

PT015

Journal of Christian Reconstruction 1:2 (Winter, 1974) © Covenant Media Foundation, www.cmfnow.com

The Person, Work, and Present Status of Satan

By Dr. Greg Bahnsen

The intellectual irony of the previous decade is that, while secular and post-radical theologians have consorted to nullify the supernatural deity of Scripture, there has been a tidal wave of publications and reprints on Satan and occultism. God may be meaningless or dead, but Satan is alive and well on planet earth (or so we are told). A separate section devoted exclusively to literature on occultism and demonology has of necessity been set up in many Christian and secular bookstores; only someone dedicated solely to Satan-ology could keep abreast of the literature and social developments centering around these topics.

The ancient church at Thyatira lived amidst a society economically dominated by trade guilds, politically dominated by immoral pagans, culturally dominated by licentious activities, and religiously dominated by idolatry and mysticism. Like the church in this day, the church at Thyatira had to be reminded that all power and authority in heaven and on earth belonged to the resurrected Messiah (cf. Matt. 28:18) and that He promised to exercise control over the nations through His people (Rev. 2:26-27). It was God's kingdom, not Satan's which would have the dominance. However, as though Satan wielded the central power over history, a heretical and mystical sect within the church prided themselves in an alleged doctrinal comprehension (as they say) of "the deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2:24). Their emphasis fell on the prince of darkness rather than the Light of the world, and yet through their concentrated probing into the things of Satan these "Jezebelites" deceptively thought they had improved their Christian walk!

A large segment of the church today has also concentrated its pessimistic attention on Satan and his powers. Along with the flood of literature on this topic has come the virtual claim by some authors to disclose "the deep things of Satan" and the claim of many other authors that Satan is the key factor in the playing out of the present dispensation. Like the church at Thyatira, the modern church has lost sight of the fact that the darkness cannot overcome the light (John 1:5); as a result it cowers before the works of darkness rather than reproofing them (Eph. 5:11). Reams are written, despairingly turning the world over to Satan and the antichrist. The theme of overcoming which plays a crucial part of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 has been either reinterpreted or expunged. Satan has come to occupy center stage until sometime after the "secret rapture" (the ultimate retreatist doctrine), and the solid conviction of Martin Luther seems to have become eclipsed:

And though this world with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

In light of the information about Satan which is reaching publication in these days, the believer needs to be aware of the perspective on Satan which is set forth in the Scriptures of the New Covenant. Only such revelational teaching provides a proper standard against which current studies can be measured for accuracy, orthodoxy, and ethical value. The following pages will attempt to summarize what the New Testament reveals about Satan and his work. We concentrate on the revelation of the New Covenant out of consideration for the limitations of an article length study, but more importantly because of the momentous and considerably relevant alteration of Satan's status in the interadventual period. Our conclusions shall be organized under eight important designations of Satan in the New Testament; these designations themselves conveniently summarize the various facets reflected in the biblical doctrine of Satan, as well as leading away from the beguilement of Thyatira.

The Worthless One (Beliar)

II Corinthians 6:15 is a good place to look for a general characterization of Satan. in the course of exhorting believers to refrain from compromise with the unbelieving world of sin, Paul sets out a series of antithetical contrasts. Righteousness has no fellowship with lawlessness (vs. 14; cf. Rom. 6:19; Heb. 1:9), just as light is incompatible with darkness (cf. Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8; I Pet. 2:9; I John 1:5). The forces of righteousness and light have a captain over them, even as the forces of lawlessness and darkness have a captain over them; Paul accordingly makes the contrast more personal. He advances from the more abstract ethical terms to a contrast between two named individuals: Christ and Beliar (one of a few variations of "Belial"). The antithesis between these two is perhaps enhanced by the fact that, in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, "Beliar" denotes not only the first fallen angel and accuser of God's people (i.e., Satan) but also the antichrist.

On the one hand we have "Christ," God's "anointed." He is God's elect and favored one, one in whom is found utmost worth, and one who deserves highest praise. The one whom God anoints is filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 61:1) and typifies adherence to righteousness: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. 45:7). In comparison to the value of Christ, all other things must be esteemed as loss and dung (Phil. 3:8). Thus God's Anointed, the Messiah, is the epitome of lawfulness and is of the highest worth. But over against "Christ" there is "Beliar." In the Old Testament "belial" was used as a descriptive adjective for wicked men, especially those who were guilty of gross immorality and rebellion against authority. It had the general sense of worthlessness ("without profit, benefit, or use"). Through a slight modification of the word's derivation, the rabbinic tradition interpreted "belial" as one "without yoke," that is, one who is rebellious, unrestrained, or lawless. The idea that belial is one who refused the law's yoke is reinforced by the fact that the Septuagint translates "belial" as "lawlessness" both in a generic sense and as applying to persons. Intertestamental literature definitely identified Satan as "Beliar." Similarly, Paul uses "Beliar" as a title for Satan in II Corinthians 6:15, thereby taking him as the paradigm of lawlessness and worthlessness. Beliar and Christ stand in irresolvable antagonism; there is no harmony ("symphony" is cognate to the original Greek word) between the two.

Here, then, we have a basic characterization with which we can begin our analysis of Satan. Paul presents him, not simply as a principle, symbol, or impersonal force, but as the coordinate member in his series of contrasts to the person of Christ. Satan is a person. He cannot be rationalized away as a pre-scientific myth or literary personification. He moves (I Pet. 5:8), works (Eph. 2:2), knows (Rev. 12:12), speaks (Matt. 4:3), plots (II Cor. 2:11), desires (Luke 22:31), disputes (Jude 9), deceives (II Cor. 11:3), feels emotion (Rev. 12:12; I Tim. 3:6; James 2:19), tempts (I Thess. 3:5), makes promises (Matt. 4:9), sins (I John 3:8), and engages in many other activities of a personal nature.

Of course Satan is more than simply a person, according to Paul in II Corinthians 6:15. He is a worthless and lawless person, the personal representative of darkness and unrighteousness. From what the New Testament teaches us, the fall of Satan is to be attributed to his apostasy from the truth (John 8:44) and condemnable pride (I Tim. 3:6). Arrogating to himself prerogatives which were not his own, Satan did not stand firm in the truth. Consequently he did not keep his original

condition or rank (cf. Jude 6). When he fell, he led astray a host of angels with him, as Jude 6 indicates by mentioning a plurality of apostate angels. Indeed, unless the mention of a third of the stars being cast onto the earth in Revelation 12:4 is merely a figure used to express the size or influence of the red dragon with respect to the imagery of that passage, it would seem that a significant minority of the angels (symbolized by stars; cf. Rev. 9:1, where Satan appears as a star) fell along with him (just as they are later deprived of certain power along with him; cf. Rev. 12:9). Not content with simply this following, Satan also applied himself to the project of winning man's disobedient allegiance to him. Historically, he is responsible for beguiling Eve (II Cor. 11:3) and thereby initiating, through his lies, the spiritual death of the human race (cf. John 8:44). The disapprobation felt toward Satan by the inspired writers is manifest from their designation of him as the evil one (Matt. 6:13; 13:19, 38; John 17:15; Eph. 6:16; I John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19), slanderer (Matt. 4: 1, 11; Luke 4:2, 6; I Tim. 3:6-7; II Tim. 2:26; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:9; 20:2), adversary (I Pet. 5:8), enemy (Matt. 13:28-29), accuser (Rev. 12:10), destroyer (I Cor. 10:10), and a world-ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12); they recoil from him as a liar and murderer (John 8:44), angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11), roaring lion (I Pet. 5:8), red dragon (Rev. 12:3-17; 20:2), and the old serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; II Cor. 11:3). He represents nothing constructive, profitable, or good.

Finally, II Corinthians 6:15 portrays Satan as in utter opposition to the person of Christ and everything He represents; there is no point at which Satan and Beliar can harmonize with Christ. Satan is devoted to the work of hindering and destroying the kingdom of God (whether or not that is a realistic aim). To that end he appears, not only as the tempter of the first Adam, but also as the tempter of Jesus Christ, the Second Adam. Immediately after Jesus' baptism, He went into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who made an all-out assault upon the divine approval Jesus had received at his baptism as well as presuming authority over the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan endeavored to induce Jesus to betray His calling, submit to the kingdom of darkness, and thus to abandon the establishment of God's kingdom. Satan was fighting for his life, just as Jesus persevered in the face of the devilish onslaught in order to redeem, reclaim, and remake the lives of His elect people. The confrontation in the wilderness was a deadly serious battle between two kingdoms, and Christ won that battle where both Satan and Adam had failed not through autonomous power, but through complete obedience to the will of God. Unlike Satan, Jesus was willing to humble himself (cf. Phil. 2:7-8), and He abided in the truth (cf. John 1:14,17).

In addition to showing us the principal defeat of Satan, this account also reveals Satan's character as the bitter antagonist to God's Anointed and the Messiah's kingdom. He expresses this antagonism by working in individuals (Eph. 2:2) both body (Luke 13:16) and mind (Luke 22:3), by working through the natural world (Luke 8:23-24, where Jesus rebuked the waves just as He rebuked the demons, e.g., Mark 9:25), by working in social behavior (Luke 8:27) and relations (II Cor. 2:5-11), by working in intellectual matters (I Tim. 4:1), by working in political affairs (Rev. 12-13), and by working in religious affairs, whether in false sects (II Cor. 11:14-15) or in the true way by distorting (Gal. 4:8-9) and competing with (Matt. 13:39) the preaching of the gospel. There is no facet of life which Satan will avoid in his project of hindering Christ's kingdom. He is a worthless person who at no point harmonizes with Christ. He is, in short, "Beliar."

The Prince of the Demons

According to Scripture, not only are there angels of God (Matt. 22:30; Luke 12:8; 15:10; John 1:51), but by contrast there are also "angels of Satan" (Matt. 25:41; II Cor. 12:7; Rev. 12:7, 9). These are designated "demons." While there are many daimonia (demons) mentioned in the Bible, there is only one diabolos (devil). A significant minority of the created angels sinned along with Satan and together with him were cast out (II Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:4), thereby becoming demons under the leadership of the devil. Accordingly, Satan is called "the prince of demons" in Matthew 9:34. Paul denominates him "the prince of the powers of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and in Revelation 9:11 he is considered "king over" the swarm from the abyss. Just as Christ is the head of His church, the kingly ruler over His disciples, so also Satan is the leader of the demonic host; he has an army of disobedient spirits at his command. These demons are wicked, unclean, and vicious (Matt. 8:28; 10:1; Mark 5:2-5; 9:20; Acts 19:15). Moreover, there are degrees of wickedness among them (Matt. 12:45), and some are harder to exorcise than others (Matt 17:21). Some scriptures lay out various categories of angels and demons (Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15), which suggests the possibility of a hierarchy of demons although the various combinations of titles makes it impossible for us to establish firmly what the gradation would be. This much is certain: Satan is their prince or ruler, surpassing all in authority as well as in degree of wickedness and strength.

Not a few have held that Matthew 12:43-45 and Mark 5:12 demonstrate that demons long to occupy physical bodies and that this is their primary modus operandi. However, the former passage seems to be a parable pertaining, not merely to individuals, but to whole cultures or societies that attempt to be neutral toward Christ. The latter passage most likely represents simply a diversionary tactic (and an unsuccessful one at that) on the part of the demons. But whether or not possession of physical (especially human) bodies is standard procedure for demons, the New Testament's accounts of demon possession are plenteous (there are at least fifty-two instances of it in the gospels alone, where the word "demonic" occurs fifty-five times and the phrase "unclean" or "evil spirit(s)" appears twenty-eight times); classic instances of demon possession are those of the two men of Gergesenes (Matt. 8:28-34 and parallels), the dumb man (Matt. 9:32-33), the blind and dumb man (Matt. 12:22 and par.), the daughter of the Syrophenician (Matt. 15:22-29 and par.), the lunatic child (Matt. 17:14-18 and par.), the man in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-26 and par.), and Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9 and par.).

The Bible fully intends for us to understand by demon possession an actual occurrence, not merely a metaphorical description. The gospel accounts clearly distinguish between sickness and demon possession sometimes as separate phenomena and sometimes as cause and effect (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; Mark 1:32). It is noteworthy that Luke, a physician in his day, mentions both separately (Luke 4:33-36, 40-41; 6:17-18; 9:1-2). Moreover, the Lord addressed demons themselves as distinct from the person possessed (Matt. 17:18; 8:32; Mark 1:25, 34; 9:25). Finally, possession could be by a plurality of demons (Mark 5:9; 16:9; Luke 11:26) and could take swine as its object; both of these facts would be superfluous embellishment if demon possession were simply a mythological way of speaking about mental illness (ironically, if anything is a myth it is the alleged phenomena of mental illness not demon possession!). Demon possession could have a profound and dominating influence on one's body (Mark 9:17-26), will (John 13:27), words (Mark 1:23) and mind (Mark 5:1-18). The demoniac could lose control over himself, and that against his will (cf. Luke 9:39). The possibility of demon possession in this day will be discussed briefly below.

The Bible gives further information about demons. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul describes Satan as "the prince of the power of the air," an allusion which has at least three lessons to it. First, the demonic controllers of sinful rebellion (darkness) over whom Satan rules are incorporeal powers of darkness (cf. Eph. 6:12). Second, these spiritual agents fill the air (cf. Eph. 3:10-12) or occupy the atmosphere around the earth; that is, Paul vividly portrays them as inhabiting our world, as being spiritual forces within reach of us and with whom we contend (cf. Eph. 6:12). And thirdly, because non-material evil powers are at work throughout the world, they create an ethical atmosphere or pervading outlook in a culture (notice how "power of the air" is parallel to "age [spirit, course] of this world" in Eph. 2:2); because the sons of disobedience have the prince of the power of the air working in them, they walk in the vanity of their minds (Eph. 4:17). A society or culture can come into an intellectual frame of mind which is properly designated "demonic"; it can develop an atmosphere of opinion which is worthless, lawless, and destructive just as Beliar himself is.

Nevertheless, it must not be thought that Satan and his demonic army are ultimately independent of God, constituting a genuine rival force in the universe. In Revelation 9:1-11 we read that Satan, as angel of the abyss, releases his demons (symbolized as terrible and powerful locusts) upon the earth. Notice, however, that they are subject to God's control (vs. 1: authority to open the abyss had to be granted by God to Satan, the fallen star) and God's restraint (vs. 5: the power which the demons have is both limited by God and granted to them by God). This plague of locusts, along with those of hail (Rev. 8:7) and darkness (Rev. 8:12), are meant to harken back to the ten plagues sent by God on Egypt. In Revelation 9, God is represented as punishing the new "Egypt" (where Christ was crucified, Jerusalem; cf. Rev. 11:8) by unleashing the terror of demons upon its unbelief and rebellion as a form of historical torment and judgment. While Satan may be prince of the demons, he nevertheless receives his power from God alone; the demonic host is in the final analysis at God's command, doing His sovereign bidding, and serving His divine ends. Whatever terrible work the demons do in the world is done under the sway of the Lord God Almighty and done in terms of His wise plan. When demonic activity is rampant in a society, we should see there God's punishment upon, rejection of, or apostasy from, the gospel that is, judgment upon the demonic atmosphere of mind which has developed.

Not only does Scripture teach us that God alone is the ultimate Sovereign and thus that the demons are under His control, restraint, and direction, but it teaches that even now these demons are enchained by God. God did not spare the angels who sinned but cast them into Tartarus (the vilest province of hell), committing them to chains (the oldest and most reliable reading, rather than "pits") of darkness, reserved unto judgment (II Pet. 2:4). Jude confirms that the angels who did not keep their first rank but abandoned their proper domain (the position assigned by God under His rule) have been kept by God in everlasting fetters or bonds (the word is used of chains, e.g., in Luke 8:29, Acts 16:26; 22:30) under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). The demons have been under lock and key since the moment of their apostasy; there has never been any question that whatever activities they engage in are yet under the governance of God, who is but setting them aside for ultimate damnation. The work of demons must be viewed constantly in terms of the chains that now restrain them. Their doom is sure. As Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 teach, the lake of fire has been prepared for the eternal doom of Satan and his demons; this is now their proper habitat and destination. These passages show us, in passing, that the fact that the demons are enchained does not mean that they are completely devoid of power

and utterly without influence in the world. They have been committed to chains from the time of their fall into sin, and yet the Gospel records show them to have been extensively active, just as Revelation 9 teaches that God makes them serve His purposes in history. Thus, being enchained does not imply being destroyed or immobilized; it simply signifies that the demons are strictly under God's control and restrained in their activities. Their operations never set them free from the ultimate end to which God's chains have assigned them. God observes a kind of *lex talionis*: the angels who did not keep their first position are now being kept by God for eternal damnation.

The Destroyer (Abaddon, Apollyon)

We turn now to examine the nature and effect of Satan's work in the world. Looking back briefly to Revelation 9, where Satan is portrayed as the leader of a host of demons who are unleashed in judgment upon Jerusalem, we notice that the work of these demons is described as that of terrible destruction: darkness (vs. 2), terror, and despondence (vs. 6). In general, they work to produce darkness and wickedness (cf. Eph. 6:12), and when they are unleashed in historical judgment (as they were in Jerusalem's tribulation of A.D. 70) circumstances become so desperate that men prefer death to living (cf. Luke 23:27-30). Therefore, the influence of Satan's host is dreadful: darkness, despair, death, and destruction. Satan's work is not constructive; it aims to deprive men and the world of the goodness of life and the creation through the negative forces of disobedience, disorder, deception, and disease. Consequently, Revelation 9:11 assigns a descriptive name to Satan, a name which characterizes the effect of Satan's operations. The name is given first in Hebrew and then in Greek, lest there be any mistake about its meaning. He is "Abaddon," the epithet for Hades in the Old Testament (Job 26:2; 28:22; 31:12; Prov. 15:11; 27:20; Ps. 88:12), meaning "destruction." It is personified in Job 28:22, which makes the reference in Revelation 9:11 especially appropriate, since there Satan is designated the angel of the bottomless pit. He personifies the province from which he operates, bringing "hell on earth" (as we say). The personification of hell in Satan is indicated in the Greek form of his name, "Apollyon"; this is the participle for the verb meaning "to destroy," thus being rendered "Destroyer." Satan is "Destruction," and indeed the "Destroyer" himself (cf. I Cor. 10:10; Heb. 2:14). His goals are purely negative, and he effects nothing beautiful, true, or good.

Satan can bring sickness and bodily ailments, such as convulsions (Mark 9:18, 20, 26), self-injury (Luke 4:35; Mark 9:18, 22), deafness and dumbness (Mark 9:17-27). Luke the physician speaks of a woman who had "a spirit caused infirmity," being "bound by Satan" with a spinal deformity for eighteen years (Luke 13:11, 16). When demons are cast out of a man he is said to be "healed" or "made whole" (Luke 8:36). Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is considered a "messenger of Satan" (II Cor. 12:7). And Peter summarizes the ministry of Jesus by saying that He went about "healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). Satan works decay and misery in the physical world.

He also has the power to bring certain circumstances under his control. Through the action of the council, Satan hindered Paul from returning to Thessalonica (I Thess. 2:18). Through political persecution, Satan can have Christians cast into prison (Rev. 2:10). Revelation 13 shows Satan to be the animating power of the political "beast," and Paul discerned that the coming of the "man of lawlessness" (a political figure) was "after the working of Satan" (II Thess. 2:9). Pergamum was the center for the emperor cult in the province round about; the believers were commanded there to say "Caesar is lord." Satan was also active there in persecuting the church and bringing about the martyrdom of believers such as Antipas. Therefore, "Satan's throne" and "dwelling" are said to be there (Rev. 2:13). Satan brings about corruption and lawlessness in the political order, thereby inspiring opposition to the kingdom of God.

Satan endeavors to tempt the godly into sinning (Matt. 4:1; I Cor. 7:5; I Thess. 3:5), thereby gaining the title of "tempter." He incites to apostasy and murmuring (I Cor. 10:10). The Holy Spirit gives a new heart to God's people, and thus God is said to work in believers (Phil. 2:13; cf. I Cor.

12:6; Eph. 3:20; Col. 1:29) both to will and to work for His good pleasure. By contrast, Satan appeals to the old heart of the sinner and energetically works in him; since he works in the children of disobedience they walk according to Satan (Eph. 2:1-2) so that they follow the desires of the sinful nature (vs. 3). Unbelievers are viewed as the work of the enemy (Matt. 13:28); they are "sons of the evil one," being tares sown by him in God's field, the world (Matt. 13:38). He would gladly overrun the kingdom of God, destroying it by people whose lives he has already spiritually destroyed. Not only does Satan tempt men to sin, play upon their sinful natures, and propagate rebellion against the gospel in the world, he actually puts sin within the heart of the reprobate. Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus Christ (John 13:2; cf. Luke 22:3), and at the last supper Satan entered Judas, leading him to carry out the wicked deed (John 13:27). Satan also put the sin of lying in the heart of Ananias (Acts 5:3). Satan is constantly scheming to prod, provoke, and produce sin with man thereby effecting spiritual death. As the author of disobedience, Satan once had the power of its consequence death though not with respect to God's people apart from God's permission (Ex. 12:23; Job 1: 12-2:6). Hence Hebrews 2:14 speaks of "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Like darkness and destruction, death is not part of God's order but is the realm the ethical realm of Satan. He tries to make death subservient to his ends, enticing men to follow after the ways of death rather than the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the destroyer of the natural man's ethical integrity and spiritual life.

Satan also works his havoc in the world of thought, which explains why Scripture designates him a "liar" (John 8:44). He works to distort God's word (Gal. 4:8-9), snatch it away when it is preached (Matt. 13:19), and replace it with the "doctrine of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). Unbelievers lack a genuine knowledge of the truth because they are caught in "the snare of the devil" (11 Tim. 2:26). One of Satan's key tasks is the deception of the world, and so he is known as "the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9; e.g., I John 2:22; 4:2). Toward that end he corrupts the mind of man (II Cor. 11:3), making it prone to be led astray; he also has "blinded the minds of the unbelieving that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (II Cor. 4:4). This causes the unregenerate to serve Satan as though he were their god (cf. Rom. 1: 18-25). By initiating sin, Satan became responsible for its consequences: in this case, an inability to perceive the splendor of the gospel which can only mean final damnation. Through his lies Satan becomes a murderer as well (cf. John 8:44). The destructive work Satan does in the world of thought is especially dangerous, for he can make rebellion and lies seem plausible and right. Since his domain is that of darkness (Luke 22:53; Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13), he has nothing in common with the realm of light (II Cor. 6:14). However, Satan proceeds to imitate God (cf. I John 1:15) by masquerading as "an angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14). His subtlety is unsurpassed; he does not make his erroneous doctrines appear for what they are, the fabrication of a wicked mind, but disguises them as wholesome or reasonable options. Since Satan did not abide in the truth he works hard to destroy man's stand in the truth, using any device he can in order to deceive, corrupt, and blind man's thinking.

Another central activity of Satan is the slandering of God's people (Rev. 12:10); he brings false accusations against them in order to see to their spiritual death. Thus he is a murderer (John 8:44). But his murderous designs extend beyond the spiritual realm to the physical world as well. As well as delivering slander, the devil creates persecution for the godly. When the Jews sought to kill Jesus (John 8:40-41), He said that they were following the desires of their father the devil, who was "a murderer from the beginning" (vs. 44) referring to the diabolical origin of Cain, who

murdered his brother (I John 3:12). Satan inspires persecution and martyrdom for Christians (Rev. 2:9-10). Knowing that his time is short, Satan operates on earth with great wrath (Rev. 12:12). Therefore, Christians must be serious and alert about Satan (I Pet. 5:8), for their "adversary walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Satan traverses the earth and has access to us (cf. Job 2:2). Many commentators have misinterpreted the allusion in I Peter 5:8 by overlooking the fact that it is Satan's walk (not himself personally) that is likened to a lion, and by failing to take cognizance that it is a roaring lion (not a stealthily stalking lion) that Peter takes for comparison to Satan's walk. Satan is not himself a lion, but his walk or behavior in the world can be likened to the walk of a roaring lion. A roaring lion was an Old Testament symbol for savage opposition and one's enemies (Ps. 22:13-14; Prov. 28:15; Isa. 5:29; Zeph. 3:3); to be "saved from the lion's mouth" was a figure for deliverance from one's persecutor (Ps. 22:21; II Tim. 4:17). Lions do not roar when sneaking up on their prey (for obvious reasons); instead, they roar in order to instill fear and to express a ferocious nature (e.g., Judges 14:5) or as part of a vicious attack upon an intruder (e.g., Dan. 6:22). Thus the lion's roar was metaphorical for the wrath and threat of a monarch (Prov. 19:12; 20:2). In I Peter 5:8, we do not see Satan represented in his secret and subtle activities as the adversary of God's people; we see him as the ferocious threat brought by persecutors (especially political oppressors) against believers. Peter explains the threat of the roaring lion as "sufferings" in the next verse, and in 4:12 he had forewarned his readers of the "fiery trial" that was soon to descend upon them. As a lion seeks someone to devour, so Satan walks through the earth activating physical persecution against Christians. He would try to drive them to faithlessness and apostasy through the violent opposition he engenders. In the short time that he has left to him, Satan expresses great wrath against God's people. If he cannot destroy them by deception, he aims to destroy them (spiritually) through fear, or to destroy them (physically) through martyrdom.

So then, we have seen Satan's destructive influence in the physical world (e.g., sickness), the political world (e.g., lawlessness), the spiritual world (e.g., temptation, sin, death), the intellectual world (e.g., distorting, deceiving, blinding), the ethico-judicial realm (e.g., slander before God), and the social realm (e.g., violent persecution). Everything he comes into contact with is degraded and destroyed. Shortly before the return of Christ in final judgment on the world, Satan will be released from the restraints that are now upon him, so that he will pursue his destructive bent with even greater intensity (Rev. 20:7-10). He will deceive again with the effectiveness he had in the Old Testament era. He will inflict plague and disease on the earth. He will turn the nations and kings of the earth against the Messiah and His church with severe persecution. Lawlessness and apostasy will characterize the day. But that day will be a short period in contrast to the long era of gospel prosperity which precedes it. That day does serve to impress upon us the nature and effect of Satan's operations; it illustrates the appropriateness of his title, "Destruction and Destroyer."

The Dung-god or Lord of the Flies (Beelzebul)

The fact that Satan is to be loosed at the end of the present era, working his final deeds of darkness on earth, has somehow misled many theologians to interpret his titles, "prince of this world" and "god of this age," as though he were presently the dominant force in world history. They see these epithets as teaching that Satan has all power and authority in this dispensation and in the province of planet Earth. Satan's destructive work at the very end of this era is erroneously taken to explain the status of Satan at the present time. Since it is assumed that the world is virtually under Satan's control until the battle of Armageddon, "prince of this world" and "god of this age" are correspondingly taken to mean that the spatio-temporal realm that now exists is under Satanic management. But this is to misinterpret the titles. It is also to overlook the fact that Satan is loosed at the end of the era to exercise his great destructive influence; he does not have that extensive influence until he is loosed by God from present restraints. That means that the degree of sway he has in world history at present is not continuous with the degree he will have in the final brief period of history. That period will be extraordinary. It will surpass the ordinary influence of Satan because of his unloosening. Therefore, the titles applied to Satan above must be understood in terms of Satan's present restricted status and not interpreted in terms of his future, extraordinary sway in the world.

What then does it mean that Satan is "the prince of this world" and "god of this age"? If it does not mean that he has the upper hand in directing world affairs, determining the results of evangelism, deceiving the thinking of men, and sowing discord in every area of life, how should we understand these phrases? I would maintain that they cannot be properly interpreted until we have ascertained the meaning of "world" and "this age" as they are used by the writers who record the titles for us.

It is quite common for the term "world" to be used, not in a geographic sense, but in an ethical sense; here it denotes the immoral realm of disobedience rather than the all-inclusive, extensive scope of creation. The "world" represents the life of man apart from God and bound to sinful impulses. Thus, when scriptural writers speak of "the world," they often mean the world in so far as it is ethically separated from God. Paul contrasts godly sorrow to the sorrow of the world; the former brings salvation, while the latter leads to death (II Cor. 7:10). If "world" here meant the geographic scope of creation (embracing all men and things), then the "sorrow of the world" would include the sorrow of any and all men who live in the world—thus precluding the possibility of any earthdweller repenting with godly sorrow and finding salvation. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of "godly" with "worldly" would require if "world" denotes a location rather than an ethical state that "godly" correspondingly denote a physical realm or location; otherwise Paul's contrast would not be categorical and mutually exclusive (i.e., some sorrow could be simultaneously godly and located in the world). Paul is clearly using "world" for the unethical state of sinful rebellion, and thus can contrast it to the ethical state of godliness. In Colossians 2:8, Paul apositionally explains "the elementary principles of the world" as philosophy which is "not according to Christ." Hence the elements of "the world" (cf. Gal. 4:3) stand in direct antithesis to Christ. Here the world is the unethical sphere of opposition to Christ. In Philippians 2:15, Christians are called "lights in the world" that is, "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The "world" is not each and every human being, but rather the generation which is perverse and crooked; the term is qualitative rather than quantitative. It has an ethical, not geographical, focus. The world in its wisdom knows not God, and God makes the world's wisdom

foolish (I Cor. 1:20, 21; cf. 3:19). The world is that realm which is under God's condemnation (I Cor. 11:32), for to walk "according to the course of this world" is to follow Satan and to be a "son of disobedience" and therefore a "child of wrath" (Eph. 2:2-3). From these verses it is evident that "world" denotes the ethical sphere of sinful rebellion.

This use of the term is not exclusive to Paul. James says that "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (4:4); thus "true religion... [is] to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (1:27). Again, the word is obviously being used in an ethical sense for sinful pollution and antagonism to God. Peter speaks of "the corruption that is in the world" (II Pet. 1:4) and "the defilements of the world" (2:20), thereby utilizing the term "world" in the same way that Paul and James use it. It is especially to be noted that the apostle John thinks of "the world" as the domain of disobedience, disbelief, and darkness. The world is in sin and therefore needs to be saved (John 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; 12:47; 16:8). The world is the place of darkness, ethically speaking, into which the light (God's holy Son, Jesus Christ) has shone (John 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). The world is spiritually dead and thus needs life given to it (John 6:33, 51 this clearly demonstrates that "world" cannot be taken in a natural sense, for the world (understood descriptively as the created order) is animated and alive. It is in an ethical or spiritual sense that the world needs life. To be "from beneath" (that is, "of your father, the devil" 8:44) is to be "of this world" (8:23); consequently, Jesus categorically affirmed, even though He was born of a human mother on earth, that He was "not of this world." Even though Jesus powerfully sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the world could not receive, behold, or know Him (John 14:17; cf. I Cor. 2:14). The world is that aspect of humanity that rebels against the truth and is unregenerate; consequently, the elect are not of the world (John 15:19; 17:14, 16) even though they are chosen out of the world (John 17:6, 9).

John's ethical use of the term "world" for the realm of sin is perhaps nowhere so clear as in I John 2:15-17,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The world knows not God (I John 3:1) and therefore hates the Christian brotherhood (3:13) which indicates that "world" denotes a subclass of humanity, one which is ethically qualified. Those who are worldly listen to those who are likewise worldly and not of God (I John 4:5-6). John summarizes this contrast between the saved and the lost, the realm of light and life and the realm of darkness and death, the sphere of righteousness and the sphere of wickedness, by saying, "We know that we are of God, but the whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John 5:19). "The world" is not the geographical, created order; nor is it the whole of humanity. It is that aspect of reality, that portion of humanity, which is in the grip of Satan and not of God. The world is positioned in the evil one and does not have its source in God; the world is that realm which is dominated by Satan and his standards. It is correspondingly appropriate that Satan is designated by John as "he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). The world is in Satan, and Satan is in the world. This confirms the ethical understanding of the term "world" which has been discussed above, for the created realm certainly does have its origin in God and has God immanent to it. Thus, "the world" (which is not of God, but is characteristically in and occupied by Satan) cannot be identified with created

reality or the whole of humanity. "The world" must be interpreted (in the above passages) as an unethical spiritual realm, the kingdom of darkness, the city of reprobate man.

From the fact that "this world" is interchangeable with "this age" (e.g., I Cor. 1:20ff.; 2:16; 3:19), we infer that the phrase "this age" can also be understood as referring to an ethical or spiritual realm, rather than exclusively to a set period of time. From the perspective of New Testament theology, the "age to come" has broken in on "this age"; those who are saved now enjoy the presence of the future age. With the first advent of Christ, God's ordained moment has arrived (Gal. 4:4), the kingdom has drawn near (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9, 11), the great jubilee has arrived (Luke 4:16-21), the good news of the kingdom has come into effect (Luke 16:16; Matt. 11:2-15), the Old Testament promise has been realized (Rom. 1:2; 16:25-26), the messianic marriage supper has approached (Mark 2:18-22). With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the "last days" of Joel's prophecy have arrived, and God's Anointed is declared to be permanently enthroned in David's kingdom (Acts 2); this Spirit is our down payment ("earnest") on the future inheritance (I Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) and the firstfruits of the resurrection order (Rom. 8:23; cf. Col. 1:18). The kingdom of God and coming age have been installed. After a long period of anticipation, God has now spoken to us by His Son "at the end of these days" (Heb. 1:2). Christ has been manifested "at the end of the ages" (Heb. 9:26), "in the last times" (I Pet. 1:20). Consequently, "the ends of the ages has arrived" (I Cor. 10:11). The eschatological age has already begun, which means that "this age" and "the age to come" are coexistent during the present era. God's kingdom of salvation is already experienced by some, but rejected by others. The "coming age" and "this age" live side by side for a time. The redemptive work of Christ has delivered us from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13) that is, from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4). Being "in Christ" (in contrast to being "in the evil one," I John 5:19) means that the "new creation" has dawned, making the old things new (II Cor. 5:17; cf. 6:2). Therefore, it is now possible for men to "taste the power of the coming age" (Heb. 6:5). Two orders (old creation and new creation, spiritual death and regeneration, damnation and salvation) are presently operative, and the Bible expresses this fact by teaching that "this age" and "the coming age" are currently contemporaneous.

It should be evident from what has just been said that "this age" denotes an ethical sphere more than a temporal dispensation. "This age" is the realm of evil which stands in diametric contrast to redemption (Gal. 1:4). It is the opposite of a renewed mind and holy living (Rom. 12:2). Everything has been subjected under Christ, and the "all things" over which He reigns in blessing and in curse are analyzed into "this age" and "the coming age" (Eph. 1:21-22). To walk according to "this worldly age," then, is to be a child of wrath and follower of Satan, rather than to enjoy the blessings of "the coming age" (Eph. 2:2-7). It is to be part of the kingdom of darkness, which is antagonistic to the kingdom of God's dear Son. The wisdom of "this age" is contrary to godly wisdom (I Cor. 1:20; 2:6; 3:18), which does not mean that Christian philosophy is impossible during this era, but that godly thinking is antithetical to the deluded wisdom of unbelievers. That "this age" applies to the realm of rebellion against God is easy to see from II Timothy 4:10, where we learn that to love "the present age" is to forsake the kingdom of God. The cares "of the age" are deceitful lusts which choke God's word (Mark 4:19). Consequently, "this age" or "the present age" are at base the domain of sin; to live in the midst of "the present age" is identical with living amidst ungodliness (Tit. 2:12).

Therefore, we conclude that "this world" and "this age" both denote the immoral realm of disobedience against God, the life of man apart from God, the ethical sphere which is antagonistic to God rather than geographic and temporal spheres. While "this age" and "this world" are found in space and time, they are not fundamentally spatio-temporal entities. They are the spiritual kingdom of darkness. It is with this in mind that we can properly understand the designations of Satan as "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and "god of this age" (II Cor. 4:4). These titles mean something quite different from the interpretation that is often given for them in these days. They are not indications that Satan's power in the present era and on planet Earth are immense; nor do they mean that God's kingdom must, by definition (of Satan, as such a "prince" and "god"), be largely unsuccessful or non-influential until some (alleged) future binding of Satan. The present era in the created realm is not in the masterly grip of Satan, and it is simply wrong to support such an idea from Satan's being called "prince of this world" and "god of this age." These epithets simply mean that Satan heads up the unethical realm of disobedience; he is the captain of the ungodly and disbelieving, the prince of darkness. By labeling him "prince of this world," Scripture does not acknowledge any authority of his over the entire created realm; rather, it consciously dichotomizes the created order, seeing that the ungodly element of it (i.e., "the world") is led by "the evil one," Satan. By labeling him "god of this age," Scripture does not acknowledge him as having the dominating sway in world history up until the battle of Armageddon; instead, it consciously distinguishes between the kingdom of God ("the coming age") and the unrighteous forces of history (i.e., "this age") and accordingly views "the worthless, lawless one," Satan, as head over the latter. These titles, then, merely indicate that Satan is the ruler over all those who share his wicked nature. He leads one kingdom, while Christ governs another kingdom. The meager fact that Satan is captain of the ungodly (which is all that "prince of this world" and "god of this age" mean) tells us nothing about his strength and influence in the created realm (including human society) during the present era.

Indeed, if anything, these titles are derisive with respect to Satan's status and power. Whereas the living and true God makes His deity manifest to men (Rom. 1:19-20), Satan can secure a following of himself as God only by blinding his vassals (II Cor. 4:4). The "god of this age" is in reality a no-god (I Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8; cf. Ps. 96:5; Deut. 32:17), for God alone is "the King of the ages" (I Tim. 1:17). The title "prince of this world" is first introduced for Satan right after Jesus has said, "now is the judgment of this world," and just before He claims to call all men to himself (John 12:31-32). Thus, in calling Satan "the prince of this world," Jesus is certainly not paying him anything but a sarcastic compliment. Satan rules over a judged realm where he cannot hold men's allegiance! Jesus here indicated that, while the cross may have appeared a victory for Satan (to blinded eyes), in reality it was his undoing.

The epithets, "god of this age" and "prince of this world," have been shown to mean that Satan is the leader or ruler of the ungodly. We should summarize here what the New Testament says about his influence on unbelievers. The unchanged heart is under Satanic control; to be in the state of unbelief is to be under the power of Satan, for conversion is basically a permanent turning from darkness to light, "from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). In contrast to believers who are "in Christ" (I John 3:24; 4:15), the whole unbelieving world is described as lying "in the evil one" (I John 5:19). Just as God works in believers (cf. Phil. 2:13), Satan is at work in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-2) intoxicating them and then catching them alive to do his bidding, which is why Scripture says unbelievers must be "recovered out of the snare of the devil"

(II Tim. 2:26; cf. I Tim. 3:7). Because unbelief is the work of Satan, unbelievers are considered his sons (Matt. 13: 28, 38). The children of Satan do his deeds (John 8:41), partake of his desires (vs. 44). reject the word of God (vss. 43, 46, 47), pervert the ways of the Lord, turn men aside from the faith, and are enemies of all righteousness (Acts 13: 10). There is no middle category; all men fall into one of two classes: they are either born of God (cf. John I: 12-13) or are children of the evil one, being from below and of the world (cf. John 8:23; 17:16). John tells us how we may discern the children of the devil: "he that doeth sin is of the devil.... In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:8, 10). John goes on to give an illustration: Cain, who murdered his brother, manifested that family to which he belonged by his moral likeness to the head of his family. Those who fail to evidence righteousness and brotherly love give patent signs of their unregenerate, Satanic, character. We must not be deceived: one's spiritual lineage is determined by his ethical resemblance to the family head, either Jesus Christ the righteous or the devil (vs. 7).

While the influence of Satan upon unbelievers is manifest in their wicked deeds, Satan is even more interested in making them "religious people." Nothing is more deceptive than a religious sinner. Far from concentrating on the seamy areas of life to find Satanic results, we should rather look from the pub and parlor to the pulpit! Here the mastermind of Satan is evident, as he deceives men into thinking that they are not following him when in fact they are. Because of the blindness and spiritual dullness of unbelief, unbelievers are easily led to worship demons (Rev. 9:20), adhere to the doctrine of demons (I Tim. 4: 1) and follow Satanic ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15). Men will think of themselves as endorsing the true religion and being God's people, but they can do it in self-delusion. The assembly of those who falsely claim to be God's people (cf. Rom. 2:25, 28-29) are in actuality "a synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9)! The worship of demons is manifest in two ways. First, there is the participation in pagan. rites which bring us into contact with demonic powers (I Cor. 10:20). The fact that idols are no-gods does not render them neutral and harmless, for when we join in and have community with those who practice false worship, we have "communion with demons!" The second form of demon-worship is satanism. Those who worship "the beast" in the book of Revelation (that is, give implicit obedience to ungodly Rome and stand in awe of its threatening might) are those who also worship the dragon, Satan (Rev. 13:4). They replace the rule of God and God's law over them with the claims and regulations of the lawless state (Rev. 13:16; cf. Deut. 6:6, 8; Rev. 14:1, 9). Therefore, demon-worship can be found in both church and state.

It must not be thought, however, that those who would mislead people to sit in the synagogue of Satan and worship demons are easy to detect, as though they portray themselves openly as priests of Satan and the occult. In reality, those who blatantly represent themselves as devil devotees are relatively less harmful than those who are ministers of Satan in disguise. These wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15), can be found in established denominations, attaching the name "Christian" to themselves, and staying within the traditions of the church. They fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness and work within the church structure. Following their master's example, they masquerade as angels of light. With cunning disguises, including turn-around collars, they mislead the minds of men with heterodox doctrine and lawless ethics. Paul says that the ministers of Satan fashion themselves as "ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:13-15). Those who would deceive the bride of Christ, the church. with another gospel or savior are as much emissaries of Satan (despite their pretenses) as was the serpent who beguiled the bride of

Adam, Eve (II Cor. 11:3). Through his disguise as an angel of light, Satan has captured and dominated unorthodox, liberal, and neo-orthodox churches as well as the "Christian" sects or cults; he has also infiltrated confessionally orthodox churches with ministers who pretend to represent the light (either doctrinally or ethically) but in reality, spread the works and thoughts of darkness.

Such pseudoministers of righteousness and light bring with them "doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). Paul warned Timothy that "in latter times" men would be seduced by spirits to follow demonic teaching. These later times were Timothy's own day, for Paul felt it important to make Timothy cognizant of these demonic doctrines as a present threat (cf. vss. 6ff.). At the time of writing, Timothy was laboring at the church in Ephesus, to whom Paul had given warning that grievous wolves were about to enter (Acts 20:29). These false teachers, masquerading as ministers of righteousness, brought with them heretical and ascetic doctrine (I Tim. 4:3). They encouraged Christians to withdraw from God's creation and become other-worldly in a Platonic or gnostic fashion. Such an abandonment of the historical realm to Satan and his host is just the kind of doctrine demons would propagate! And when people abandon the great commission of discipling the nations and making society follow the pattern of God's law (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) that is, when they forsake full confrontation with the real enemy their demonic doctrine leads them to do battle within the church instead. Demonic wisdom, James 3:15-16 tells us, is from below, bringing jealousy, faction, and vile deeds. Unlike the attitude which would crush Satan, demonic doctrine is not peaceable (James 3:17, cf. Rom. 16:20).

The "prince of this world" and "god of this age," therefore, "blinds the minds of the unbelieving" (II Cor. 4:4), committing them to the realm of unconverted darkness, ensnaring them, fathering their rebellious thoughts and deeds, and even making them adhere to the synagogue, worship, and doctrine of Satan and his demons in the name of light and righteousness. He transforms God's good creation and the men who have been created as God's image into refuse; he makes waste of the unbelieving world. He is, then, not the powerful authority over the created realm in this era (as "prince of this world" and "god of this age" have so often been taken); he is merely the leader of a destroyed humanity, a godless generation, a kingdom of unethical darkness and spiritual death. He is, in short, "Beelzebul" (cf. Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). By a play on words, the Jews of Christ's day had changed "Beelzebub" (a title for Satan taken from the Philistine god by that name, "lord of the flies;" cf. II Kings 1:2ff.) into "Beelzebul" that is, "baal zebel" or "lord of dung." In utter contempt for the work of Satan, people came to call him the "dung-god." While God created all things good and delightful, Satan has set out to rework creation into that which is wicked and despicable. The fitting emblem, then, for that over which he is god is dung. He is the prince of darkness, despair, deceit, and death. His destructive work in the children of disobedience warrants calling him "prince of this world" and "god of this age." But those labels are best interpreted by concluding that Satan is simply Beelzebul, the dung-god. He is legitimate leader over only refuse and waste. When Paul was delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13), he came to consider all things which are outside of Christ and His dominion as loss and dung (Phil. 3:8). That realm which is outside of Christ is "this world" or "this age," and the captain of that obnoxious realm is Satan.

Our Adversary (Satan)

Having surveyed the work of Satan in unbelievers, we should also analyze his destructive operations with respect to believers. His opposition to them merits the designation of "Satan" or "adversary." That one title summarizes an entire aspect of Satan's work in the world. "Satan" basically means "opponent" (the term is used, e.g., in Matt. 4:10; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Rom. 16:20; I Tim. 5:15; Rev. 12:9), and thus Satan is denominated "our adversary" in I Peter 5:8. Satan is a wicked angel who does his utmost to present opposition to the people of God.

It must always be kept in mind that whatever Satan does in opposing God's people, he can only do it at the permission of God. This is well illustrated in the case of Simon Peter; Satan had to ask God's permission to sift the apostle like wheat--hoping to find that he was only chaff (Luke 22:31). The allusion to Job in the Old Testament is manifest. Satan's aim is to discredit those who are part of God's kingdom, showing (really, slandering) that they have no right to be included in God's blessing. However, in attempting to bring about apostasy, Satan is not free to assail us at will and with whatever power suits him. Because he needs God's permission, we are assured that we shall never be tempted beyond endurance or without a way of escape (I Cor. 10:13). Satan shall not be successful with genuine believers, and hence, contrary to his wishes, his evil work is twisted to a good end--refining rather than destroying the believer's faith (e.g., Peter is sifted as wheat in the long run, not as chaff). It must not be forgotten that even when Satan has leave to work on Christians, Jesus is making supplication for them in order that their faith fail not (Luke 22:32).

We learn from this example, then, that Satan tries to destroy the regenerating and sanctifying work of God in the believer. Paul worried that, in time of trial, the tempter would have tempted the Thessalonians and rendered the apostle's work vain (I Thess. 3:5). Satan wishes to expose spurious faith, and thus he continues to tempt and work upon people even after their apparent conversion and profession of trust in Christ. In I Timothy 5:15 we read of certain widows who indeed had "turned aside to Satan," giving in to immoral conduct, and thus providing occasion for the adversary to do what he most wants to do: slander and reproach those who bear Christ's name (vs. 14). Toward that end Satan even takes advantage of godly activities (e.g., sexual abstinence for the sake of prayer), perverting them into an opportunity for seduction to sin (for example, either depriving the partner or adultery) (I Cor. 7:5). Even those who appear to have the graces necessary for leadership in the church can, through pride, fall into the condemnation which is wrought by the devil and which is shared by the devil (I Tim. 3:6-7).

The sovereignty of God is displayed in the fact that He uses the destructive work of Satan to further His own ends. Paul was sent a messenger from Satan, a thorn in the flesh, who buffeted him and thereby prevented him from being exalted overmuch (II Cor. 12:7). This "stake for the flesh" could have been a non-physical burden to bear, but more likely it was a bodily infirmity (cf. Gal. 4:13-14). A Satanic messenger would, if working spiritually upon Paul, seem to further rather than curtail pride (cf. I Tim. 3:6; James 4:6-7); and consequently, an unavoidable and aggravating bodily affliction would seem more effective in restraining runaway self-exaltation. But whatever kind of buffeting this messenger from Satan represented, it was used by God (just as in the case of Job) for His servant's good (cf. Heb. 12:10). Against his contrary intents, God utilized Satan's work for the cause of sanctification. Another illustration of the same principle is found in the case of church discipline at the point of excommunication. When one in the church is guilty of unrepentant

immorality, Paul commands that he be "delivered unto Satan" (I Cor. 5:5), that is, placed in the realm of Satan or excommunicated from the church (cf. I Cor. 5:2, 13). He is to be regarded as unsaved and under the power of darkness. The purpose for which he is abandoned to the devil, however, limits or restrains Satan's work. It is not for ultimate punishment but eventual restoration, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Deliverance unto Satan, then, aims at remedying the sinful situation which has arisen in the life of him who is excommunicated (I Tim. 1:20). Whatever the effect of Satan's "destruction of the flesh" is in these cases (whether producing revulsion from the taste of sin. e.g., Luke 15:13-19, or inflicting bodily harm, cf., Acts 5: 1-11; 13:9-11; II Cor. 10:8, 12:7; 13:10: esp. I Cor. 11 :30), we again see that God uses Satan's work for promoting rather than destroying the cause of His kingdom.

The Christian is not ignorant of Satan's devices, and hence he should never gain an advantage over the believer (11 Cor. 2:1 1). The passage here cited shows that to have an unforgiving spirit is to grant Satan an opening to which he has no right, to grasp more than his due, to seize what does not belong to him. In the case of the man guilty of gross immorality (cf. I Cor. 5) Satan had been given the fight to work destruction of his "flesh" (probably indicating his sinful nature). But now Satan was trying to gain even more, using the church's unforgiving spirit in the face of the sinner's repentance for the destruction of him and the church. Christians should not be ignorant of such purposes or plots ("devices") as Satan cunningly utilizes. He would gladly further a legitimate end, such as ecclesiastical purity, through ungodly means, such as a harsh spirit. This is just another example of his deceptive work, drawing men into what might seem a good project, but in reality, using them to further wickedness. In II Corinthians 2:11, however, Paul makes the point that Satan should not gain such a toe-hold with Christians; they know what he is scheming to do.

The Christian strategy against the destructive work of Satan in his personal or ecclesiastical life, then, first of all includes resisting the devil (James 4:7). Because Satan will quickly latch onto any opportunity to turn good actions and attitudes into evil deeds (e.g., transforming righteous anger into sinful wrath), the Christian must not compromise but resist. Thus, Paul commands, "neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). In his fight with the adversary the believer is assured that he shall conquer. But because Satan's methods are crafty and deceptive, the Christian must utilize the armor of God-all of it. To a city full of demonology, Ephesus, Paul writes that the Christian struggle is not with flesh and blood but with demonic influences. Although Satan has many fiery arrows to shoot at us, and although his methods are crafty, the believer is protected from them by the shield of faith (Eph. 6:11-12, 16). Using faith's shield is the second element in the Christian's strategy. Peter, who before had been induced by Satan to deny the Lord, commands us to withstand Satan "steadfast in the faith" (I Peter 5:9). Revelation 12:9-11 shows that the devil is overcome by faithful testimony, even when it entails going to one's death. The third element in the Christian's strategy against the personal attacks of Satan is prayer. Christ gave us a way of escape by teaching us that we should pray for divine protection which cannot fail. In the Lord's Prayer we are instructed to pray, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).

We see, then, that Satan is the Christian's adversary, always tempting him to apostasy and moral inconsistency. Satan works hard to pervert righteousness into wickedness by deceiving the believer in various ways. However, even though Satan slanders the people of God and attempts to

trip them up, it ultimately serves the purposes of God in refining, sanctifying, and reclaiming His chosen people. The Christian is not ignorant of Satan's plots, and thus he can gain personal victory over him by resistance, faith, and prayer. Although the devil does not leave us alone, the believer's perspective on Satan is that of triumphing over him and his devices. Satan is under God's control, depends upon Him for permission to carry out his work, serves the ends of God's kingdom, and is defeated by God's people as they wear the whole armor of God. The adversary must be taken seriously, but not feared.

The One Cast Down from Heaven

Christians should take great assurance and comfort in their confrontation with the kingdom of Satan from the fact that Scripture portrays him as deposed from that position of strength he had prior to the coming of Christ. During the Old Testament era, Satan held sway over the nations, constantly deceiving them into superstition and idolatry. He wrought havoc in the kingdom of God as well, leading Israel into heterodoxy and idolatrous apostasy throughout her history (from the worship of the golden calf at Sinai to the murder of the Messiah at Calvary). Leaving induced Adam and Eve to rebel against God, Satan continued to dominate the descendants of Adam, keeping the following of God down to a minimal righteous remnant among the nations and an even smaller righteous remnant within the nation of Israel. Ungodliness was rampant in the world, so much so that God in His wrath destroyed all but eight persons in the great flood. Ungodliness continued to reign among the sons of Noah, as Babel and Sodom stand out as illustrations of the rebellion of men against God. Following the Exodus, both the gross immorality and idolatry of the nation were punished by "holy war." However, the nation waging such war soon fell into cycles of apostasy during the time of its judges. The nation gained a king only to descend soon into civil war and division. Later, having learned to avoid idolatry through the punishment of exile, the Jews subsequently turned to the sins of secularism (Sadduceeism) and self-righteousness (Pharisaism). If Satan was, thus, so influential within God's chosen nation, one can imagine the extent of depravity fostered by the pagan nations. The world lay in deception, darkness, and spiritual death prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, for Satan operated with a strong hand and few restraints. However, the Messiah's advent effected a radical change in Satan's status, greatly deposing him of his power over human society.

The advent of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, triggered an outburst of Satanic activity; Satan exercised the extent of his powers in an attempt to extinguish the light of Christ with the darkness of sin, rebellion, and demon possession. This the accounts of exorcism in the Gospels are not incidental to the good news that God's kingdom has been established. Satan's intensified activities only provided a background against which Christ's overthrow of his power would be the more conspicuous. Exorcisms performed by Christ were an outward manifestation of the great confrontation taking place between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, between this age and the coming age. The Gospels are nothing less than an account of the cosmic struggle between God's messianic Son and Satan.

Zechariah 13:2 had prophesied that the establishment of the redemptive kingdom of God would mean the removal of "unclean spirits." In retrospect, Peter described the ministry of Christ as that of "healing those oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38; passing note should be made that Peter's mention of "oppression" is intended to summarize the various influences of Satan, not to introduce a new category of operation oppression in addition to possession). Christ's ministry signaled the establishment of the promised kingdom of God, for He had the power to cast out the unclean spirits (e.g., Mark 1:27); His curing of demoniacs was in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise concerning the suffering servant of the Lord (Matt. 8:16-17). The demons whom Jesus cast out testified to His divinity (e.g., Mark 3:11). They also recognized that the advent of God's Son signaled their torment (Matt. 8:29), their commitment to the abyss (Luke 8:31), and their destruction (Mark 1:23-25). Jesus' own interpretation of His power to cast out demons was that the kingdom of God had come and that this meant the plundering of Satan's house (Matt. 12:28-29). God the Father confirmed from heaven that Jesus had come to do the Father's business namely, by

His death to depose Satan of his power and defeat him (John 12:23-33). Christ's power to cast out demons was supremely attested in His casting out the prince of this world from his domain, his position of strength in the created realm; instead of being under the sway of Satan's deceptions, men shall now be drawn to Christ. Satan's dominance has been destroyed.

This overthrow of Satan's strength and downfall of his kingdom is vividly described by Christ in Luke 10:18. The seventy had returned to Christ, reporting that even the demons were subject to them in Christ's name (vs. 17). Jesus then reveals what lies behind this subjugation: the complete crumbling of Satan's authority. He says "I beheld Satan fall like lightning out of heaven." Satan's exalted power has been broken; like a flash of lightning, his energy has been spent. He has been hurled down from the sky. This explains the disciples' power over demons: the head of the demonic host has been overthrown by Christ. Christ's statement is metaphorical and does not refer to some historical, spatial plummeting of the person of Satan to the earth's surface. Rather, because Satan could not overthrow Jesus in the wilderness temptation, and because Jesus had begun the plunder of Satan's kingdom, Satan's ascendancy is symbolically represented as falling dramatically. Satan's kingdom has been served a fatal blow by the incarnation, unsuccessful temptation, and exorcising power of Christ.

The same figure is used in Revelation 12 to symbolize the defeat of Satan. In this chapter, Satan is symbolized by a great red dragon, just as the opponents to God's kingdom are often represented as monsters in the Old Testament (Rev. 12:3; cf. Job 26:13; Ps. 74:13-14; Isa. 27:1; 51:9; Ezek. 32:2). This dragon is portrayed as mighty (having ten horns) and hard to kill (having seven heads). His opposition to God's people takes on cosmic dimensions, for he is seen in the sky and is so large that his tail alone sweeps away a third of the stars (12:4). A significant minority of the created angels (i.e., stars; cf. 9:1) are commanded by him. The one whom he opposes is symbolized by the elements of Joseph's Old Testament dream (12:1; cf. Gen. 37:9). She is a woman traveling to give birth, a common literary picture of Israel in the Old Testament (Isa. 26:17; 66:7-9 Mic. 4:10; 5:3). The twelve stars in her crown evidently represent, then, the twelve tribes of Israel (c. Ex. 28:17-20; Rev. 21:19-20). The woman is the people of God, here in the Old Testament form of Israel. The one to whom she is about to give birth is Jesus the Christ of God (12:5; c. Isa. 9:6; Ps. 2:9). This imagery is suggested by the fact that, with respect to the flesh, Israel gave birth to the Messiah (Rom. 9:5). When Christ was born, the red dragon attempted to devour him (Rev. 12:4-5). Satan attempted to destroy Christ, at his birth (Matt. 2:13, 16) and at his crucifixion (John 14:30; Luke 22:53). However, John concentrates on the fact that Jesus escaped the attacks of Satan unscathed; it is as though Christ proceeded from His incarnation directly to His ascension (Rev. 12:5; cf. Phil. 2:9). He utterly defeated Satan.

To symbolize the great spiritual conflict which ensued at the establishment of God's kingdom during Christ's life and ministry, John goes on to describe war in heaven between Satan and his angels on the one hand and Michael and his angels on the other. The confrontation of Christ's kingdom with Satan's was a cosmic struggle; it involved the battle of good angels with fallen ones. In particular, one should notice the place of the angels of God in the wilderness temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:1 1). In Revelation 12, Michael (the guardian angel of God's people: Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9) led the angels in war against the Satanic host and drove them completely from their position (vss. 7-8). This means that Satan has been toppled from his place of power: he and his angels were cast down to the earth (vs. 9). The one who opposes and slanders

God's people (i.e., "he that is called the Devil and Satan") has lost his power; his accusations no longer have force after the substitutionary atonement of Christ. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. They overcame him because of the blood of the lamb" (vss. 10-11). Through death, Christ brought to nothing the devil's power of death (Heb. 2:14), and thus Paul can exclaim "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33). Satan has been cast down from heaven, and this deposition took place during the ministry of Christ. It can be seen at the sending of the seventy (cf. Luke 10: 18), and it can be seen at the sacrificial death of Christ, when the prince of the world was cast out (John 12:31).

Satan was not able to destroy Christ at his birth or death, he was not able to make Him sin at the temptation, he was not able to stop the plundering of his dominion by Christ and the disciples, his hosts were unable to withstand the onslaught of the good angels, the atonement has voided his power of death, and his accusations no longer have any force. In short, the salvation, power, and kingdom of God have come (Rev. 12:10), and Satan has been cast down and defeated. He has hurled like lightning from the sky; his dominion is spent.

Revelation 12 goes on to explain that, because Satan's power was broken, he was in great frenzy for a short time, persecuting the church (like a roaring lion, as Peter put it) with great wrath (vss. 12-13). Having lost the spiritual battle, Satan turns to physical persecution against the woman that is, against the people of God. In particular he sought to destroy the Jewish church in A.D. 70. However, the woman fled to the wilderness where God protected her for forty-two months (vss. 6, 14) which is the length of time given over to the razing of Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 11:2, 8; Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Matt. 24:15-28), at which time the Christians fled to Pella (church tradition tells us), according to Christ's directions (cf. Matt. 24:16; Luke 21:20-21). Using the imagery of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 15:12; 19:4; cf. Deut. 32:11; Isa. 40:31). John says that God's people, the church, would be thoroughly protected from Satan's persecution as they exodus from Jerusalem (Rev. 12:14-16). Satan thought that by sending the Roman army against Jerusalem he would destroy the people of God, but instead (as we have seen above) Satan was simply the tool of God's sovereign plan; his wrath was used by God for historical judgment and retribution upon the city which had rejected the Messiah and put Him to death (cf. John 1:11; Luke 19:41-44; 23:27-31). Consequently, being foiled again, Satan then increased in his wrath and turned to persecute the rest of the woman's seed (that is, other believers; cf. Gal. 4:26, where Jerusalem above is designated "our mother"); the enmity placed by God between the serpent and the seed of the woman (cf. Gen. 3:15) is relentless. Satan turned his angry attention upon the Gentile church, those who keep the, commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17). However, there again he is overcome by the word of their testimony; even should they die for the faith they profess, they would be more than conquerors through Christ (Rev. 12:11; cf. Rom. 8:35-37).

Therefore, Revelation 12 relates the undeniable downfall of Satan's kingdom, the demise of his power. It reveals for us the spiritual backdrop to Satan's opposition to the Messiah and Christ's church; it shows us the war in heaven. Thereby it assures us that Satan has been conquered by Christ, his kingdom has been overthrown by the elect angels, and believers can overcome him by their testimony. After the advent of Christ and the establishment of His redemptive kingdom, Satan is nothing but one who has been cast down from heaven.

The Crushed Serpent

It is evident from the previous discussion that Satan's power has declined and been broken. But not only has his power and influence waned, he himself has been thoroughly defeated in the encounter with God's Messiah. In Genesis 3:15, God's promise of salvation entailed the crushing of Satan and simultaneous bruising of Christ's heel. A minor injury to the Messiah would spell the major destruction of Satan. It is the New Testament's testimony that this bruising of the Messiah and crushing of the adversary took place in the first advent of Christ, and in particular at the cross. Consequently, when Christians think about the nature and work of Satan, they must not lose sight of the fact that Satan is presently a crushed serpent, a conquered enemy. Christ our Lord is the one who came to conquer him.

Satan attempted to divert Christ from the path of obedience, just as he tempted Adam and Eve to wander from that path. In Christ's case, Satan tempted Him to take a wicked course to victory over the nations: worshipping Satan and therefore conquering the nations without also conquering Satan. Satan wished to mislead Christ from the will of God, to draw Him away from the cross as the way to victory. Satan made his attempts directly (Matt. 4) and indirectly (through Peter; Matt. 16:23). But in neither way was he able to gain the advantage over the Second Adam. Jesus demonstrated that the devil could have no power over Him. Therefore, when Jesus was about to end His earthly ministry, seeing in the approaching soldiers the coming of Satan, He declared His intent to meet the enemy with spiritual determination and voluntary obedience to God's direction. No man had the power to take Jesus' life; He alone sovereignly deigned to lay it down (John 10:18). Thus He told His followers that Satan had no hold or claim on Him (John 14:30). There was nothing in Christ that came under the dominion of Satan; hence, the crucifixion did not spell the defeat of Christ at all. Instead it meant the crushing or overcoming of Satan (cf. Rev. 12:11). The lifting up of Jesus meant the judgment of Satan's realm (the world) and the casting out of the devil himself (John 12:31-33). From that point on, all men would be drawn not to Beliar but to Jesus Christ, indicating the dissolution of Satan's power. The crucifixion turned out to be the devil's undoing.

Through His substitutionary atonement for the sins of the elect, Christ released His people from the blinding of Satan and his snare (cf. 11 Cor. 4:4; II Tim. 2:26). That blindness and snare would have eventuated in their eternal damnation, the second death. However, Jesus partook of flesh and blood "in order that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Christ's death frees His people from the penalty of the law death and thus from Satan's power to inflict that penalty. Redemption from the curse of the law (cf. Gal. 3:13) effects our deliverance out of the power of darkness and translates us into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13). Death is no longer a fearful threat to us (cf. Rom. 8:15, 21) because Christ has used Satan's utmost power (death) as the instrument of his defeat! Since Christ went to death and overcame Satan thereby, it is now Christ who has authority over death: "I was dead and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:18). Through His redeeming blood, Christians pass from death into life (I John 3:14). By Him death itself, and not just Satan (who had power over death), is destined to be destroyed (I Cor. 15:26). Therefore, by His appearing, Jesus Christ has fulfilled God's ancient promise to crush Satan's head, for He has "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). Nailing our indictment to His cross, Jesus our Savior has "despoiled the principalities and the powers"; in His resurrection victory over the grave, "He made a show of

them openly, triumphing over them by it" (Col. 2:15). The whole of Christ's life and ministry from His incarnation, obedient life, powerful words and works to His death, resurrection, and ascension can be categorized as for the purpose of crushing the serpent, Satan. John aptly declares, then, that "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). That mission of ruining Satan and his effects has been marvelously and mightily accomplished.

The Shackled Dragon

Based upon the foregoing study, we can conclude by pointing out that Satan is not the formidable foe to Christians and their Great Commission which so many writers are making him out to be in these days. His opposition must be taken seriously, of course. However, it is important that we do not let it defeat us in our sanctification, evangelization, or application of God's standards to every area of life. Because Jesus Christ has defeated and overcome Satan, so also shall Christ's people gain the victory over Satan. His work is no real threat to the progress of God's kingdom. Satan has been bound by Christ, and now his house is being plundered.

We would observe first that Jesus gave power over the demons to His disciples (Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7; 9:38; Luke 10:17; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12). He never meant for the victory to be His alone; He shares His mighty power with believers so that they too defeat the devil and destroy his works. The kind of power which Jesus gives is not something of which the unbelieving world can partake; even the professional sorcerers do not have the power which is bestowed on Christ's apostles (Acts 8:9, 19), and when they try to imitate it, dreadful results rebound upon them (e.g., Acts 19:13-17; exorcism in Jesus' name is not something to be trifled with!). This exclusive power over demons which Jesus has delegated to His followers means two things. First, believers cannot be demon possessed. There is an utter antithesis between the Holy Spirit and an unclean spirit (Mark 3:29-30), just as their respective descriptions indicate. It is impossible to have the two simultaneously dwell in you, and since "greater is he that is in you [namely, the Holy Spirit] than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4), the Christian cannot be possessed of a demon. Second, because of the power which accompanies the preaching of the gospel, where the good news of Christ's kingdom has penetrated and taken root, it scatters the darkness and subsequently reduces the occurrence of demon possession in a society. A failure to study the scriptural doctrine of Satan in respect to the eschatological kingdom of God has led many writers today to postulate the possibility of indiscriminate explosions of demon possession. Satan cannot work such havoc where God's kingdom is strong and widely followed. Of course, cultures which apostatize from the truth of the gospel or who endeavor to be neutral toward Christ always face the threat of revived demonic activity (cf. Matt. 12:43-45).

Secondly, we observe that the New Testament is replete with indications that Christians have the assurance of ethical victory in their encounters with Satan. Jesus Christ, the victor over the devil, prays for His people, that they be kept from the evil one (John 17:15). His intercession surely avails much (cf. James 5:16). Consequently, we can easily set the devil to flight by merely resisting him (James 4:7). Empowered with the Lord's mighty dominion and wearing the full armor of God, Christians can ably withstand and defeat Satan (Eph. 6:10-18). Because the Holy Spirit in us is greater than the adversary in the world (Satan), we face no insurmountable difficulty in overcoming those of antichrist and the world (I John 4:3-4). This same Holy Spirit takes as His work with respect to the world the task of bringing to true light the fact that justice has been done to Satan. Just the opposite of His work as our Advocate, the Spirit convicts (prosecutes, refutes) the world with respect to judgment because the prince of this world has been judged (John 16:8, 11; e.g., Acts 2:36-37; I Cor. 14:24). The Holy Spirit makes the definitive defeat of Satan manifest, just as He progressively defeats Satan within the life of the believer. Moreover, just as Jesus countered Satan with God's word (cf. Matt. 4), so also those who are strong through the word of God abiding in them are privileged to overcome or master the wicked one (I John 2:13-14). They are stronger than the "strong man" himself (cf. Matt. 12:29), and as such they can successfully

encounter anti-Christian doctrine (I John 4:1-4). It is evident, then, that the believer, having Jesus Christ interceding for him and the Holy Spirit living within him, can easily resist and overcome the works of Satan by means of the word and the Spirit. Just as Satan has nothing in Christ (John 14:30), "He that is begotten of God keeps himself and the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18). In his personal life the Christian is assured of victory over the influence of Satan. In the face of the resources at the disposal of the regenerate Satan's power is neutralized.

Thirdly, even in the face of physical persecution, the believer wins the battle over Satan. Peter's discussion of the fiery trial to come upon the church through Satan's walking about as a roaring lion is bracketed with reference to Christ's mighty dominion (I Pet. 4:11; 5:11). Satan's onslaughts should be viewed in that context. While Satan unleashes his destructive fury upon earth (Rev. 9:

1-11) subsequent to the decline of his dominance, the disciples of Christ are promised "authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing in any wise shall hurt you" (Luke 10: 19). When Satan's persecution comes, it is Satan rather than believers who will be trod upon and defeated. For even martyrdom cannot rob the Christian of his victory; the faithful witness for Christ is more than a conqueror and always overcomes the wicked one (cf. Rom. 8:35-37; Rev. 12:10-11). Victory over sin and preservation from its power and deadly effects are assured us. Satan cannot gain an upper hand over us even through physical threatening then.

Not only is the believers defeat of Satan evident with respect to possession, temptation, and persecution, it is also manifestly clear with respect to the prospect of evangelistic success. Jesus definitely taught in Matthew 12:28-29 that his ability to cast out demons was conclusive evidence that "the kingdom of God is come upon you," and He declared that this power to destroy Satan's kingdom would be impossible unless Satan were not already bound. From this passage we see that it was during the first advent of Christ that both (1) the kingdom of God was established, with the effect that (2) Satan was bound by Jesus Christ. The binding of Satan is not a future event any more than the coming of God's kingdom is an exclusively future event. The power of the coming age has already been expressed, and Christ has installed God's redemptive kingdom as part of His messianic work. All this has been amply illustrated in the above discussion. We have also seen previously that the figure of being bound in chains does not represent total immobilization or complete cessation of activity (cf. II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). To be bound with chains is to be restrained in a certain respect.

The respect in which Satan is currently bound is explained in Revelation 20:2-3. Jesus Christ, an angel from heaven with the key of the abyss (cf. Rev. 1:18), has come to earth and has bound Satan (Rev. 20:1-2 with Matt. 12:28-29; Luke 10:17-20), committing him to the abyss (cf. Luke 8:31; John 12:31; Rev. 12:9). The effect of this restraint is infallibly explained as "that he should deceive the nations no more." Scripture does not go beyond that in interpreting the binding of Satan. That he is bound means that he no longer has the ability to deceive the nations in the way that he did previous to Christ's advent. The power of the proclaimed gospel can shatter Satan's attempt to lead people astray from the truth. Thus the church is assured of great power and success when it faithfully proclaims the whole counsel of God (cf. Rev. 19:11-21). Because Christ now rules the nations (Ps. 2:8-9; Rev. 12:5; 19:15-16) Satan is unable to deceive the nations. A missionary door of utterance has been opened to the nations for faith which no man can shut (Rev.

3:7-8; Acts 14:27; Col. 4:3). The Great Commission shall be accomplished, and all nations shall be made disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; cf. Rev. 7:9;

11:15; 15:4), since all power in heaven and earth have been granted to Him and He is ever present with this power in His church. Thus the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Evangelism and doctrinal edification are activities which the believer can forcefully and successfully engage in as God brings all nations to serve His Son (cf. Acts 2:34-36; Ps. 72; cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:11; 16:26, I Cor. 15:25-26; Col. 1:27-28; I Tim. 4:17).

The believer's victory over Satan, therefore, is clear from the fact that Satan cannot prevent the proclamation of the gospel from being prosperous in this age. If the nations are not presently being discipled, it is not because Satan dominates the course of history. It is because Christians, like the church at Thyatira (cf. Rev. 2:18-29), have come to grant Satan more importance than he deserves and have failed to exercise their power (through God's kingdom proclamation) in the world. Believers have the power, via the gospel, to turn people from the power of Satan to God, from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). When the word of Christ is preached, its prevailing power brings many magicians to conversion so that they renounce their secret utterances and burn their expensive scrolls (Acts 19:19-20). Even those of the synagogue of Satan will be brought to submit to God's kingdom (Rev. 3:9) in fulfillment (though in a way opposite of that expected by the pseudo Jews) of Isaiah 60:14; 49:23; Ezekiel 37:28. The false religions will even be ultimately submissive to the true church! Therefore, in contrast to those who cause conflict by beguiling men with heretical doctrines and by serving their own bellies, the progress of the gospel and God's kingdom will establish peace. Not only has Christ crushed the serpent in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, but His powerful promise to the church is that "the God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly!" (Rom. 16:20). The church shares in her Savior's triumph over Beliar, the prince of the demons, Apollyon, Beelzebul, her adversary the devil. In the face of God's kingdom and its advance, the one who has been cast down from heaven is a serpent crushed by the Messiah, nothing more than a shackled dragon.

Therefore, from this analysis of the person, work, and present status of Satan in the era of the New Covenant, we should learn to be sober with respect to his work in the world, but also to be victorious in overcoming it. The church must not lose sight of the many facets to the biblical truth about Satan, for when it does it inevitably engages in a distorted attitude and manner of life. Such a distortion threatens today in the view that Satan is alive and well on planet Earth. This is a half truth with which he would gladly deceive the church and thereby stifle its discipline activity in the world, discourage it amidst tribulation, worry it with respect to demon possession, and weaken it in temptation. The fact is that while Satan is alive, he is not well! His power and kingdom have fallen, and presently he frantically thrashes out his short remaining time. Christ has deposed him, crushed him, and shackled him; Christ's followers continue to spoil his house. The only lordship he retains is over the despicable elements of life symbolized by dung.

However, our closing thought should not concentrate upon our personal privilege in having power and victory over Satan and his works. For this is not the most important aspect of our relation to the kingdom of darkness. It is possible for one to taste of the powers of the coming age (Heb. 6:5) and even to cast out demons and do mighty works in Christ's name (Matt. 7:22) and yet be reprobate and not known by Christ (Heb. 6:6; Matt. 7:23). Power over Satan can be gained

temporarily by unbelievers and pseudo-Christians, but such power possessed in these unethical states is of little eternal value. It is kingdom membership that is vital, not simply kingdom effects. Hence Christ tells us. "Nevertheless, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). It is the theocentric thought that we have been delivered from Satan's kingdom of darkness, deception, and spiritual death that should thrill our hearts, not merely the anthropocentric blessing of power over Satan. Reflection upon our relationship to Satan compels us to praise the grace of God and subsequently to engage the power which it entails, so as to subdue the earth under Christ's redemptive kingdom. If you participate in the outward benefits of that kingdom (as it encounters and destroys the domain of Satan) and yet have no claim to its central blessing, you shall eventually encounter Satan in a new way as you spend eternity with him (Matt. 7:23; Rev. 20:10).