduce God’s people and lead them into sin.

To propagate their false teaching, demons make use of *hypocritical men who speak lies*. They are false-teachers operating within the church. Though they claim and pretend to be servants of Christ, in reality, by their lives of sin and deliberate false teaching, their consciences have been branded as with a hot iron. Every true Christian bears in his mind and heart the seal of the Holy Spirit, given at his baptism (Eph. 1:13; Acts 2:38; Rev. 14:1). These hypocritical teachers are branded, not with God’s Spirit, but with the mark of Satan (Rev. 13:16-17).

The particular heretics of which Paul wrote taught men that marriage was forbidden as was meat for food (I Tim. 4:3). Their false doctrine is contrasted with the “good doctrine” which Timothy was to convey to the brethren (I Tim. 4:6). From this we learn that Satan is actively involved in trying to corrupt the faith of Christians and the church. This is true today, as then. We see that his wicked demons work to find and influence malleable and willing teachers to promote, within the church, destructive doctrines that originated in the mind of the devil. Such teachers are hypocrites because while pretending to be faithful servants of Christ they are working and teaching in ways that do harm to His church. Since only truth can make man free from ignorance, error and sin (John 8:32), to seduce men and women to accept religious error enslaves them, making them bond-servants to Sin (Rom. 6:16-18).

Satan is not only the wicked enemy of God and all righteousness, he “standeth not in the truth,” he is “a liar and the father thereof” (John 8:44-45). He used lies to seduce Eve and Adam and falsehood is still his most effective weapon in corrupting people. In Eden he conveyed his evil message through a serpent, today he does so through hypocritical men who speak lies on his behalf (I Tim. 4:2-3). Paul tells us “It is no great thing therefore if his (Satan’s) ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Cor. 11:15). Such teachers are not filled with the spirit of truth, but rather the spirit of error (I John 4:6). Their teaching reflects a wisdom that does not come from above, “but is earthly, sensual, devilish (demoniacal, ft. note) (James 3:15).

Imagine for a moment, all of the preachers who stand before congregations of worshipers every week of the year. They hold in their hands the one book containing the doctrine of Christ. Yet out of their mouths come forth such a diversity of teaching that there are at least 2,500 different religious bodies in the world, all claiming to be His church. Whence come such diverse and conflicting doctrines? The Prince of Darkness uses his demons to seduce, corrupt and use all such teachers as can be turned to his wicked service. Some, out of ignorance, unwittingly teach his errors. Some for money will do so (John 10:11-12). Others, for ambition’s sake, will say whatever is needed to gather a great following. The worst will do so because they despise and scorn the Lord’s church and his people and deliberately work to harm them. With their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent” (Rom. 16:18).

When a man teaches that Christ recognizes and blesses many different religious bodies, he is in conflict with Ephesians 4:4. If one teaches sinners they can be saved by faith, before and without anything else on their part, he denies James 2:20-26). Should a teacher tell sinners that they should be baptized by sprinkling water on their faces he disagrees with Romans 6:4. The teacher who encourages women to fill leadership roles within congregations of the church violates Paul’s prohibitions (I Cor. 14:33-34; I Tim. 2:11-12). This list could be extended to include scores of doctrines and

practices promoted by men that are in conflict with the clear teaching of Christ and his inspired writers. Whence come these disparate teachings? They are the work of “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” delivered to Christians for the express purpose of corrupting their faith and leading them away from Christ! Where such error is taught, souls are lead away from “the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:5) and Satan gains the victory!

Never forget that the impressive preacher with his winsome personality, who can charm his audience, who can draw a great following, whose words are sweet as honey is not necessarily the servant of God to whom you should listen. For if he preach not the word of God (II Tim. 4:1-2); if he declare not the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) he is not a true servant of Jesus. In fact he may be teaching the doctrine of demons!

XVIII.

DEMONS AND IDOLATRY

Some Christians in Corinth were hesitant to break all their ties with their past idolatry. Some of them were still participating in feasts and celebrations to their old gods. The practice of engaging in the rites of two different religions is called syncretism. It is still a problem for some weak Christians, especially for those living in pagan environments. This temptation reared its head at family gatherings such as weddings and funerals, in meetings of trade guilds and public activities. Young and weak Christians would feel pressured to partake in the sacrificial meal.

Paul insisted that when they partook of the idolatrous food and drink of these feasts, they were having communion with demons (I Cor. 10:20). He went on to say that their participation in the meals of idols nullified the meaning of their communion with Christ. “Ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons” (10:21). They might eat and drink of the bread and fruit of the vine, but the communion with Christ was not accomplished.

Today we see leaders of liberal Protestant bodies engaging in ecumenical worship with the leaders of various world religions such as Buddhist, Hindu and Islam, etc. They later return to their own churches to conduct communion services. They should know one cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons...” (I Cor. 10:21).

Paul wanted these weak brethren to understand that an idol is nothing but lifeless stone, wood or metal fashioned into the shape of some living thing. Sacrifices presented to lifeless idols in temples cannot secure a blessing. He then explained that while the image they worship is nothing, behind it and encouraging the idolatry are wicked demonic servants of Satan. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons” (10:20). Unseen, wicked spirits use lies and deception to entice ignorant souls. Thus the Holy Spirit describes them as “lying spirits” (I Kings 22:23) and “seducing spirits” (I Tim. 4:1). Keep in mind that both Greeks and Romans believed that demons were the departed spirits of human beings. The ghosts of the departed can neither help nor harm us. But wicked spirits in the service of Satan can and will lead us to do things contrary to God’s will and thus bring disastrous consequences upon us.

Satan uses idolatrous religion to distract and confuse people and keep them from looking to Jehovah, the one and only God, and Jesus our only savior (Eph. 4:5-6). Syncretistic worship is more than a waste of ones time and effort, it is a sin against God. We should ever be alert lest we drift into such a pagan practice.

XIX.

CAN DEMONS POSSESS PEOPLE TODAY AS IN BIBLE TIMES?

On the basis of Hebrews 1:14, I believe God's angels are his providential agents to bless and protect his children today. They "are ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." That is us. Most brethren hold this view.

I do not believe that the demons, the evil spirits mentioned in the New Testament, are among us today. My reading leads me to conclude that demons were allowed to operate on earth during the ministries of Christ and the Apostles. They were the visible evidence of Satanic evil and control in the lives of people. God gave Christ and the Apostles power over the demons to prove they were sent by God. Jesus said, "but if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). The Apostles were empowered to cast out demons and do other miracles for the same reason (Mark 16:17-20). Now the earthly ministry and message of Christ and the Apostles has been completed and recorded in our New Testament. Christ is in heaven and the Apostles rest with Abraham. Miracles have ceased (I Cor. 13:8-10). Satan no longer is allowed that kind of power on earth.

Many progressive teachers find their inspiration from Evangelical and Charismatic denominational teachers many of whom believe that miracles can yet be done, and that demons yet roam the earth. If an author believes that demons are yet among us, he almost certainly believes that he or someone has the power to cast them out. Charismatics believe that. If he says demons still are with us, but we cannot cast them out, then the victims of possession are helpless. Paul tells us that "no temptation (will) take you but such as man can bear; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape..." (I Cor. 10:13).

That said, we do not deny Satan's malevolent power on earth. The whole world lies in the evil one (I John 5:19). Satan definitely still has great power and uses it to create strife, suffering and problems for mankind. He is like a roaring lion, a dangerous predator (I Pet. 5:8). That however is something different from demon possession. Demon possession is not to be equated with mental illness. Mental illness can be treated and often helped by therapy and drugs. A demon possessed soul would not respond to such treatments. Remember the pitiful case of poor Legion who was possessed (Mark 5:1-15). We see no such cases today and if we did, none could cure them.

XX.

THE CROWDED ROAD TO MYSTICISM

Modern man, disillusioned and driven to despair, desperately reaches out for something to cling to. One of his options in his escape from the real world is in mysticism. While everyone has heard the word, few could precisely define the term.

"Mysticism, according to the strict meaning of the word, signifies a special knowledge and understanding of the mysteries from which the uninitiated are excluded" (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 6, p.794).

"Mysticism despairs of the regular process of science, it believes that we may attain directly, without the aid of the senses or reason, and by an immediate intuition, to the real and absolute principle of all truth, God" (*Ibid.*, Vol.6, p.794).

Mysticism is "setting up of personal thoughts and feelings as the standard of truth or as the rule of action . . . Men ascribe their inward standard of truth and rule to the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p.795).

Mysticism presses beyond the external form of religion to an attempted direct knowledge of God, more especially in prayer and meditation (*Baker's Dict. of Theology*). "It is therefore the faith in an inward light; the neglect of the written

revelation; contingency and contemplation" (McClintock and Strong, p 794).

"In mysticism we have an expression of human religion rather than a true response to divine revelation" (Baker's Dict. of Theology).

"Mysticism has been the most usual form in which the expiring flame of religion has flickered up from its embers" (McClintock and Strong, Vol. 6, p.795). "...mysticism has always been most flourishing in times of general religious formalism—a striking illustration of the tendency of any extreme to generate its opposite" (McClintock and Strong, p. 804). "Mysticism therefore is frequently in tension with dogmatic theology and its periods of fluorescence occurs particularly in reaction to dead orthodoxy" (C. F. Henry, p.440).

EASTERN AND CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

When discussing mysticism the student must make a distinction between "Christian mysticism which has sprung up repeatedly over the centuries and the Eastern mystic cults which reflect Hindu or Buddhistic philosophy." In this lesson we will be discussing the Eastern variety.

Eastern mysticism involves "a belief that God is totally different from anything the human mind can think and must be approached by a mind without content. In mystical experience a person loses his sense of a personal identity, there are no dualities, time-stops, and words lose all meaning. Mysticism assumes that divine revelation is non-cognitive, faith does not involve assent to true assertions, religious language is not informative but merely expressive or directive and all words about God are interpreted symbolically" (G. R. Lewis, p. 87).

THE CHALLENGE OF MYSTICISM TO CHRISTIANITY

What Francis Schaeffer said about the church and rationalism and existentialism is also true of the problem of mysticism. "The tragedy of our situation today is that men and women are being fundamentally affected by the new way of looking at truth and yet they have never even analyzed the flood-waters of secular thought and the new theology overwhelmed the church because the leaders did not understand the importance of combating a false set of presuppositions" (Schaeffer, *Ibid.*, pp.15). Os Guinness describes the threat of mysticism thusly: "The subtlety of Eastern religion is that it enters like an odorless poison gas, seeping under the door, through the keyhole, in through open windows, so that the man in the room is overcome without his ever realizing there was any danger at all" (*The Dust of Death*, p.229-230). "The main fight, make no mistake, is between the Christian faith in its inner, classical meaning and the new Oriental versions whether they come via neo-platonism or in modern forms . . . The supernatural, personalistic, classical Christian faith is now being undermined by an ultimately non-dualistic, impersonal or transpersonal faith. The winds are blowing gale-strong out of the Orient." (Nels Ferre, from the forward in *Christology and Personality*, p. 196).

WHY THE MYSTIC CULTS HAVE SUCH STRONG APPEAL TO OUR AGE

G. K. Chesterton once said that "When people cease to believe God, they do not believe in nothing, they believe in anything." Man is incurably religious. He cannot survive on bread alone (Matt. 4:4). "With his memories of Eden, man is never at rest east of Eden, and he repeatedly throws himself on the flaming, drawn sword of the angel" (Os Guinness).

Mysticism is no foreigner to the Western mind and culture. "Eastern mysticism was early translated to the West by Neoplatonism." "The high point of Christian mysticism came in the middle ages with Bernard of Clairvaux (Henry, p. 440).

Transcendentalism, in part set the stage for the influx of gurus, swamis and other spiritual teachers from the East. It must not be forgotten however, that Transcendentalism is a child of Eastern mysticism. The Transcendentalists devotedly read the Upanishads and other Eastern scriptures" (Jerry Yamamoto, *S.C.P. Newsletter*, 10 '78, Vol. 14 #6).

Our society has long been conditioned for the mystical escape. "This underlying theme is being promoted in a way that subtly conditions people at every level of culture to accept a definition of reality which ultimately denies the personal God of the Bible, asserts the autonomy, power and inherent divinity of man, and condemns as obsolete any absolute statement of moral values" (C. S. Lewis, **Miracles**, Macmillan, 1947, pp. 84-85).

MYSTICISM = PANTHEISM

"Mysticism normally inclines to pantheism" (McClintock and Strong, Vol. 6, p.777). C. S. Lewis noted that "Pantheism is in fact the permanent natural bent of the human mind; the permanent ordinary level below which man sometimes sinks, but above which his own unaided efforts can never raise him for very long" (Ibid.). Pantheism is "the teaching that everything that exist constitutes a unity and that this all-inclusive unity is divine. Pantheism denies the personality of God and equates God with the forces and laws of the universe" (G.R. Lewis. **Transcendental Meditation**, p. 88). All oriental mystical cults espouse Pantheism. The Hindus speak of "That." "That" is a term used for the abstract being which is beyond human language, but is allegedly in all things and persons. The basic teaching of the Hindu Vedas and Transcendental Meditation is, "I am That, Thou are That and all is That" (G. R. Lewis, p.80).

Os Guinness believes that "the basic appeal (of Eastern philosophy) is the force of contrast with what people have experienced in the West. The East stresses experience, not theory and thus is a welcome relief from the sterile memory of preachers and pulpits, six feet above contradiction and life. For the East, verification is via participation" (**Dust of Death**, p 210). "To the Christian, talk of God is rather like the great bulk of an iceberg, whereas his experience of God is only the tiny tip of the iceberg; but for the Easterner the experience of God is the bulk of the iceberg, whereas his talk about God is only the tip" (Ibid.).

"Western answers no longer seem to fit the questions. with Christian culture disintegrating and humanism failing to provide an alternative, many are searching the ancient East" (Guinness, p. 195). "Intellectually both the East and post-Christian West have arrived at the silence of atheism or mysticism" (Ibid. p. 206).

A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF WHY MANY EMBRACE MYSTICISM AND SECULAR CULTS

1. They have rejected traditional forms of "Christianity" but being incurably religious they must have some spiritual diversion. God has planted eternity in the heart of mankind (Eccle. 3:11).
2. Man, in rebellion, would rather recreate God in his own image rather than himself be recreated in God's image (Rom. 1:21-23).
3. Appalling ignorance of the Scriptures and of true non-sectarian Christianity leaves a man defenseless before the beguiling errors of these cults (Hos. 4:6). The utter moral and spiritual bankruptcy of Catholicism and liberal Protestantism has left thousands of souls totally disillusioned and vulnerable.
4. Intellectual pride. Most mystics "think they have found what others have not, i.e., the hidden-higher gnosis, or spiritual knowledge which is reserved for the spiritual elite (I John 2:16).
5. A thirst for the bizarre, the new, the different, and the rejection of the familiar and commonplace. This reflects a spectrum of problems: rebellion against established authority and tradition, curiosity, dare-devilness, the search for a new thrill. Like the Athenians some are always searching for something new (Acts 17:21). They find it in the strange, exotic cults.
6. The failure of Western society as a whole. Government, industry, the scientific community, education and philosophy have failed in their basic moral responsibility. Disillusioned with this spectacle of the whole of life, many desperately look for a way out that works. In mysticism they think they have found it.
7. Collapse of the home and family and depersonalization of human relationships. Dr. Lee Rangell of Los Angeles, past president of the American Psychoanalyst Association, believes many "are tense, anxious, alienated, disappointed in themselves or their parents, and desperately hungry and groping for love, approval and guidance. The leaders of these

cults are in many cases parent-substitutes who provide their followers with goals, rewards and a form of acceptance they cannot find outside the cult."

"Parental failure seems to be a major reason why young people turn to the charismatic and frequently paranoid authority figures who head these cults" (**Parade**, 2/11/79). Man has an insatiable need for community, fellowship and family. They find it in the cult. All cults stress love and affection for each member. The Moonies use "love-bombing" as a recruiting device.

8. Escapism from all of today's tensions and problems. Why try to cope when you can cop out! Aldous Huxley claimed that "the urge to escape from selfhood and the environment is in everyone, almost all the time" (**The Doom of Perception**, p. 50). It takes a certain degree of grit and tenacity to wrestle with and be victorious in today's world. If one's training and education do not prepare him for the struggle, if his character tends to be weak or timid, he looks for a hole to crawl into. The cults are waiting for such people.

9. In most cults man is robbed of his individuality and therefore his responsibility. Yun-men, Zen master, wrote, "If you want to get to the plain truth, be not concerned with right or wrong. Conflict between right and wrong is the sickness of the mind." Duty to one's fellow man or society is not a strong point in the mystic cults. Most of one's energy is expended on self in seeking self-realization. Alan Watts says it well: "In Buddhism there is no place for effort. Just be ordinary and nothing special. Eat your food, move your bowels, pass water, and when you're tired go lie down." (From his book, **Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen**). Eastern mysticism is made to order for copping-out.

10. Despair of finding meaning, purpose and happiness in the traditional framework of Western Civilization. Allen Ginsberg, patriarch of our Eastern mystics, wrote, "I feel as if I am at a dead end and so I am finished. I never escape the feeling of being closed in and the sordidness of self, the futility of all that I have seen and done and said" (William J. Peterson, **Those Curious New Cults**, p. 270). Buddagosa writes, "I am a nowhere, a somewhatness for anyone" (**Guinness**, p. 216). Albert Camus puts it plainly, "I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my own proclamation, and I am compelled to believe, at least in my own protest" (**The Rebel**, p. 16, Penguin Books). Pessimism and despair are the natural fruits of rationalism. Humanism and Existentialism.

11. Satan's lie. Today, as in Eden, man's greatest weakness is the desire to be his own god (Gen. 3:4-6). He consistently falls for that lie when it is subtly presented. The following four pillars of Eastern mysticism reflect This weakness:

A. "All is one." There is only one reality in existence, therefore all apparent separations and oppositions (including the opposition of good and evil) are unreal or are a secondary manifestation of the single divine Reality.

B. Man is a Divine Being. "All forms of occult philosophy are united around the central belief that the inner or "real" self of man is God.

C. The purpose and fulfillment of life are to become aware of our divine nature. The way to discover one's godness is by way of gnosis or enlightenment and illumination. They always look to the personal subjective and experiential as the source and certification of meaning, while rejecting Revelation and Faith.

D. Self-realization leads to the mastery of spiritual technology and the attainment of psycho-spiritual power. Thus he, the God-man, becomes the master and creator of his own reality" (Brooks Alexander, **Occult Philosophy and Mystical Experience**, S.C.P.).

12. Modern man's recent love affair with nature opens the door to mysticism. "Elemental ecology heads straight to elemental Buddhism" (Aldous Huxley). What man loves, he tends to worship, what he worships he deifies. The "back to the earth, protect the earth movement" has evolved into pantheism.

WHAT THE EASTERN MYSTICAL CULTS OFFER THEIR DEVOTEES

They offer no hope, only deeper despair! Of Zen Buddhism, Dr. D. T. Suzuki says, "Zen has no God to worship, no ceremonial rites to observe, no future abode to which the dead are destined, and last of all Zen has no soul whose welfare is to be looked after by somebody else and whose immortality is a matter of intense concern with some people" (William Peterson, p. 180).

One pessimistic parable from the Upanishads describes a man as dangling head-down in a pit; snakes threaten him from below, elephants from above, he is kept alive only by the creeper on which he is hanging, and this is being slowly gnawed

by a black and white rat, symbolizing the shortening of his life throughout both day and night" (Guinness, p. 217).

In occultism there seems to be neither freedom, nor meaning, nor light at the beginning of the way. Man must proceed in the dark, climb an endless darkened stairway on which no merciful ray of light falls. Occult knowledge is somehow not an active process of giving meaning to something but only a second-sight description, a passive acceptance of things in one-self " (Nicholas Berdyaev, **The Meaning of the Creative Act**, N.Y. Collier Books, 1962, p. 287-289).

Those who refuse to find the unification of their fragmented lives in God must seek it within the realm of creation. Since the creation is fallen and under the curse (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:19-23), the conclusion of the matter is that mysticism declares the way by which one embraces the fulfillment of the curse here and now." (Brooks Alexander, **Occult Philosophy and Mystical Experience**, 5 p.c.).

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY

We are spectators of a world dying from lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). We have the truth that will make them free from the entangling web of mysticism and cultism (John 8:32). Either we will arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit and fight the good fight of faith or we will be classed and judged with the myriads of other guilty by-standers.

"...the Christian must resist the spirit of the world in the form it takes in his own generation. If he does not do this he is not resisting the spirit of the world at all" (Francis Schaeffer, **The God Who Is There**, p. 18). Our problem is that most elders and preachers are not aware that there is such a problem in our society. They vaguely sense that something is awry, but have not searched out the cause or the meaning. Especially helpful in understanding the intellectual climate of our day are the works of Francis Schaeffer, specifically, **The God Who Is There**, **Escape From Reason**, and **How Then Shall We Live? The Dust of Death** by Os Guinness is invaluable. Another useful source of material is the **Spiritual Counterfeit Projects, Newsletters and Tracts (P.O. 4308, Berkeley, CA, 94704)**. Brethren are encouraged to acquaint themselves with these challenging and relevant materials.

As in every generation we need to preach the word (II Tim. 4:2) and reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11-12). Nineteenth century books of sermons do not always meet the special needs of twenty-first century man. Martin Luther said, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition, every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

May the church of our day meet this challenge! May we who preach not be content just to stand in the gap to defend the cause, but may we boldly carry the battle into Satan's domain and win the victory in Jesus' name.

XXI.

IS WITCHCRAFT A REALITY OR A SUPERSTITION?

Witchcraft can only thrive in an environment of ignorance and superstition. Jesus said "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The more one knows and understands the Bible, the less he is influenced by superstitious practices such as witchcraft. Witchcraft flourishes where people know little or nothing about the power of Jehovah and of his love and goodness. This leaves them vulnerable to false teaching regarding the power and ability of Satan to terrorize man.

There are some cases where people, who are mentally insane, think of themselves as the devil or bewitched by the devil. This is their way of explaining to themselves their bizarre behavior or the evil thoughts that emanate from their diseased

minds. Sometime, the insane person who today claims he is the devil, might tomorrow claim he is God or Jesus Christ.

If a person grows up in an environment where the people about him believe in witchcraft and that people are possessed by wicked demons, he will naturally assume that such beliefs and claims are true. If he does not take the time to study the matter in light of God's word, he will go through life assuming witchcraft to be a real phenomenon.

Producers who create movies and television shows love to make shows about witchcraft, demons and Satanism. With their cameras, special effects and editors they can create images that seem to portray the influence of evil spirits on a person's mind and body. People, who because of their ignorance or superstition already believe in witchcraft, etc., see these shows and allow their minds to be convinced what they are viewing is a real event. They forget it is only an illusion.

There are some wicked people who have no fear of God in their hearts. They may or may not believe in a real devil. But they desire to have power over other people. They know that most unlearned and superstitious people believe that these evil forces can harm them. So the wicked villain, proclaims himself to be the devil, or a warlock or that he is an instrument in Satan's hands. He has learned how to frighten and intimidate his neighbors by his words and actions. They cower in fear of him and he is able to use and abuse them and exercise power over them. He knows full well that he is lying, but his lies deceive the ignorant and unsuspecting folks around him or her and he is able to dominate them..

We can identify one last category of these wicked people. There are some corrupt and evil people who hate God and all He stands for. They live in rebellion to God. They know nothing about the Bible. They would reject it if they did know it. So they choose to identify themselves as servants of Satan, the greatest rebel of all. In defiance of God, they worship him. Their Satanic Bible proclaims the opposite of all of God's commandments. They worship with such things as drunkenness, drugs and sexual indulgence. They look for opportunities to desecrate church buildings and grave markers of Christians. They might burn a bible. They might sacrifice dogs or cats to their evil god, Satan. Occasionally we read of these Satan worshipers actually murdering some innocent person as a sacrifice to their god, Satan.

We do not question that there are people who *claim* to be the devil, or witches (females) and warlocks (male witches), or that they are possessed by the devil or his demons. We have some of that here in America.

Their power is of two kinds. First they can use a person's ignorance and intimidate him by fear and dread. This is a mental attack. Second they can actually do physical harm to the person with poison, or by slipping a poisonous spider, insect or snake into their bed or garments. Since this is done secretly, when the person grows sick or dies, the uninformed people around them are terrorized and easily convinced that the witch or warlock did it by his evil power..

Superstitious fear is contagious, like certain diseases. Once the lie begins to circulate that someone is a witch, or that someone has been cursed by a witch, it creates a panic among those who are ignorant and superstitious. This explains why there might be other people who will begin to think they are bewitched. This happened in Salem, Massachusetts back in 1692 when someone accused an old woman of being a witch. There was a trial and before long the common folks began to think there were witches all around them. Several young girls confessed that they were witches. Some folks were put to death. Later generations look back with embarrassment that such actually happened.

Remember that Jesus is the light of the world (John 9:5). His gospel is the light that drives ignorance and superstition from the human heart (II Cor. 4:3-5) and replaces it with the truth that makes men free (John 8:32). There is an old saying "That when eyeglasses were invented, ghosts disappeared." This meant with clearer vision, that which was once thought to exist was found to be only an illusion.

XXII.

ASTROLOGY

"Astrology is the belief in the occult influence of heavenly bodies in human affairs and the practice or techniques of divining events from astronomical observances" (**Americana, Ency., 1969**). Can one participate in this fad and still please God? In numerous verses, God condemns astrology.

I. It is seeking for forbidden knowledge. "The secret things belong unto...our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us..." (Deut. 29:29). God has reserved knowledge of the future for himself. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

II. It's origin is in idolatry. God warned against serving other gods and worshiping them, including the sun, or the moon or any of the hosts of heaven. Such is abomination (Deut. 17:2-4). Under Moses' law it was punishable by death.

III. It is corrupting. "Thus saith Jehovah, learn not the way of the heathen and be not dismayed at them" (Jer. 10:2). Astrology was practiced by most of the pagan people of the East.

IV. It is forbidden (Jer.10:2)

V. It is futile. "I am Jehovah that...stretcheth forth the heavens above...that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish (Is. 44:24-25).

VI. It is worthless. God challenges, "let now the astrologers, the star gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. Behold they shall be a stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves (Is. 47:13-14).

The scripture gives us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). By prayer we can ask God's help. We must abstain from the appearance of evil, including astrology (I Thess. 5:22).

XXIII.

PAGANISM

Christianity, in the widest sense of that term, is professed by only some 20% of the earth's population. The rest of the people worship in various forms of paganism. Excluding Islam, these people worship gods made by man's hands.

The consequences of paganism are appalling. All of these religions leave their followers in the depths of moral degradation. Every kind of immorality, deceit and dishonesty prevails. Socially, the strong dominate the weak, women are degraded before men. The poor are treated as the dirt of the ground. Financially the nations that are addicted to idolatry are generally poor with a very few men holding most of the money. Domestically, the home is the throne of the tyrant father, women are little more than slaves. Children are sired with little thought of moral or spiritual training. Politically, these nations are generally oppressed or they are oppressive. The rights of men mean little to pagan rulers. The welfare of a society is of no serious concern. Those in power enrich themselves at the expense of their poor subjects.

The only effective weapon against idolatry is the gospel of Jesus. It will tear down the strongholds of ignorance. (II Cor. 10:3-5). In days past, the major Protestant churches did much to combat paganism. Now it is sad to see the leaders of today's liberal Protestant churches willing to accept the pagan religions as their equal partners .

Idolatry is wrong on numerous counts. We will notice four areas in which it is condemned of God.

Idol worship dishonors God the Creator of man. Paul writes: "Because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God neither gave thanks...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things" (Rom. 1:21-23). Even as Jehovah strictly charged ancient Israel, so it is today, "I am Jehovah thy God...thou shalt

have no other gods before me, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve, them for I Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God..."(Deut. 5:5-9). It is hard for Americans to visualize human beings prostrating themselves before images of beasts or men, debasing themselves in the most abject manner before the creation of human hands. Yet one has only to board a jet air liner and in a matter of hours he can be in Asia or Africa where such is the rule of life, not the exception. While unbelieving religious liberals and altruistic anthropologists speak of the splendor and beauty of heathen worship, Christians are shocked, disgusted and appalled by it. It is gross and sensual, far from beautiful. It dishonors the God, in whose image man is made, to offer such vile worship.

Idolatry is wrong because it is vain and foolish. Isaiah ridiculed the idol worshipers of his day. "The (black) smith maketh an axe, and worked in the coals and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm:...the carpenter sketcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. He heweth him down cedars,...and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself: yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshipeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshipeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou are my god. They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see and their hearts that they cannot understand. (Behold how Satan blinds them! II Cor. 4:4). And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire: yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination (idol)? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right-hand?" (Is. 44:12-20).

Again in 46:1-2, Isaiah cuts sarcastically at Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, as he foresees the people fleeing their city with their idols strapped to the backs of their beasts. Not only can they not save their worshipers, the gods themselves must be saved from capture or destruction by their devotees. Man, the crowning jewel of all creation, made in God's likeness with intelligence, superior to all other creatures, should perceive the folly of such senseless worship. Paul argues in Romans 1:20 that all idolaters are "without excuse" since with their native intelligence and basic sense they should realize the one God's everlasting power and divinity. He further charges that such idolatrous worship is the result of man becoming vain in his reasoning and professing himself to be wise. Man seeks a god like himself so that he can do the desires of his flesh with the approval of his conscience and his society.

Idolatry is wrong because it is cruel and degrading. Idolatrous rites have included human sacrifice, ritual fornication, sensual dancing, torture of devotees, and sacrificial victims. Idolatry has cruelly crushed the masses of people under foot as the Hindu Brahmins have the harijans (the low caste) people of India, treating them far worse than they treated their beasts and even vermin and insects. Multiplied millions yet cringe in fear of demons, evil spirits and shaman (witch doctors) who claim to hold supernatural powers. People let rats and cows eat the grain with impunity while millions fight to cling to the threads of life as they battle starvation. In Thailand, Buddhist women are told they cannot enter Nirvana (the highest state) as women, they must be reincarnated as men. Polygamy is basically a product of corrupt religion that teaches that man's future happiness depends upon the number of spirits he can generate to take into eternity with him.

Idolatry is wrong because it leads away men from the true God and farther and farther into rebellion. Paul vividly portrays this downward path in Romans 1: "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves... God gave them up unto vile passions (homosexual perversion)... And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful..."(vs. 22-31). The author used to think that this sordid, morbid picture was only of the first century Romans. A trip to any pagan nation in Africa or Asia will be a living commentary on Paul's words. The road of idolatry is away from Jehovah and in the opposite direction

of righteousness, justice, and truth. From Paul we learn that men first reject God in their heart, then they are rejected by Him. Man becomes like the God or god which he worships. The faithful Christian grows to be like the righteous Jehovah. The heathen is like the devil gods he worships.

As these words were being written I looked out of my window in city given over to idolatry. I saw the situation described above. What can we do to help these poor benighted souls who languish under the yoke of Satan's false religions? The answer is simple and plain. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."(Mark 16:15-16). This is not simplistic, for the Scripture tells us that the gospel of His Son Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16).

Christians in America, look around you and be grateful, look up and be thankful, and send the blessed light of the gospel into all the world.

XXIV.

LA SANTA MUERTA; THE SAINT OF LAST RESORT

While most of our immigrants from Mexico bring nothing but the clothes on their backs, some of them bring their faith in Santa Muerta, the Saint of Death. This unusual "saint" is depicted as a skeleton, often wearing a nun's black habit. In her hand are a scythe, manacles and a globe.

Although Saint Muerta is not listed in the Catholic Church's catalog of saints, she is adored by at two million Hispanics. Her devotees live primarily in Mexico and in America.

The origin of this strange cult are obscure. Most who have studied it think it is a revival of the old Aztec Goddess of Death which have been given the trapping of a Roman Catholic saint. It seems to have blossomed among the poor rural peasants of Mexico and was then embraced by hundreds of thousands of folks who were social outcast, criminals, etc.

This movement is a reaction to the dominant Roman Catholic Church and the failure of that church and its array of saints to provide for, protect or deliver them from their unfortunate situation. It flourishes in slums and poverty smitten rural areas. It has attracted not only the poor but those involved in crime, prostitution, homosexuality, illegal drugs activity, etc. It appeals to uneducated, superstitious people who already believe in witchcraft, evil spirits, magic and the occult.

The worship of Santa Muerta is simple with no demands. They pray to Saint Death, asking her for favors. They offer her simple, inexpensive gifts such as cigarettes, a piece of fruit, small coins, a bottle of beer or liquor, etc. Her special day is Nov. 1st. Each devotee has his own little shrine with an image of the saint. Her dress will be changed to a variety of colorful gowns, depending on what one hopes to receive. Different colors of votive candles are placed before her statue. In some towns and villages an annual procession in her honor is held on Nov. 1st. There is no formal official priesthood but an individual can proclaim him or herself a priest and by persistence and effective promotion attract a following. There is a public shrine in Mexico City created by Enriqueto Romero. A life-size image is displayed complete with prayers, candles, gifts, flowers and worship. The worship of Saint Muerta is based on the Roman Catholic rosary. David Romero who claimed to be the archbishop of the cult was convicted of robbery, kidnaping, extortion and sentenced to 66 years in prison.

Early Roman Catholic missionaries encountered the worship of the Aztec Goddess of Death and sought to divert the observance to All Hallows Eve (Our Halloween), but they did not achieve that goal. The old belief was merely driven underground. The people, over time, blended their old pagan beliefs with those of their new Catholic religion. Hence they made the Goddess of Death into a saint like Mary, Mother Teresa, etc. They dress her like a nun, use the same kind of candles as in their church and pray the rosary of Catholicism. Most of her adherents think of themselves as good Catholics. This blending of pagan and Catholic views is called syncretism. It is very common in Catholicism. The Catholic Church makes much use of mystical beliefs and practices. She claims that prayers to the images of saints will bring special blessings. She claims to work miracles and encourages the use of amulets, medallions, and personal images for good fortune and safety. In Rome, one can visit the Church of St. Mary, Our Lady of Conception. There he will find the church decorated with the bones of thousands of Capuchin monks; a wall of skulls, another of pelvises, lights adorned

with shades of human rib bones, etc. Complete skeletons wired together and adorned in the rust colored robes of the Capuchin order greet visitors. Locally it is called the church of bones. In hundreds of other Catholic churches are displayed the bones of past heroes and martyrs. People bow and pray before these "sacred relics." Thus it is a small step from such bizarre practices to the practices of the cult of Santa Muerta.

Death as a religious motif is found in African Jujú and in voodoo shins and practices. It is also seen in Satanism and witchcraft.

As to why anyone would worship an image of death, I suggest several possible reasons:

- * Ignorance and superstition still abounds, especially among the uneducated in primitive environments. Those folks are easily duped and allured by such false religion.
- * Those whose religious education has been defective are vulnerable to it. Converts to Catholicism in third world nations, even those who are literate, have a faulty view of Christianity that makes it easy to accept this bizarre kind of religious practice. This has been discussed above.
- * Those whose lifestyle and values are of the sinful world think that in this cult they can have the benefits of a spiritual systems that will provide them with physical and financial blessings, without having to live in God's appointed way.
- * Those who use this fearsome image of death show their bold defiance of Jehovah and the true religion of Christ.
- * Those who use the death image to frighten and intimidate weak, ignorant, superstitious people around them. Members of the violent drug cartels are chief among Santa Muerta's adherents. In this they are much like the Hell's Angels and similar motor cycle gangs that terrorize others.
- * Satan blinds the minds of the unbelieving and lures them into paths of perdition (II Cor. 4:4).

The Mexican government has linked this cult to prostitution rings, drug trafficking, kidnaping, smuggling and homicide. They openly discourage its practice. The Catholic bishops of Mexico have opposed it. But the Vatican and the popes have said little or nothing concerning it. It has found a fertile seed bed among the impoverish Mexicans who have entered our country. The faulty view called "pluralism" (i.e., that all religious expressions are of equal value...i.e., all useless) welcomes Santa Muerta and our freedom of religion grants it the same standing as established churches. The Catholic bishops of America have said virtually nothing against it.

Santa Muerta has been called "the saint of last resort." Not all who adore her are criminals, but many definitely are. Christians sometime sing, "When the Saints Go Marching In." Adherents of Santa Muerta could sing when the prostitutes, pimps, homosexuals, thieves, drug lords and hit-men go marching in. Unfortunately for them it would be a song based on a vain wish. Paul tells us, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10).

XXV.

NOSTRADAMUS, SOOTHSAYER AND FRAUD

History reveals that Michel de Nostredame, later known as Nostradamus, was born in France in 1503, living until 1566. He was born into a Jewish family that had converted to Catholicism. He remained true to that church throughout his life

In his early adulthood Nostradamus worked as an herbal doctor and on some occasions in later life, he continued to identify himself as a physician.

Nostradamus was fascinated with the occult, divination and magic. He was also much involved in astrology. He claimed his predictions were received by retreating to his secret library and staring at a flame until a vision appeared. He also claimed visions that came from staring into a bowl of water. Both of these were commonly methods used by other fortunetellers. They were used like the Gypsy fortunetellers use their crystal balls.

His method of foreseeing is called “scrying.” It was an ordinary method of fortunetellers, witches and other so-called soothsayers and magicians of his day. He borrowed his methods from pagan soothsayers. He was known to have read extensively in books relating to magic and the occult. He claimed that while in a trance, a spirit would possess him, revealing to him predictions of future events.

Nostradamus lived at the end of what is known as the “Dark Ages.” It was a time of ignorance and superstition. In that environment many, without questioning, eagerly accepted the tales the “so-called prophets” and fortune tellers brought forth. We have no trouble understanding how unlearned and ignorant people of that generation believed that Nostradamus was indeed a great prophet. Many people in the royal courts of Europe took him to be a genuine prophet. Catherine de Medici of France greatly admired him and appointed him to be the “Counselor and Physician-in-Ordinary to her young son, King Charles the IX. The marvel is that so many modern, well educated people blindly accept Nostradamus as genuine and his predictions as somehow inspired.

Nostradamus began publishing a yearly almanac in which he claimed to make numerous prophetic predictions. In a total of eleven volumes of his Almanac he claimed to have made 6,338 predictions. His book, “**The Prophecies**,” has been kept in print some 400 years.

To protect himself from those who sought to investigate and verify or disprove his predictions, Nostradamus made his writings obscure by using, unfamiliar grammatical structure, word games and use of other languages such as Greek, Latin, etc.

The continuing popularity of his work can be attributed to the vagueness and absence of dating of his predictions. This makes it easy for readers eager to find something new, strange or different to quote and apply to dramatic events of their day and location.

Researchers have demonstrated that Nostradamus borrowed heavily from other authors, some from the ancient past and some, his contemporaries.

Interestingly, Nostradamus in his Dedicatory Letter to King Henry II, specifically said his predictions were about Europe, North Africa and parts of Asia Minor. This has not discouraged people here in America and other nations, far removed, to find their nation and events described in his works. Another interesting fact is that he never mentions the end of the world which many claimed to have found in his works.

In his superstitious day, adherents of Catholicism often heard their teachers warn against practitioners of magic and witchcraft. This made Nostradamus fearful that he might be so accused and suffer at the hands of those who were authorized to wring out confessions of sins and then punish them severely. He burned his magical books. He urged his son never to seek such forbidden occult knowledge, for they will “send the soul to perdition.” He publically rejected the title or label of “prophet.”

Nostradamus and all similar prophets stand condemned by the Word of God. Moses wrote, “There shall not be found with thee...one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination to Jehovah...” (Deut. 18:10-12).

Again God said, “But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously...” (Deut. 18:20-22). While his devotees crow loudly about his few predictions they claim have been fulfilled, they are silent as stones about the hundreds that have not materialized!

HOW DO WE EXPLAIN PREDICTIONS THAT SOME CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN FULFILLED?

Someone wisely observed that “time is the great enemy of the false prophet.” That which seems remarkable when the prophet claims to see the distant future, is exposed as worthless boasting when the time predicted comes and goes without fulfilment. Modern fans of Nostradamus and other so-called prophets use their creative imagination to try and match his ancient predictions to modern events. As do all fortune tellers and soothsayers, Nostradamus was careful to couch his predictions in vague terms with lack of specific names and dates. Gullible folks who want to believe in some mysterious, extra-earthly power will gladly fill in all the details to satisfy their desires.

While his believers point to a handful of his predictions they have been able to declare fulfilled they fail to comment on those that failed to come to pass. He claimed to have made 6,338 prophecies. His modern disciples have trimmed that number to 942. Those few predictions that some claim to have been fulfilled can be explained as historical coincidences. If a man makes enough vague predictions about future events, odds are that a few of them might come close enough that true believers can claim they are fulfillments.

Many sinful men reject God, Jesus and the Bible as “unbelievable,” yet they relish the worthless and often bizarre predictions of fortunetellers like Nostradamus. This demonstrates the fact that although sinners may reject God and his Word with their conscious mind, still their unconscious mind yearns for something supernatural, someone who can foretell the future. As Solomon said, God has “set eternity in their heart” (Eccle. 3:11). Paul tells us that when men “receive not the love of the truth,” God sends them “a working of error, that they should believe a lie.” God does this because they “believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. 2:11-12).

The man or woman who seeks to please Jehovah keeps in mind God’s instruction that those who claim who know the unknowable, to predict the future are an “abomination to Jehovah” (Deut. 18:10-12). They reject such prognosticators. They do not take their writings seriously lest they share in their sin!

XXVI.

ANTI-CHRISTS

No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as that of “anti-christ.” The speculation is most extreme among those religious teachers holding the various premillennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God’s word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of “anti-christ.”

The term is a combination of “anti” and Christ. “Anti” has two basic meanings: (1) “over against,” hence one who puts himself in the place of Christ; (2). “opposition to,” i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan’s attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the Creator’s rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God’s image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah’s day he nearly succeeding in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan’s man enslaved the Hebrew’s and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God’s people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God’s cause. From the broken Grecian Empire he saw a “little-horn that rose up to persecute God’s people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164 BC). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with

its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God's people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domitian (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were anti-christs.

Jesus was confronted by anti-christ forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered. When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christs, i.e. messiahs (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of an coming "man of sin" (II Thess. 2:1-12). He was described as the "son of perdition." He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of anti-christian iniquity was already at work in Paul's day.

The Apostle John wrote of "antichrists," not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they had gone out from them because they were no longer with them in heart and mind (I John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (I John 2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching, they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John's day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (II John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (II John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels "anti-christian" (I John 4:1-3).

Anti-christs are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons..." (I Tim. 4:1-3). Such anti-christs seek to corrupt the faith and practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of all the cults and sects that pervert the message of the Master and seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body. They too are anti-christs. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured forgiveness of humanity's sins and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those antichrists who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe who hate Jesus, his church, his word and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and the Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-christian spirit is seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining anti-Christ to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind and unaware of the anti-christs working in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming (II Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God " (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the place of Christ or worked against Him and his Cause!

XXVII.

THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

Some year ago, I visited the old New England town of Salem, Massachusetts, infamous in history as the site of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. In February of that year eight young girls, including the daughter of a preacher named Samuel Parris, began to exhibit strange symptoms of behavior that were diagnosed as bewitchment. Interrogated by a local minister, the girls accused a family mulatto maid servant named Tituba of witchcraft. Soon two other older ladies were accused and then several ladies of Parris' congregation.

Within days one of the most bizarre and shameful incidents in the history of our nation occurred. Mass hysteria broke out that wrecked and destroyed numerous lives and forever put a blot on the town of Salem.

The following quotes from the **Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge** offer some helpful insight to understanding this destructive experience. It seems "there was the predisposition of the community to accept at its face value every claim and assertion made by the afflicted." 1 "The accusers became bolder; those who under other circumstances could not have been thought of were charged with the guilt, and of especial significance is the fact that those who opposed or denounced the proceedings were noted and pursued with vindictiveness by the band of girls." 2

"The magistrates entered upon their duties, the accused were examined, the assumption of guilt being at the basis of the examination." 3 "...Obloquy rests in large measure upon the ministers who were so active in the affair." 4 Most notable was the famous Boston preacher, Cotton Mather.

"Person after person was accused until it seemed that no station, calling or character was exempt from peril of accusation." 5 "Previous good records and useful lives went for nothing in the frenzy which paralyzed humane impulses." 6 "Among those who were assaulted...were Dorcas Good, a child between four and five years of age, Rev. Samuel Willard of the Old South Church...and Mrs. Hale, the wife of the minister of the First Church of Beverly..." 7 Benjamin Andrews observes that "no one knew whose turn to be hanged would come next," "A reign of terror prevailed." 8

By September 23, twenty souls had gone to the gallows, and eight more were under the death sentence. "The dire results of the outreach appear only partially in the executions. Hundreds were put under arrest and confined in fetters, some died in prison," 9 and multitudes of others were treated as public enemies because suspicion was cast upon them.

Shortly thereafter public sanity revived. On April 25, 1693 the Superior Court of Boston dismissed all charges against the survivors. King William soon vetoed the Witchcraft Act. 10

"The feature of the Salem episode which is most noticeable is the epidemic of spiritual insanity." 11

A Lesson For Today

Where ignorance, fear and superstition prevail people can easily be convinced some other person is somehow evil. This is especially true if that person is different in his appearance, dress and behavior; if he or she acts in a way that is strange or frightening.

The weakness, of otherwise good people, to be stampeded into persecution of innocent people still survives. Sometimes

Christians tend to believe the worst about fellow Christians. Rumors fly and destructive reports are passed from ear to ear without thought of verification. Even Paul was slanderously accused by false brethren (II Cor. 10:10).

Guilt is assumed because of some personal acquaintance or kinship with a wicked person. Solemn warnings are issued against the odd acting Christian and all are expected to put him on their black list. If he or she hasn't yet done something bad, they might.

It seems never to occur to these witch hunters that their conduct is contrary to every principle of Christian conduct. Especially the golden rule of Jesus (Matt. 7:12). Little concern is manifested that a person's usefulness for Christ can be forever damaged or destroyed by such accusations. Paul reminds us that "love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom. 13:10). The very least we should do is to "prove all things" (I Thess. 5:21) and reject all charges not sustained by two or three honorable witnesses (I Tim. 5:19).

Of course there are some bad people that must be marked and exposed. Scripture authorizes this (Rom. 16:17). But this is no approval for reckless and irresponsible maligning of brethren.

Strange to say, the accusers are frequently found to have far worse problems on their own door steps than the accused.

Let us "love the brotherhood" (I Pet. 2:17). "Speak not evil one to another, brethren" (James 4:11 KJV). David tells us that "whoso privily slandereth his neighbors, him will (God) destroy" (Ps. 101:5).

May we as a people rise above the evil hysteria of old Salem. Let us not be stampeded into sinning against our own brethren. Our war is with Satan and false religion. If we bite and devour one another, we all will be destroyed (Gal. 5:15).

End Notes:

1. Samuel Jackson, ed. **The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge**, 1911, s.v. "witchcraft."
2. **Ibid.**
3. **Ibid.**
4. **Ibid.**
5. **Ibid.**
6. **Ibid.**
7. **Ibid.**
8. **Ibid.**
9. **Ibid.**
10. E. Benjamin Andrews, **History of the United States**, Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 254.
11. **The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge**, s.v. "witchcraft."

XXVIII.

HOW DO WE BIND SATAN?

In Revelation 20:1-2 John describes a mighty angel coming down, binding Satan and casting him into an abyss. There the old deceiver would be kept for a thousand years. In most religious circles there is a foolish idea commonly believed concerning the binding of Satan. This doctrine claims that the Devil is now exercising unrestrained control over the peoples of this earth but that some day he will be bound: that is, in some miraculous way he will be totally impotent and then righteousness will reign over all the earth. Time does not permit me to deal with this premillennial heresy in full. So for the present we will deal with one phase of this theory: Can we bind Satan now? If so, how can we do it?

To understand how to bind Satan we must first understand how Satan works. God has always had a law by which man should live: from the simple, single law given to Adam and Eve to the Perfect Law of Liberty to which we are amenable today. Every transgression of that law is sin (I John 3:4). Every unforgiven sin will be punished by separation from God

(Is. 59:1-2).

Satan's unaltering design has ever been to get men and women to sin, and thus be separated from God, damned as he himself is. This he accomplishes by temptations. He uses the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (I John 2:15). Eve's allurements and fall came through these same three channels of temptation. James tells us that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin, and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death (1:14-15).

Jesus bound Satan. We see how he did so in the record of his temptation. When the evil one assailed him through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, Jesus fended him off with pertinent appeals to the written word of God: "Thus it is written." In each case, Satan was without victory (Matt. 4:1-11).

When the Pharisees saw Jesus casting out demons, they accused him of doing it by the power of Satan. Jesus refuted their cavil by the famous axiom, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Then he said "or how can one enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first **bind the strong man**" (Matt. 12:22-29)

Satan had most of the world under his control. Before Jesus could free and save them, he had to bind that haughty potentate. Not only did Christ conquer Satan in the wilderness, but he went right into his house and spoiled the devil of his most priceless possession, death. Jesus became one of us "that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

When Christ was raised, Satan was spoiled of his universal sway of death, "for now all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth" alive (John 5:28-29).

Can we today bind Satan? Yes! Just as Jesus did, by the Word of God, the Bible (Rom. 1:16); by submission to God and by resisting his temptations. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). We must practice sober watchfulness. "Be sober, be watchful, your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith" (I Pet. 5:8-9). Thus Paul assures Christians, "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Before Jesus came and instituted his law of grace and forgiveness, Satan, could have dominion. This was because once he could lead a person to sin, the old law, lacking the grace and mercy to forgive, readily condemned him to death. Now, even though Satan succeeds in getting us to sin, we can come to Christ with obedient faith, and his blood will cleanse us from those sins (I John 1:7).

Satan still exists: The condition of the world is a testimony to his existence and power. Yet to the child of God, he is chained or bound just like a vicious dog is chained to a tree. If you stand outside the reach of that chain, he cannot harm you. So it is with us and Satan today. God's truth is the chain that binds him, but only when it is applied as Jesus did. Those who are ignorant of God's Word, or who do not live by its precepts will be the victims of the great enemy of souls.

No one ever sincerely followed Christ, obeyed his teaching, without becoming a better person; without overcoming Satan.

TO BE A SPIRITUAL PERSON

Christ is set before every Christian as the goal toward which we strive. The more we grow to be like Christ, the more "spiritual" we become. One can be a Christian and yet not be "spiritual." Such was the plight of the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:1). Hopefully the thoughts of this lesson will help us all grow to be more like Jesus, hence more spiritual men and women.

I. Spirituality is greatly concerned about true values, right attitudes and correct motives. Unfortunately, some people engage in religious activities for wrong motives. Pharisees did their righteous deeds to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1). Whatever we do, it must be "to the glory of God," not self (I Cor. 10:31). Even those who preach and teach Christ must be careful lest they do so of envy and strife or other faulty motives (Phil. 1:15-17). The spiritual person follows the path of maximum service and minimal selfishness. He desires "right for the sake of right, truth for the sake of truth, love for love's own sake, honor for honor's sake, humility for the virtue in humility."

II. Spirituality is tested by its comparative interest in temporal and eternal rewards. Temporal rewards are those positions in life which feed pride, give prominence, afford great financial remuneration or otherwise bestow rewards that belong only to the present life. Eternal rewards, on the other hand, look to God and eternity for their fulfillment. Moses gave up the temporal reward of high station in Egypt and cast his lot with God's people because "he looked to the recompense of reward" which God offered (Heb. 11:24-26). Paul said that he held not his life of any account as dear to himself so that he could accomplish his course and the ministry he had received from Christ (Acts 20:24). His spiritual value system was properly ordered.

III. Spiritual power comes when we weep over our sins and those of others. The greatness of Paul's spiritual strength is seen in the fact that despite all his notable attainments he still felt himself to be "the chief of sinners" (I Tim 1:15). His great heart ached for his fellow Hebrews who were yet in unbelief (Rom. 9:1). He wept for enemies of the cross, rather than despise or hate them (Phil. 3:17-19). May God give us a tender heart and sensitive conscience.

IV. A spiritual soul is able to judge properly between the most important and less important things. He will then have the courage and strength to choose the right, no matter the difficulties involved or the consequences thereof. He knows that one soul is more precious than the whole world (Mark 8:36-37). To be spiritual, one's education, career, profession, and hobbies must be kept in proper perspective.

V. A spiritual person is faithful to a trust. Along with Paul, the gospel of God is committed to our trust (I Tim. 1:11). Jesus said that he that is faithful in little is faithful in much (Luke 16:10). If you would be spiritual, whether you teach a nursery class or the adults, whether you clean the building or serve as treasurer, you must be faithful to that trust.

VI. Spirituality is measured by the readiness with which we judge others and the manner in which those judgments are expressed. This includes our attitude toward teachers, elders, preachers and fellow Christians. A carnal mind judges all men untrustworthy until they prove themselves worthy. Those who are spiritual count all men honorable until they prove themselves otherwise. A spiritual heart expresses its criticisms like a gentle nurse (I Thess. 2:7). The worldly heart is harsh and thoughtless. The spiritual heart "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things" (I Cor. 13:7). He dispenses judgement to others in the way he would want to be judged (Matt. 7:12). He always seeks to "judge righteous judgement" (John 7:24). A spiritual soul is careful in the use of "loaded words" such as "liberal," "anti," "extremist," "soft," "narrow." Such words have no precise meaning. They convey a different message to every hearer. In a mixed

group, most any Christian could be called by all of these terms. The spiritual person prefers to use Biblical terminology in order to express himself in a non-prejudicial way. He measures his words so that they "may give grace to them that hear" (Eph. 4:29).

VII. Some things that will help us grow spiritually. We grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ by reading spiritual literature (II Pet. 3:18). First in priority is the reading of God's Word. Read it daily, systematically and purposefully. Read good devotional books. Among those volumes that have been helpful to spiritual growth over the years are: John Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress**, **The Imitation of Christ** by Thomas A Kempis; **Holy Living** by Jeremy Taylor, and **The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul** by Philip Doddridge. We will grow by taking time to mediate upon God's word (Ps. 1:2; 4:4). Like Paul we need to set spiritual goals and work towards attaining them. A good goal is to be more like Christ in word, thought and deed (Phil. 3:16). Honest self-examination is a vital necessity if we are to develop spiritually. The Corinthians needed this and so do we (II Cor. 13:5). Self examination will help us be more patient with the shortcomings of others (Matt. 7:3-5). We need to confess our sins (James 5:16). Those who would instruct others especially need to purge their hearts regularly lest their sins neutralize their message. A proud impenitent heart can not lead students in the paths of righteousness. Frequent prayer should adorn the life of every Christian (I Thess 5:17). If the Son of God needed lengthy seasons of prayer with his Father, how much more do we frail sinners need such? (Luke 6:17). Spiritual souls will associate with those of like precious faith. They will be drawn together by common interests and desires. They will seek the strength other righteous souls can supply. They will want to reciprocate (Heb. 10:24-25). Let every Christian ponder this question: "If Paul wrote me today, would he address me as a spiritual disciple or as carnal?" Should your answer be the latter, will you not take active steps to correct your status.

"O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer."

XXX.

WHERE DOES MAN'S SPIRIT GO AT DEATH?

Since death stands before each of us (Heb. 9:27), most will eventually wonder about what lies beyond this realm of life. The answer to such a question is beyond any philosopher or teacher who depends on the findings of science or human wisdom. Only in God's Word can we find the information that will satisfy our curiosity and comfort our hearts. Jesus reminds us that what God's Holy Book says is truth (John 17:17).

Paul wrote that Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10). Prior to his coming, little was known about the future of those who have died. Job wondered, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). From the teaching of Christ we can know the following:

- * The body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). This is the definition of death.
- * At death, the body returns to the dust (Eccle. 12:7), but the spirit returns to God who gave it. There it lives on in its appointed place.
- * When death occurs, the body of the righteous person is placed in the tomb, while his righteous spirit is carried by the angels to a place of joy and happiness, known to the Jews as Abraham's bosom (i.e., in his near presence) (Luke 16:22).
- * The body of the wicked man is likewise buried but his spirit is delivered to a place of torment (Luke 16:28).
- * Jesus told a dying man, "today thou shalt be with me in **Paradise**" (Luke 23:43). This was not the final reward, for Jesus said later, "I am not yet ascended unto the Father" (John 20:17). Where then did the soul of Christ go at death? David wrote of Him, "**Thou wilt not leave my soul to Hades**" (Acts 2:27 RSV). At death, the spirits of all people go

to Hades "the unseen abode of the dead." The word Hades does not indicate whether one will suffer or be happy! Hades is described in Luke 16:19-31. Two types of men are seen , one righteous and one wicked. Both died and went to Hades, the place of the dead. The righteous man, Lazarus , awoke in Paradise, in Abraham's bosom. The Wicked Man was in torment.

* After death, it was impossible to alter their destiny. A great gulf separated them. No one could cross over it (Luke 16:26). No changes in our state are possible after death (Luke 16:26).

* Both the righteous and the wicked are conscious in their place of waiting (Luke 16:23-25). They can communicate with those around them. They have memory of those left behind. Moses and Elijah, long dead, appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

* Hades is not the final abode, for there is yet to be a resurrection and judgement. "The hour cometh when **all** that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29). The resurrected body will be reunited with the spirit (I Cor. 15:50-54).

* The resurrection body of the saved will be incorruptible, i.e., it will never deteriorate and die (I Cor. 15:42). It will be a glorious spiritual body (I Cor. 15: 43-44). Thus it will be suited for eternal life, i.e., immortality.

* This will occur when Jesus returns. The dead in Christ (Christians) will be raised and the righteous ones yet living will be instantly changed (i.e., provided with a resurrection body) (I Thess. 4:16-17). All the rest of the dead, (those unsaved) will also be raised at that time (John 5:28-29).

* At that point in time we will all stand before the judgement seat of Christ and received the deeds done in this body (II Cor. 5:10).

* Before the judgment seat of Christ we will hear our eternal destiny. "These (wicked) shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46).

* Many Christian poets and hymn writers fail to make a distinction in the Christian's place of rest (Abraham's bosom) and our final destination of a place in the Father's house (John 14:3). It is when Jesus comes that he will take us to where he lives. This has led to some misunderstanding about the abode of the deceased.

XXXI.

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL HOSTS OF WICKEDNESS AGAINST WHICH WE FIGHT?

In Ephesians 6:12 Paul writes, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (New International Translation). To put it simply, Christ's people are not engaged in a physical war with wicked kings and nations such as Rome of Paul's day. We do not use physical weapons in making converts and enlarging the kingdom of Christ. In Ephesians 6:13-17 he describes the Christian's armor. It consists of such things as truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel, faith, salvation and the word of God. We do not use physical force to enlarge the borders of the church nor do we resort to physical war to defend her when her enemies attack her. He reminds us that ours is a spiritual warfare against the Satanic forces of evil. He mentions principalities and powers which refers to orders of evil angels. He mentions rulers of the realm of spiritual darkness and hosts of wicked spirits or demons. Satan makes full use of ignorance, error, superstition and sin. He fills men with false pride, greed, ambition, jealousy and bigotry. He then mentions the wiles of the devil, i.e., the deceitful tricks Satan uses to allure and ensnare God's people. When we confront false religious teachers, be they pagan or teachers of counterfeit churches, we are fighting against these spiritual enemies. So are we when we preach against sin and wickedness in the lives of people and when we rescue sinners by

bringing to them to Christ in baptism. When we are forced to deal with false teachers in our churches, they are part of Satan's foul army. Notice that our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17). This passage reminds us that Satan is a real force in our world. Evil is present in our society. It is malignant, militant and aggressive. If we do not manfully resist it, Satan's forces will defeat us and drive the Lord's church out of existence in community after community. Thus Paul exhorts us to fight the good fight of the faith ..." (I Tim. 6:12).

XXXII.

OUR ENEMY USES LYING SIGNS AND WONDERS

Paul wrote of a coming man of sin, a son of perdition who would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped. His "coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceit of unrighteousness..." (II Thess. 2:3-9). While we may debate just who the "man of sin" might be, there is no disputing the fact that from earliest times, wicked men have utilized deceit, along with lying signs and wonders to win a following, to enrich themselves, to gain and hold onto power and to thwart the will and work of God.

When God sent Moses and Aaron to persuade Egypt's Pharaoh to let the Hebrew slave go free, He certified their message by empowering them to do mighty works and wonders. A normal mind would have reasoned, "Anyone who can do such remarkable things, must represent Almighty God." But the king's magicians challenged the signs of Moses and Aaron. They also appeared to turn their staves into serpents. But Aaron's rod, turned into a serpent, devoured their serpents. When God's men turned the waters of Egypt into blood, the magicians were able to imitate that mighty miracle. The magicians also, by some trickery, seemed to bring forth frogs. But when Aaron smote the earth and lice swarmed over all the land, they could not do the same. "And the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God..." (Ex. 8:19). This was an admission that their efforts were not supernatural, but mere tricks to deceive the ignorant.

Witches, warlocks and their witchcraft were universal in the pagan civilizations of the past. In his final admonitions to the Hebrews, Moses warned them, "There shall not be found with thee any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah..." (Deut. 18:10-12).

Claims of supernatural power were common to religions, governments and some social parasites. Their alleged powers were attributed to gods who were to be feared, not loved and adored. Ignorant, superstitious people did not want to get contrary with a devil god whom they had been taught to greatly fear. Evil king Manasseh used witchcraft to manipulate his subjects. With it he also introduced idolatry among the Hebrews. Jehu attributed the lack of peace in the land to "Jezebel and her witchcrafts" which were many (II Kings 9:22). This wicked and vicious queen used witchcraft to frighten and intimidate her subjects and gain her ends.

In Apostolic times, Philip encountered a man in Samaria named Simon. He was a sorcerer. He had "used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great" (Acts 8:9-10). Sorcery is defined as "the use of supernatural power over others through the assistance of evil spirits, witchcraft, black magic" (**American Heritage Dictionary**). Like all other sorcerers, Simon had no real, supernatural demonic power. He used the typical tools of the magicians trade: Ignorance, fear, superstition, slight of hand, hypnotism, potions to deceive the people. We conclude this

because when Simon saw the genuine miracles wrought first by Philip and then by Peter and John, he was willing to pay well to receive power like that wielded by those holy men (Acts 8:9-20). Of course he was rebuked for thinking he could purchase the power of God's Spirit!

Those who claim the ability to perform miracles are of several categories.

* There are pagan witch doctors in third world settings who make such claims. They claim to be able to pronounce either blessings or curses on people. We find them in some backward or immigrant communities of our country. Voodoo, still evokes fear in many minds.

* There are evil manipulators of others, like Charles Manson, who claimed the powers of Christ and the devil.

* There are fortune -tellers, readers of tarot cards, etc., who are often mysterious types who claim to have some access to supernatural knowledge of future events.

* There are so-called mediums, who claim they can contact the spirits of the dead. Scripture calls them necromancers.

* There are astrologers who claim they can read the future of people by their study of the stars and their alignments.

* There are pseudo-Christians who claim that God has empowered them to work miracles of healing, etc. Some of these are "high-powered" evangelists who attract great crowds. They claim to heal a select few of pains and health problems which are internal and thus cannot be seen by observers. They often fail to heal their patrons, but never fail to grow rich from their "love-offerings." The Catholic Church claims that all sorts of physical disorders have been healed at their shrines. Claims of miraculous healing is a trade mark of all Pentecostal and Charismatic type churches. They do help those with psychosomatic illnesses but no true miracle is involved. They claim God has worked through their hands, but the fact is they have manipulated the minds of their seekers and demonstrated the ancient truth that mind is superior to matter.

* There are professional magicians who make their living by entertaining people with their feats of theatrical magic. These generally make no claim to be empowered by some god. They depend on training, slight of hand, the credulity of their audience, and the expectation of some marvelous feat by their fans, etc.

Those claiming to wield supernatural powers flourish best in environments where ignorance and lack of bible knowledge prevail. Meaningful education and a good working knowledge of Scripture are most effective in neutralizing the claims and success of those who claim that either Jehovah or some demonic god is working through them. There is an old proverb that said, "With the invention of eye glasses, most ghosts disappeared."

Let it be clearly understood that God has indeed worked mighty signs and wonders through a few of his chosen servants. Moses and Aaron were in fact God's instruments in sending the ten plagues on Egypt. Prophets like Elijah and Elisha were in fact empowered to work miracles among their Hebrew peers. Jesus wrought remarkable signs and healed all manner of illness and disorders (Acts. 3:38). He sent the Holy Spirit to give the his Apostles that same kind of miraculous power (Mark 16:17-20). A careful study of the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles will show beyond doubt that the claims of occultists and religious miracle workers are bogus and a fraud. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:8-10 that the gift of tongues, the supernatural knowledge and prophecy would all be done away. They would last only until "that which is perfect is come." The pronoun "that" which Paul uses is neuter in gender. Thus he is saying "when *that perfect thing*" is come, that which is in part shall be done away. He speaks not of Christ's return for that would require the pronoun "he." He speaks not of the church reaching a state of perfection for that would require the feminine pronoun "she." The "*that*" of which he speaks is the completed New Testament of Christ. What *that* was available to humanity, then the miracles of the early days of Christianity would be "done away" (I Cor. 13:10). The purpose of the miracles was to confirm the message of the Apostles as being from God (Mark. 16:20). God still has such supernatural power and should he chose to do so could exercise it today. But the evidence is abundant that He does not chose to do so.

Christ has not bestowed supernatural gifts since the end of the Apostolic Age. He does not allow Satan and his agents

to exercise such powers today. What we see by the claimants of miraculous powers is a pale imitation of the genuine miracles described in the Scripture.

When a wicked person, a pseudo Christian or a church makes a claim to miraculous powers do not allow them to frighten or intimidate you. Just remember Paul's description of those "Whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and *lying* wonders, and with all *deceit* of unrighteousness..." (II Thess. 2:9-10). Know that they are deceivers who take advantage of the ignorance and superstitions of untaught masses.

XXXIII.

THE POWER OF GOD VS. OCCULT PRACTITIONERS

When Christ commissioned his Apostles go into all the world, preaching the gospel, He gave them power to perform miracles. He said, "In my name shall they cast out demons..." (Mark 16:17). Mark went on to explain, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed" (16:20).

* We read that in Jerusalem, God, by the hands of the Apostles, wrought many "signs and wonders...And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one" (Acts 5:12-16).

* When Philip, deacon of the church in Jerusalem, proclaimed Christ in Samaria, the people "saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice..." (Acts 8:4-8). "But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who before in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed...saying This man is that power of God which is called Great" (Acts 8:9-10). Peter and John visited Samaria to confer supernatural gifts on the new church. They laid their hands on those selected and prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit...and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying Give me also this power..." (8:14-19). Peter rebuked Simon for thinking he could purchase the gift of God. He told him bluntly, "Thy silver perish with thee...thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." He then instructed Simon to "Repent" of his wickedness (Acts 8:20-22). A sorcerer practiced witchcraft, using occultic deceptions to deceive the ignorant, superstitious people. Simon had no real power, only his ability to deceive. His duplicity was immediately spotted by the Apostles and he had no ability to dispute their rebuke.

* On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel through out the island of Cyprus. The Roman Proconsul, Sergius Paulus, invited them to speak before him. Arriving, they found a Jewish sorcerer by the name of Elymas Bar-Jesus, who withstood their teaching. He was determined to keep the proconsul from hearing and accepting he gospel of Christ. But "Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind...for a season...And the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed..." (Acts 13:4-12). Notice how helpless the sorcerer was before the power of God. This makes clear that before all his alleged powers were merely counterfeit deceptions foisted upon the superstitious people.

* When Paul and Silas were evangelizing in Philippi, there was "a certain maid having a spirit of divination." The girl

followed after Paul and Silas crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God...” She greatly troubled Paul and he “turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour” (Acts 16:16-18). The demon was helpless before the powerful name of Jesus Christ.

* Paul spent time in Ephesus preaching Jesus. There he encountered seven sons of a chief priest of the Jews by the name of Sceva. They made their living by pretending to be exorcists. They saw or heard of Paul great success in casting out demons and sought to imitate his method. When they said to a man possessed by a demon, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth” to come out, the evil spirit answered and said unto them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them and mastered both of them and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” (Acts 19:13-16). Not only did the Sceva’s sons fail to oust the demon, they were thrashed, humiliated and exposed as frauds!

When Jesus gave John the Apostle the message of the book of Revelation he depicted the mortal struggle between the church and pagan Rome. Of Rome he said, “For with thy *sorcery* were all the nations deceived” (Rev. 18:23). Note that sorcery is based upon deception! Every time you see the sign of a fortune teller, a spiritual medium or an astrologer, or you hear of a person claiming to be a witch or warlock, remember, they were proven to be frauds by these events in God’s Word. Don’t believe their claims, do not fear them. They are helpless before our Lord who has all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

XXXIV.

SYNCRETISM...REVIVAL OF AN ANCIENT RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The Associated Press reports that the Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania was slightly embarrassed when it was discovered that two of her priests were also practitioners of an ancient pagan religion. Rev. William Melnyk and his wife, Rev. Glyn Ruppe-Melnyk were the active spiritual leaders in their community for a group of Druids. Druidism was practiced in ancient England. It involved the worship of the Sun and the Mother Earth. The two clerics were leaders of Episcopal churches in Malvern and Downington, PA. They explained that their participation in the pagan cult was to help folks who were alienated from the church to reconnect with it. When exposed and called to give account, the priestly couple apologized and renounced their association with the pagan Druids. It is a bit strange that this would cause a ripple since the Episcopal bishops recently approved a Woman’s Liturgy that used pagan forms invoking a female mother deity of which the Bible knows nothing.

Eric Gorski of the Associated Press writes that “Many in U.S. Mix, Match Their Religions.” His point is that while most Americans profess some variety of Christianity, millions mix various pagan rites or beliefs with their Christian faith.

* One in four believe in New Age ideas which include such Buddhistic and Hindu teachings as reincarnation, and spiritism, which claims that spiritual energy is found in trees, rocks, mountains, etc. It also includes spiritual practices such as meditation, mantras, labyrinths, centering, pilgrimages, etc.

* Sixteen percent believe that certain wicked people can cast curses or evil spells on people. This is derived from Voodoo or Devil worship.

* Thirty percent claim that have had contact with the ghosts or spirits of those who are dead. This superstition is found most commonly among Catholics and Black Protestants.

* Thirty percent of Protestants and twenty percent of Catholics are comfortable visiting with other religious groups.

* About half of all Americans claim that they have had some kind of mystical experience or epiphany.

To blend the religion of Christ with aspects of any other kind of religion is called syncretism. God's ancient prophets rebuked those of their day who sought to mix His truth religion with the false religion of their neighbors (Jer. 7:8-10).

Those guilty did so with the expectation that God would accept the mixture and reward those who offered it to Him.

In ancient Israel, the people "feared Jehovah and served their own gods after the manner of the nations..." (II Kings 17:33). God was displeased with their practice. Contrary to popular opinion, true Christianity cannot be blended with these other types of religious beliefs and practices. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by him (John 14:6). He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Those wishing to be saved must observe all things whatsoever he commanded (Matt. 28:20). Those who abide not in the teaching of Christ have not God nor the Son (II John 9-11). We are not to join with nor encourage them in their activities. Jesus condemned the church in Pergamum for tolerating some that held the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:15-16). The church in Thyatira was rebuked for tolerating a prophetess who sought to involve their members in idolatrous practices (Rev. 2:20).

While syncretism may be the current fad of our religious neighbors, we who wish to be faithful to Christ must reject the practice and refuse those who dare to promote such things. When the true faith and worship ordained by Christ are blended with religious error they are corrupted and not acceptable to the Lord who gave his life for the church.

XXXV.

IN THE WAKE OF EVIL

On July 21, 2012, Evil raised its ugly head in Aurora Colorado. At that moment James Eagen Holmes launched his deadly attack against innocent people he did not know. In a few short moments twelve innocent people lay dead. Fifty-eight others were wounded, some critically. Every such atrocity stirs people to ask, "Why do such evil things happen?"

Surveying human history there have been only two brief periods when the world was free of wicked violence. Before their sin and expulsion from Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed a peaceful existence. Afterwards, evil struck their family when their eldest son, Cain, slew his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8). Following the Great Flood, when only Noah and his immediately family shared the earth, we can surmise they were able to enjoy a period free from violence. In all other ages, sin and Evil have prevailed.

Some may ask, just **What is Evil?** At its foundation, evil is hatred: hatred of God, of self, of others. John tells us "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer..." (I John 3:15). Evil is destructive. It manifests itself in harming others, usually those who are innocent. Evil is best understood in contrast. It is the opposite of that which is good! Think in terms of contrast: God vs. Satan; good vs. bad; help vs. hurt; love vs. hate; right vs. wrong; kindness vs. cruelty, purity vs. vileness.

There are different **Kinds of Evil**. There is **Legal Evil** where a person despises and flagrantly violates the law of the land or else uses the law to harm others. There is **Spiritual Evil** where a person despises and wantonly tramples the Will of God. There is **Social Evil** where evil imposes hardship and suffering on certain classes of people; the Caste System

of India, oppressive taxation, prostitution, etc. Then there is **Moral Evil**. This we consider in this lesson.

Men have long pondered the **Origin of Evil**. It is not from God. He made man in his own image (Gen. 1:26) and at the conclusion of the creation event, He saw all that he had made and it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Long before the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, there was a rebellion among the angelic hosts of heaven. Peter tells us of angels that sinned and were cast down to Tartarus (II Pet. 2:4). Jude says “angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness...” (Jude 6). Paul reminds us that Satan’s condemnation came because of his wicked pride (I Tim. 3:6). John may have used this event for an illustration in Revelation 12:7-9. He speaks of “war in heaven” wherein the devil and his angels were defeated and cast down.

Defeated in his rebellion in heaven, Satan then dedicated himself to defeating and destroying God’s plan for blessing humanity. Jesus said Satan “was a murderer from the beginning....he is a liar, and the father thereof” (John 8:44). All Evil must ultimately be credited to him. He is the “Evil one” we must avoid at all costs (Matt. 6:13).

Evil men do evil things (Matt. 12:34). Evil originates in the mind or heart of sinful men. Before murder, there is hatred in the heart. Before adultery, there is lust (Matt. 5:21-22; 27-28).

Man was not created evil, nor are babies born evil. God saw Adam to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31). We must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3). Evil is a consequence of our being made in God’s image. To make us like Himself, God gave us volition, i.e., the freedom to choose. Among the choices we must make, will be to do evil or good. Without this gift of volition, we would be naught but robots. With it, we are like God, but it can be easily abused. Satan knowing the potential for Evil in this gift will always be near by to supply the temptation to do Evil (I Pet. 5:8). Sin is transgression of God’s law (I John 3:4). Evil is cruelty done to others, especially the weak, the poor, the innocent. Evil hates the good, God, Christ, the Bible, Christians, the church and righteous people!

Three types of people do evil things to others. Some do so **because of mental illness**. Their disease distorts or darkens their sense of right and wrong. It overcomes their normal sense of duty to be kind and considerate of others. In their deranged state, Satan can manipulate them to inflict suffering and harm on others.

Others, by the **abuse of alcohol and drugs**, have their moral conscience disabled so they are unable to distinguish between right and wrong. This allows sin to control their hearts. Their anger is free to rage out of control. They can vent their fury against those around them. In their inebriation they feel justified in their wicked deeds.

Some evil people are **psychopathic**. This means they are so depraved that they know no guilt, shame or remorse for the wicked things they do to others. Their hearts are hardened. Their conscience is “seared as with a hot iron” (I Tim. 4:2). They are totally selfish, thinking only self. They have no fear or respect for God or man. They embrace Evil and gladly serve it. They find perverted pleasure in hurting others. This Evil in the heart of man is as real and devastating as cancer in the body. Mindless people are allured by evil, drawn to it like a moth to a flame to be swallowed up by it.

Our Duty in the Face of Evil. God expects us to “abhor evil” (Rom. 12:9). We must not allow ourselves to be overcome of evil, but... overcome it with our good (Rom. 12:21). We are not to “give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). Rather we are to “resist the devil” (James 4:7). We are to abstain from the very appearance of evil (I Thess. 5:22).

There are important **Lessons to Remember** regarding Evil. “Evil is immensely powerful and a pervasive force” in human society. Never underestimate the possible evil that lurks in the hearts of wicked men! Evil should be punished

and defeated when the evil first manifests itself. Tolerated, it soon grows to be a monster. This is a lesson parents must learn as well as the courts. When an evil person or evil enterprise arises, it is not enough to hack at the branches of it, we must deal with the root to defeat it. Solomon rightly observed, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccle. 8:11).

We Christians can take comfort, knowing that Evil will be defeated, punished and banished from the presence of God and the saved. The lake of fire is the destiny of all who die in their evil way (Rev. 20:10; 21:8).

XXXVI.

SATAN: THE ENEMY WE ARE UP AGAINST

God's Word identifies the devil as the great adversary with whom we must deal (I Pet. 5:8). Our world abounds with evil governments, evil institutions, evil people, evil things, evil deeds and doctrines. Multitudes suffer greatly from these evils, yet many foolish people are hesitant to acknowledge the existence of Satan, the author of all evil.

God, in his book, has provided us a description of Satan. He is the adversary of God and all things good (I Pet. 5:8). He is the accuser of all who live godly lives (Rev. 12:10). Remember how he accused righteous Job before God (Job 1:9-11). He is the father of lies (John 8:44), the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9). He is a master of disguises. He sometimes appears as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14). He is a schemer who plots evil against God's people. He is a murderer of souls (John 8:44) and has caused millions of people to be struck down by the hand of others. Like a hungry lion, he is stalker and a predator (I Pet. 5:8).

Satan uses four methods to ensnare the souls of human beings. The first of these is *affliction*. He used pain and suffering in his efforts to destroy Job (Job. 1:13-19). With swift strokes, in a single day, he destroyed Job's children and swept away all of his possessions. When that failed to break Job's faith, he afflicted him with a horrible disease similar to small pox. He turned his wife and neighbors against the suffering man. Job was forced to live in isolation at the refuse dump (Job. 2:7-8).

Luke tells us of a woman who was afflicted by Satan for 18 long years (Luke 13:16). Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a "messenger of Satan" to torment him with pain (II Cor. 12:7). Among the afflictions Satan uses are physical, mental and emotional suffering, distress, fear, hopelessness, loss and betrayal.

Deception is another of Satan's devices. John calls Satan "the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). With deception he lures us to indulge in soul-wrecking sin. You may have heard his deceptions: "Nobody's perfect;" "It's no big deal;" "No one will ever know;" "This is your business, no one else will be hurt;" "You can quit whenever you want to;" "You have already gone too far;" "You know you can never be forgiven."

To keep us from turning to Christ for salvation, Satan tells us, "You are too wicked to be saved;" "You could never live up to the Christian standard;" "You are too old to change;" "It makes no difference what you believe so long as you are sincere;" "One church is as good as another;" "The church really doesn't matter as long as you live a good life;" "Baptism isn't really that important, as long as you live a good life." Mark it well, Satan is a liar, the father of lies (John

8:44). He is an ancient and highly skilled liar. He has no shame. His goal is to keep you from Christ, so he (Satan) can own and enslave you and use you for his own wicked purposes.

Distraction is an effective method of Satan. Jesus compared the minds and hearts of some people as a garden filled with weeds and thorns. He explained, “the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22). The author of Hebrews wrote that “sin..doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12:1). For every Christian who is overcome by wickedness, there are a hundred or more lost by distraction from their commitment to Christ. Satan leads us to get so involved with so many things that we lose interest in spiritual matters. Many are distracted by things that are insignificant and don’t really matter: hobbies, sports, clubs, lodges, etc. will keep millions out of heaven. We can allow other worldly people distract us. Problems in the church can distract us. Christ expects us to seek “first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matt.6:33). Whatever the cause of the distraction, Satan wins, and we lose.

Temptation is a key tool used by Satan to draw us away from God. He tempts us through many avenues: fear, sex, money, power embarrassment, peer pressure, desire for recognition and popularity, discouragement, bitterness, lack of forgiveness, loneliness, pride, harboring anger, resentment. All of these and more the Prince of Darkness will cast in our pathway, hoping to bring us down.

We dare not allow Satan to win in his efforts to capture our hearts. Never doubt his existence. Don’t underestimate him. He is evil, strong and determined to destroy you.

God has promised that we can be victorious against him. Will will not be tempted above what we are able to resist (I Cor. 10:13). The Holy Spirit in our hearts is greater “that he that is in the world” (I John 4:4). God’s written word is sufficient to defeat any temptation Satan presents (Matt. 4:1-11). God has provided adequate spiritual armor for the conflict. It is our duty to use it for our protection. We must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:11-18). It is essential that we resist the devil. When we do he will flee from us (James 4:7). Always keep in mind that there is not a single wound that Satan can inflict upon us, that the blood of Christ cannot cleanse and heal (I John 1:7). WE can and will be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

XXXVII.

SATAN’S BAG OF LIES

We are engaged in spiritual war. The issue to be decided is whether or not Churches of Christ shall continue to be Christ’s people, patterned after the church revealed in Scripture, or shall they be changed into a denomination? Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), uses disinformation to confuse and mislead God’s children. From our own ranks we read and hear the following lies:

* ***“The church cannot survive in the Postmodern age unless we make serious changes adjusting our message and practice to be acceptable to Postmodern people.”*** The church survived the power and pressures of Judaism and pagan Rome. He survived the hundreds of philosophies that have come and gone since her birth. She will survive this latest creation of human wisdom. She stood alone in the ancient world proclaiming Christ. Those who desired salvation flocked to her. She must continue to fulfill her divinely given commission today (Mark 16:15). By adjusting her message and practice to please the world she will be swallowed up and perish (Gal. 1:10).

* ***“She cannot criticize and pass judgment on the beliefs and practices of other religious bodies”*** Jesus passed judgment on the Pharisees and their false views (Matt. 23). Paul had no hesitation in condemning numerous religious leaders by name such as Hymenaeus and Alexander, Philetus, even Demas who forsook him. He also had no reservation about challenging doctrines that were contrary to the faith he had received from the Spirit of God (I Tim. 4:1-3).

* ***“All who believe in Christ as God’s Son are equally acceptable to God, regardless of their denominational affiliation.”*** This flies in the face of Christ’s prayer for the oneness of his people (John 17:20-21) It clashes with Paul’s exhortation that we all speak the same things and that there be no divisions among us (I Cor. 1:10). It clashes with every verse that condemns false doctrine, and false teachers. It denies Christ’s declaration that those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the will of the Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21).

* ***“Doctrines and practices unique to the Church of Christ are merely traditions and cultural expressions; not Biblically based and therefore essentials.”*** Yet each of these points; one non-denominational church, baptism by immersion for remission of sins, male leadership in the church, weekly communion on the Lord’s day, vocal praise without instruments of music are derived from the New Covenant of Christ and are plainly taught therein.

* ***“The Bible was not intended to be an absolute standard or pattern for the church!”*** Yet twice the Holy Spirit clearly says, that we must hold to the pattern revealed to us (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5). The question is shall we believe the Ph.Ds. or the Spirit of God? In judgment there will be two categories of Christians. Those who did their best to follow the instructions God gave and those who chose to do things their way. Which group do you want to be in?

* ***“The Bible does not need defending.”*** This is a favorite assertion of liberals who are subtly working to undermine respect for the absolute authority of God’s Word. Even though God’s Word, will stand forever (Matt. 24:35), people’s perception of it can be distorted, their faith in it can be destroyed! Paul was set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16).

* ***“The church does not need protecting, God will not allow it to be destroyed.”*** The Jerusalem church is gone and all of those of the first century perished. Perhaps they could explain what happened to the thousands of churches that were gradually swallowed up by the apostasy that became Catholicism, or those which once existed where Islam now reigns supreme. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that the church was in danger of false teachers (Acts 20:28-31). Churches have been destroyed in thousands of places. Congregations that once flourished as Churches of Christ are now Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches. Recently a preacher called to inform me that his congregation “no longer considered themselves a Church of Christ.”

The purpose of this lie is to convince the unthinking that they should do nothing to resist the efforts of false teachers to reconstruct the church according to their own pattern.

These are just a few of Satan’s lies. They are the kind many of our churches are hearing from preachers who have abandoned the old paths for the new ways of change! They now serve a different master and teach a different gospel (Gal. 1:9). They shall receive a different reward than those who are faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

XXXVIII.

DEVICES OF THE DESTROYER

While reading through an old handbook on how to deal with the strategies of psychological warfare I found the following methods for subverting and overthrowing a kingdom and gaining control over its citizens.

* The use of **“smooth and fair speech”** (Rom. 16:18) and **“beguiling the hearts of the innocent”** (Rom. 16:18). We must ever be alert that no man beguile us (II Thess. 2:3). Rather than blindly heed every teacher who comes our way we must prove them (I John 4:1). We must search the scriptures to see if a teacher’s message is from God (Acts 17:11).

* **The fear factor.** The fear of the ten spies caused not only them but the entire nation of Israel to fail to take Canaan. It doomed them to 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness and the death of a whole generation (Num. 13:25-14:35). We must never be afraid to confront evil or error.

- * The **pride project**. A Christian, lifted up with pride, will fall into the condemnation of the devil (I Tim. 3:6). False pride drives many a man to manipulate his congregation in his quest for worldly success.
- * The **lie oft repeated**. By using this propaganda device, the lie often repeated comes to be considered the truth by the masses. This is a favorite weapon of today's anti-Christian secularists. It also is used by apostates who continually tell brethren the church is mistaken or she will die unless she heeds their call for change.
- * The tool of **revising the history of a people**. Marxists and other secularists are doing this in our textbooks and class rooms. Ere long a people forget who they are, what their forefathers believed and stood for. The good appears to be bad and the bad appears to be good. With no historical roots they are at the mercy of their manipulators. False teachers are attempting to revise our spiritual history as well.
- * The **false shepherd** method. A true shepherd leads the sheep in safe pathways and provide them protection, refuge, food and water. A false shepherd leads the sheep into dangerous situations, he ignores their needs. He neglects and abuses them. He flees when predators appear (John 10:11-14). Elders and preachers can be either true or false shepherds.
- * The **wolf in sheep's clothing** strategy (Matt. 7:15). Predatory teachers present themselves to a church as faithful Christians. Trusting them, the sheep have no fear. When the time is right the wolf strikes, rending and scattering the flock.
- * The **mask of love and kindness**. This is a common tool of the liberal church wrecker. He feigns piety, love and kindness. When the flock is thoroughly deceived, he reveals his true agenda to lead them away from Christ and his church.
- * There is the **Edenic approach**. Satan snared Eve by assuring her God did not mean what he had clearly said about the forbidden fruit. He convinced her there was no punishment for disobedience. He promised she would be her own god by acquiring the forbidden knowledge (Gen. 3:1-6). Elements of this approach are yet used false teachers.
- * There is the **angel of light effect** (II Cor. 11:14). Paul warned the Corinthians about this tactic. The preacher appears to be as pure and grand as an angel from heaven. Only later does the congregation learn that he is really Satan's agent in disguise. Sadly many never figure this out.
- * There is the **"we want to be like our neighbors"** approach. This was the failure of the Hebrews (I Sam. 8:5,20). One of humanity's greatest weaknesses is the fear of standing alone and being different. We are easily drawn astray by the desire to be like other religious groups.
- * The **"we must compete in this Postmodern age"** strategy. The logic is, to accomplish this goal the people must compromise their faith in God's standard. Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). Satan says "Oh, but you must do so to survive." Being competitive with the world trumps faithfulness to God's word.
- * There is the **discrediting tactic**. The false, Judaizing teachers could not answer Paul's teaching so they set about to discredit him as a man of God. They said he was not truly an apostle, that he was a man-pleaser, that he was an unfaithful Jew and that he taught a flawed gospel. This tool is widely used today to discredit those past and present who dare to challenge the teachers of error who arise among us..
- * There is the **peace at any price** method. Jeremiah warned of those who preached "peace, peace, when there is no peace." (Jer. 8:11). In the name of preserving peace the voice of truth is silenced;, the conscience of multitudes is stifled, false teachers enjoy free course in churches and false teaching is able to flourish .
- * There is the **pragmatic weapon**. If it works it must be good and pleasing to God. Under this banner all sorts of innovations and changes have been thrust upon the church. People were deceived into thinking since the innovations have increased their attendance they must be blessed of God. They have only passed the people's test. They have yet to face the judgement of Jehovah's Son who straitly warned us not to add to nor take from his word (Rev. 22:18-19) and not to go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:;6; II John 9-10).

To be aware of and familiar with these devilish devices makes it easy for us to recognize and reject them when the false teacher comes and presents his package to us. Let us "be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might!" (Eph.6:10).

SOLDIERS WHO FIGHT FOR CHRIST

The Bible clearly describes Christians as soldiers in the army of Christ. Jesus has enrolled us as soldiers (II Tim. 2:4). He has amply provided us with armor and our weapon (Eph. 6:10-17). He has identified our chief adversary as the devil. Satan's agents are principalities, powers, world rulers of this darkness and hosts of wicked spirits (Eph. 6:11-12). Our mission is to cast down strongholds, imaginations and "every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and (to bring) every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ..." (II Cor. 10: 4-5).

As Christ's warriors, we must be willing to "suffer hardship...as ... good soldier(s).." (II Tim. 2:3). We will not entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. Our one aim will be to please him who enrolled us as his soldiers (II Tim. 2:4).

To be counted faithful, we must "fight the good fight of the faith..." (I Tim. 6:12). Observation tells us that not all of Christ's soldiers clearly understand just what is involved in "the good fight of the faith."

- * Our battle is spiritual, not physical (II Cor. 10:3-4).
- * Our weapons are the sword of truth and fervent prayer (Eph. 6:17-19). Faith is essential if we are secure the victory (I John 5:4)
- * We fight for our God against every atheist, infidel and pagan who raises his hand or voice against Him.
- * We fight for the Lord Jesus and against Satan his archenemy.
- * We fight against those pagan religions that hold millions of souls under their power.
- * We fight for his church; to advance her borders and to protect her from her enemies, whether within or without.
- * We fight against every corrupt, counterfeit religion that presents itself to humanity as Christ's church.
- * We fight for Christ's truth. Since God's truth frees people from sin and error (John 8:32), Satan wants it ignored, discredited or banned if possible.
- * We fight for the moral and spiritual standards of Christ that are revealed in his Word. We fight against every man and every system that seeks to undermine or overthrow those sacred standards.
- * We are not to spend our time "beating the air," i.e., shadow boxing, or playing at war (I Cor. 9:26). This many preachers prefer to do rather than confront the enemy on the field of battle.
- * We must never make war against our fellow-Christians who are faithfully serving God.
- * Nor are we to make war over our own opinions, ideas and favorite issues.

Sad to sad many men seem to find these three things more exciting and satisfying than meeting the real enemies of Christ.

- * Heaven forbid that we should ever be found fighting against God!
- * We must fight the battle that before us at the present time. A man might inform himself about Arianism, Sabellianism and be militant in opposing it. But we are not troubled by these ancient heresies today! He might be mighty in understanding the hyper-Calvinism of the Primitive Baptists and ready to fight them, one or all, but they are no longer the active enemy we face. Martin Luther understood this and expressed the idea well:

"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing

Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”

We fight, not for the delight of fighting or for hatred of those who oppose us. We fight because of our undying love for our Savior, his church and his truth. It is our obligation to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37-38). May each of us be good soldiers of Christ who never turn our backs to the enemies of our Sovereign King.

THE END

