

The Kingdom of Satan

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Abstract: An exposition of Paul's statement: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*" (Eph. 6:12).

Beyond the world of phenomena is the *real* world – the unseen world – from which great and decisive influences emanate with an impact on all people's lives. Since humans also have a spirit, they are conscious of the spirit world and receptive to communication from it. The immense importance of spiritual influences necessitates a sound knowledge of spiritual realities. Even if people wish to ignore these realities they are nonetheless profoundly affected by it. The two great realities in the spirit world are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

These two kingdoms are in opposition to one another, contending for the souls of people and preparing to reveal themselves on earth. The kingdom of Satan will send the Antichrist to physically rule the world, while the kingdom of God will send the true Christ to destroy the earthly kingdom of Satan and set up His millennial kingdom.

All the people of God are engaged in a struggle against the devil who is the great adversary of God. It is critically important that we understand the principles and strategies of Satan's kingdom in order to prevail in the struggle.

1. THE REALITY OF THE BATTLE AGAINST SATAN

The spiritual battle against evil forces is a very real one, and it is intensified as we approach the end of this dispensation. It confronts us with the responsibility to thoroughly understand the objectives and methods of the enemy. There are different spheres in which this struggle is waged. The most important battlefield is human lives that were created in the image of God. Satan's attacks on the kingdom of light are aimed at dethroning God and enthroning himself as the ruler of the universe. In the process he aims at controlling all people, spirit soul and body, and at being worshipped by them as if he were God.

There are various forms and degrees of control that Satan presently has over people, and his final objective is to further expand this control. The Bible says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19). However, the kingdom of God also has established interests here and a considerable number of followers on earth, but they are a minority in a predominantly evil world.

Despite this situation, God still has undisputed sovereignty in the universe. But in His eternal counsels He decided to give to man the authority to subdue the earth and have dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). By yielding to Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden to rebel against God, our first parents died spiritually and became subservient to another god – the devil. In this way the devil and his fallen angels became "the rulers of the darkness of this world".

Fallen humankind was now confronted by two kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. A free will to decide for themselves to which kingdom they want to belong would be the deciding factor whether spiritual light or darkness would prevail on the earth, or specific parts of it. The wrong inclinations and unrepentant hearts of the majority of people is the reason why believers everywhere find themselves "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [they] shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

By deliberately living in darkness and sin, the great majority of people are the objects of God's judgements: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19).

The majority support that the kingdom of darkness enjoys on earth is the reason why the Bible refers to "this present evil world" from which God wants to deliver us (Gal. 1:4). The large masses who tread the broad way that leads to hell are those "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4:4). The god of this dark world is Satan. In John 14:30 Jesus refers to him as "the prince of this world."

But Satan does not rule over Christians as he has been dethroned in their lives. "The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). Although being set free from the control of the Evil One, Christians are nevertheless engaged in the fierce battle that is waged against the kingdom of light. That is why the Bible emphatically commands us: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Satan's attacks are not aimed at the people who are already in his power, as he oppresses and manipulates them at will. His attacks are aimed at the believers who oppose him and have committed themselves to help other people to be liberated from the powers of darkness. As such, the Christians have also declared war against him: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

2. WARS OF SATAN AGAINST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Satan applies different strategies in his war against the kingdom of God. His ultimate purpose is to gain absolute control and to establish a fully-fledged satanic world order in all spheres of life. He obviously realises that time is running out for him and is now dramatically increasing the severity of his attacks. The different wars that he is waging are the following:

2.1 Religious war

It is a high priority of Satan to deceive people spiritually, thereby gaining control over their lives. Various methods are employed to achieve this objective, all of which are aimed at eroding faith in God and replacing it with superstitions, or at supporting and perpetuating the superstitions and false religions of the deceived people:

False prophets

In his most disguised form, Satan attacks the church of Christ by infiltrating it with false prophets who pretend to be apostles of Christ. 1 John 4:1 says that "many false prophets are gone out into the world." The Bible also reveals that, "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15). They utterly distort the Word of God and also falsify it by way of new translations that deviate from the original text. A false Christian church is a powerful tool in the hands of Satan to deceive nominal Christians into believing that they are saved and heading for heaven, while it is not the case. Millions of naïve people expose themselves to damnable heresies without putting them to the test by discerning, in terms of Biblical principles, the spiritual powers that are at work in the preaching, in the 'religious shows' and in the literature that are presented to them.

False religions

In a more direct way, humanity is deceived by the non-Christian religions to worship idols that are disguised demons. The Bible says that the idols to which the heathens sacrifice, are demons (1 Cor. 10:19-20). Anyone participating in these sacrifices has fellowship with demons. The heathens do not know that Satan has deceived them. Neither do compromising, liberal, and ecumenical Christian churches realise these dangers, as they subscribe to the false idea that all religions worship the same God. Multireligious deception proliferates in our time and amounts to a complete denial of the unique position of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of the world. The ecumenical 'Christians' should endeavour to become more aware of the activities of the god of this world who blinds the minds of people so that they do not see the truth.

Occult powers

A still more ostensible revelation of Satan is by means of occult or mystical practices. He still does not associate it openly with his name and his kingdom so that people may be more easily deceived into becoming unfaithful to God. The power of Satan is marketed and promoted by way of the New Age Movement, the Human Potential Movement, and related occult and mystical practices such as spiritual channelling, shamanism, magical powers, transcendental meditation, yoga, fortune-telling, psychic powers, astral projection, holistic healing, extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, etc. People are influenced to open themselves up to these powers and cosmic wisdom, and to freely draw on these resources. Eastern meditation is one of the most popular methods of effecting an altered state of consciousness, which leads to an openness to occult powers, cosmic wisdom, spirit guides and demons.

Satanism

The direct revelation of Satan can, because of the inherent repulsiveness of the idea, only be made to highly deceived, morally decadent, and spiritually degenerate people. In the past, these direct revelations were confined to small groups of people, but during the past two decades their numbers have vastly increased in the world. To these worshippers, Satan and his demons reveal themselves in all their abomination, vileness and bloodthirstiness. They demand animal or human sacrifices from their worshippers, as well as the murdering of certain persons.

2.2 War against moral values

The moral norms which God has established through His laws and precepts, and which the human conscience should acknowledge as right and good, are continually questioned, challenged, and broken down by Satan. Moral decline is promoted by demons. This is done with a view to replacing God's morality in the world by the opposite values of a satanic immorality. These two sets of values can be contrasted as follows:

GOD'S MORALITY	SATAN'S IMMORALITY
Truth	Lie
Righteousness	Unrighteousness
Self-control	Lawlessness
Honesty	Deceitfulness and theft
Moral chastity	Moral depravity and vileness
Soberness	Drunkenness
Sincerity	Slyness
Reverence to God	Blaspheming of God
Orderliness	Disorderliness
Meekness	Arrogance
Peacefulness	Violence
Forgivingness	Revengefulness
Love	Hate
Kindness	Cruelty
Conservation	Destruction

Satan knows that with his war against moral values he can achieve a great victory in the control and eventual destruction of humankind. The Roman Empire, for instance, was never defeated by military force but destroyed itself by way of internal moral decay. Sexual orgies, drunkenness, fornication, homosexuality, materialism, corruption, theft, and bribery gave rise to one scandal after another. Widespread immorality completely ruined the integrity and effectiveness of the governments in Rome and Constantinople.

The apostle James also contrasts the morality of God with the moral depravity of a fallen world that lies in the sway of the Evil One: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good [conduct] his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jas. 3:13-18).

Under the cloak of humanistic reforms the world is, over a wide front, being drawn into a demonic immorality. When this process has advanced far enough the Antichrist, as the man of sin, will be revealed. He will be the leading figure in the new world order's culture of sin. He will act according to his own will (Dan. 11:36), rule by means of satanic powers (Rev. 13:2), blaspheme God (Rev. 13:5-6), will, together with Satan, be worshipped by a morally and religiously utterly depraved human race (Rev. 13:4), be a tyrant and mass-murderer (Dan. 11:44), and order the execution of all people who refuse to worship him as god (Rev. 13:15).

2.3 Psychological war

A psychological war is also waged against humanity by inducing people to stop relying only on rational thinking which is based on logical facts. They are influenced to discover and use their hidden psychological potential by switching over from their rational 'left brain' to their creative 'right brain'. Here they will discover a super memory, powers of self-healing, the 'gifts' of clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. These discoveries are allegedly associated with a hitherto unknown side of our human potential, referred to as *the deeper self* or *the higher self*. The extra-sensory techniques used to effect such a switchover are mainly transcendental meditation, self-hypnosis and yoga.

Various psychics, psychologists, and deluded 'Christian' counsellors are guiding people in this new self-discovery that helps them to attain altered states of consciousness. Some of them discover their deeper self, others discover spirit guides that help them to regress to earlier lives, while others discover their abilities towards self-healing, etc. However, these 'gifts' and other discoveries are clearly mystical and demonic in nature. In doing so, people relinquish all forms of self-control by subjecting themselves to higher powers, they open themselves up to the working of unknown spiritual agents, and move into a cosmic realm in which 'gifts' are experienced that are clearly not from God. They abandon all logical and rational arguments from the Bible, and thereby render proof that the god of this world (Satan) has indeed blinded their minds (2 Cor. 4:4).

The victims of Satan's psychological war all think and act differently than before. Apart from their reliance on higher spiritual powers of unknown origin, most of them develop an entirely new world-view. They see everything as one (monism, or synthetic thinking), for instance the inherent unity of all religions. They no longer subscribe to antithetic thinking in which distinction is made between opposite categories of things such as the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil, the lie and the truth, etc. Satan's world government (Rev. 13:3, 7) and his alliance of world religions (Rev. 17:3-5) will be perfectly acceptable to them.

2.4 Social war

As the Creator of human beings, God also laid down rules for social identity and group forming to ensure the orderly functioning of social groups. Satan also relentlessly attacks these institutions in an effort to sow disorder and chaos.

God created humans as male and female, with different characteristics and social roles assigned to each sex. Their appearance, conduct, dresses and hairstyles should reflect and conform to these differences. The men should in all respects be truly masculine and the females truly feminine. Satan tries to eliminate these differences through unisex reforms and endeavours to establish homosexuality as an alternative and socially acceptable lifestyle. Under his influence, society is also restructured on a non-sexist basis with a view to introducing uniform roles for all individuals irrespective of gender. Because God appointed the man as head over his wife, resulting in a paternalistic society, Satan employs humanism and radical feminism to give impetus to his egalitarian reforms.

Cultural differences among various societies are also minimised by superimposing universally acceptable trends and institutions on groups with a strong sense of identity – the aim being to erode their patriotism and transform their members into planetary citizens. These reforms, in which national and ethnic identity are denied, form the basis of the neo-Babylonian world society of the future. In that society, any ideology can be subscribed to, any religion can be practised, any type of marriage may be practised (e.g. same sex) or none, and no moral norms are enforced. When this stage has been reached in the demonic war against God's standards for individuals, groups, and nations, Satan will have achieved his objective of creating cultural chaos and a lack of identity among human beings.

2.5 Economic war

In the kingdom of darkness, money and capital goods are regarded as very important means to control people's lives. With it people can be controlled, bribed and induced to do things that they otherwise might not have done. The mere desire to

become rich in material terms gives rise to a form of idolatry. The god of money is Mammon, which is one of the descriptive names of the devil. According to the Bible you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time (Mt. 6:24).

Satan clearly prepares to make full use of the power of money in the end-time. According to Revelation 13, the Antichrist will be in control of a cashless monetary system for the whole world, operated by a number system. Nobody will be able to buy or sell without this number.

Not only individuals, but also nations, will be economically controlled by a future world government headed by the Antichrist. Economic subservience to global economic structures, like the IMF and World Bank at present, will contribute towards the loss of national sovereignty.

2.6 Political war

Satan is clearly also engaged in a political war against humanity. God's order for human communities is based on the principle of sovereign nations, each with its own government and territory. According to Acts 17:26 God determined the boundaries of their habitation. Satan's first rebellion against the existing order of independent nations was the motivating force behind the establishing of the ancient Babylonian Empire and the building of the tower of Babylon. This effort was aimed at political, religious, economic, and linguistic unity on earth (Gen. 11:4-6). The Babylonian ideology of globalism was wrong in the eyes of the Lord; consequently He confused their plans and forced the participating nations to move away and follow an independent existence without domination by a world empire.

The devil never relinquished his plans for an alternative order of global political domination of the nations. Various world empires were established through the ages. They all oppressed and exploited the nations, imposed a heathen religion on them, and also undermined other cultures by enforcing cultural and linguistic conformity to their own institutions. Some of the efforts to establish such world empires were unsuccessful, for instance that of Hitler in World War II.

Whenever Satan makes an attempt in this direction he prepares a suitable strongman who rises to a position of political leadership, to the extent that he becomes a military dictator who conquers and subjects other nations. Through the expansion of his empire he then becomes a world leader. Such power was always abused by inducing or forcing people to rebel against God by bowing the knee to man-made idols. Due to their inherent immorality, corruption, and oppression of other nations, all these empires eventually collapsed.

According to the Bible Satan will, before the Second Coming, use all his means to once more overthrow God's order of independent nations by incorporating them into a new world order of international political, religious, economic, social, and linguistic unity. The man that he has chosen to head the new world order is called the **Antichrist, the beast, and the man of sin** in the Bible. The world empire that he will establish will be a repetition of the Babylonian Empire of Nimrod and Nubuchadnezzar. For that reason, the end-time world empire is quite aptly called **Babylon** in Revelation 17 and 18.

Like Nimrod of old, the Antichrist will deify himself. Through deceptive diplomacy he will persuade other nations to join the new world order of global unity. It will initially, therefore, be a common, negotiated agreement. In their vision for a united world they might paraphrase Genesis 11:4 as follows: "Come, let us build ourselves a city as world capital in the Middle East, and establish a powerful world religion which exalts and enthrones man; and let us make a name for ourselves as planetary citizens, lest we be divided and scattered over the face of the earth."

Diplomatic negotiations for the establishing of a new world order have already been conducted under the auspices of the USA, the United Nations and other world bodies. When the Antichrist is revealed, he will pursue these negotiations to their final conclusion. Daniel says: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week" (Dan. 9:27). This prophetic week represents a period of seven years, and refers to the coming tribulation period.

When the Antichrist is accepted as world leader, it will be at the cost of the deceived nations with whom he has confirmed a covenant. He will not act in their best interests, but in the interests of Satan who prepared and empowered him for his position. John says: "...and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2).

We must clearly understand that apart from his attacks on individuals and groups, the devil also follows a strategy to deceive the nations to serve him and to join his antichristian new world order of political and religious unity. In Revelation 20:3 we read that Satan will, after the second coming of Jesus, be bound and confined to a bottomless pit "that he should deceive the nations no more." After the thousand years he will be released to once more deceive the nations and mobilise them for a war against the kingdom of God (Rev. 20:7-10).

At present, the nations are deceived into sacrificing their sovereignty on the altar of regional and global unity. The moves to achieve European unity are good examples of this dangerous trend. The process of political unification will end up in a new world order and global governance. By that time Satan's strongman, the Antichrist, will offer his services to the deceived masses. Revelation 13 says: "...and all the world wondered after the beast... and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:3, 7).

2.7 Military wars

In association with his political war against independent nations – particularly those nations who strongly resist satanic ideologies – Satan actively resorts to military wars of conquest to establish and expand evil empires. He is the "God of forces" (Dan. 11:38) who uses his power in various ways to deprive nations of their independence by subjecting them to strong adversaries who, wittingly or unwittingly, advance the interests of the kingdom of darkness.

Many wars have been instigated by Satan against Israel in an effort to obliterate the Chosen People from whom the Messiah was born and to whom He will shortly return to rule the world from the throne of David. These wars were often motivated by conspiracies against God: "Keep not thou silence, O God... For, lo, thine enemies... have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites... the Philistines... Assur also joined with them" (Ps. 83:1-8).

Relentless wars against Israel and various Christian communities and nations were waged in New Testament times by the Roman Empire, Islamic nations, the Vatican, the Nazis, various Communist countries, etc. Satan inspires these wars, and will continue to do so. Two wars that are probably the highest on Satan's agenda for the end-time are the Russo-Arab invasion of Israel (Ezek. 38-39) and the Third World War (the battle of Armageddon). Active demonic instigation will occur to mobilise the armies of the world: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:13-15, 16).

As we move closer to the tribulation period, wars and revolutions will continue to escalate with a view to bringing about total disarray among the nations. In this way they will be prepared to accept the temporary peace and unity that the Antichrist will offer them, and become subjects of his world empire. They will relinquish their political and economic independence and also willingly worship Satan's 'Prince of Peace' as their Messiah.

3. SATAN'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The seven types of war that Satan wages against mankind and the kingdom of God are planned and co-ordinated within his own kingdom. Although he operates from spiritual spheres he has a power hierarchy and typical institutions of government for the execution of specific tasks. It is the actions of these principalities and structures of authority that we should resist: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*" (Eph. 6:12). From its diverse activities it is evident that the kingdom of Satan has the following seven departments:

3.1 Department for personal attacks

This department functions like the intelligence section of a human government, with the difference that its members collect information on all people on earth. The information is used to exploit people's weaknesses, to encourage their passions and evil desires, to seduce mislead, oppose and accuse them, and also to rob or kill them. On this level every Christian is continuously involved in spiritual warfare against such demonic attacks. We must achieve victory in the power and in the Name of the Lord Jesus. "[Therefore] take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13).

3.2 Department for groups and governments

The Bible clearly alludes to the fact that from the kingdom of darkness attacks are levelled against all interest groups and governments in order to distort their vision and to mislead them ideologically. Worldly, humanistic ideologies are offered to them to seduce them to play into Satan's hands. Paul warned against deceptive philosophies when he said: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8). This phenomenon increases in the end-time: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1).

The perverted and godless world in which we live has its own ideological principles. Examples of the corrupting ideologies embraced by governments, political parties, educational institutions and other bodies are humanism, atheism, evolutionism, socialism, communism, liberalism, existentialism, relativism, pragmatism, globalism, New Age thought, as well as all the false religions. If only one of these ideologies gains control over a country or an organisation, it constitutes a great victory to the kingdom of darkness. Just think of the potential for mass deception in countries that are officially identifying with communism or one of the non-Christian religions.

Because a government has extensive powers to determine the ideological orientation of a country, its educational policy and other public matters, it is a high priority of Satan to deceive nations, their political leaders and governments. In Daniel 10:13 and 20 we read about the princes of Persia and Greece. They were highly ranked demons with the assignment to deceive entire nations and use them as instruments in Satan's struggle against the people of God (Israel). These demons withstood the angel of the Lord, indicating that there are also conflicts between the angels of God and the fallen angels of the devil. In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1366-7, Profs. Walvoord and Zuck say the following about the war against Satan's angels who are controlling certain nations: "In Daniel 10:12-14 Gabriel explained the reason for the delay in God's answer to Daniel's prayer. God had dispatched Gabriel with a message for him, but Gabriel was hindered by the prince of the Persian kingdom... who must have been a satanic adversary.

"God has arranged the angelic realm in differing ranks. Gabriel and Michael have been assigned authority over angels who administer God's affairs for the nation Israel (cf. Michael in Dan. 10:21, 12:1 and Jude v. 9). In imitation Satan has

also apparently assigned high-ranking demons to positions of authority over each kingdom. The prince of the Persian kingdom was a satanic representative assigned to Persia.

"To seek to prevent Gabriel's message from getting to Daniel, the demonic prince attacked Gabriel as he embarked on his mission. This gives insight into the nature of the warfare fought in the heavenlies between God's angels and Satan's demons to which Paul referred in Eph. 6:12. The battle between Gabriel and the prince (demon) of Persia continued for three weeks until Michael, one of the chief princes of the angelic realm (cf. Dan. 10:21 and 12:1) came to Gabriel's assistance. Such angelic-demonic conflict indicate something of Satan's power."

Many nations and governments in our time clearly demonstrate that they are influenced and even controlled by the kingdom of Satan! They heed the call of the prince of darkness by abrogating Christian constitutions in which the supremacy of the Triune God is recognised, the phasing out Christian education in state schools, the degrading of Christianity by demoting it to the same level as the non-Christian religions, and by substantially lowering the moral standards in a country through the legalising of prostitution, homosexuality, abortion, and other immoral practices. In this way a lawless, immoral, violent, and barbaric lifestyle is promoted. All that remains to happen in such a pernicious world society is the revelation of the man of sin, the Antichrist, who will be Satan's ruler over a wicked and perverted generation.

3.3 Department for the infiltration and deception of the Christian faith

In this department, much emphasis is placed on theatrics. The church of Christ is studied and imitated to enable false prophets to easily infiltrate and deceive it. The demons that are assigned to this duty select the best possible human collaborators to do their evil work. These are then converted into false prophets who are wolves in sheepskins. These people are usually esteemed and influential persons in society whose opinions as pastors or theologians carry a lot of weight. Their deceptive teachings are very subtle forms of disinformation that cannot be easily discerned from the truth. Their supporters must have blind and unconditional faith in them. Paul says: "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Such people cause great confusion in the kingdom of God. The following features are typical of false prophets:

Misleading Pharisees

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Mt. 23:28). They pretend to be what they are not. They proclaim a dead form of godliness "to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mt. 23:15). We are clearly warned against these heretics: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt. 7:15).

Stumbling-blocks in God's kingdom

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Mt. 23: 13). These preachers are esteemed spiritual leaders who are not only unsaved themselves, but they act as stumbling-blocks to hinder those who are searching for the Lord. In their preaching they split hairs over trivial issues, but the important subjects of sin, condemnation and salvation are not addressed. "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Mt. 23:24).

Proclaimers of a false peace

For the sake of popularity, a false prophet proclaims a false peace to pacify people and induce them to continue with their sins under the premise that a loving God will not condemn them. At the same time the false prophets who are used of Satan, keep themselves busy with corruption and self-enrichment. "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace" (Jer. 6:13-14; cf. also Jer. 14:13-16).

They deny Christ

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2Pet. 2:1-2).

The collaborators of Satan enjoy great public support. Peter says that many will follow their false teachings. They abhor and scoff at the evangelical churches who still preach a Biblical doctrine of salvation based on the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, His Deity, His atoning death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His coming again in glory. The false prophets are also campaigning against those who believe in the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. They describe such people as naïve, uninformed and outdated in their views. Satan especially hates Genesis and revelation, as his doom is predicted in the former and his execution is described in the latter. His collaborators embrace evolution and deny the literal truth of the Creation account. They also try to spiritualise away the end time prophecies in their campaign to undermine the credibility and literal application of God's Word.

False prophets who deny the Divinity of Christ abound in most of the large theological seminaries and faculties of theology at the various universities. Their influence is most destructive, as they are busy training the following generation of "unfaithful servants" who will further lower the spiritual standards of denominations.

Extra-Biblical revelations

The false prophets turn away from sound Biblical exegesis and rely on extra-Biblical revelations of a highly questionable nature. They prefer to follow their intuition and justify it by saying, "God told me this or that." They also talk about their dreams, visions, messages received from angelic beings, and even astral travels to heaven where they allegedly talk to deceased saints. These messages are conveyed to their followers rather than preaching the Word of God.

Small gods, signs and wonders

In the end-time, many false prophets appear on the scene and deceive large crowds with sensational signs and wonders. Some of them do not hesitate to call themselves apostles, prophets, or even gods. They command powers that can make people swoon and fall down on the floor, behave as if drunk, shake or laugh uncontrollably, shout at the top of their voices, bleat, roar, make animal noises or behave in other bizarre ways. Biblical justification is then given for these phenomena. The Lord Jesus warned against the false prophets and their deceptive methods: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many... For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall [show] great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Mt. 24:11, 24).

So do not underestimate Satan's department for the infiltration and deception of the Christian church. Take cognisance of this possibility and guard against it. The Lord Jesus "spoiled principalities and powers, He made a [show] of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). We should be able to identify the false prophets and expose their deceptive teachings under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. John said: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1).

3.4 Department for the perversion and destruction of God's Word

Throughout the ages, incessant attacks were made against the written Word of God by perverting and distorting it with wrong exegesis, and also by providing and using new translations that deviate from the original manuscripts. In this way people become doctrinally deceived and also ignorant about vital promises and warnings in the Bible. There is only one way to correct their heresies and falsifications, and that is the continued proclaiming of the true and unadulterated Word of God: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

3.5 The department for false religions

It is obvious that Satan concentrates largely on the founding and expansion of false religions in his efforts to deceive mankind. In this way he confronts and persecutes Christianity from the outside and deceives millions of people to worship idols. In this context, he and his demons still disguise themselves behind masks in order that the deceived people may remain under the impression that they are dealing with gods, spirit guides, ancestral spirits, or ascended masters of wisdom. By sacrificing to these gods and spirits, camouflaged demons are actually worshipped. Paul warned against this practice: "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:19-20).

The Biblical command is: "[Therefore], my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14).

3.6 The department for occult powers

From his mystical, supernatural spheres Satan and his demons can manifest a great variety of occult powers among people on earth. It is done selectively and in such a way that they will not realise that these powers come from the devil. Occult powers manifest as supernatural abilities such as psychic powers, extrasensory perception, signs and wonders, holistic healing, witchcraft, magic, spells, divination, fortune-telling, clairvoyance, astral projection, levitation, and the ability to go through fire by walking over hot coals. Thousands of years ago, Israel was strictly warned against engaging in practices of this nature: "There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee... For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners" (Deut. 18:10-14).

3.7 The department for Satanism

The seventh department in the kingdom of darkness is concerned with the unconcealed worship of Satan as the cruel, revengeful, and power-hungry god of a fallen world. Because of the highly gruesome nature of this practice it is only people who are in the darkest depths of spiritual and moral depravity who would feel inclined to go to these extremes.

As the spiritual and moral falling away in the world increases, there are more perverted human beings who take pleasure in violence, rebellion, curses, bloodshed, skeletons, liquor and drug abuse, sexual orgies, and the most grisly satanic rituals. What were earlier small groups of people who met in dark dens in deserted places to worship Satan and to sacrifice to him, have now grown into millions of supporters all over the world.

Apart from the fact that Satan is a rebel and a murderer he also wishes to be worshipped and honoured by his followers. Those who are prepared to accept and worship him in spite of his cruelty and ugly characteristics become involved with

Satanism. In America and other countries there are also branches of the Church of Satan that was established by Anton LaVey in 1966.

In Satanism there is a hierarchy through which a member moves to the top structure; consequently, many of the new members have only limited knowledge on who and what Satan really is. As they become deeper involved in the movement they also learn to know him better and become more and more like him.

There are various reasons why people become involved with Satanism. Some are motivated by a spirit of extreme rebellion. They revolt against the social order, reject all authority and the norms of decency, and then associate with the great rebel, Lucifer. Others crave for mystical, supernatural power and approach the devil to get it from him. There are also people with murderous inclinations arising from a thirst for revenge, who join forces with the great murderer and execute their plans with accomplices of an equally corrupted spirit. A common attraction is the sexual orgies and the availability of liquor and drugs at the meetings of Satanists.

Another reason why people approach Satan is to become financially prosperous. Many of the members of rock bands in America have approached high priests or witches of satanic groups to sell their souls to Satan in exchange for fame and prosperity. With their own blood they sign a covenant with Satan. The obligation then rests on them to promote themes like witchcraft, magic, drugs, Eastern cults, or Satanism in their songs.

One of the most important activities at their meetings is sacrifices to Satan, accompanied by prayers to him. Animals are sacrificed to him, but in some cases also humans. Instances are known where abducted people have been sacrificed to Satan, as well as the unregistered babies of cult members. Those participating in the ritual drink blood mixed with liquor or drugs. Demons also appear at meetings and take possession of people who open themselves up to them.

The captives of Satan are on the lowest level of spiritual and moral corruption imaginable. Nobody should even take the first step in this direction. The Bible says: "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). The advice of James is: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). Peter adds to this when he says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Do not take the dangerous risk of becoming acquainted with the depths of Satan by descending into the pit of Satanism (Rev. 2:24).

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF SATAN AND HIS ACCOMPLICES

From a study of Satan's methods of work among people in general, as well as the unbridled and extreme manifestations of his evil nature within the Satanist movement, the following 13 basic characteristics of him and his accomplices are evident:

4.1 Rebellion

Satan means *Adversary*. His rebellion and opposition against God started in heaven. In the book of Isaiah God says about Satan:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; *that* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners?" (Is. 14:12-17).

Satan is still the great adversary who promotes anarchy by rejecting all authority and laws. He undermines divine *and* human authority in an effort to create total chaos. That is part of the struggle that he waged against the kingdom of light through the ages. Satanists are possessed by the same spirit of rebellion and anarchy. They show it by painting the Anarchy symbol (A) on walls or floors of public buildings. The circle around the symbol, which is also used with other symbols, is the circle of power. The occult power of Satan must be kept inside the circle, and danger outside.

4.2 Destruction of God's creation

The entire creation of God is a target for Satan's destructive works. He is intent on polluting, poisoning, burning and destroying the earth and its natural resources with the aim of making it uninhabitable. The more control Satan gains over a people and their culture, the more he blinds the minds of people, erodes their values and sense of responsibility, and transforms them into materialistic and covetous people who overexploit or destroy nature in a callous and unscrupulous way to benefit themselves at any cost. Trees are cut without replacing them, pastures are overburdened and destroyed, soil erosion is allowed to continue unchecked, land and sea animals are hunted without allowing stocks a reasonable chance to recover, while land, water and the atmosphere are polluted to the extent that the survival chances for man and animals are seriously endangered. It is clearly Satan's agenda to destroy the world which God has given to man to be cultivated and controlled in a sustainable manner. In the great tribulation, Satan will come very close to causing a total ecological collapse on earth.

4.3 Destroying of God's institutions

Satan and his followers not only endeavour to promote the destruction of the physical creation, but also God's institutions for the orderly existence of human societies. Of these, marriage and government institutions are the most important targets for attacks. Satanists often curse the marriages of Christians in the hope that they will succumb to pressure and divorce. Sexual promiscuity and cohabitation is promoted in various ways.

Continuous efforts are also made to bring down or subvert governments and institutions for the maintenance of law and order. The police are strongly despised and hated because they maintain law and order and thus impede a movement towards anarchy. They also hunt down Satanists who contravene certain laws. The police force and other security services are consequently undermined and sometimes infiltrated by Satanists to get covert protection through inside information. To protect themselves against the police, Satanists use code names for one another at meetings, and they also maintain secrecy about their addresses and places of employment. In this way a member who may be arrested by the police, does not have valuable information that may lead to the prosecution of other members. In this way, Satan protects his agents who must sow chaos, disorder and anarchy in society.

4.4 Sabotage and underground activities

In Satan's empire there is a strong commitment to sabotage in order to break down what has been built up. That does not only involve the ruining, burning or destruction of buildings, cars, and other property, but also the non-material possessions of a nation. This includes the sabotage of educational standards and other forms of academic terrorism by which tertiary institutions are threatened. Most of these activities are planned underground by a network of secret societies. The evil plans of Satan are then executed by various front organisations. Covert attacks are in this way made on a society to deprive its members of their material and spiritual goods, and leave them destitute. Christian civilisation is incessantly attacked and undermined by the forces of darkness in their campaign of hatred.

4.5 Lying and the spreading of evil doctrines

Because the devil is the father of lies, he fights all forms of the truth and endeavours to substitute it with lies. This attitude emerges from the demonic ideology of opposite values in which everything that is good, is, in Satan's domain, regarded as bad. Nice, clean, honourable and positive things are despised by the devil and his followers. In their place ugly, vile, dishonourable and negative things are presented. Filthy, pornographic material is displayed in public places to promote the process of spiritual, psychological and bodily defilement, thereby putting Satan's stamp on society. Doctrines of demons are also disseminated in the form of distorted religious, political and philosophical ideologies. Churches, governments, political parties, and universities clearly show the results of this assault from the underworld. In many theological seminaries, demonic teachings have been firmly established in which the Deity and virgin birth of Jesus as well as the inerrancy of the Bible are denied. Demonic signs and wonders have also found their way into many churches and Christian movements through the mediation of false prophets. Satanists also infiltrate many churches to spread their evil influence there.

4.6 Cursing and blaspheming

The devil and his followers hate, despise, reject, and slander the Triune God, the Christians *and* Israel. *Devil* means *False accuser* or *Slanderer*, and that is exactly what he is doing. An extended vocabulary of swear-words, curses, and slanderous talk is used. Curses are placed on individuals, groups, churches, and even on an entire country. The Name of God is also blasphemed. This will be a major characteristic of the Antichrist: "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies... And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5-6). All people who participate in this evil practice are playing directly into the hands of Satan.

4.7 Opposition against the cross of Jesus and the Christian church

The kingdom of darkness is fanatically opposed to the church of Jesus Christ and tries to question, discourage, deceive, infiltrate, oppress, forbid, or destroy it in every possible way. Some of the symbols that they use in this campaign are the following:

The broken cross

In this symbol, the cross of Jesus is turned upside down and the horizontal bars broken to point diagonally to the bottom. It represents the rejection and destruction of Christianity – something to which every Satanist must commit him or herself. Witches use the same symbol. A number of radical peace movements also use this symbol, to which they refer as the peace sign. One of these groups campaigns against the use of nuclear weapons. Although their cause may be just, they are guided by Satan as the angel of light and are looking for a false, humanistic peace outside Christ. In their concept of peace there is no place for peace with God based on the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. To the contrary – the cross of Jesus is broken and rejected to allow fallen man to establish his own peace outside God. This false peace, which is also promoted by the New Age Movement and the new world order, is a deceptive prelude to the great tribulation: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

The inverted cross

This cross is not broken, but turned upside down. It indicates the rejection of Jesus Christ and contempt for the gospel of salvation. Inverted symbols are typical of the opposite values pursued by Satanists. People who are sometimes sacrificed to Satan on Black Sabbath are crucified upside down in accordance with this tradition.

The cross of confusion

This is a cross of which the long lower leg is curled to resemble a reversed question mark. It is also a satanic cross by which the genuineness and power of the cross of Jesus is questioned. The rock group *Blue Oyster Cult* uses this symbol on their record covers.

The Ankh cross

This is an Egyptian symbol of life, of which the short upper bar forms a circle. It also depicts a combination of the female and male signs of Isis and Osiris. Satanists use it as a sex symbol for their sexual orgies.

4.8 Immoral behaviour

Because the Bible upholds high moral standards, the Adversary makes it his business to break down these standards and replace them with the most extreme forms of immorality and misconduct. Filthy habits, swearing and vile conversations, anti-social behaviour, a propensity for nakedness, fornication, homosexuality, corruption, violence, and theft are all part of an immoral lifestyle that is continuously promoted by Satan. He is the author of sin and seeks to establish an international culture of sin among all nations. That is why his future world leader, the Antichrist, is also referred to as "that man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3).

During the rule of the Antichrist the decadence and immorality on earth will be comparable with the days of Noah and Lot. Of the time of Noah the Bible says: "And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually... for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6:5, 13). In the time of Lot, homosexuality and violence were rife. Because of the extreme immorality and rebellion of people, God poured out His wrath over them.

During the coming rule of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, immorality and rebellion against God and His norms will again take on unprecedented proportions. As a result, the world will be surrendered to a great tribulation as there was never before; and if those days are not shortened no flesh will be saved (Mt. 24:21-22). Sin is the reason why God judges people. Satan makes it his job to plunge individuals, groups, and even whole nations into sin by presenting it as human freedom and an acceptable way of life. In the Satanist movement the culture of sin already reigns supreme.

4.9 The use of occult power

Satan doubtlessly has considerable power, which he actively uses for the promotion and extension of the interests of his kingdom. He makes it available to Satanists, magicians, witches, diviners, necromancers, psychics, and various other practitioners of occult powers and wisdom. Through these people it is channelled to the wider community. Occult powers are also offered to false prophets who infiltrate Christian churches and work sensational signs and wonders. In the end-time, this phenomenon will increase considerably.

In His prophetic discourse the Lord Jesus said: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall [show] great signs and wonders" (Mt. 24:24). In this way Satan and his collaborators will pave the way for coming of the ultimate false Christ, who is the Antichrist. Paul says his coming is "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). The false prophet will have the same occult powers. John says about him: "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast... And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth... And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (Rev. 13:12-14). In the coming new world order, the occult powers and 'cosmic wisdom' dispensed by Satan will be much sought after by both political and spiritual leaders. Those without it will be disregarded as ignorant and powerless.

4.10 Self-deification

In his kingdom, Satan insists on being referred to as the god and ruler of the universe. People must also accept him in this capacity when they conclude covenants with him. It is his great desire to have dominion over all people. He already has a considerable degree of influence and authority over the deceived nations of the world but he is not content with that. Like so often in history, he wishes to institute a world government with absolute powers over the inhabitants of the earth. People must be ruled with an iron fist and be forced to worship Satan or his demons that pose as idols. According to the Bible, a satanic world government will indeed be instituted by the Antichrist. It will be a revival of the Babylonian and Roman world empires in which occult powers and idolatry were rife. Satan will give his power and authority to the Antichrist and also insist on being worshipped by all people (Rev. 13:2-4). Many of the followers of Lucifer also deify and exalt themselves, and become very arrogant.

4.11 Murderer

Satan "was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn. 8:44). He takes pleasure in killing people so that they may be plunged into hell where eternal death awaits them. His followers are also attracted by murder, murder weapons, blood, and skulls. The more gruesome a murder scene is, the more they like it. When Satan is finished using people for a certain task, he kicks them aside, drives them to commit suicide, or uses other people to kill them. Anton LaVey, the satanic priest who started the First Church of Satan in America on the sixth day of the sixth month in 1966, and who also wrote the satanic bible, died in 1997 in a very mysterious way. The last few months before his death he suffered heavily from depression and may have committed suicide.

4.12 Demonic possession

A commonly used method in the kingdom of Satan is that of demonic possession. Satan and his fallen angels are spirits who are dependent on possessing people and working through them. They can also influence and deceive people without possessing them, but it remains a priority with them to get full control over their victims. A demon who possesses a person, completely changes the personality of his host, controls his will and emotions, intimidates and commands him by way of telepathic orders, or even by talking to him/her in an audible voice. He tortures the person if he refuses to execute orders. The victim gets frightening nightmares, is forced to display weird pictures on the walls of his room and to wear black clothes. In the

satanic cult there are high priests who are possessed by a number of demons, each with his own name. They can be given certain assignments by the high priest.

4.13 The worshipping of Satan

Satan is the undisputed head of his kingdom and demands the loyalty and worship of all his subjects. The Satanists must continually worship him and bring sacrifices to honour him. They mainly use the name *Lord Satan* when they worship him, but they sometimes invert the name to become *Natas*. They also address him as *Lucifer* or *Leviathan*. In illustrations he is depicted as a human-like being with the head of a goat, or only as a black goat. The symbol that is mostly used in connection with him is the inverted pentagram. The head of a goat is sometimes drawn in the pentagram. At satanic meetings a large, encircled pentagram is drawn on the floor and black candles are placed on each of the five points of it, which are lit by magical power. Demons that are called up appear in the middle of the pentagram.

Although Satan and his demons are indirectly worshipped by millions of people who worship idols, it remains his final objective to be directly worshipped in his undisguised form as Lucifer. Together with the Antichrist, who will be the leader of the future luciferic world order, the dragon (Satan) will be worshipped by all people. Refusal to obey will be punishable by death:

"...and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast?... and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:3-4, 15).

In the coming hour of darkness, millions of people will openly worship Satan.

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

We will now briefly indicate from the Bible how the struggle between the kingdoms of light and darkness will develop in future. Due to its increased perversion and corruption, the world is heading inexorably toward a satanic take-over. At the height of the Antichrist's reign of terror during the great tribulation, Satanism will be the only officially recognised and compulsory world religion. This darkest hour in human history will commence in the middle of the tribulation period, shortly after a war between angels and demons has broken out in heavenly places during which Satan will be cast down on earth. He will know that he has little time to accomplish his evil plans and will act with intensified anger and viciousness: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:7-9, 12).

Satan will know that he only has 3½ years to implement his plans for world domination and to be worshipped by all people. The Bible is very clear about the fact that Jesus Christ will return to earth with a heavenly army at the end of the great tribulation, placing His feet on the Mount of Olives outside the Old City of Jerusalem, and judging His enemies. Satan will muster all his forces to fight against Jesus to try and prevent this divine intervention in his kingdom. This conflict is called the battle of Armageddon. Satan will use evil spirits to incite the kings of the world to send their armies to Israel for this great battle against Jesus and His heavenly hosts (Rev. 16:13-16).

The battle of Armageddon will not last very long, as it will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Lord will quickly and effectively deal with Satan and all his deceived horde: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that [worked] miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone... And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years; and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled... And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations... and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 19:19-20; 20:1-3, 7-10).

Before the second coming of Jesus, when the dragon, the beast and the false prophet will be conquered and judged, a mustering of satanic powers will occur on earth as never before. The devil will know that his time is short, and the Antichrist will also have knowledge about the prophecy that he will be destroyed by the coming of the true Christ (2 Thess. 2:8). As in the case of Lucifer, his hatred and revengefulness will know no bounds, "therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44).

6. ARE YOU A VICTIM OR A CONQUERER?

In the light of this information on the kingdom of Satan, there are a few questions that each of us needs to seriously ask ourselves. Some people may be shocked to learn about the plans and modus operandi of the kingdom of darkness, but nevertheless remain under the illusion that these things do not directly influence them. The fact is that Satan does not miss a single person on earth. As a result of the fall of man that was planned by Satan, all people are born with a sinful nature from which they desperately need to be saved. Otherwise, they are lost sinners on their way to eternal damnation. Because of their

sins they will share eternity with the devil and his fallen angels. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). "Except a man is born again [and gets a new nature from God], he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3).

The question is not whether you became involved with Satanism, practised false religions, experimented with occult powers, or were deceived by false prophets. These are all very real dangers, and people who were lured into the evil practices of darkness urgently need to be redeemed. Millions of people are not lost because of these things but because of their own sins, despite the fact they were, by human standards, reasonably good people. A definite decision must be taken *for* the Lord Jesus and *against* your sins from which you must sincerely repent.

Although you have not explicitly chosen to be evil-minded and inherited a sinful nature because of Satan's deception of Adam and Eve, the father and mother of us all, you nevertheless have the responsibility to do something about it. God has given each of us a free will to take independent decisions and thus to accept accountability for whatever we have decided to do. Because your sinful nature is part of your personality, which includes your free will, God holds you responsible for your own sins: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

The devil does exploit your evil passions and strengthen wrong desires, but because of your inherently sinful nature you mostly commit sins without the direct intervention of Satan and his demons. You always take a decision to either yield to a temptation or to resist it.

Is your life characterised by continuous sins, or are you born again with a new nature that was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness? (EPH 4:24). Do you live a sanctified life in the power of the Holy Spirit? If you live in sin you will go to hell just as certainly as all the deceived victims of Satan to whom we referred in this article.

Examine yourself as to whether you are in the faith and bear fruit that befits repentance. A few straight questions may help you to conduct this examination: "Sir, do you practise a dead form of godliness without a clear testimony of being born again? Then you are deceiving yourself. How is your conduct at work? Are you overcome by rages and do you often lose your temper? Are you honest, do you avoid corruption, and do you refrain from cursing, participation in filthy conversations and pornographic material? How is your conduct at home? Do you love your wife and are you true to her? Do you set the right example to your family of holiness and a godly life? Do you regularly worship the Lord and read the Bible in family and private devotions? Do you read good Christian books?"

Ladies, you need to face up to similar questions about your conduct, also.

These questions will help you to determine whether you belong to the Lord Jesus or to the devil. All habitual sinners are children of the devil. Jesus said to the unsaved religious leaders of the first century: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father [which are sins] you want to do" (JOH 8:44). When a child of God sins it is a disaster in his life and he must immediately confess and forsake the sin. The rule of the Christian life is that we should *not* sin (1 Jn. 2:1). We must even resist to blood, striving against sin (HEB 12:4).

If you are a saved person belonging to the Lord, then "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (GAL 5:1). Help others who are bound by Satan, that they may be liberated by the only Saviour of the world. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (JOH 8:36). Praise His Name!