



1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

The word *wonder* speaks of a sign, something that is unusual and transcends the ordinary, and is an indication that something momentous is about to take place.¹ The location of this *wonder* is in heaven where everyone will be able to see it. What is the *wonder* that John sees? It is a woman who has been clothed with the sun, the moon is beneath her feet, and upon her head is a crown of twelve stars. What we must notice is that this *woman* is greater than the created universe, for the lights in our earthly heavens, which God created on day four, are merely accessories to this *wonder*.

When people are asked who this woman represents, most frequently the response will be either Mary (the mother of Jesus) or Israel. This is understandable, to an extent, since we later read of the woman being ready to deliver a child. However, if we ponder these responses carefully, we must realize that neither one is greater than the universe that God created, nor can either Mary or Israel be said to be clothed in the lights of the universe. Therefore, it is necessary that we look to something that is more marvelous than God's dealings with either Mary or Israel, and yet out of which the Messiah came.

In all of the created universe, and in all of time, there is nothing that is a greater marvel than the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Jesus made it clear that the Jewish religious elite (the scribes and Pharisees) were not entering into the kingdom (Matthew 23:13); those who were responsible for interpreting the Law of Moses, and providing the people of Israel with Jehovah's teachings, remained outside of the kingdom of God. They knew so much, yet practiced so little. On the other hand, Jesus made it equally clear that His kingdom belonged to infants: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16). These are still in innocence, and understand nothing but to trust those who care for them. Jesus also said, "Blessed *are* the poor [lowly, without pride] in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3); "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). The contrast is evident; the scribes and Pharisees lived in opulence, removed from the common people over whom they exercised great authority, yet they were also separated from God's kingdom. In Jesus' words, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24). It is the one who is bound by his wealth (a *rich man*, like the scribes and Pharisees) who will find it impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven; "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

As we consider Matthew 19:23-24, we see that the terms *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven* are used synonymously, from which we can determine that there is only one kingdom. Let's look carefully at the kingdom of God in order to see how it fits with the *wonder* that John beheld in heaven.

¹ Gingrich Lexicon; <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/portent?s=t>.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus, who was a highly influential Pharisee, what it meant to enter into the kingdom. He began by saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he acknowledged that the Pharisees had somewhat agreed that Jesus was a teacher Who had come from God, simply because they could not account for the miracles that He performed without admitting that God must be present (v.2). Using this as a springboard, Jesus launches into an exposé of the kingdom of God, and how we can have access to it. We have noted before is that, in the Greek, *verily* is the same word as *amen*, and it is used at the beginning of a comment to underscore the truthfulness of what will follow; Jesus places a double emphasis on the truth of what He is about to tell Nicodemus: unless someone is born anew, or from above (*again*), he absolutely is unable to know the kingdom of God.² What is fascinating is that Nicodemus gravitated to the thought of being re-birthed physically (*again*), rather than being born from above (spiritually). Nicodemus was a Pharisee (which means separated), and of the most law-abiding sect of the Jews. As such, he would have considered himself to be among the righteous, religious elite, those who kept the Law of Moses meticulously, along with the multitude of rules that they, as a sect, had imposed upon themselves in order to appear more righteous and godly before the common people. Therefore, he would have instinctively shied away from admitting a need to be born from above, and, consequently, inquired as to how he could possibly be born-again physically.

Jesus provides a further explanation, once again beginning with a double emphasis on the truth of what He is about to say (*verily, verily*): “Except [unless] a man [someone may] be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot [is absolutely unable to] enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born [only once – perfect tense] of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born [only once – perfect tense] of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6).³ Here is Jesus’ explanation to Nicodemus as to how the re-birth takes place: there are two births, the first one is physical (*of water* [v.5], *of the flesh* [v.6]), the second one (which is the new birth) is spiritual (*of the Spirit*), and you require both in order to enter into God’s kingdom. We must not overlook the fact that, even within this simple explanation, it is very clear that you can only experience **one** of each (physical birth and spiritual birth). This eliminates two modern errors: 1) there is NO reincarnation, and 2) if you forsake your new-birth relationship with the Lord (that is, you become apostate), then there is NO possibility of a second spiritual birth.

The Psalmist declared: “Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations” (Psalm 145:13). The word *everlasting* is to be applied toward the past as well as the future, i.e., the Lord’s kingdom is an eternal kingdom⁴; his rule (*dominion*) is present throughout all generations, namely, from the beginning of time to the end of time. When Nebuchadnezzar began to comprehend the greatness of Jehovah, he proclaimed, “How great *are* his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting [from an Aramaic word that means the same as the Hebrew word used in Psalm 145:13] kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation” (Daniel 4:3). The Spirit through Peter declared, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence [make every effort] to make [middle voice, something we must do for ourselves] your calling [a holy calling – 2 Timothy 1:9] and election [chosen in Christ –

² Strong’s Online.

³ Ibid.

⁴ BDB.

Ephesians 1:4] sure [steadfast]: for if ye do these things [what he has just listed], ye shall [should; *fall* is in the subjunctive mood] never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting [eternal] kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).⁵ Our salvation is all of God: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Once we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (we have accepted His *gift* of salvation), there is nothing **external** to us that can take us away from Him. “And I give [am giving] unto them [His sheep who are following Him] eternal life; and they shall [should; *perish* is in the subjunctive mood] never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* [no one] is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29).⁶ However, that does **not** mean that we cannot be removed from the Father’s hand; we are warned to guard against a heart of unfaithfulness, lest we fall away from God (Hebrews 3:12). It is through our obedience to the commands of God that we demonstrate our faithfulness to Him (John 14:15), and it is as we remain in faithful obedience to Him that we are assured of entering into His kingdom (Matthew 24:13). “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4). Our position in Christ is made steadfast through our obedience to His commands. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (spiritual birth) is the key that opens the kingdom of God to us; an enduring faithfulness to the Lord will ensure our entrance into the glories of His eternal kingdom someday.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). When pressured by the Jews to explain to them when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus stated that it would not come “with observation” (i.e. by carefully scrutinizing data in order to interpret events), but that it is “within you” (Luke 17:20-21); in other words, don’t look for signs that the kingdom of God is coming to replace the rule of Rome, but know that His reign is to take place within you – in your heart! When queried by Pilate as to His kingdom, Jesus made it clear that His “kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36); yet “kingdom building” is a very common practice among Evangelicals today. As we have seen, it was to Nicodemus that Jesus explained how to enter into this kingdom: “Except a man [someone] be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).⁷ The kingdom of God is made up of only some of those who have been created in the image of God (not everyone will enter God’s kingdom). So we know that there is a physical aspect to it (*born of water*); however, that is not enough; there must also be a spiritual birth from on high. This is why His kingdom is not of this world; until we have made a heavenly connection through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not a part of His kingdom. Everyone enters this world as a physical and spiritual creature, but he grows into a child of this world, and is spiritually dead to God unless he is born anew from on high by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:1-2; Romans 8:9). We understand, therefore, that our entrance into the kingdom of God comes only through being made spiritually alive when we place our faith in Christ. This world remains the domain of Satan, and he is continually looking for those whom he

⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶ Strong’s Online; Stephanus NT.

⁷ Strong’s Online.

can bring under his control. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8); *devour* literally means to drink down, and, as it is used here, it means to completely overpower or to control.⁸ When we consider that the world is under the control of Satan, then we realize the importance of the commands to be *sober* (clear-headed) and *vigilant* (alert); Satan is not wandering the earth looking for the unsaved (they are already his, and he will destroy them at will), rather, he is diligently endeavoring to cause the child of God to fall away from his spiritual life in Christ. Hence the warning: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil [wicked] heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible [if they are able], **they shall deceive the very elect**. Behold, I have told you before” (Matthew 24:24-25). Jesus forewarned us so that we will be vigilant and alert to the deception that will be all around us.

Now that we have briefly looked at the kingdom of God, how do we relate this to the *wonder* of which John writes? We see the kingdom of God as being one – there are not many kingdoms, and we recognize that it is an eternal kingdom, which we can only enter into through Christ. We are told that the wonder *appeared* in heaven, i.e., it was made to appear (the Greek word is in the passive voice), it did not come into existence by or of itself.⁹ God made His kingdom to appear within the creation that He had made for mankind.

When God created the vast universe, He did so with a very unique focus on the earth, and more specifically upon the man and the woman who were created in His image. On the fourth day, God made lights to appear in the heavens for “signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years,” and for giving “light upon the earth” (Genesis 1:14-15); these lights are the sun (*the greater light*), the moon (*the lesser light*) and the *stars* (Genesis 1:16). Amazingly, God, Who is eternal (and not subject to time), placed within the heavens all that was needed for man to track time, even though it would be two days before he was created.

John describes for us a *wonder* that incorporates all of the luminaries that God created for man’s benefit, and his first descriptive is that this *wonder* appears to be a *woman*. Let’s consider this word-picture in light of the kingdom of God.

When Jesus asked His disciples Who He was, Peter boldly proclaimed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus accepted this statement from Peter, providing the clarification that it was revealed to him by His Father, and He went on to say, “... thou art Peter [*petros* – a stone], and upon this rock [*petra* – bedrock] I will build my church [*ekklesia* – called-out ones]; and the gates [synonymous with power; nothing is stronger than death, which is the entrance to hades] of hell [*hades*] shall not prevail against [overpower] it” (Matthew 16:18).¹⁰ Here Jesus speaks of the work that **He** will be doing – He, as the Son of God, being the foundation upon which all such construction would take place. Jesus said that He would build, not on Peter (*petros*, a stone that can easily be moved), but on the confession that he made (*petra*, the bedrock foundation of Jesus as the Anointed Son of God)! John wrote of this: “Whosoever believeth [is believing – present tense] that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...” (1 John 5:1); clearly, believing

⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁹ Strong’s Online.

¹⁰ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

that Jesus is the Christ (*Anointed*) is significant beyond what we might casually think to be true.¹¹ If we believe (are persuaded) that Jesus is *the Christ* (anointed by God at His baptism), then we are convinced that He is God's anointed High Priest Who has made the sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 5:8-10; 7:26-27). If we are truly persuaded that He is our Savior from sin, and our only access to the Father, then it only follows that we must demonstrate our commitment to Him by living in obedience to His commands (John 14:15). "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar [one who breaks faith; faithless], and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4); Jesus said, "I am ... the truth ..." (John 14:6), therefore, we must recognize that, if we are not prepared to walk in His ways, then He will have no part with us.

What we come to see from the Scriptures is that *believing* is so much more than what we have learned through our Evangelical teachers; unless believing includes obedience to the commands of the Lord, how can we even say that we *believe*? We can't! The ecumenist (the word *ecumenical* comes from the Latin for "universal"¹²), who is also an Evangelical, will heartily proclaim that he believes that *Jesus is the Christ*, and will also boldly claim to be *born of God*; nevertheless, because he refuses to live in obedience to the commands of the Lord, his life contradicts his claims, and the Scriptures affirm that the truth (Jesus) is not in him! Jesus said, "For I say unto you, That except [unless] your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case [never, certainly not (in Greek a double negative is used for emphasis)] enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).¹³ The ecumenist has a *righteousness* like unto that of the Pharisees: he likes to appear to be very godly (a feigned righteousness and love – Matthew 23:5), he loves to be honored (Matthew 23:6), and his leaders love to be called *pastor* or *reverend* (Matthew 23:7). However, our righteousness can only come through living in faithful obedience to the Lord (Romans 8:4; Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 3:9).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul draws a parallel between the husband-wife relationship and that of Christ and His *ekklesia*. He begins by establishing that the *ekklesia* is *subject* to (obedient to) Christ (Ephesians 5:24); this is in keeping with Christ being the Head of the assembly (Ephesians 5:23). Interestingly, the word *subject* (in v. 24) is in the passive voice, not the active, which indicates that we (who are a part of the *ekklesia*) do not initiate our submission to Christ, but, rather, because He is our Head, we are made subject to Him through faith (our spiritual renewal by the Spirit of God) – we do not make Him to be Lord, He IS Lord!¹⁴ The ONLY way to be found *in Christ* is through faith in His sacrifice for our sins and the abiding presence of the Spirit of God. Earlier Paul spoke of the *ekklesia* in terms of being the *body of Christ* (Ephesians 4:12); with Christ as the Head, every part of the body receives nourishment directly from Him (4:16). His conclusion of the marriage illustration is this: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined [passive voice; not man's action, but God's] unto [glued to] his wife, and they two shall be one [only one] flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church [*ekklesia*]" (Ephesians 5:31-32).¹⁵ We find here irrefutable evidence that the woman is identified

¹¹ Strong's Online.

¹² http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e&p=3&allowed_in_frame=0

¹³ Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

¹⁴ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

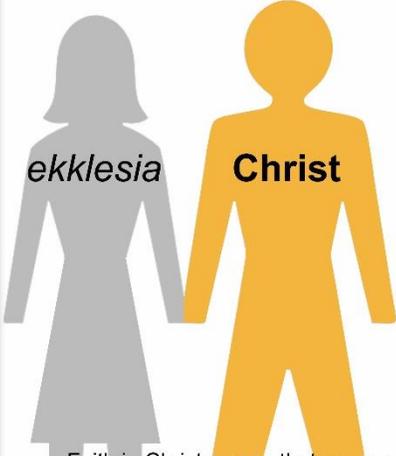
¹⁵ Strong's Online.

with the *ekklesia* (the called-out ones); through faith we become one with Christ spiritually (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Even within the OT, we find that Jehovah used the husband-wife relationship to express His dismay at Israel's failures. "Surely *as a wife treacherously [deceitfully, faithlessly (perfect tense)] departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously [exactly the same Hebrew word] with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD*" (Jeremiah 3:20); Israel had forsaken the Lord, just as a faithless wife would leave her husband. When the Lord promised that there would come a day when He would establish a New Covenant with Israel, He described it as: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD ...*" (Jeremiah 31:32). God's desire for Israel was that they would be a faithful "wife" unto Him: a valued possession (*peculiar treasure*) taken as His own, and established through their

We ARE SUBJECT TO Christ

Ephesians 5



Faith in Christ means that we are spiritually united with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17), just like marriage makes a man and a woman one flesh (Ephesians 5:31). Also similar to the marriage relationship, we (as the woman/*ekklesia*) **are in submission** to Christ (Ephesians 5:24). When we place our faith in Christ, we enter into that submissive/obedient relationship; if we refuse to be obedient, then we are not in a relationship with Christ.

Ephesians 4



Faith in Christ means that we are made members of His Body, all connected to Christ, as the Head (Ephesians 4:15-16). Through that connection with Christ, we are nourished and grow (Colossians 2:19); however, if that vital link is broken, then we will wither and die (like the branch of John 15:6). In the same way that the body is controlled by the head, so we (as members of the Body of Christ) **are subject** to Christ as our Head.

obedience and faithfulness to Him (Exodus 19:5). As a nation, this never happened, but, individually, there has always been a faithful remnant (Romans 11:1-5).

The final piece to this puzzle is this: can we establish that the *ekklesia* is the same as or part of the kingdom of heaven? In a prophetic vein Isaiah wrote: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone* [the Septuagint shows this as: *akrogoniaios*], a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste [hurry away];

yield or give way]” (Isaiah 28:16).¹⁶ Peter picks up on these words from Isaiah: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner [*akrogoniaios*] stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth [is believing (present tense)] on him shall [should – subjunctive mood] not be confounded [put to shame]” (1 Peter 2:6);¹⁷ Paul removes all doubt as to Who is being spoken of here: “... Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [*akrogoniaios*] stone ...” (Ephesians 2:20b).¹⁸ Paul’s clarification comes at the end of a significant passage in which he explains that the Lord Jesus Christ has “reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross” (Ephesians 2:16); by *both* he means the Jews and the Gentiles (v. 11-13). The Mosaic Law stood as that great barrier between the ancient Jews and the Gentiles (v. 15); however, Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses at the cross so that it has been removed and is no longer in force (Colossians 2:14) – the Law of Moses does NOT include the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone. With the reconciling action of Christ at the cross, Paul acclaims that we (as Gentiles) are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints [hold the same citizenship as the OT saints (Hebrews 11)], and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*” (Ephesians 2:19-20). There is not one body of the *ekklesia* and another of the OT saints – there is ONE body in Christ; Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [namely, Israel]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one** fold [*poimne* – flock], and **one** shepherd” (John 10:16).¹⁹ As we look to the heavenly fulfillment of this unified gathering of saints, we see that the gates to the heavenly city bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12), and that there are twelve foundations that carry the names of the apostles of the Lamb of God (v. 14); clearly, there will be one habitation where the everlasting kingdom of God and the *ekklesia* express their unity in Christ. This should not come as a surprise to us, for there is only one way to the Father (Jehovah), and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6); since there is salvation by no other, the faith of the OT saints is the same as our faith – the difference is that their faith was projected forward to the promised Messiah, and our looks back to the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of those promises.

We now come back to the *wonder* that John beheld in the heaven, a wonder that did not appear of itself, but was made to appear: the eternal kingdom of God (encompassing all of the saints from all ages). The kingdom of God is His, not ours; Jesus plainly stated that He would be doing the building of the *ekklesia*; we do not build His kingdom for Him (Matthew 16:18). This wonder of the kingdom of heaven appears to John as a *woman*, spiritually united with the Lord through faith, as illustrated by the man and woman being united in marriage (Ephesians 5:31). John’s final description of this wonder is that she has been clothed in brilliance: the sun, the moon, and twelve stars for a crown. Each of these luminaries was created by God to provide the earth with light, and to establish a distinction between day and night (Genesis 1:16-18); all of these relate to the physical, and were created for man. In the new heaven and earth, where the kingdom of God (as a spiritual domain) will be established for all eternity, there will be no need for the sun or any other physical light, for God will be the light (Revelation 21:23; 22:5). To the kingdom of heaven (the

¹⁶ BDB.

¹⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

wonder), the sun, moon and stars are all external things; we, who are made a part of God's kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus, live in the midst of a physical world, but that is not to be our focus. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Jesus died so that His called-out ones might be made spiritually clean and set apart (holy) unto Him, and that He might present to Himself a people of purity and holiness (Ephesians 5:25-27). When John sees the innumerable saints in heaven, he describes them as being clothed in robes that have been made white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:13-14); *white* speaks of "what is characterized by bright light, so bright [that] it appears white."²⁰ This fits perfectly with the *wonder* being clothed with the sun: each of us, who are part of the eternal kingdom of heaven, is to put on the purity and righteousness of the Lord now, in preparation for that day when our glorified bodies will perfectly display His holiness (Ephesians 4:24).



2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

To understand this, we must go back to the Lord's promise to Satan that was made in the Garden of Eden right after Adam chose to sin: "And I will put enmity [hostility] between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed [followers of Satan] and her seed [promise of Messiah, Who would be born of the woman]; it [He (a masculine, singular pronoun in Hebrew), referring to *her seed*] shall bruise thy head [a death-blow dealt to Satan], and thou shalt bruise his heel [the Messiah will suffer]" (Genesis 3:15).²¹ The promise was made that, through the Seed of the woman, Satan would be defeated. If we understand that the *woman* refers to the kingdom of God, then we realize that a time came when Someone was born **out of** this kingdom.

As we learned through Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus, all who are born of man must be re-born spiritually in order to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Here we are told that the kingdom is going to bring forth a Child; we immediately recognize that this will not be an ordinary event, for we are born into the kingdom, not out of it. Even at this point, we can see that this must be the promised Messiah.

We might wonder, did those who were considered to be in the kingdom understand that such an event was to take place? The religious elite of Israel were quite aware of the signs of when the Messiah would come. Daniel, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had provided a fairly specific time-line as to when the Messiah (the Anointed) would arrive (Daniel 9:25); when Jesus came, the Jews struggled with the question of whether He was the One Who was to come, or not. "Then came the Jews round about [surrounding] him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt [literally: lift up someone's soul; i.e., keep us in suspense]? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not ..." (John 10:24-25a).²² The difficulty that the religious Jews had was that Jesus did not come in accordance with their expectations; they desired a political Messiah Who would release them from the tyranny of Rome. Jesus came as the suffering Messiah, as prophesied by Isaiah, in order to bring release from sin;

²⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

²¹ BDB.

²² Friberg Lexicon.

the self-righteous religious leaders did not see their need to be saved from the penalty of sin, or, at the very least, they felt that their need for release from the oppression of Rome was greater than their need to be saved from sin. Even at the end of Jesus' ministry, when the religious elite of the Jews sought occasion to have Him killed, it came back to whether He was their Messiah: "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ [Anointed], the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61). However, Jesus' affirmation that He was their Messiah did not elicit their worship, but was, instead, considered to be blasphemy, and a reason for His death (Mark 14:64).

When the angel came to Mary, who had found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Luke 1:30), she was told, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Here is the promise of Genesis 3:15 being fulfilled; physically, Jesus was *her seed* – He was born of one who through faith was a part of the kingdom of God (Mary); spiritually, He was eternal God, being conceived by the Holy Spirit. As the eternal and holy God now robed in flesh, Jesus was not only unique in the world, but He was distinctive in all of time. As God, the kingdom out of which He was born was His; despite being flesh, He did not need to be reborn in order to enter the kingdom; rather, the kingdom was His because He was eternally God! He wore a body of flesh, but He did so without sin (Hebrews 4:15); sin is perpetuated through Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22), which is why Jesus was born of Mary and the Holy Ghost – it was the only way for there to be a sinless Man Who could offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin, thereby defeating Satan.

As John beholds this *wonder*, he sees that she is about to be delivered of a child – a momentous occasion; one that had been anticipated from the Garden of Eden!



3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

John now goes on to describe a second *wonder* that is made to appear in the heaven. The Greek word used for *another* is *allos*, which speaks of another, often of the same kind, with the emphasis being placed upon its distinction from the first. In other words, even though it is not exactly the same, it is similar. However, do not misunderstand this to mean that the two wonders themselves are comparable, for, in truth, they could not be more different; what it means is that there are two signs in the heaven, and they are equally significant to what is taking place. As wonders, they are the same (*allos*) – they are both important, but what they represent are polar opposites. So John now sees two wonders in the heaven, and it is regarding this second *wonder* that John now says, "Behold!"

What John sees, and calls upon us to look upon, is a large, fiery-red dragon.²³ This is none other than the devil himself. Before the establishment of the millennial reign of Christ, we are told that an angel takes hold of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" and binds

²³ Strong's Online.

him in a pit for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2). Therefore, we have the first *wonder*, the kingdom of God, and now a second *wonder*, the devil himself.

We are told that the devil has *seven heads*, *ten horns*, and *seven crowns* upon his seven heads. Here is some symbolic language that will tell us a little bit about the devil. The head is used symbolically as a sign of authority (God is head of Christ [1 Corinthians 11:3]; Christ is head of the *ekklesia* [Colossians 1:18]; the husband is head of the wife [Ephesians 5:23]).²⁴ We have already learned that seven speaks of completeness; as these are brought together here, we come to understand that the devil has complete authority within the created heavens (the territory within which the first wonder appears). When Satan was tempting Jesus, just before He began His earthly ministry, he claimed this authority, and Jesus did not dispute his claim: “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power [*exousia* – power of authority] will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it” (Luke 4:5-6).²⁵ Satan promises the Lord Jesus authority over all of the kingdoms of the earth, if He will simply worship him; Jesus never questions Satan’s dominion over the earth, but simply counters that all worship is due to the Lord God (Luke 4:7-8; cp. Deuteronomy 6:13, where *serve* carries the thought of worship²⁶). Despite Satan’s defeat through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, he still holds the kingdoms of this earth as his own; Jesus’ kingdom is not yet of this world (John 18:36), but there will come a day when it will be, and, during that time, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:2).

Herein is the error of men like Rick Warren (and all other Dominionists), for they seek to establish Christian authority within the nations that are still under Satan’s control; their limited success is only due to the devil permitting them to create confusion and a convincing deception that they are making progress, when, in reality, they are simply working for him. Christ is building His kingdom (Matthew 16:18); it is His kingdom, not ours, and He will exclude from it those who do many things in His name, but not according to His will (Matthew 7:21-23). You hear much of “building the kingdom of God” within the community of Evangelicals today; many probably don’t realize what they’re saying (they’re simply parroting what they’ve heard), but many others are actually trying to build God’s kingdom, and, thereby, are usurping the Lord’s work! More on this in a minute.

The *horn* is metaphorically used to speak of strength; therefore, when we see that the dragon has seven heads and ten horns, it is clear that his authority is significant. The number *ten* speaks of law, order, and responsibility (using God’s Ten Commandments as a model),²⁷ revealing that Satan’s strength will come through at least a feigned appearance of law and order, and an underlying personal responsibility to him. When Satan came to Eve, he came with the promise of a New World Order (NWO): “ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Nothing has changed; what he failed to mention to Eve was that his NWO would bring complete separation from God (spiritual death), along with misery, pain, and, ultimately, physical death; nevertheless, the NWO was Satan’s plan. When he first set his eyes on being “like the most High” (Isaiah 14:14),

²⁴ Vine’s “head.”

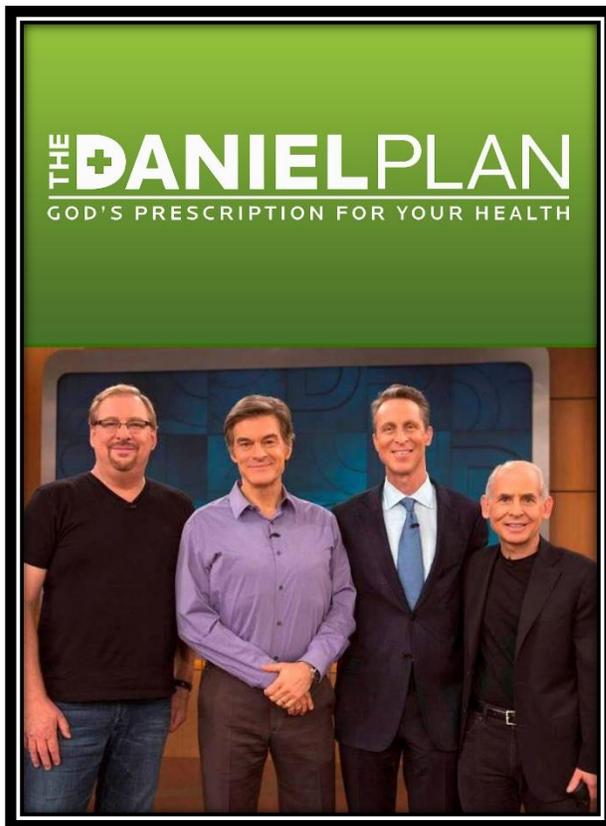
²⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁶ BDB.

²⁷ <http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/10.html>

Satan sought for a kingdom over which he could rule. God gave man dominion over all of the earth and the creatures that were in it (Genesis 1:26), but, through submission to the deceitful promise of Satan, man relinquished that dominion to the devil – Satan now had his kingdom, and Adam’s descendants were his. Even though God immediately provided a means of restoring man’s fellowship with Him, those who have placed their faith in God’s provision have always been a minority. It was this way at the time of Noah (Genesis 6:5,8), nothing was changed during the work of Elijah (1 Kings 19:14,18), and Paul assures the Romans that, although God will always have His people, they will be a remnant, not a massive movement (Romans 11:5).

Today, the world and many professing Christians hold unwavering confidence in the promise of a New World Order; even within Evangelical Christianity there is a growing support for a NWO that bears many faces: Dominionism, Dominion Now, Christian Reconstructionism, or simply, “building His kingdom.” This has found its greatest traction within the charismatic movement, but not exclusively so; many times Evangelicals will speak of “building Christ’s kingdom” or “working for His kingdom.” The general thrust of this thinking is that Christians around the world



Rick Warren, Mehmet Oz, Mark Hyman, Daniel Amen

must gain influence and/or control in government, business, media, the arts, family, religion, and education (the essence of Seven Mountains theology²⁸, which is dominionism), since, within their minds, Christ will not return until He has gained dominion over all of the earth through His people.²⁹ The foundation for this thinking goes back to Genesis, and the belief that Christians must retake the dominion of the earth that God gave to mankind. Rick Warren has become a strong Evangelical voice for this thinking with his global, ecumenical P.E.A.C.E. plan,³⁰ which is his effort to change the world, and bring peace, prosperity, and health to all. More recently, he has unveiled his Daniel Plan, through which he is bringing together Mehmet Oz (a Muslim), Mark Hyman (a Jew), and Daniel Amen (a “Christian”) in order “to transform your spiritual, physical, and emotional health.”³¹ Nevertheless, this is not the transformation that is done by the Spirit of God (Romans 12:1-2); since all three of these men

²⁸ This originated with Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ) and Loren Cunningham (YWAM) in 1975, and, within a month, Francis Schaeffer followed. Their focus was on culture, and its perceived seven mountains.

<http://www.7culturalmountains.org/>

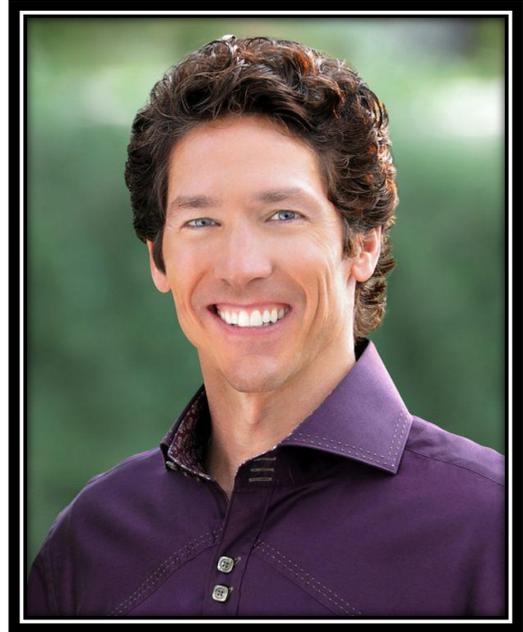
²⁹ <https://deceptionfree.wordpress.com/2013/01/05/satans-deceptive-theology-in-the-church-dominionism-and-the-nar/>; <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/david-barton-advocates-seven-mountains-dominionism>

³⁰ P – Promoting reconciliation (originally Planting churches), E – Equip leaders, A – Assist the poor, C – Care for the sick, and E – Educate the next generation; <http://www.thepropheticyears.com/comments/Globe!%20Peace%20plan.htm>

³¹ <http://danielplan.com/>; <http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/mwest/110124>

are also involved in Eastern mysticism of some form, Warren is actually heralding an ecumenical, New Age brew that will spell spiritual doom for all who partake – it might be Warren’s prescription, but it is not *God’s Prescription*.

A more benign form of dominion theology comes through the feel-good teachings of men like Joel Osteen. Joel advocates a positivism that draws thousands every week to hear his pep-talks. His advice to the naive is for them to repeat these phrases until they believe them: “I’m a victor and not a victim ... I am the head and I am not the tail. I will lend and I will not borrow. Everything I touch will prosper and succeed.”³² This was the essence of Jehovah’s conditional promise to the people of Israel, if they would live in obedience to His commands (Deuteronomy 28:12-14); we do not read of these promises being fulfilled in Israel, nor do we hear Joel advocating obedience to the Lord’s commands before muttering this mantra. Dominion teaching can take many forms, but ultimately it will expose itself through a violation of God’s Word, which simply means that we must heed Paul’s command to expend our energies in the study of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). Unless we have a good understanding of what God has given to us in His Word, we will be vulnerable to the heresies that will come our way. Peter warns us that Satan is busy in this world “seeking whom he may devour [completely overpower/control]” (1 Peter 5:8)³³; since all of the unregenerate are already subject to the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), this can only mean that the devil is looking for the weak among those who are in Christ by faith! Beware of Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and those of like mind (really, everyone who is tolerant of ecumenical



Joel Osteen

teaching), who “by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [the gullible, the naïve]” (Romans 16:18). Satan’s tremendous strength (illustrated by the *ten horns*) comes through his ability to deceive – to make what might normally repulse us to appear to be desirable and good.

John describes the devil as having tremendous authority (*heads*) and great strength (*horns*), and he sees him wearing *seven crowns* upon his seven heads. Earlier we looked at the crowns that were worn by the 24 elders, and saw that the Greek word was *stephanos*, a wreath, which was either a sign of accomplishment or honor.³⁴ However, in this case the Greek word is *diadema* (*dee-ad’-ay-mah*), which is a band worn around the head as an indication of royalty.³⁵ In keeping with his desire to be like unto the Lord of all creation, Satan bears the sign of royalty upon his earthly authority; in other words, he will not look like the great deceiver that he is. John saw a fiery red dragon; we might see a benevolent leader who exhibits a quiet and attractive demeanor of authority (perhaps something like what is seen in Francis, the present pope of Rome).

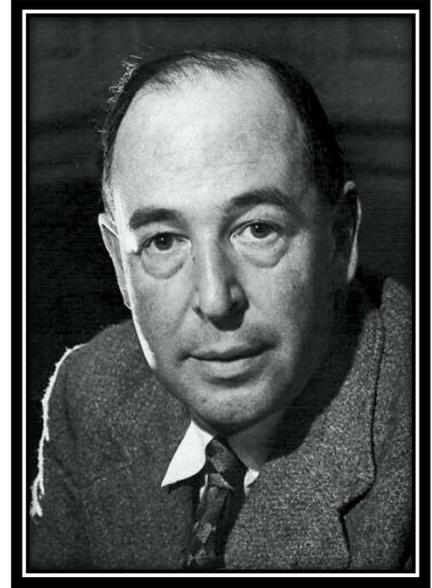
³² <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Article.aspx?articleid=6505>

³³ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Today, Satan will appear as an angel of light exercising a kingly authority with great strength (2 Corinthians 11:14), so that he might well deceive those who are not wise and discerning. Little wonder that Jesus said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works [*dunamis* – power to do miracles]? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).³⁶ Satan loves religion, and he will never oppose those who will do his work, even if they do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though mighty miracles had been done in His name, Jesus says that He never knew those who did them, and, consequently, they are destined for the lake of fire. Here are the words of the devil to the undiscerning: “Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash [the devil], I account as service done to me [Jesus].”³⁷ By contrast, Jesus says that all of the marvelous deeds done by those who are not His, will account for nothing; the devil, through C.S. Lewis, says that all the good deeds done for the devil will be accounted as having been done for the Lord. Why would he say that? Two very simple reasons: 1) in obedience to his master, Satan, and 2) to lull the naïve into a false sense of eternal, heavenly security, when the reality is very different. Perhaps a bigger question is, why would Evangelicals herald C.S. Lewis as a shining star in their list of prominent theologians? Clearly, we would do well to spend more time studying the Word of God than in reading the literature of men.



C. S. Lewis

Two wonders appear in heaven: the great wonder of the kingdom of God, and the wonder of the devil, who holds authority over creation. The wonders are equally significant, but they are also very, very different.



4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

This fiery red dragon, who exercises great authority in the earth, sweeps (*drew*) a third of the *stars* and throws them to the earth. What are the *stars*? In Revelation 1:20 Jesus explained the meaning of the *stars* that were to His right as being the *angels*, or the messengers, of the seven assemblies whom He was about to address. We saw that the messengers were the lead elders among these groups, and those who bore the responsibility of ensuring the Biblical integrity of the teaching. The *stars of heaven* are, in reality, the angels of heaven, of whom Satan convinced a third to follow him, and he threw them to the earth, the place of his authority.

³⁶ Strong's Online.

³⁷ <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1059917-the-last-battle>

However, the devil's attention was not with the angelic hosts who followed him in his rebellion; his mind was filled with God's words: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [He] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).³⁸ He had been able to grasp the dominion of the earth by leading Adam and Eve into sin, and his focus was to retain it. God told him that it would be through the woman that his demise would come, and so he stood before the growing kingdom of God prepared to consume, or eat up (*devour*), the promised Seed when He would arrive. Satan knew the promise of God, and sought to position himself so that the world would be ready to do his bidding, and to endeavor to thwart God's plan when the Child of the kingdom would come.

Indeed, throughout Jesus' time on this earth there were many occasions when Satan did his utmost to remove Him. When the magi came to find the One Who was born king of the Jews, Satan used Herod to seek to remove the Seed (one of his attempts to consume the One Who was born out of the kingdom of God). "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof [surrounding area], from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men" (Matthew 2:16).³⁹ Despite his thorough slaughter of the children in the Bethlehem area, Herod (and Satan) were unsuccessful, for God warned Joseph to flee with his family before Herod had time to implement his purge.

Satan's efforts to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ came to a culmination at the cross. Perhaps he felt that he was on the verge of victory at this point, if he could only put the Lord to death. However, the plan of God was far greater, and Jesus willingly gave His life in order to pay the price for sin; He gave His life, Satan did not take it! "Jesus ... yielded up [*aphiemi* (*af-ee'-ay-mee*), to send off (in the active voice; Jesus did the sending)] the ghost" (Matthew 27:50); "And Jesus ... gave up the ghost [*ekpneo* (*ek-pneh'-o*), to breathe out; active voice]" (Mark 15:37); Jesus ... gave up the ghost [*ekpneo*, active voice]" (Luke 23:46); Jesus ... gave up the [*paradidomi* (*par-ad-id'-o-mee*), to give over from one's hand to another; active voice] ghost" (John 19:30).⁴⁰ Jesus' death was His choice in order to break the power of death (the wages of sin) and make full payment for the sins of mankind, and His resurrection confirmed that the debt for sin had been paid. Rather than killing the Seed of the woman, the devil received the promised death-blow, and his fate was sealed.

John beholds the two wonders in heaven: the wonder of the kingdom of God about to bring forth the promised Messiah, and the wonder of the devil waiting in readiness to destroy Him.



5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

In keeping with the promise of Genesis 3:15, the kingdom of God (the *woman*) brought forth a male, so that **He** might crush the head of the serpent, Satan. As noted earlier, Jesus was the only One Who came out of the kingdom of God (through Mary); everyone else enters into the kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus; none of us, who reach the age of accountability, is automatically

³⁸ BDB.

³⁹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁰ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

in the kingdom – we must be born into it (John 3:5). It is specified here that He is about to (*was to*) be ruling all of the peoples with a rod of iron.⁴¹ When Satan sought to derail the ministry of the Lord by tempting Him to contravene the Word of God, it is evident that the peoples of this world remained the devil’s undisputed territory (Luke 4:5-6), yet when the Promised One was to be born, we read that He was to become the Governor of all peoples – the very same people who were under Satan’s dominion. For Satan, this meant only one thing: his control over the earth was about to be broken in accordance with the promise that Jehovah made that his head would be crushed (Genesis 3:15). However, we then read that the Seed of the woman was snatched away to the throne of God.⁴² There is much here, so let’s consider it carefully.

We are told that the *woman*, the wonder of the kingdom of God, gives birth to a *man child*. What we have learned from our examination of Genesis 3:15 is that the Promised Descendant of the woman, Who would defeat Satan, would be male; the Hebrew pronouns used in the latter phrases of the verse are both masculine and singular: “it [**He**, the KJV translators were mistaken when using the neuter pronoun *it*] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise **his** heel.”⁴³ This looks forward to a day when an individual Male would defeat Satan at great cost to Himself. *Child* is from the Greek word *huios* (*hwee-os*), which in a broad sense means a descendant, but is most frequently translated as *son*. *Man*, on the other hand, is from *arrhen* (*ar’-hrane*) in the Greek, and refers specifically to a *male*. The great wonder brought forth a male Descendant in fulfillment of God’s promise to the serpent, and He is about to *rule all nations*.

Rule, as it is used here, is from the Greek word *poimaino* (*poy-mah’-ee-no*), which means to shepherd. This One, Who is born out of the kingdom of God, will shepherd *all nations*. *Nations* is from *ta ethnos*, a plural form that is typically used to refer to non-Jews.⁴⁴ However, before we assume that we know how this is to be applied, let’s carefully consider a few related Scriptures. To the Romans, Paul wrote: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly [namely, a physical descendant of Abraham] ... But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly [i.e., one who is born into the kingdom of God by faith] ...” (Romans 2:28-29). The Jews are called God’s chosen people (Isaiah 44:1); God chose Abraham so that, through his Seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8) – a direct reference to the coming Messiah. However, what we must soon realize, as we look at history, is that not every one of Abraham’s descendants bore his saving faith, nor were they all numbered among the chosen of Jehovah. Abraham’s descendants included Ishmael, as well as six sons born to him through Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2), and other children born through his concubines (Genesis 25:6), yet the *chosen* line came only through Isaac; in turn, Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob, but the *chosen* line came only through Jacob. It was only those who were faithful who were the chosen of God. As Isaiah said, “For though thy people Israel [the physical descendants of Jacob, who are, in turn, only a remnant of all of the descendants of Abraham] be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return [repent] ...” (Isaiah 10:22),⁴⁵ or, as Paul puts it, quoting this passage from Isaiah, “a remnant shall be saved” (Romans 9:27). Clearly, being a descendant of Israel (and so, of Abraham) did not, and does not, guarantee

⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

⁴² Gingrich Lexicon.

⁴³ BDB.

⁴⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁵ BDB.

salvation; salvation has always come only by faith in Jehovah. It was that way before Abraham, and it has been that way ever since Christ paid the price for sin on the cross; without faith it has **always** been impossible to be pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). The descendants of Israel are often referred to as the people who were chosen by Jehovah (Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 105:6; Isaiah 41:8); however, this is equally true of those who are in Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ**: According as **he hath chosen us in him** ...” (Ephesians 1:3-4a). If we are in Christ by faith, then we are numbered among those who have been chosen by God, which includes the faithful who lived before Christ came (Hebrews 11) – Jesus is the Shepherd of ONLY ONE flock (John 10:16; Ephesians 2:16).

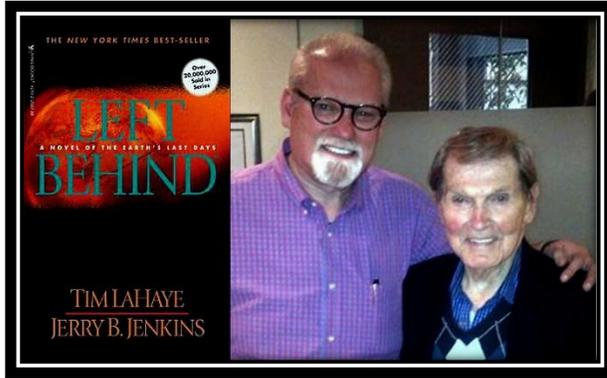
Therefore, using this as a foundation, when we read that Jesus is about to rule all *nations* (*ta ethnos*), we can accept that this will be those who are not Jews, but, using Paul’s clarification, we can also understand this to refer to all of those who are not in Christ, even if they are descendants of Abraham; in other words, *all nations* refers to everyone who has not been spiritually re-born into the kingdom of God. Based upon Revelation 19:15, we understand that it is during His millennial reign that Jesus will rule with a rod of iron; those who enter His earthly, millennial kingdom will be those who have come through the time when God’s wrath is poured out upon mankind. Even during the final vial of God’s wrath, we read that they, who experience this tremendous expression of judgment, will continue to blaspheme the Lord (Revelation 16:21). Those who survive the outpouring of God’s wrath, and enter the time of Jesus’ reign, can never be saved, for they have all rejected His salvation. Those who enter into the millennial kingdom will be a remnant of those who have been left behind when Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven to snatch His faithful ones away.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall **all the tribes** [*phule*] **of the earth mourn** [*kopto* – to beat one’s breast in grief or remorse], and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect [those who are *in Christ* (Ephesians 1:4)] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:29-31).⁴⁶ “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and **all kindreds** [*phule*] **of the earth shall wail** [*kopto*] because of him” (Revelation 1:7). We must realize that the harvesting done by the angels of the Lord will take long enough for everyone on earth to recognize what is taking place (the transformation of the faithful will be done in an instant [1 Corinthians 15:52], but the harvesting will take some time [Revelation 8:1]); however, even though there will be a full understanding of what is taking place, those who have refused the Lord’s truth will no longer be able to turn to Him (Revelation 6:15-17). This is why we read that they will *wail* (*kopto*) – they will know that they have missed their opportunity for the Lord’s salvation. Within the context of these two verses, *phule* means all of the peoples of the earth,⁴⁷ and this clearly excludes the elect who are gathered by the Lord’s angels to be with Him

⁴⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

forever. With the signs in the heavens (in the sun, moon and stars, and the Son of Man), the wailing of the peoples of the earth will begin: “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:16-17). There will be an immediate recognition that they have missed their opportunity to be with the Lord, and their anticipation is for God’s wrath to descend



upon them, and it will. Therefore, it will be those who have rejected the Lord, who have missed their opportunity for salvation, who have survived God’s wrath being poured out upon them, and who are not a part of the destroyed armies of the Antichrist (Revelation 19:19-21), who will initially populate the millennial kingdom. It will be these godless blasphemers who will come under the firm shepherding of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to whom we, in our glorified bodies, will be priests

of the Lord, and over whom we will reign in the name of the Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14). We will not be a part of Christ’s earthly millennial kingdom, for we will be in our glorified bodies carrying out the shepherding and priestly activities of Jesus Christ, bearing the Lord’s *rod of iron* to the people.

What we must be sure to recognize from this is that the message of men like Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins is fatally flawed, and that it presents a false hope to naive Evangelicals. The error that permeates Evangelical thinking (LaHaye and Jenkins are merely the latest to promote it) is that after Jesus has removed His faithful ones from the earth (the *rapture*), there is still an opportunity to accept the salvation of the Lord, and be saved. If this was true, then why would those who are not among the Lord’s faithful express such an intense remorse (*kopto*) when they

Jerry Jenkins and the late Tim LaHaye see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven? Such regret can only come because they know that they have missed their opportunity to be saved, which is why they will cry unto the rocks and mountains to fall upon them in order to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb of God that is about to fall upon them (Revelation 6:16-17).

This One Who is born out of the kingdom of God is referred to a second time as a *child*. However, this time the Greek word *teknon* is used, which places an emphasis on the fact of His birth.⁴⁸ Earlier, the emphasis was on the Child being a male, in fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15; here it is simply that this One was born, thereby placing Him within the human family. Jesus, as eternal God, took on the form of man in order to pay the price for sin. Man, in Adam, chose rebellion against the Lord; man inherited death as the just reward for sin (Romans 6:23); only a righteous Man could pay the price for sin (death) in order to open a way to God (John 14:6). “For as **in Adam** all die [are dying (present tense)], even so **in Christ** shall all [all will] be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22); all of those who are born of Adam are dying, and, in like manner, all who are re-born in Christ will be given life. When is the fullness of the new life in Christ confirmed? After we have remained faithful to Him to the end (Matthew 24:13); it is those

⁴⁸ Vine’s “child.”

who are in Christ, walking according to the leading of the Spirit of God, who are no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1). It was Jesus, born of Mary and the Holy Spirit, Who was qualified to pay the price for the sins of all of mankind, which is why we are told that He is “not willing [desirous] that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9);⁴⁹ the latter phrase is *all into repentance come*.⁵⁰ In other words, God wants everyone to come to repentance, but, as we know from looking around, that does not mean that everyone will do so.

The tremendous difficulty that Calvinists have at this point is that they have completely incapacitated all of mankind so that no one is able to believe. Nevertheless, Jesus told Nicodemus that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16b); *believeth* is in the present tense (it is not a onetime action, but continuous), and active voice, which means that *whosoever* is doing the believing!⁵¹ The Evangelical error, at this point, is that they think *believeth* is in the past tense; as long as *believing* has taken place at some time, then the glories of heaven have been secured! When Joshua came to the end of his life, he challenged Israel: “choose you this day whom ye will serve...” (Joshua 24:15); he laid before them the two choices that they had: they could either serve the living Lord Jehovah, or the false gods of their fathers before Noah and of the pagans who dwelt among them – the choice was theirs: either the Lord or paganism. The message of the Calvinist is that God has “mercifully elected us to salvation in spite of ourselves”;⁵² yet, if this was true, then Joshua’s message should have been, “God has chosen some of you to serve Him, and the rest of you have been condemned to the eternal destiny of the pagans.” In such matters as these, we must believe the words of Jesus, not those of the Calvinist who is wrapped up in the “logic” of his theology. To the woman at the well Jesus said, “Whosoever [the one who] drinketh [*might drink* – active voice, subjunctive mood (a possibility, but not a certainty)] of the water that I shall give him shall [*should; thirst* is in the subjunctive mood] never [an emphasized negative] thirst [after *thirst* is the Greek phrase *eis ton aion* (unto the age, or eternally) which is not translated in the KJV]” (John 4:14).⁵³ Clearly, Jesus does not force anyone to drink of the water that He offers; he might choose to drink, he may choose not to drink, or he may choose to stop drinking (*believing*). God does not override the will of a person to choose. Likewise, we must continually **choose** to remain faithful to the Lord (Hebrews 3:12,14) if we desire to be saved one day (Mark 13:13).

We read that the Messiah, this One Who is born out of the kingdom of God through a woman, is *caught up unto God, and to his throne*. Keeping in mind that John is giving us a quick thumbnail sketch of the great conflict of the ages, we recognize that from the birth of this *man Child* to when He is *caught up unto God* includes all of Jesus’ time on earth. He was received into glory when He had completed the mission that He came to earth to accomplish, namely paying the price for sin so that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Despite Satan being ready to destroy the Savior the moment that He was born, we recognize his failure at various times throughout Jesus’ life, even though he used various tactics in his endeavors. Even today, Satan still uses many and varied approaches to derail the message of salvation that

⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵¹ Strong’s Online.

⁵² John MacArthur, *Slave*, p. 133.

⁵³ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

God has for mankind. We have just looked at one of those – the theological musings of those who hold to an appearance of piety, but who deny its power (the Calvinist). Jesus’ warning to them would be: “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees [and Calvinists], hypocrites! for ye shut up [close] the kingdom of heaven against [in front of] men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).⁵⁴ Those who teach a gospel other than what we have in the Scriptures, are NOT entering heaven, and, by their teaching, they are shutting others out as well; in this, the Calvinists, ecumenists, and most Evangelicals join the scribes and Pharisees. Satan loves religion, for he can use it to so easily blind the eyes of those who should know better; they think that they hold the truth even while they walk in darkness. The greatest tool in his arsenal today is ecumenism; it towers over Calvinism in its effectiveness to destroy, and has subtly robbed millions of saving faith. Its subtlety lies in the fact that it can be quietly added to any belief system, and the impact of doing so can be almost imperceptible. Its premise is really very simple: do not be so arrogant as to believe that you hold the truth of God, be open-minded enough to permit other interpretations of truth, and be willing to suppress your beliefs when in the company of those who believe differently. The numbing salve in this is that it is possible for you to retain your personal belief structure, and still have spiritual fellowship with those of a different mind. Combine this with a rapidly growing Biblical ignorance among Evangelicals, and you have a situation that is spiritually lethal. Do not fall for Satan’s ecumenical ploys!

Ecumenism

is the greatest tool in Satan’s arsenal.

When Jesus was taken up from His disciples, we read: “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). With His mission on earth completed, Jesus ascended to heaven and sat to the right of God upon His throne. When John was translated to heaven in order to see things “which must be hereafter,” he first views the Lord Jesus Christ as the sacrificed Lamb of God standing in the “midst of the throne” (Revelation 4:1; 5:6; cp. Isaiah 3:13). The clue as to why the Lord is standing, when John sees Him, is the fact that John has been called to heaven to witness what will be taking place after what he saw and heard while still on Patmos (namely, the vision of the Lord Jesus, and His dictation of the letters to the elders of the seven *ekklesias* of Asia); he is about to witness a time of action when Jesus will not be seated, and it begins with the Lord taking the book with the seven seals (Revelation 5:7). What takes place after this will be directed from the throne of God.



⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Keeping in mind that we are looking at a thumbnail sketch of time here, we must not try to limit the events of this verse to the time that followed the Son of God being caught up into heaven. There is an element of this verse that can find application when the Lord ascended to heaven, another to a time shortly after the Lord left the earth, and there is a future application when this

⁵⁴ Strong’s Online.

will also see fulfillment. Let's consider what this verse is saying, first of all, and then seek to place it within the prophetic timetable.

The *woman*, as we have come to understand, is the eternal kingdom of God, and we are told that this kingdom will flee into a solitary or empty place,⁵⁵ and the time of flight appears to be set when the Lord is caught up into heaven. The *woman's* flight is more than simply a rapid departure into a place that is desolate; it includes the thought of fleeing from something that is unpleasant or dangerous, and, equally, that of achieving safety in this new location.⁵⁶ Even in the midst of flight from oppression comes the assurance that God already has a place for her; *prepared* is in the perfect tense, describing a past completed action that does not need to be repeated.⁵⁷ However, not only has God prepared a place of safety in advance, but He has also made provision for the required sustenance of the kingdom in this new place of refuge.

How can we understand this seemingly confusing metaphor? The key is to view it in light of other Scriptures, as well as a backward glance at the history of God's people since the day that John received this revelation.

We are told that the *woman* flees into a *wilderness* that has been *prepared* by God for her. If we understand the *wilderness* to be an empty place, then there is justification for seeing this as God emptying paradise when Jesus ascended into heaven. Paul tells us that when the Lord Jesus ascended to glory that He "led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8); He led those who had been held captive in paradise into the presence of the throne of God – a place that, to this time, had not seen the Lord's faithful ones. From the parable that Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus, we learned that after Lazarus died he went to paradise (the bosom of Abraham) – a place of peace and contentment (Luke 16:22-23). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that for the faithful one to be absent from the body (to die) means to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Obviously a change has taken place, and the change is that paradise has been emptied and the righteous have been led into heaven – not in their glorified bodies, but their spirits. Those making up the kingdom of God from the OT, plus everyone who has died in the Lord since His ascension, are now in heaven awaiting the first resurrection when they will be given glorified bodies, and will



Piedmont Valley, home of the Waldenses

remain with the Lord forever (1 Corinthians 15:49-53; Revelation 20:6). Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving them in order to prepare a place for them so that they could be where He would be after His ascension (John 14:2). As John provides additional details for this time later in the Revelation, he notes that this will be away from the presence of the devil (Revelation 12:14).

The Waldenses give us just a glimpse of what might be entailed here regarding a less immediate fulfillment of the flight and spiritual nourishment of the kingdom. Persecution came

⁵⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶ Strong's Online.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

early to the kingdom of God that remained on earth after Jesus departed for heaven. Even within the book of Acts we read of the persecution that Paul (then Saul) brought to bear upon those who professed faith in the Lord Jesus, and that those who were part of the growing *ekklesia* were scattered abroad (Acts 8:3-4). Such oppression only increased when the Roman rulers joined in the persecution of the followers of Christ. The Waldenses were a people who, for centuries, held tenaciously to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, hidden away in the virtually inaccessible valleys of the mountains of southern France and northern Italy. They never succumbed to the spiritual degeneration that took place within the Roman Catholic Church, and, when the fires of the Reformation began to burn against some of the doctrines of Rome, the Waldenses' testimony was simply: "Our ancestors have often recounted to us that we have existed from the time of the Apostles."⁵⁸ Throughout the centuries of Roman oppression, degradation, and spiritual darkness, tucked away in desolate areas were a people who retained their faith in the Lord. Truly their forefathers practiced Biblical separation, and had fled into an isolated place where they were spiritually nourished by the Lord for many, many years. Unfortunately, modern Waldenses from this same area no longer hold to the faith of their predecessors; they have become ecumenical, and on June 22, 2015 the pope of Rome and the head of the Waldensian Evangelical Church in Turin, Italy embraced. A long history of faithfulness does not exclude the possibility of becoming apostate (Ezekiel 18:24); that not only applies to groups like the Waldenses, but more specifically for the individual. It is as individuals become apostate by forsaking the narrow truth of God's Word that groups of people will become identifiable as being apostate. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12); we must be ever vigilant! God has always retained a remnant of faithful ones – we must ensure that we are among them (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Clearly the Lord's sustaining grace for the Waldenses lasted much longer than 3.5 years (or 1,260 days), therefore, I do not consider this to be the specific fulfillment of this prophecy. There is a future fulfillment; a time is coming when the Lord will once again be providing particular sustaining grace and spiritual sustenance to His separated people, and there are numerous references to it being for a period of 42 months or 1,260 days. This will be the time when the Antichrist will hold most of the world under his spell; we will see more of this later.



7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

John writes of a war that was taking place in heaven – a battle being waged among celestial beings. Leading the fight for the Lord is Michael; what do we know of him?

We are told that in the third year of King Cyrus' reign, Daniel received a vision, and for three weeks he petitioned the Lord to understand its meaning (Daniel 10:1-3). When the messenger from the Lord came to reveal the meaning to Daniel, he told him that, although he had come immediately upon Daniel's request, he had been hindered by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Daniel 10:13). Clearly the messenger to Daniel was celestial in nature, and so we can conclude that the

⁵⁸ E.H. Broadbent, [The Pilgrim Church](#), p. 113.

conflict (the hindering) took place within the angelic realm; this was not a physical battle with the Persian princes, but, rather, a fight with Satan, who was the influence behind the Persian leaders. Since the Persian princes were not godly men, their allegiance was to the devil; we must not forget that there are only two sides to the conflict of the ages: God's and Satan's (Matthew 12:30). As Daniel's messenger struggled in his fight with the devil, Michael, "one of the chief princes," was dispatched to assist in the battle (Daniel 10:13). Michael is one of the top angels within the angelic realm, and his name means, "who is like God?"⁵⁹

Therefore, what John describes for us is a battle between Satan and his demonic forces (fallen angels) and Michael and the angelic powers of heaven. This is described in more detail in what follows, so that we can determine when this all-out war took place.



8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

The first phrase means absolutely not powerful, and applies to Satan and his forces from the previous verse.⁶⁰ In this celestial battle, Satan and his demons are losing, and we are told that their place is no longer in heaven.

To understand this, we must go back to Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God [angelic beings] came to present themselves [implication of readiness for service] before the LORD, and Satan [the Adversary] came also among them" (Job 1:6).⁶¹ We learned from Revelation 12:4 that Satan convinced a third of the angels in heaven to align themselves with him, and these he cast to the earth; however, it seems that Satan was still permitted access to heaven and to God, even though he was now the Adversary, the enemy of Jehovah. However, when God asked Satan where he had been, he identified the earth as being his primary domain: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro [to go about] in the earth, and from walking up and down [to traverse in this direction and that] in it" (Job 1:7).⁶² Rest assured that Satan does not walk aimlessly throughout the earth; he is continually seeking to cloud the understanding of those who desire to walk with the Lord. Until the time of Jesus' presence on the earth, Satan's focus had been on preventing the promised One from coming to deal him the death blow that Jehovah promised in Genesis 3:15. Since feeling the impact of that death blow by the Lord, Satan now occupies himself with endeavoring to drag into apostasy those who are in Christ by faith (1 Peter 5:8).



9. 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.

⁵⁹ BDB.

⁶⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶¹ BDB.

⁶² Ibid.

Here we have clarification of two things: 1) the dragon, the serpent, the devil, and Satan are all the same, and 2) Satan is now limited to the earth.

Satan is described here as the one who is deceiving the *whole world*, or all people.⁶³ Clearly, this is speaking in general terms, for there will always be a remnant among the people of the world who are faithful to the Lord. Nevertheless, even we, who are born-again by the Spirit of God, were, at one time, numbered among the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:1-3). All of those who are born into this world come as sinners (in the likeness of Adam), and, when we reach the age of accountability, we become responsible for our inherent sin, and fall under God's condemnation. Probably Satan's most difficult task with mankind came when he sought to deceive Eve in the Garden. Eve was created in purity and innocence, and Satan's task was to present her with a lie that was sufficiently believable so that she would follow him. We all know that he was successful; now it is much easier for him to keep the descendants of Adam and Eve in darkness, for they (we) are born in sin.

From this we learn that, when the mission of Messiah was completed on the earth (His death made full payment for sin, and His resurrection brought new life), Satan no longer had access to heaven (he had received his death-blow), but was thrown out into the earth, along with his demonic hosts. In Job we learned that there were times when Satan would appear before Jehovah among the angelic beings. Although the earth was his primary focus, heaven also seemed to be a place where he could be found from time-to-time. However, heaven is no longer his domain – he can no longer appear before God, as in the days of Job; having been defeated by Michael and his angelic hosts, Satan and his are confined to the earth.



10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

As John beholds the unfolding of the celestial war and the defeat of the Satanic forces by the angelic hosts of Michael, he hears a great voice in heaven making a significant announcement; we are not told who makes it – just that it is in the heaven.⁶⁴ The first word, *now*, is important, for it provides a context for what follows. *Now* tells us that this message comes on the heels of the defeat of Satan, and when he and his forces are cast into the earth.

Skipping the main part of this pronouncement, for the moment, we are given the reason why it is being made: because (*for*) the *accuser of our brethren* (Satan) has been thrown (*cast*) down. The Greek that is translated as *cast down* is in the indicative mood, which tells us that this is a statement of fact.⁶⁵ Not only would Satan appear before Jehovah among the angelic beings, but we are now told that he was continually bringing charges against (*accused*) those who had placed their faith in the Lord for salvation (*brethren*). His sole heavenly activity was to discredit the saints of God. So

⁶³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

this announcement is made on the heels of Satan's defeat, and it springs from the fact that he has now been cast down to the earth, and will no longer be coming before God to accuse His faithful ones.

Let's return, now, to the substance of what this heavenly voice is saying; the first phrase is: *now is come salvation*. *Salvation* comes from the Greek word *soteria* (*so-tay-ree'-ah*), which speaks of deliverance. This announcement comes after Jesus, the One born **out of** the Kingdom of God, has completed His task of paying the penalty for the sins of mankind, and has ascended to the Father. It is through Jesus' victory over sin and death that Satan lost his battle with Michael, and was cast out of heaven. Remember that it was through Adam's submission to Satan that both sin and death entered the earth (Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22), and now we see that it is through Satan's defeat that sin and death are conquered. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up [completely absorbed, and so brought to an end] in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).⁶⁶ It is following Satan's downfall that we read that *salvation is now* (at this moment) *come* (come into being).⁶⁷ Was there no salvation in the OT? The Psalmist declared: "Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth [announce] from day to day his salvation [*yeshuw'ah* – deliverance by God]" (1 Chronicles 16:23);⁶⁸ "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation [*yeshah'* – deliverance, rescue coming from God]; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:5).⁶⁹ Truly, saving faith was as readily available to those who lived in OT times as it is today (Hebrews 11). Therefore, this statement must mean something other than that salvation has just arrived.

From Adam to the day that Christ paid the price for sin, it was necessary to sacrifice a perfect animal as prescribed by the Lord so that, through faith, a covering for sin could be obtained, and this activity had to be repeated because the blood of an animal was not sufficient to provide a permanent cleansing from sin (Hebrews 7:26-27; 9:11-14). "For *it is* not possible [impossible] that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away [remove] sins" (Hebrews 10:4).⁷⁰ Of Christ we read, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ..." (Hebrews 10:12); through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus dealt the promised death-blow to Satan, and removed the condemnation and penalty of sin for those who place their faith in Him (Romans 8:1; 2 Timothy 1:10). Since the price for our sins has now been paid in full forever (the perpetual animal sacrifices have been replaced by the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ), we, through faith in Christ, are released from the kingdom of Satan, and liberated into the kingdom of God. For this reason, we are to account ourselves as being dead unto sin (identifying with Christ's death for sin) and alive unto God (identified with Christ's resurrection to new life) – "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [we are made slaves] of righteousness" (Romans 6:18); literally: *and being freed from the sin, we have become enslaved to the righteousness*.⁷¹ We have been freed from the bondage of sin so that we might live out the

⁶⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁷ Strong's Online.

⁶⁸ Strong's Online; BDB.

⁶⁹ BDB.

⁷⁰ Strong's Online.

⁷¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

righteousness of the Law of God, which will be according to the leading and instruction of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:4; John 16:13); we have not been freed to live as we please, but as He has pre-determined (Ephesians 2:10).

Under the OT sacrificial practices (both before and after the Mosaic Law was given), the sacrifices needed to be repeated, i.e., a single sacrifice was never sufficient to remove sin forever. “But now in Christ Jesus ye [those alien to the Mosaic Law] who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [the Jew and the Gentile] one, and hath broken down [*luo* – loosen, undo, do away with] the middle wall of partition [the barrier of separation – the Mosaic Law] *between us*; Having abolished [*katargeo* – cause to cease, do away with] in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances [the Law of Moses]; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body [the *ekklesia*, the kingdom of God] by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ...” (Ephesians 2:13-16).⁷² Truly, with what Jesus accomplished on the cross, salvation came in a whole new way! The single Sacrifice, which was promised in the Garden, had arrived; He administered the promised death-blow to Satan, and paid the full price for the sin of all of mankind for all of eternity. The sacrifices prescribed by God, and made in faith by the OT saints, found fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ! Salvation no longer requires keeping the numerous Mosaic traditions (they have ALL been removed⁷³); it has been opened up to all people who place their faith in the Lord. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16); salvation is open to *whosoever* is believing, and will find ultimate fulfillment in those who remain faithful to the Lord Jesus, Who paid the price for their sins. “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [this is the one! who] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).⁷⁴ It is as we remain faithful to the Lord that we have full assurance of our salvation, which is why we are warned against permitting a heart of unfaithfulness to turn us away from God (Hebrews 3:12).

With Christ’s completed work at Calvary came a whole new concept of salvation; this should not be surprising since Jesus told His disciples that He was introducing a New Covenant: “This cup *is* the new [fresh] testament [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).⁷⁵ Jeremiah wrote of this very thing: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new [fresh] covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Which Law is God’s Law (*my law*)? Yes, that would be the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20! When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, God writes His Ten Laws upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:16-17), His Spirit comes to abide

⁷² Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁷³ Care must be taken to acknowledge the line of distinction that the Scriptures draw between the Mosaic Law, which has been abolished, and the Law of God (the Ten Commandments), which have now been written upon our hearts as promised (Jeremiah 31:31-33). It is the righteousness of the Law of God that will be expressed through our lives if we live in accordance with the leading of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). Failing to recognize this distinction can lead to much confusion.

⁷⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁵ Strong’s Online.

within us (Romans 8:9), and, as we live in obedience to the Spirit's leading, the righteousness of God's Ten Laws will be expressed through us (Romans 8:4). Under the Mosaic tradition, the Ten Commandments (written by the finger of God upon tables of stone [Deuteronomy 4:13]) were kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (I Kings 8:9), and were to be read to the people once every seven years (Deuteronomy 31:10-11). The abiding presence of God was in the Holy of Holies, between the cherubim, above where the tables of the Law were kept (Exodus 25:21-22; Isaiah 37:16); after making his sin offering as prescribed, which was only effective through faith, the individual was then required to keep all of the burdensome ordinances contained in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 20:22). Since the sin offerings were unable to provide complete cleansing, it was necessary that they be repeated (Hebrews 10:4,11). However, **in Christ** the final sacrifice for sin was made: "... after he had offered **one sacrifice** for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ..." (Hebrews 10:12). Through Christ came the fulfillment of the Mosaic Laws (Matthew 5:17), and, consequently, they have been abolished, blotted out, and nailed to the cross (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14-17). When we are in Christ, the Ten Laws of God are written upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:15-17), the Spirit of God abides within us (1 Corinthians 3:16), and, through an enduring faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we no longer live under the condemnation of the Lord (Romans 8:1). *Now*, with the victory that Christ won at the cross, is come the salvation that was spoken of in Genesis 3:15.

Now is come ... strength; the Greek word is *dunamis*, which speaks of an inherent ability;⁷⁶ *dynamite* comes from this word, and we know that it packs a latent, destructive power that will be unleashed when the situation is right.⁷⁷ Through the establishment of the New Covenant has come a new capacity to deal with the attacks of the enemy, Satan. Peter explains this for us: "Be sober [clear-headed – a command (imperative mood)], be vigilant [watchful, alert – imperative]; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour [completely overcome]: Whom resist [to set one's self against – imperative] steadfast [strong] in the faith, knowing [understanding] that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world [your spiritual family endures the same sufferings in the world]" (1 Peter 5:8-9).⁷⁸ Our firm stand against the attacks of Satan is founded upon a strong commitment to the Lord (our faith in Him), which must be expressed through our obedience to His commands. "And hereby we do know [are coming to understand] that we know [have known – perfect tense (a completed action that does not need to be repeated)] him [God], if we keep [are carefully attending to] his commandments. He that saith, I know [have known – perfect tense] him, and keepeth not [is not carefully attending to] his commandments, is a liar [one who breaks faith, false, or faithless], and the truth is [absolutely] not in him"⁷⁹ The Scriptures are very clear that we cannot claim to abide in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ if we do not live in obedience to the commandments of His Word. Saving faith and obedience are woven tightly together, and they cannot be separated; John is very clear that the one who claims to know God, but is not doing what He has commanded, has broken faith (he is a *liar*). Faith, without obedience, is dead (James 2:17); obedience, without faith, is empty legalism (Matthew 23:23). "Take heed, brethren, lest there be

⁷⁶ Strong's Online.

⁷⁷ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=d&p=45&allowed_in_frame=0

⁷⁸ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁹ Strong's Online.

in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12); this speaks of someone who has broken faith with God (becoming faithless, perhaps through disobedience), and has become apostate. According to John, the one who says that he knows God, but will not do what He says, is either apostate (he, at one time, did hold an accurate understanding of who God is, but he has broken faith), or he is a pagan, having never known God, despite what he might say.

For those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a new *strength* to live in obedience to the Lord. The new strength is this: the Spirit of God is now abiding within us (Romans 8:9), and He is interceding with the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:27). As long as we remain *in Christ*, we do not abide under the condemnation of God (Romans 8:1); if we are *in Christ*, then we are faithful to Him, and with that faithfulness comes our obedience to Him – you cannot have one without the other. Jesus said, “If ye love [are loving] me, [I command you to (*keep* is in the imperative mood)] keep [attend carefully to] my commandments” (John 14:15).

Now is come ... the kingdom of our God. We have already noted that the kingdom of God is eternal; how can it be said to come at this time? As with *salvation*, this does not mean that this is the beginning of the kingdom of God. Rather, under the New Covenant, the kingdom of God has taken on a whole new life. Two things contribute to this: the ultimate defeat of Satan, and the presence of the Spirit of God within the hearts of all those who are *in Christ*. All of creation, from God’s judgment in Eden, has looked forward in anticipation to the time when Satan would be dealt a death-blow: to the serpent God declared, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [He – it is a masculine pronoun] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Every sacrifice made by the faithful of the OT looked forward in anticipation of the Promised One Who would come to defeat the devil; every communion celebration held by those who are faithful to the Lord, has looked back in remembrance of the sacrifice that Jesus made to accomplish Satan’s defeat. As Jesus gave His disciples instructions, just before He was taken from them into heaven, He said, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you [the Comforter (John 16:7)]: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with [put on, be clothed with] power [*dunamis* – strength, ability] from on high” (Luke 24:49).⁸⁰ It is through the sacrifice that Jesus made (thereby defeating Satan), and through living in a manner that is in accordance with the guidance of the Spirit of God, that we can live without condemnation before God, and have the righteousness of God’s Law lived out through us (Romans 8:1-4). This is NEW! Like salvation, the kingdom of God has now come in a whole new way, along with a whole new power!

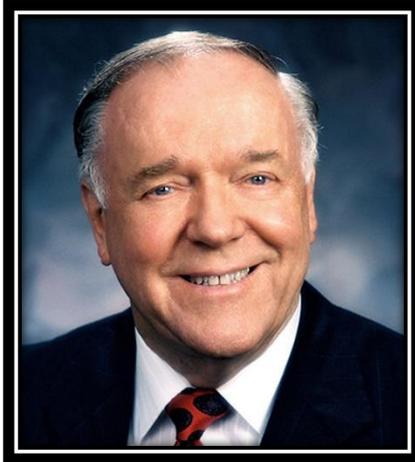
Today there is a massive movement among “Christians” to build the kingdom of God here on earth. As we have seen, Jesus made it very clear that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), yet, despite His insistence on this fact, there are many who speak freely of building the kingdom on earth. “It’s our duty as a Christian and disciple of Jesus to help in building the Holy Kingdom of God ... You need to take a higher position than being a non-serving member of your church. God has called us all to serve his holy Kingdom in some way.”⁸¹ There are two problems with these statements: 1) Jesus very plainly stated that He would build His *ekklesia* (Matthew

⁸⁰ Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

⁸¹ Wendelin Phillips, an approved blogger with Calvary Chapel; <http://www.ccsouthbay.org/blog/five-ways-kingdom-of-god>

16:18), therefore that is not to be our focus, and 2) this writer has equated *church* and God's *Kingdom* – the former refers to a physical organization that is typically run like a business, and the latter has been declared by Jesus to be within us, and not of this world (Luke 17:21).

However, we must not consider this thinking to be that which is held by only a few professing Christians today; frequently it finds expression as the need for us to “redeem our culture.” The late Chuck Colson is quoted as saying, “Redeeming culture is the never-ending mission of the church”;



Kenneth Hagin

“We've got to be faithful to the cultural commission to have dominion, to work for Christian values to arrest our worldview slide.”⁸² Those might well sound like good words, but Jesus clearly stated that we are “not of the world,” therefore, it cannot be His will that we seek to redeem our “culture,” which remains under the dominion of Satan (John 15:19); after all, His kingdom is not of this world. Kenneth Hagin, well-known for his promotion of the word-faith heresy, has said, “Yes, sin, sickness and disease, spiritual death, poverty and everything else that's of the devil once ruled us. But now, bless God, we rule them -- for this is the Day of Dominion!”⁸³ The essence of Dominionist thinking is that Christians must work toward gaining control of the world in order to establish Christ's kingdom on earth; hence the charge to *redeem the culture*. What

becomes apparent, within this philosophy, is that Jesus is not returning to establish His millennial kingdom on earth, but, rather, men have shouldered the task of building His kingdom for Him. Along with this comes a subtle (or, sometimes not so subtle) disregard for the Word of God as it pertains to end-times prophecy – it is frequently molded so as to fit the Dominionist's particular theology.

A careful consideration of Rick Warren's activities exposes him as being a part of this “spiritual” conspiracy. As early as 2005, he said:

“You know, 500 years ago, the first Reformation with Luther and then Calvin, was about beliefs. I think a new reformation is going to be about behavior. The first Reformation was about creeds; I think this one will be about deeds. I think the first one was about what the church believes; I think this one will be about what the church does.

The first Reformation actually split Christianity into dozens and then hundreds of different segments. I think this one is actually going to bring them together.”⁸⁴

Can you see how ecumenical thinking and the Dominionist agenda fit well together? When questioned about doctrine not being important within this movement, Rick's response was: “... it's what Augustine said: ‘In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.’ And I think that's how evangelicals and Catholics can get together.”⁸⁵ This is the glue of

⁸² <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/dominionismexposed.html>

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/2005/05/23/myths-of-the-modern-megachurch/>

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Warren incorrectly attributes this particular quote to Augustine. It seems to have appeared for the first time in the 17th century, whereas Augustine died in AD 430 (<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/essentials->

ecumenism, for the “essentials” are very few and vague, the “non-essentials” are subjectively determined to be anything that might hinder the “unity” and “love” that forms the foundation for their way of thinking, and “charity” (love) justifies it all.

Dominionism and ecumenical thinking working hand-in-hand – so obviously apparent in Rick Warren. The entire thrust of his P.E.A.C.E. plan, and, more recently, his Daniel Plan, is to make this world a better place; yet he seeks to accomplish this mission through unity with those who are of other faiths, even though the Scriptures tell us to spiritually avoid them, since we should have nothing in common with them (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17). Although Warren continues to vehemently deny that he promotes Chrislam (a hybrid of Christianity and Islam), he has, in fact, appealed to the Muslim community to join him in his global P.E.A.C.E. endeavors, and his Daniel Plan includes leadership from a “Christian” (Daniel Amen), a Jew (Mark Hyman) and a Muslim (Mehmet Oz). Perhaps Warren denies promoting Chrislam because he knows that he has sailed well beyond that to an all-inclusive ecumenism that knows no religious boundaries – his desired unity is not just between Islam and Christianity, but a melding of all faiths! All three of his Daniel Plan promoters engage in some form of New Age/Eastern practices: Amen advocates the use of kundalini (a latent force within every individual that brings spiritual enlightenment when awakened,⁸⁶ not much different from the *divine spark* that Max Lucado writes about), Hyman recommends a yoga that often focuses on the kundalini in order to instill calm, and Oz is a strong advocate for Reiki, a Buddhist technique said to use universal energy for healing.⁸⁷ Why would Warren surround himself with these men? Could it be that his focus is only on trying to improve this world and spread his influence? That is Dominionism, and Warren’s ecumenical mind seeks to bring all religions together in order to accomplish the global task of restructuring society, and, there we are, back to the idea of “redeeming our culture.”

Despite what we see around us in the world today, with the defeat of Satan at the cross, the kingdom of God has come to us in a whole new way. We come back to the promise given by the Lord to Jeremiah that there was coming a New Covenant that would see the Law of God written upon the hearts of those who turn to Him (Jeremiah 31:33). Within the heart of the true believer in Christ is God’s Law and His Spirit: “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed [marked] with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest [down payment] of our inheritance until the redemption [deliverance] of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).⁸⁸ Combine this with the promise that there is absolutely nothing from outside of us that can remove us from the hand of the Lord (John 10:27-29), and you have a glimpse of all that God has done to keep us in His kingdom. Nevertheless, we are commanded not to grieve (vex, irritate⁸⁹) the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and warned against allowing faithlessness to enter our hearts, thus drawing us away from the Lord into apostasy, from which there is no recovery (Hebrews 3:12;

unity-non-essentials-liberty-all-things/); however, the Evangelical Free Church does attribute a variation of this quote to John Chrysostom of the fourth century (<http://www.efcl.org/beliefs/>).

⁸⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kundalini>

⁸⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reiki>; <http://www.newswithviews.com/West/marsha210.htm>

⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁹ Gingrich Lexicon.

10:26-29). The kingdom of God is ours if we will simply remain faithful (i.e., obedient) to the Lord Who paid the price for our sins (Mark 13:13).

Now is come ... the power of his Christ. The Greek word translated as *power* is *exousia*, which speaks of authority and of the right to act.⁹⁰ When it is applied to God (as it is here), it raises this to a level of absolute and unrestricted authority (complete sovereignty).⁹¹ Even though we might not see the absolute authority of Christ being exercised in the world today, we do know that, with the defeat of Satan at the cross, this is a surety. Consequently, if we are *in Christ*, then we **must** live under His absolute authority, or we cannot claim to be *in Christ* (Luke 14:26-27); He is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. The book that we are studying confirms that Christ will come from heaven one day to establish His kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:4), we are assured that Satan will find his place in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10), and, with all wickedness judged and removed (Revelation 20:15), a new heaven and earth will be established in which the Lamb of God will reign with complete authority (Revelation 22:3). The assurance of heaven for those who are *in Christ* was eternally accomplished with the defeat of Satan at the cross. Was it ever a doubt before that? Of course not! However, with the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the full payment for sin was made, and all of those who were held captive in paradise were received into glory, into the presence of their Savior – “When he [Jesus] ascended up on high, he led captivity captive ...” (Ephesians 4:8)! Once again, we can see that with the defeat of Satan at the cross, a new expression of the *power* (sovereignty) of the Lord has been made. “We [those who are *in Christ*] are confident [to be of good courage], *I say*, and willing [prefer or choose] rather to be absent [depart] from the body, and to be present [to be among one’s own people] with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).⁹²

Satan has been removed from the heavenly realms, where he took every opportunity to discredit those who were faithful to the Lord, and, as a result, there has been a more forthright expression of God’s salvation and His kingdom through the New Covenant that Jesus implemented. Wonder of wonders, the Jew and the non-Jew now stand on equal footing before the cross of Christ (Galatians 3:28); Jesus is the Shepherd of one flock that will be made up of all of the Lord’s faithful ones from all ages (John 10:16) – there is ONLY ONE kingdom!



11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

They can only refer to *our brethren* of all ages from the previous verse, and *him* speaks of *the accuser of our brethren* (Satan). The word *overcame* is from the same Greek word that the Lord Jesus used in His letters to the seven elders in Revelation 2 and 3 (*overcometh*) – just in a different tense. In each of the letters, the word was used in the present tense; here it appears without any reflection on time (past, present or future), but simply stands as a statement of fact (indicative mood) that the brethren have been victorious over Satan on account of (*by*) the blood of the Lamb of God, and because of (*by*) the declaration of their evidence (*testimony*).⁹³

⁹⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁹¹ Vine’s “power.”

⁹² Strong’s Online.

⁹³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Interestingly, we are told that these brethren have been victorious over Satan because of two things: 1) as we would expect, first of all, through the blood of the Lord Jesus (His blood cleanses us from sin – 1 John 1:7), and 2), perhaps somewhat surprisingly, through the evidence that they have given – the words that they have used in expressing their faith in Christ (*testimony*). *Testimony* is translated from the Greek word *marturia*, which is related to our English word *martyr*, one who bears witness by his death.⁹⁴ The blood that Jesus shed for the payment of sins initiated the New Covenant, and that is what forms the foundation of our victory over the devil; however, it is as we declare that His sacrifice has cleansed us from sin that we are affirmed in our commitment to Him, and our faith is strengthened in the victory that is ours through Him.

In summary, we are told that these brethren chose not to love their lives to the point of (*unto*) death. The word *love* is from *agapao*, that love that is expressed as an act of the will – not a product of the emotions.⁹⁵ It was their determination not to hold their earthly lives in higher regard than the Savior Who purchased their freedom from sin. “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Where does our love for the Lord fall in relation to all of the other things that fill our lives? It is very possible that, in order to be victorious over Satan, we might have to forfeit our physical lives (or social life, family ties, etc.). “And ye shall be hated [detested] of all *men* for my name’s sake [because of My name]: but he that shall endure [remain faithful through trials; persevere] unto the end, the same [this one!!] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).⁹⁶ There is a price to be paid for the salvation that is only found in Christ; to be the one who will be saved one day, we must put the Lord **FIRST** in all things!



12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. 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.

Therefore comes from two Greek words meaning *on account of* or *because of* and *this*; what follows is directly linked to what has come before.⁹⁷ We have seen that the devil, or Satan, has been cast out of heaven into the earth (v.9) as a result of his defeat at the cross of Christ (v. 7-8), and, based upon the rest of this verse, that is the primary reason for the heavens and the heavenly dwellers to be joyful. The heavens are no longer accessible to Satan; this is his first step downward toward his ultimate destination: the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). A translation of this first sentence (into English), allowing for the proper expression of the tense, voice, and mood of the verbs, is this: *Because of this, let the heavens be glad and they who are dwelling in them.*⁹⁸ Although, in the Greek, *rejoice* is in the imperative mood, it is also in the passive voice; therefore, this gladness will not be due to the direct action of the heavens or of those who are dwelling there (as the KJV might lead us to believe), but, rather, it is a by-product of Satan no longer having

⁹⁴ Strong’s Online; Vine’s “witness.”

⁹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁹⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁹⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁹⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; <http://www.studyandexam.com/passive-voice-for-imperative-sentence.html>.

access to heaven. Interestingly, *dwell (are dwelling)*, on the other hand, is in the active voice: they are dwelling in the heavens; it is something that they are doing. To dwell in the heavens is a matter of choice both for the angelic hosts and for mankind: the angelic hosts are there because they refused to follow Satan's lead, and mankind is there because they have individually placed their faith in the One Who came to pay the debt for sin (they are *in Christ*).

For those who are not dwelling in the heavens, there is one word: *woe* or *alas* – an interjection expressing grief or calamity.⁹⁹ The object of this expression of grief is those who are dwelling in the earth and the sea (*inhabiters* is a present tense verb in the Greek); clearly, this calamity harkens back to the same thing that causes those in heaven to be glad – Satan being cast out of heaven and into the earth. All creatures in the earth and the sea are impacted by Satan's defeat at the cross, which resulted in him being cast out of heaven (v.8). Once again, an explanation is provided. The calamity has come because the devil (*diabolos* – *the slanderer*) has descended to the earth and is expressing great anger (*thumos* – a violent outburst of anger), having understood (*knoweth* – perfect tense) that he only has a little time.¹⁰⁰ “Be sober [clear-headed], be vigilant [alert]; because your adversary [the one who is continually hostile toward you] the devil [the slanderer], as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom [someone – singular] he may devour [completely overpower] ...” (1 Peter 5:8).¹⁰¹ It is said that a male lion roars to establish his presence, to affirm his territory, and to communicate with those that are under his control.¹⁰² Satan's activities in the world today are as that of a roaring lion: he wants everyone to know that he is here, he confirms that this world is his territory, and he speaks to those who are his. Even though Satan is walking around today as a roaring lion, there is one thing that he is doing that a roaring lion is not doing: hunting! Typically, lions do not roar when they are stalking their prey, lest they frighten them away.¹⁰³ Satan, on the other hand, endeavors to instill fear into the heart of the one over whom he seeks to gain control.

We are told that the devil understands (*he knoweth*) that he only has a short amount of time. Even as he wanders the earth like a roaring lion, his roaring could be as much an expression of his violent anger because of his defeat as it is of him ensuring that everyone understands that the world is his. Despite the fact that man submitted to the lure of the devil through Adam, that did not thwart the plan of God to provide a Way for man to be reconciled with his Maker. As much as Satan desired to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross, it actually signalled his own defeat; in accordance with Jehovah's promise, Satan bruised the heel of the One Who came to crush his head, and to pay the price for sin (Genesis 3:15).

The time between when Satan was cast out of heaven and when his final judgment will take place is described here as a *short time*. We look at the almost 2,000 years that have passed by since Satan's death-blow was inflicted, and we wonder how this could be considered to be a *short time*; however, within the shadow of eternity, two millennia pales into insignificance. God's promise is sure: “For yet a little while [in just a little while], and he that shall come [is coming] will come,

⁹⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁰⁰ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁰¹ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁰² <http://www.londoloji.com/cubsden/why-do-lions-roar-2/>

¹⁰³ http://www.africam.com/wildlife/lion_roar

and will [absolutely] not tarry [be late]" (Hebrews 10:37).¹⁰⁴ Our faith must be in God, Who controls the fulfillment of His plan. We are told that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son ..." (Galatians 4:4a); eternal God took on the form of man when the time was right according to His plan. Despite 4,000 years passing by after the promise had been pronounced in the Garden of Eden, Christ's first coming was right on time! It is with that same certainty that we can anticipate the coming of the Son of God again; there will be no delay in God's plan. Even though we might consider the time since Jesus ascended to the Father as being long, His return will take place according to God's time-line, and there will be no delay! We must be challenged by Jesus' words: "...he that shall endure [to remain faithful; active voice, it is something that we must be doing] unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13); it is our responsibility as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to remain faithful to Him to the very end (whether that is His return, or our death), for only then will we be saved. We can be encouraged in our faith, for we know that Satan has been dealt with, and we can be overcomers *in Christ*.



13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

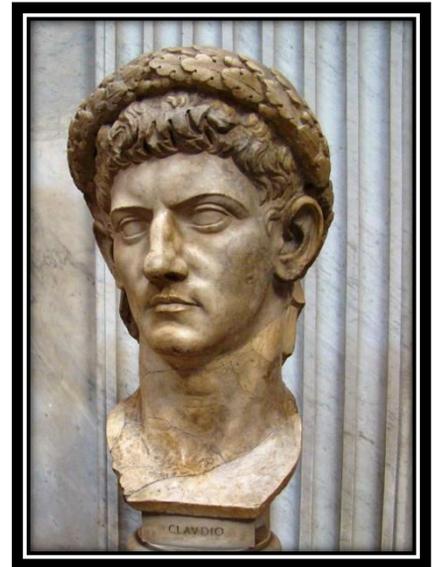
We have just learned that the devil came to the earth in a state of great anger (because he was cast out of heaven, where he had aspired to be like unto the Most High – Isaiah 14:14). When he realized (*saw*) that he was now limited to the earth, without hesitation he pursued the *woman* in order to cause her misery (*persecuted*). In other words, Satan set out to oppress the kingdom of God, which, as we have seen, is made up of all those who remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Persecution can take many forms, and Satan has become skilful at using them all. However, as we consider this matter for a moment, it will become evident that there are really only two fronts to his attacks: the physical and the spiritual – our mind/heart is involved in both.

After the Spirit of God descended upon the disciples of the Lord in the upper room, and they began to teach the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that salvation comes only through Him (Acts 4:12), the first opposition to their message came from the Jewish religious rulers. Those who had conspired to put the Lord to death sought to silence the Gospel message by forbidding the disciples to speak of Jesus (Acts 4:18; 5:40). Very soon Stephen became the focus of their attacks, and was the first martyr; when the Jewish leaders could not defeat him in debate, they hired men to bring false accusations against him (Acts 6:9-11). This opened the doors of oppression against the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem, and Saul, who was at this time among the religious elite (Philippians 3:5-6), took it upon himself to do his utmost to destroy them (Acts 8:3); yet this only served to scatter the message of the Gospel around the country (Acts 8:4). The beginning of persecution was small, and it was primarily physical in nature; it seems that Satan's initial strategy was to simply pressure everyone who believed in the Lord to become apostate – if he could cause them to become unfaithful, then he would have successfully halted the growth of the kingdom of God.

¹⁰⁴ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

Although the Jews were the initial source of persecution against the Christians, they were also the targets of much oppression. As someone whose trade was to make tents, Paul joined with Aquila and Priscilla (who were of the same trade) in Corinth because Aquila, along with all of the other Jews, had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2).¹⁰⁵ During these early days, differentiating between the practicing religious Jews and Christians was difficult for the Roman leadership. It is clear from Paul's letter to the Galatian believers that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem struggled to let their traditions die on the cross of Christ, and so it seemed logical to outsiders to consider them as simply another sect of the Jews; they were familiar with the Sadducees and Pharisees, and to this was now added the *Christians*. However, Paul's instruction to the Galatians on this matter was that to turn to the Jewish traditions was to *again* embrace slavery to worthless practices (*beggarly elements; bondage – Galatians 4:9*¹⁰⁶); the Galatians came to faith in Christ out of paganism, yet Paul says that adding Jewish traditions to their faith in Christ was the same as returning to worthless paganism. As Paul expounded the message of the Gospel, the distinction between Christianity and Judaism, of necessity, became more pronounced; he had very sharp words of criticism for the Jewish leadership of the Jerusalem assembly for their failure to recognize the freedom from the Law of Moses that Christ had won at the cross (Galatians 2:11; Ephesians 2:13-18). To the Philippians, Paul explained that he had abandoned all of the advantages that were his as an elite religious Jew so that he might *win* (gain the favor and fellowship of) *Christ* (Philippians 3:8).¹⁰⁷ Paul understood and taught the necessity for a separation from Judaism; Peter, at the end of his life, acknowledged that Paul taught many things that were difficult to understand, but that were important for spiritual wellbeing (2 Peter 3:16).



Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54)

By the time of the great fire of Rome (AD 64), the Christians were an identifiable group, and Emperor Nero, needing some means of shifting the blame for the disaster away from himself, laid the responsibility for the fire upon the Christians.¹⁰⁸ Thus began the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperors. The atrocities that Christians faced were numerous, and as varied as those who sought to inflict torture upon them. For almost two and a half centuries the physical persecution waxed and waned, depending on the Emperor, at the time, and the local governor. Diocletian (Emperor from AD 284-305), under the strong influence of Galerius, was the last Emperor to impose severe persecution upon Christians, with the intent of eradicating them completely.¹⁰⁹ When Diocletian abdicated in AD 305, Galerius sought to continue the persecution, but, by AD 311, he came to the conclusion that it was a hopeless task; shortly before his death he

¹⁰⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudius'_expulsion_of_Jews_from_Rome

¹⁰⁶ Strong's Online.

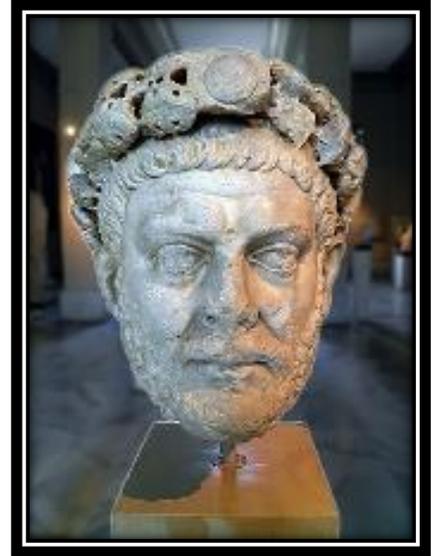
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/rome.htm>

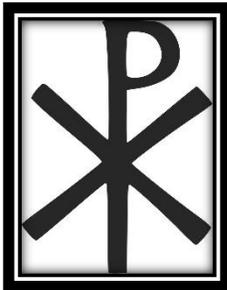
¹⁰⁹ <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/persecution-in-early-church-gallery/>

issued an edict of tolerance, whereby Christians were once again permitted to assemble.¹¹⁰ It would appear that, at this point, Satan was re-thinking his tactic for opposing the Gospel message. Jesus' promise had proven itself: "My sheep ... follow me ... and ... neither shall any ... pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28); severe physical persecution had proven to have little impact in diminishing the numbers of Christians – the kingdom of God continued to grow.

After Constantine ascended to the position of being one of the Emperors of Rome in AD 306, he became the means of influencing a shift in attitude toward the Christians; he took the tolerance that had been introduced by Galerius and raised it to a level of acceptance.¹¹¹ In AD 313, Constantine, along with his co-regent, Licinius, implemented an edict that required all confiscated properties to be returned to the Christian



Emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305)



Chi-Rho Symbol,
Constantine's sign

assemblies, at the expense of the Roman treasury.¹¹² By all appearances, the time of physical persecution against the Christians had come to an end. Constantine was favorably disposed toward Christianity; he saw it as the reason for gaining victory in his battles (thereby solidifying his control of the Roman Empire), and he came to consider himself to be a bishop, of sorts, to those who were outside of the organized "Christian" church.¹¹³ Despite many referring to Constantine as the first "Christian" Emperor of Rome, it would be more fitting to say that he was the first Roman ruler to mix Christianity with the popular paganism of the day. For example, it is said that Constantine's turn to Christianity began when he went to battle at the Milvian Bridge (over the Tiber River), and saw a sign in the sky along with the instruction, "In this sign, conquer."¹¹⁴ He put the sign¹¹⁵ on the shields of his army, and, despite being outnumbered, was victorious – a victory that he attributed to the Christian God.¹¹⁶ In honor of that victory, an arch was built, and it was decorated with images of the goddess Victoria (the goddess of victory), and its dedication was marked by sacrifices to Apollo, Diana, and Hercules – completely absent was any reference to the God of the Christians.¹¹⁷ What is very evident in Constantine is a zealous pragmatism: an inner impulse to achieve peace and security at all costs, even if that meant mixing paganism with Christianity.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc2.v.iv.xiv.html>

¹¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ <http://www.worldhistory.biz/ancient-history/70751-constantine-and-christianity.html>

¹¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Milvian_Bridge

¹¹⁵ The Chi-Rho sign is made up of the first two letters of "Christ" in Greek; however, the symbol predates Christianity by several centuries, and was used to signify *good*; it was used as a sign of Chronos (the god of time), as well as other solar deities (<http://symboldictionary.net/?p=2043>) – Constantine took a known pagan symbol and applied a "Christian" meaning to it.

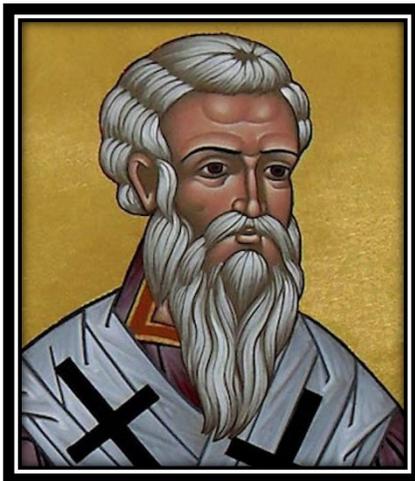
¹¹⁶ <http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/battle-milvian-bridge>

¹¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great#Religious_policy

As Constantine embarked on this new pathway of dressing paganism in the trappings of Christianity, we can see that Satan's strategy had changed, and the danger was now different for those who had placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps, for the moment, they did not have to look over their shoulder in anticipation of being arrested, but now they were faced with a much more ominous and deadly threat. Constantine legislated that Christianity should be accepted alongside of the pagan traditions for which Rome was well known, thereby largely ending the physical persecution that had been the Christian's lot up to this time. However, on February 27, 380, Emperor Theodosius I took this a step further, and enforced the Edict of Thessalonica whereby Christianity, based upon the Nicene Creed, became the state church of the Roman Empire.¹¹⁸ The Nicene Creed was compiled at the First Council of Nicea, which was convened by Constantine in AD 325, and it was expanded at the First Council of Constantinople that was organized by Theodosius I in AD 381.¹¹⁹ Both of these councils were convened by the Roman Emperor of the time, which gives an inkling of their influence on the development of this Creed that has been considered to be a defining document of the Church ever since.



Silver dish featuring Theodosius I



Ignatius of Antioch

We can read of Paul addressing heresies in his letters that are a part of our Scriptures, and so we realize that a departure from the truth of God's Word did not take long to rear its head. Ignatius (c AD 35-110), in a letter, which some say is not his, makes this observation concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus: "Mary the mother, whom they report to be an object of admiration and of affection to all."¹²⁰ Whether this was written by Ignatius or not is not relevant to our discussion; however, what this shows is that very early on there was a growing admiration for Mary. It was common practice for the early assemblies to develop rituals and recitations that became an essential part of their gatherings. One such reading, which is believed to date back to the fourth century, bears the name of James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the assembly in Jerusalem.¹²¹ The Liturgy of Saint

¹¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_church_of_the_Roman_Empire; the Edict of Thessalonica introduced several other notable elements as well: the equality of the Trinity, followers of the state church were to be called "Catholic Christians," non-adherents were termed "heretics," and the door was opened to the persecution of these heretics as determined by the emperor and the state church officials.

¹¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed#Comparison_between_Creed_of_325_and_Creed_of_381; the amendment is significant on two fronts: 1) it included reference to the "Virgin Mary," and 2) their belief was extended to include "one holy catholic and apostolic Church." This heralds the rise of Mary's significance in matters of the Church, and the promotion of Rome as being the dominant Church (the Creed was compiled and updated under the watchful eye of the Roman leadership).

¹²⁰ Ignatius' *Second Epistle to John*; *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, p. 348 (PDF format).

¹²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy_of_St_James

James, as it is known, includes the following: “Thou who art the only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal; who didst submit for our salvation to become flesh of the **holy God-mother**, and **ever-virgin Mary** ...” (emphasis added).¹²² It is plain to see that the undue veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, dates back to the time of Constantine; even at this early date, she was being elevated to a position of divinity (*God-mother*), and deemed to be forever a virgin (contrary to Mark 6:3). How did this fit together with the prevailing paganism?

Central to the practices of many historical, pagan cultures is the worship of a mother and child. The basis for this is said to go back to the time of Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, his wife Semiramis, and her child, Tammuz, who was born after Nimrod’s death, and was said to be his reincarnation.¹²³ Thus began a system of worship with a focus on the mother (as the queen of heaven), and her child (seen as the sun-god). When the Lord sent the confusion of languages during the building of the tower of Babel, the people were scattered, and they took this paganism with them wherever they went. Therefore, it is not surprising that all of the major civilizations have their version of the mother-child; for example, Assyria (Babylon, where it all began) had Semiramis (also known as Ishtar)-Tammuz, Egypt: Isis-Horus, India: Isi-Isvara, Greece: Aphrodite-Eros, Rome: Venus-Cupid.¹²⁴ As the Roman church delved ever deeper into applying a veneer of “Christianity” onto pagan traditions, it was not long before Mary and Jesus became synonymous with Isis and Horus, or Venus and Cupid – at least in the minds of the pagans; to them it mattered not what the “deities” were called, as long as their traditions and customary celebrations remained intact.



At the Council of Ephesus, which was convened in AD 431 by the Emperor Theodosius II, it was officially declared that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was *Theotokos* – the Mother of God.¹²⁵ You will recall that Ephesus was a center for the worship of the goddess Diana (Artemis to the Greeks), who was also known as the Queen of Heaven, the Lunar Virgin, and the Great Goddess (Acts 19:35); however, in other regions of the world, she was known as Astarte (Phoenicians), Ishtar (Babylonia/Assyria), and Ashtoreth (Canaanites – 1 Kings 11:5).¹²⁶ At the Council of Ephesus, Mary was given many of the characteristics of the goddess Diana, and, with increasing frequency, was referred to as being the Queen of Heaven. Since that time, the

¹²² “The Divine Liturgy of James the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord,” Section 6, [Anti-Nicene Fathers](#), Volume 7, p. 1154 (PDF version).

¹²³ <http://www.mystery-babylon.org/originsofbabylontwo.html>

¹²⁴ <http://www.ldolphin.org/semir.html>

¹²⁵ <http://www.theopedia.com/theotokos>

¹²⁶ <http://www.covenofthegoddess.com/goddessdiana.htm>

Roman Catholic Church has gone to great lengths to promote the eternal virginity of Mary¹²⁷ (Diana/Artemis is known as the “Immaculate Virgin”¹²⁸), and they often portray her as standing on the moon (Diana was also known as the goddess of the moon).¹²⁹

What we can see from the early history of the official Church of the Roman Empire, is that there was a significant departure from the truth of God’s Word regarding Mary, and this is only one area of apostasy that I have used to illustrate the pagan alliance that was taking place. Beginning with Constantine, as the Emperor of Rome who first embraced Christianity, there is evidence of pragmatism ruling the day, and the significant Christian gatherings within the empire quickly fell into line. Laws were passed that were designed to draw the citizens of Rome together, thereby affirming the Emperor’s authority over all of his people. For example, “Constantine in 321 forbade the sitting of courts and all secular labor in towns on ‘the venerable day of the sun,’ ... perhaps with reference at once to the sun-god, Apollo, and to Christ, the true Sun of righteousness; to his pagan and his Christian subjects.”¹³⁰ As the Emperor of a very diverse people, Constantine looked for ways to unite the people, and part of that came about by merging traditional pagan practices with Christianity by means of legislation – in this case, establishing that Sunday (the *venerable day of the sun*) was to be the day of rest, and not the seventh-day Sabbath as the Christian tradition had been up to this time.



The challenge that now faced conscientious Christians was this: would they bend to the subtle changes that were being imposed by their new “Christian” Emperor? History tells us that, for the most part, the compromises and accommodations that were legislated were accepted, often with little or no question. What had been a time of extreme physical persecution now very quickly became a spiritual battle for the hearts of the saints. However, the question was still the same: would their allegiance be given to the Emperor (who was now benevolent), or to God? The threat was no longer external; the battle ground had moved into the hearts of men and women who now bore the responsibility of weighing compliance with the Emperor against the standard of God’s Word. Unfortunately, the question of allegiance was now fraught with subtlety – the choice no longer appeared to be between paganism and the Lord, as it had been during the time of physical persecution. Since the Emperor now consorted with all of the notable “Christian” bishops

Sun-god, Apollo – Constantine deferred to this in declaring Sunday as the day of rest

¹²⁷ The third canon of the Lateran Council of 649 declared: “If anyone does not properly and truly confess in accord with the holy Fathers, that the **holy Mother of God** and **ever Virgin** and **immaculate Mary** in the earliest of the ages conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed, namely, God the Word Himself specifically and truly, who was born of God the Father before all ages, and that she incorruptibly bore [Him?], **her virginity remaining indestructible even after His birth**, let him be condemned” (the emphasized phrases note the infiltration of pagan traditions). <http://classicalchristianity.com/2012/03/25/canons-of-the-lateran-council-of-649/>

¹²⁸ <http://zero-point.tripod.com/pantheon/ArtemisII.html>

¹²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_%28mythology%29

¹³⁰ Philip Schaff, [History of the Christian Church](#), Volume III, p. 75 (PDF version).

throughout his empire, and even called and led religious councils, there was a great tendency to accept what he legislated as having the approval of the religious elite – so how could it be against God’s Word? Rationalism stepped to the fore, and, since it takes far less effort to rationalize than it does to study the Scriptures in order to determine the truth of God on a matter, it became so much easier to accept the dictates of the religious elite and the Emperor. However, despite this, Paul’s exhortation to Timothy remains intact: “Study [a command to give diligence, to make every effort] to shew thyself approved [genuine] unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [holding a straight course; teaching accurately] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).¹³¹ Since the bishops exercised an increasingly strong control over those within their assemblies, it was not long before the average Christian had fallen into line with the rulings of the Emperor and his religious entourage. The infrastructure for the Roman Catholic Church, with its ever increasing appetite for re-worked paganism, was now in place; the foundation had been laid, and the religious leadership was eager to build upon it with the blessing of the Emperor and for the security of their own positions.

Physical oppression was now virtually a thing of the past; the Roman Emperor Theodosius I had legislated that the Nicene Creed was to form the foundation of the officially recognized church of the empire – paganism was out; a form of Christianity was in! For the average Christian of the day, there were two options before him: 1) he could follow the dictates of the bishops and the Emperor, and give it no further thought, or 2) he could recognize the responsibility that was his to weigh all things according to the Scriptures. If he chose the former, then life would be easy; however, if he chose to follow the Word of God, then he could very easily find himself in trouble with the religious authorities, who were now backed by the Emperor. Nonetheless, Jesus words were there for everyone to see: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [to remain faithful even under oppression] unto the end, the same [this is the one who] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).¹³² We have noted the rising heresy that surrounded Mary, the mother of Jesus (and this is only one of many); clearly, to follow the religious leaders of the day would be to depart from the truth of God. The writer of Hebrews declared, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [unfaithfulness], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).¹³³ Even though physical persecution for being a Christian had been legislated out, the faithful Christian could still be in difficulties in this world if he did not comply with the unbiblical dictates of the prevailing religious “Christian” powers.

When Satan realized that trying to remove all of the Christians from the face of the earth would not work, he changed his strategy in order to try to deceive them into becoming unfaithful to the Lord so that their relationship with Him would be severed. If he could get them to become faithless, then he would have overpowered them (1 Peter 5:8); moreover, if he could get them to become unfaithful even while they thought that they were still being faithful to God, then so much the better – that would be the ultimate double-deception! Welcome to the Evangelical world of today! As has been demonstrated before, holding to ecumenical doctrines is spiritual fornication – it is not possible to be ecumenical without denying the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17). In other words, everyone who clings to the unclean teachings of

¹³¹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹³² Strong’s Online.

¹³³ Gingrich Lexicon.

ecumenism is being unfaithful to the Lord, and is spiritually dead – even while he thinks that he is spiritually alive, because he retains his belief in the eternal security of his salvation. The ecumenical “Christian” is either 1) a religious pagan who has never understood the Gospel message in order to be truly saved, or 2) he is now apostate (he has fallen from a state of being truly born-again), and is without hope (Hebrews 10:26-29). The former abides within Satan’s deception, and the latter has fallen prey to him – either way, they are both living under the control of the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).

However, we, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been warned so that we can be prepared. Jesus said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were possible* [*if possible*, the Greek text does not permit the thought that it is not possible], they shall deceive [lead astray] the very elect. Behold, I have told you before [I have forewarned you]” (Matthew 24:24-25).¹³⁴ Who are the elect? When Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven, we are told that He will send His angels to gather *His elect* “from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31). Paul addressed his Colossian epistle to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ” (Colossians 1:2), and later charged them as the *elect of God* to wear mercy, kindness, humility, patience, etc. (Colossians 3:12); therefore, the *elect of God* are the *faithful brethren in Christ*! Even as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, God has chosen us **in Christ**; it is not that God has chosen us individually for salvation, rather it is that as we are *in Christ*, that we are numbered among His *elect* (Ephesians 1:4; 2:8). It is the gift of God that we must accept by faith – our acceptance of His gift does not constitute work on our part, only a willingness to bear the cross of being the Lord’s disciple (Luke 14:26). Faith in what God has done for us in paying the price for our sins is what finds us *in Christ*; it is continuing to be firmly grounded in that faith that will see us remaining in Him. However, if we should become faithless (which is very possible), then we have abandoned our position in Christ and have become apostate (Hebrews 3:12), and it is impossible to recover from it (Hebrews 6:4-6). Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of the *elect* of God, it is speaking specifically of those who are faithful in Christ, and it is these whom the false Christs and false prophets will seek to deceive.

Although there are many who have taken this to mean that it is not possible for the elect to be led astray (they misinterpret Matthew 24:24-25), that understanding does not make any sense within the context. Why would Jesus specifically state that we have been forewarned, if, in fact, it is impossible for the elect to be led astray? If that were the case, then there would be no need for any warnings. However, there are many challenges in the Scriptures for us to remain faithful; frequently we are called upon to endure (*hupomeno* - to remain faithful in the face of trials) or to stand fast (*steko* – persevere) in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:15), which means that we are actually capable of relinquishing our firm hold on the faith of Christ. Jesus explained why it is so important for us to remain faithful: “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive [lead away from the truth] many. And because iniquity [wickedness] shall abound [be multiplied], the love [*agape*] of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to persevere, remain faithful even through oppression] unto the end, the same [this one!] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:11-13).¹³⁵ It is the one who will remain faithful unto

¹³⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

¹³⁵ Strong’s Online.

the very end who will be saved. The Lord, through Ezekiel, declared, “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned [remembered]: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die” (Ezekiel 18:24).¹³⁶ Quite simply, it is not sufficient to remain faithful for a while; historical faithfulness will not save you – it must be a present, active faithfulness to the Lord. The writer of Hebrews echoed the words of the Lord: “Take heed [a command to be continually discerning], brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – not believing; no longer persuaded, unfaithful], in departing [falling away, apostatizing] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).¹³⁷

Despite Satan’s defeat at the cross, he continues to harass the kingdom of God – he goes about like a roaring lion seeking for someone, who is a part of God’s kingdom, whom he might overcome (1 Peter 5:8). Deception and lies have become his primary tools (although physical oppression is still in his arsenal); his lies were effective with Eve (Genesis 3:4-5), and he continues to make use of them so as to deceive into submission those who claim the name of the Lord. Paul warned Timothy that a day was coming when imposters (*seducers*) would increase, and would deceive (lead others away from the truth), even while they were being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13; cp. Matthew 24:11-13).¹³⁸ Jesus warned that many charlatans would come in His name, and that they would lead many astray (Matthew 24:5); they come holding forth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet, despite the many signs and wonders that they will perform, Jesus will proclaim, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). How very important it is that we, through the guidance of the Spirit of God, exercise Biblical discernment – judging righteously, lest we, too, fall prey to the wiles of the devil (John 7:24; Ephesians 6:11). The dead in Christ are safely out of the reach of Satan, and his attention is now specifically on those who are alive on earth and have been reborn into God’s kingdom. We have been forewarned – let us be continually vigilant!



14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

We have just been told that the devil, after his defeat by the Lord, has set out to specifically target the kingdom of God on earth with his deceptive ways – his focus not being on the kingdom as a whole, but on the individuals who are a part of it. He has no hope of either acquiring or defeating the kingdom of heaven (that was confirmed with his defeat at the cross), but he will use his arsenal of deceptive tactics in an effort to spiritually overcome (and destroy) individuals who have been born into the kingdom of God. Consequently, it is required of us (those who are in Christ by faith, and thus members of God’s kingdom) to “stand fast [*steko* – persevere] in the Lord”

¹³⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹³⁷ Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

¹³⁸ Strong’s Online.

(Philippians 4:1 – here it is given as a command; 1 Thessalonians 3:8 carries the additional thought that it is possible to not persevere: “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord”).¹³⁹ We have the promise from the Lord Jesus that no one is able to snatch us out of His hand (John 10:28); however, we also have the warning to guard our hearts against unbelief, which would result in us becoming apostate from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12). *Unbelief* can be as simple as knowing what God desires in a particular situation, and then choosing not to do it (James 4:17; 1 John 2:3-4); do not be deceived, disobedience springs from a heart that is unwilling to believe God’s truth – if we believed, then we would obey! The Lord’s protection against all external foes does not overrule our ability **to choose** to forsake His ways; “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before [understand beforehand], beware [be on guard] lest ye also, being led away with the error [deception] of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness [perseverance]” (2 Peter 3:17).¹⁴⁰ Peter warns us against being like those who are spiritually ignorant and unstable, who, as a result, pervert the Scriptures to their own complete spiritual ruin (2 Peter 3:16). The reality, which Peter describes for us, is that we can, in fact, fall from a position of being steadfast in the Lord, and, once again, join those who are destined for utter destruction. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to remain alert to the deceptive schemes of the devil lest we be taken in by his trickery and become apostate.

We are told that the kingdom of God (*the woman*) is given *two* wings of a great eagle that will carry her to the place of nourishment. Perhaps this word picture harkens back to the song of Moses, after the Lord had led Israel out of Egypt: “As an eagle [He] stirreth up her [His] nest, fluttereth over her [His] young, spreadeth abroad her [His] wings, taketh them, beareth them on her [His] wings: *So* the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him” (Deuteronomy 32:11-12).¹⁴¹ Moses referred to the Lord’s care for Israel as being like unto that of an eagle for its young; so, too, we see the kingdom of God receiving wings in order to fly to a place of care; the word *wings* draws together the ideas of a speedy departure and of protection.¹⁴²

We have already noted that the flight of the *woman* is a partial fulfillment of the OT saints being taken into heaven at the time of the ascension of the Lord. However, we have much more included here, so that we know that this illustration is more than just the saints being transported from paradise to heaven.

Since the *wings* are metaphorical, to what might this be referring? What is given to the child of God (the born-again member of His kingdom) that can lift him away from the onslaught of the devil? The challenge that Paul placed before the Roman Christians was that they must “reckon [a present tense command to account or consider]... yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ the Lord” (Romans 6:11).¹⁴³ Sin, which is a part of all who are born of Adam, is evidence of the presence and influence of the devil (Ephesians 2:1-2); we are commanded to consider ourselves to be dead unto sin – no longer alive to the influence and control of Satan. Therefore, it is expected that we should “put off concerning the former conversation the

¹³⁹ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁰ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁴¹ BDB; in each case the Hebrew pronouns are masculine and singular, which means that they must not be translated as feminine and applied to the female eagle; it is Jehovah who is doing these things toward Israel, similar to an eagle’s care for its young (*as an eagle*).

¹⁴² Vine’s “wings.”

¹⁴³ Strong’s Online.

old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (reckoning ourselves *dead unto sin*), and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness [holiness of the truth]” (*alive unto God*) (Ephesians 4:22,24).¹⁴⁴ Here are the *two wings* from God that will carry us away from the deceptive destruction of the devil: the righteousness of God, and the holiness of His truth. By sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the payment for sin, God “condemned sin in the flesh: [so] that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). It is as we are *in Christ* (this is foundational), and as we live according to the leading of the Spirit of God, that we will express the righteousness of His Law. Jesus, Who is also called the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), declared, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); thereby we know, without any uncertainty, that God’s Word is holy, and as we dig into its substance, we will discover the holiness of truth that God desires for us (an attitude of heart that seeks to live in compliance with the Law of God – the Ten Commandments).¹⁴⁵ Holiness will lead to righteous living; righteousness will encourage our desire to be holy!

Where do these wings of righteousness and holiness carry the kingdom of God? They carry her to *her place*; this is the place that God has prepared in advance for her (v. 6). Paul’s exhortation to Timothy was this: “Take heed unto [be alert to] thyself, and unto the doctrine [teaching, instruction]; continue [persevere] in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).¹⁴⁶ In order for Timothy to be assured of being pleasing to the Lord, he is challenged to remain consistently in the instruction that he has received. So, too, for us; it is not sufficient for us to **have been** in God’s truth, we must **be in** His truth. If we are not presently abiding in His truth, then we have left the place that God has for us. “Study [make every effort] to shew thyself approved [genuine] unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [accurately teaching and living] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).¹⁴⁷ The greatest shelter and source of spiritual sustenance for the child of God is the Word of God! It is as we are diligent to learn the truths of God from His Word, and as we are careful to live by them, that we will remain faithful to the Lord. The Spirit of God has come to abide within us in order to guide us into all truth (John 16:13); it is as we continue to live in accordance with the Spirit’s leading that we will persevere faithfully for the Lord – thereby remaining without condemnation before God (Romans 8:1), and holding the assurance that we will be saved to abide with Him forever (Matthew 24:13).

To the *woman* (the kingdom of God) are given the *wings* of a *great eagle* so that she **may** be flying into *her place*. The KJV has a correct translation of the Greek at this point by having *might fly*. To the member of the kingdom of God who is living on the earth, as long as they draw a breath, they are faced with a choice: will they remain faithful to the Lord, or will they be drawn away into deception? Peter provides us with a clear picture of the situation as we must understand it: “For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity [literally: because of speaking boastful nonsense], they [the false teachers] allure through [are leading astray with] the lusts of the flesh, *through much wantonness* [sensuality], those that were clean [in reality] escaped from them who live in error

¹⁴⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁴⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁴⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁷ Gingrich Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

[delusion]. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants [slaves] of corruption: for of whom a man is [for such a one has been] overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage [and enslaved]. For if after they have escaped the pollutions [corrupting influence] of the world through the [full] knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled [involved] therein, and [have been] overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better [more advantageous] for them not to have [fully] known the way of righteousness, than, after they have [fully] known it, to turn [back] from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:18-21).¹⁴⁸ We do face a choice, but, once again, we do not get to choose the consequences of the selection that we make. Peter identifies the false teachers as those who will come speaking empty words of freedom, even while they themselves are overcome and enslaved by corruption. For the child of God (a member of His kingdom) to be taken in by the smooth words of such a false teacher, Peter declares that their new spiritual state is worse for them than before they came to fully understand the Lord, because they have now turned away from His commands. Consider this carefully. The one who has been born-again by the Spirit of God (the only way to fully know the Lord Jesus), and then submits to the doctrines of false teachers, is spiritually worse off than he was before he was born-again; i.e., a pagan who has never known the Lord is better off than a Christian who falls prey to a false teacher! The writer of Hebrews explains this very forthrightly: “For if we sin wilfully [in this case, we choose to accept the doctrines of false teachers] after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [is left] no more [absolutely no further] sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26).¹⁴⁹ For the one who turns away from the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no longer any means for the cleansing of his sins – he has spurned the ONLY means of salvation; he is now an apostate with no hope of reconciliation with the Lord! Peter says that his *latter end* (his state of apostasy) is *worse* than his *beginning*, before he was saved by God’s Spirit; for the unsaved there is always the hope of salvation in Christ; for the apostate, that hope is gone. It is incumbent upon us to very carefully heed the warnings of Scripture to carefully attend to the commands of the Lord. The choice is ours, but we must remember Jesus’ words that it is only those who remain faithful through adversity right to the end (our death or His coming) who will be saved by Him (Mark 13:13); do not be deceived by the false teaching of once-saved-always-saved, for it is a cleverly devised doctrine of the devil. The choice is ours, and the Lord has told us the consequences that will follow each option; “...wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction ... strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life” (Matthew 7:13-14) – let us choose wisely!

We are then told that the kingdom of God (namely, those who are a part of it) will be fed and nurtured in this secluded place for a *time, and times, and half a time*.

The Greek word that is used here for *time*, in each case, is *kairos* (*kahee-ros*’), which speaks of an unspecified period of time that is characterized by identifying features; whereas, by contrast, *chronos* simply marks the duration of a period of time (identifying the quantity).¹⁵⁰ Therefore, we can view this as being at least three distinguishable periods of history (*time, and times*), and a shorter period (*half a time*), perhaps a period that is brought to an abrupt end; what this does not express is a period of three and a half years, which would require the use of the word *chronos*. By

¹⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

¹⁵⁰ Vine’s “season.”

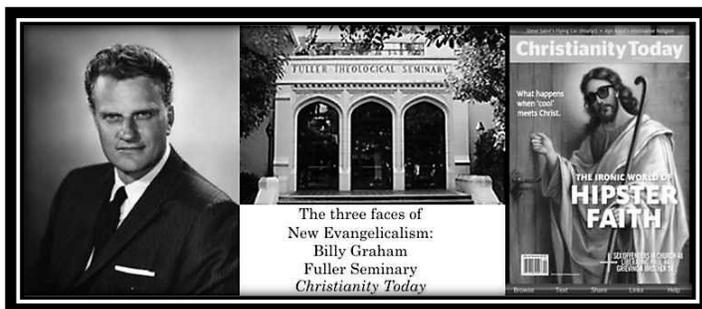
looking at the history of Christianity since Christ’s crucifixion, we can get a glimpse of what this time of nourishment and provision might be. To my amazement, most church historians are agreed that there are three general periods of church history, with some variation as to their applied titles: Patristic Christianity (a time of establishment), Medieval Christianity (a time of decline), and Modern Christianity (a time of reformation and revival).¹⁵¹ Keep in mind that this is a view of *the Church* that has been made by *church* historians, and, therefore, their observations do not necessarily relate to the kingdom of God. However, if we apply this broad view of historical Christianity to the expression of *time* that we find here, and include a projection of the kingdom of God during these same periods, perhaps we can then begin to understand what has taken place, and what will yet take place, while the kingdom of God is being *nourished*. A chart of this data might look something like this:

	Chronology (<i>chronos</i>) – with some flexibility	The Church	The Kingdom of God
TIME (<i>kairos</i>)	From the first followers of Jesus to AD 590: Patristic	Instruction of the Apostles, the canonization of the NT Scriptures, development of a highly organized structure with a political alliance, moved from suffering to sovereign power.	Instruction of the Apostles, rapid growth, increased persecution, dispersion, and a growing separation from the dominant <i>church</i> – the faithful are in declining numbers.
TIMES	AD 590 to 1517 – the Middle Ages: Medieval	Domination by the Roman Catholic Church, corruption, solidifying of papal authority, suppression of the Scriptures, rise of Islam, and much violence in the name of Christianity.	Safely isolated from the influence of Rome, and brutally persecuted when discovered – faithfulness comes at great physical cost; separation is a necessity to remain alive.
	AD 1517 to the Present: Modern	Decline of overt papal control, increased availability of Scriptures in the common languages, rise of philosophy, reason, and man’s ego, contamination of the Scriptures by philosophy, a profusion of heresies, and a thirst for unity.	Continued persecution by Rome, added threat from the Protestants, and an ever increasing pressure to conform – the cost of faithfulness shifts from the physical to the social, and still requires separation.
HALF A TIME	Future time under Antichrist, identified as being 42 months or 1260 days.	One-world church led by the False Prophet, with all worship being directed toward the Antichrist (the beast); abruptly ended with Christ coming for His own, followed by the outpouring of God’s wrath.	A time of great persecution, when the price for faithfulness will be very costly again; ends with Christ coming to gather those who are His.

¹⁵¹ <http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/an-overview-of-church-history>; Mark Paynter, *A Brief Church History*, p. 2 (PDF).

We are further assured that this time of nourishment will take place away from the presence (*face*) of the serpent (Satan). We have noted that those who have died **in Christ** (both OT saints and NT faithful) are in the presence of God, a place to which Satan no longer has access. However, beyond that, Jesus is called the Word of God (Revelation 19:13) and the Word (John 1:1). During His ministry on earth, Jesus said, “This [speaking of Himself] is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth [is eating – present tense] of this bread shall live for ever” (John 6:58). For those who are **in Christ**, their spiritual health comes through feeding on the Word of God – the living Bread (John 6:51)! If we understand that the place for spiritual nourishment is the Word of God, then we recognize that it is as we are immersing ourselves in the Scriptures that the devil will be far from us; this goes well beyond memorizing Scripture, as good as that might be. Conversely, it is as we either neglect the Word of God or turn away from its precepts, that we can be assured that the devil’s distractions will become increasingly difficult to ignore. It is in this latter situation that Evangelicals, for the most part, find themselves today – yet, just as surely, they are oblivious to their failure. During the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic Church was dominant, the Scriptures were suppressed; “it was regarded as a book for the clergy, and the interpretation of its meaning was assumed to rest largely with the decretists [experts in canon law] and the pope. The Council of Toulouse, 1229, had forbidden the use of the Bible to laymen.”¹⁵² This was a time when God’s Word was neglected because of the decision made by the ruling ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church; the common people had no access to the Scriptures, and the experts only provided interpretations that would enhance their control – the average citizen was deprived of the light of God’s Word. Today, there is a willful neglect of the Scriptures; even among those who claim to be Christians there is, for the most part, a deferral to the “experts” in spiritual matters – the average Christian willingly submits their understanding of the Word of God to that which is proclaimed by their favorite false teacher.

However, today’s problem actually goes much deeper than that. As the Scriptures became increasingly available to the common people through the use of the printing press, Satan changed his tactic, and embarked on a plan to undermine the Word of God completely. Once more, the experts came to the fore, and this time they applied their worldly skills to the actual text of



Scripture. Out of this came a corrupt Greek translation of the NT, followed by an ever increasing profusion of translations that are based upon it. As a result, when Harold Ockenga proposed that neo-evangelicalism would embrace the “reexamination of theological problems such as the antiquity of man, the universality of the Flood, [and]

God’s method of creation,” he “received a hearty response from many evangelicals.”¹⁵³ Satan had ensured that the groundwork had been laid so as to proficiently turn the hearts of the people away

¹⁵² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 6, p. 280.

¹⁵³ Harold J. Ockenga, *Forward to The Battle for the Bible*, by Harold Lindsell.

from the saving truth of God's Word. Although Evangelicalism was, at one time, considered to be the heart of Biblical fundamentalism, the broad acceptance of this new approach to the Bible very quickly removed the life from its message – despite their claim to still uphold “the great historic doctrines of Christianity.”¹⁵⁴ Billy Graham's vision for *Christianity Today*, as a herald for this new thinking, was that it would “combine the best in liberalism and the best in fundamentalism without compromising theologically”;¹⁵⁵ clearly, he did not understand the Gospel that he was supposed to be preaching. This simply illustrates that the early proponents of this new faith (for that's what it was) had been thoroughly hoodwinked by the devil, for “what part hath he that believeth [faithful – the one who is adhering faithfully to the Word of God (a fundamentalist)] with an infidel [unfaithful – one who's unfaithfulness is expressed by his disobedience to God's Word (a liberal)]” (2 Corinthians 6:15).¹⁵⁶

In contrast to the apostasy of Evangelicalism, those who are in the kingdom of God can go to a place of spiritual nourishment that will provide shelter from the attacks of the enemy. Jesus said, “My sheep hear [are hearing] my voice, and I know [am knowing] them, and they follow [are following] me: And I give [am giving] unto them eternal life; and they shall [should] never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).¹⁵⁷ It is as we faithfully abide in Christ and His Word that we will find His protection from the external attacks of the devil; however, what we must not fail to guard against is a heart that might turn away from the narrow message of His saving truth. Even though He affirmed that nothing can remove us from His hand, He also said that we **should never** perish (not that we will not perish). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing from [falling away from, becoming faithless to] the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith [evaluate yourself against the standard of Scripture]; prove [test to see if you are genuine] your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates [failing the test]?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).¹⁵⁸ As children of God's kingdom, we all face a choice on a daily basis; it is only as we choose to remain faithful to the Word of God (i.e., obedience!) that we will be among those who will be saved (Matthew 24:13).

We find here the assurance that God has provided the means for His child to receive spiritual nourishment through three periods of history, and one shortened period, which will undoubtedly be during the coming time of the Antichrist. This should provide us with additional incentive to “study [make every effort] to shew [make] thyself approved [genuine] unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [teaching and living accurately] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).¹⁵⁹ God has predetermined a work for us that we **should** do (Ephesians 2:10); however, He will not force our hand to comply – once again, we must choose to do His bidding. Jesus said, “If ye love [might be loving (*agapao*)] me, keep [attend carefully to] my commandments” (John 14:15);¹⁶⁰ the first (loving Him) requires us to choose (an act of the will),

¹⁵⁴ Harold J. Ockenga, National Association of Evangelicals press release December 8, 1957, as quoted by John Ashbrook, *New Neutralism II*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁶ Strong's Online.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁵⁹ Gingrich Lexicon; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶⁰ Strong's Online.

the latter is a command to be obeyed (once again, a choice). In this day of increasing religious apostasy all around us (ecumenism), it is incumbent upon us to remain untouched by its contamination, lest we experience the rejection of the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:17). If we find ourselves continually facing the temptations of the devil, or living in a place of spiritual defeat, then we need to do two things: 1) examine our lives to see how we are dabbling in what God has forbidden (2 Corinthians 13:5), and 2) then repent of our failure, and determine to spend more time in the Word of God, permitting the Spirit of God to open our eyes to His truth so that we might walk more perfectly before Him. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before [are understanding beforehand], beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked [avoid, lest by the lawless deception being led away], fall from [ye may lose] your own steadfastness. But grow [be increasing] in grace [favor], and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:17-18).¹⁶¹ Moses placed before Israel the same choices that we face today: “I have set before you life and death ... therefore choose life ...” (Deuteronomy 30:19); Joshua, Moses’ successor, in similar fashion stated: “choose you this day whom ye will serve ...” (Joshua 24:15). We all choose, but will the choice that we make draw us closer to the Lord, or draw His disapproval?

The Lord has promised His protection and provision if we abide in the place that He has prepared for us – it is as we are *in Christ* that we are new creatures in Him, and are equipped with the Holy Spirit to make the right choices (2 Corinthians 5:17). Do not be deceived into jeopardizing your position *in Christ* for a mess of pottage – whether that is the approval of family or friends, or perceived fellowship with professing Christians. We have been created *in Christ Jesus* for a life that is to be lived in obedience to Him; we must be in His Word so that we will know what is expected of us – we have been called unto holiness, and obedience to the Lord is the only way to become holy (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:14-16).



15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

As Satan sees the kingdom of God (the *woman*) flying to a place where she will be preserved, he makes a final effort to destroy her. If he could destroy God’s kingdom, then his would be the only kingdom left among men, and he would have defeated God to that extent.

In graphic language, we are told that a torrent of water pours out of Satan’s mouth by which he hopes to overcome the kingdom of God. We must recognize that this is metaphoric language, and not literal. Whether Satan’s intent was to overcome the kingdom as it flew to safety, or to overwhelm it in its place of safety, we are not told – perhaps he hoped for both. However, she is safely in the protection of God’s hand, and Satan cannot touch her; nevertheless, it is clear that Satan’s desire is to destroy her. This would seem to be an attack on the kingdom of God on earth in its early days under the New Covenant – a last-ditch attempt by Satan to overwhelm the kingdom.

¹⁶¹ Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

In Revelation 17 we read of a false religious system (*whore*) that is sitting upon *many waters* (v. 1), and an angel explains to John what the *many waters* represent: “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). This Antichrist kingdom rests upon peoples of every description: people generally (*peoples*), gatherings of people with a common purpose (*multitudes*), races (*nations*), and languages (*tongues*).¹⁶² Therefore, when we read that Satan sent out a torrent of water in an effort to overcome the woman, his purpose was simply that the multitudes of the earth would envelope the kingdom of God, and overcome it – it would no longer be identifiable as being unique in the world. In other words, Satan wanted God’s kingdom to be absorbed by the hordes of his kingdom; perhaps like the seed that fell among the thorns, and, as it grew, it was choked to death (Luke 8:14). This was a reactive response to his defeat and seeing God’s kingdom flying to a place of safety; in desperation he sought to overwhelm it before it reached the haven that God had prepared for those who are His.

Unfortunately, in our day it is too apparent that those who profess to be a part of God’s kingdom exhibit very little that would differentiate them from the world. The fact is that Satan has been quite successful at overwhelming those who should, based upon their words, be a part of kingdom of God. What we must not forget is that to each of the elders of the seven assemblies Jesus included a message for everyone, whom He addressed as “he that overcometh.” What we learned is that, unless we are an overcomer, we are destined for destruction: the overcomer will eat of the tree of life, and the one who is overcome will be denied access to it (Revelation 2:7; 22:14); the overcomer will not face the second death (being cast into the lake of fire), but the overcome are destined to join the devil in that place of eternal torment (Revelation 2:11; 20:5-6,12-15). The overcomer will rule (Revelation 2:26), will be dressed in white, and keep his name in the book of life (Revelation 3:5), will abide in the presence of God forever (3:12), and will sit with Christ in His throne (3:21). It is the one who overcomes, the one who remains faithful to the Lord unto the end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13). God has prepared a refuge for us in His Word (the Lord Jesus Christ); however, it is only as we walk in obedience to Him that we will be numbered among His faithful ones (John 14:15).



16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

In keeping with the metaphoric language from the previous verse, we are now told that the earth came to the aid of the kingdom of God by devouring the *flood*. Ironically, what the earth did to Satan’s torrent is exactly what Satan desires to do to anyone whom he can deceive (1 Peter 5:8; *katapino* – *devour* or *swallow up*).¹⁶³ Satan’s effort to overwhelm the kingdom of God met with failure (John 10:28; Romans 8:38-39); the torrent did not touch God’s kingdom, thereby permitting her to arrive at that place of separation and safety, which has been prepared for her by God (Revelation 12:6). For those of us who are a part of God’s kingdom on earth, the Scriptures (the Word of God) have been prepared and preserved for us – a place of safety from the presence of

¹⁶² Strong’s Online; Strong’s Dictionary.

¹⁶³ Strong’s Online.

the devil. Even though what we have in English today (the KJV) is only a translation of the original text, we can be assured that it was prepared before Satan launched his attack directly against the Scriptures; even with its translational weaknesses, it is still the preferred Bible today – all other translations bear the numerous scars of Satan adding, removing, and altering the text of Scripture.

However, despite all that God has done to provide protection for those who are within His kingdom, we, while on earth, still have the ability to choose to be faithful or unfaithful – that is not an external force, but an internal choice that we all face on a daily basis. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared [become known] to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we **should** live soberly [with self-control], righteously, and godly, in this present world [time] ...” (Titus 2:11-12).¹⁶⁴ This is how we *should* live, and, if we **choose** to be obedient to God’s Word, then this is how we will be living. “Despise [reject] not prophesyings [speaking forth the counsel of God]. Prove [a command to test to ensure that something is genuine, and approve it if it is] all things; hold fast that which is good [approved]” (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21);¹⁶⁵ Paul’s instruction to the Thessalonians is for them to test what they hear to ensure that it is genuine before God, and then to cling to that which has passed the test (cp. 2 Timothy 2:15). “Therefore to him that knoweth [has understood] to do good [that which is approved; that which has been tested and proven to be genuine before God], and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).¹⁶⁶ Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), and “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ...” (John 15:10). When we have been presented with a command from the Lord Jesus, and we have confirmed that our understanding is in keeping with the context of His Word, then our sole obligation is to do what He has said; the declaration of God’s truth has been proven to be genuine, therefore if we do not heed it, that is sin to us. “He that saith, I know him [God], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar [one who breaks faith] ...” (1 John 2:4); “But ... all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). Woe to those who turn their backs on something that the Lord has commanded us to do!



17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

After his failed attack against the kingdom of God (the *woman*), Satan becomes furious with her. Even though it is God Who provided the *woman* with the wings to escape from the devil, and also equipped the earth to come to her aid, Satan’s anger is directed toward the kingdom of God, and not toward God. Remember that Satan has been dealt the death-blow by the Lord Jesus through His death and resurrection; he, therefore, recognizes that he will never be able to rise to be like unto the Most High (Isaiah 14:14). In desperation to inflict as much harm as possible on God, he directs his anger against His kingdom. However, when his efforts fail to destroy the kingdom in

¹⁶⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶⁵ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s “prophesying.”

¹⁶⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

its early days under the New Covenant, he turns his attention to those on earth who are a part of the *woman* – those who have been born into God’s kingdom by faith.

You will recall that Jesus said, “Except a man be born [someone should be born] of water [physically] and of the Spirit [spiritually from above], he cannot [is not able to] enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, we understand that those who are a part of the kingdom of God have been born anew from on high, i.e., they have been placed *in Christ* through faith in what He has done for all of mankind. “For ... ye [are being] saved through faith; ... created in Christ Jesus ...” (Ephesians 2:8,10); both *saved* and *created* are in the passive voice, which means that this is the work of God in us – this is NOT something that we can do for ourselves. Nevertheless, we must be presently, actively persuaded (believing) that Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 3:16; 14:6), otherwise the salvation that God has perfected in Christ will not be ours; moreover, “he that shall endure [remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [this is the one who] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13)!¹⁶⁸ We are called to faithful endurance – the salvation that God has purchased for us requires that we remain faithful to Him to the end!

We’ve seen how the devil desired to do away with the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4), and, thereby, gain the upper hand in his war against God. When that failed, and his numerous attempts to derail the reason that God took on the form of man came to naught, it came down to the devil facing the Lord at the cross. As Jesus willingly relinquished His spirit to the Father, and died, Satan felt the death-blow of God upon his head (ensuring his defeat), and, in desperation, he launched an attack against the kingdom of God through every means available to him. However, the security of the kingdom of God could not be breached, and so he has been reduced to targeting those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (representatives of the kingdom of God), and who are alive on the earth. We have been warned that our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour [overwhelm] ...” (1 Peter 5:8); Satan is looking for someone (*whom* is singular) over whom he might be able to gain control (*devour*), which is why Peter commands that we must always be clear-minded (*sober*) and alert (*vigilant*).¹⁶⁹ Satan has set his sights on individuals on earth who have been born into God’s kingdom. As children of Adam, we have all come into this world with the propensity to live in disobedience to God – we are sinners by birth; it is the spirit of Satan that is at work within all those who, through unbelief, live in disobedience to God (Ephesians 2:2-3). Those who abide outside of Christ are not the targets of Satan – they are already his to do his bidding or to be used for his evil pleasure; it is those who are *in Christ*, those who have been born into the kingdom of God, who are now the focus of his attention. In his wanderings throughout the earth, he is continually looking for someone whom he might be able to lure into compromise, accommodation, and, ultimately, lead away from the truth that brings salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Jesus warned: “Take heed [*blepo* – be discerning: present tense – always taking place, active voice – it is our responsibility, imperative mood – it is a command] that no man deceive [*planao* – to lead away from the truth; subjunctive mood – it is possible!] you. ... For there shall arise ... false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if ... possible, they shall deceive [*planao*] the very [even the] elect” (Matthew

¹⁶⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶⁸ Strong’s Online; Vine’s “he.”

¹⁶⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

24:4,24).¹⁷⁰ The success of these false prophets, who are the tools of Satan to deceive us, is dependent upon one thing: our failure to heed the Lord's command to be discerning! "...let him that thinketh [is of the opinion] he standeth [perfect tense – firmly established] take heed [*blepo*] lest he fall [fall away – subjunctive mood, it is a possibility]" (1 Corinthians 10:12).¹⁷¹ For those who have eyes to see, this is a specific warning against the doctrine of eternal security that is tenaciously held by Evangelicals and Calvinists alike. The Evangelicals believe a once-saved-always-saved teaching, which provides them with a false hope that finds no support from Scripture: they think that as long as you have prayed a prayer for salvation, you are assured of a place in heaven someday. The Calvinists, on the other hand, simply say that God has already chosen those who will be saved and those who will be condemned – it is God's irresistible grace that saves those whom He's chosen, and, if you're among the chosen, then you simply cannot be lost – your eternal destiny has been firmly established. Using the example of Israel, Paul warns us in his letter to the Corinthians that if we are of the opinion that our place with the Lord is eternally secure, then we need to be careful for we stand in danger of becoming apostate.

Satan has recognized that the kingdom of God will never be his, nor will it ever be overcome by him; therefore, he is seeking to decimate God's kingdom on earth by targeting those who are a part of it. He has turned away from the kingdom as a whole in order to *make war with the remnant of her seed*; he has declared war against the rest of the kingdom of God – those who, through faith in the Lord, have been born into God's kingdom, and who are yet abiding on the earth. We, who desire to remain faithful to the Lord, are the rest (*remnant*) of the kingdom to whom Satan has access while he roams throughout this earth. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ..." (1 Peter 5:8); it is the child of God for whom the devil is looking (*seeking*), so that he might overcome (*devour*) him through deception and intimidation. We must maintain a clear head and a watchful eye, so that we are aware of the devil's activities, and can discern his tactics.

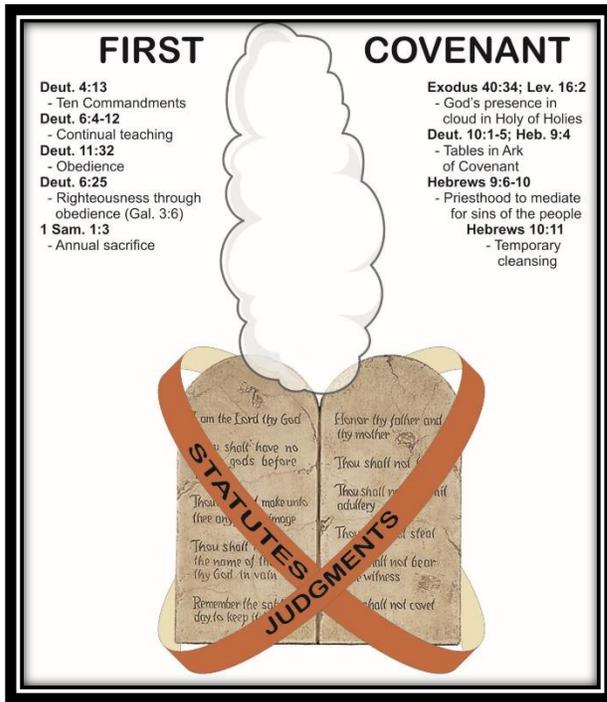
John goes on to present two evidences that are used to identify those who are a part of the kingdom of God, and who are also the targets of Satan's attacks: 1) they are keeping *the commandments of God*, and 2) they are holding *the testimony of Jesus Christ*.

As we have noted before, God has given us Ten Commandments that form a framework for how we are to live within His kingdom; the first four of these describe how we are to live in our relationship with God, and the last six tell us how to live before our fellow man. When a lawyer from the Pharisees sought to test the Lord, he asked Him: "Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40). In His response, Jesus condenses the Ten Laws of God into two, and states that everything in the OT hangs upon these two. The first one would have been very familiar to the Pharisees (being students of the Law of Moses), for it is repeated several times in the fifth book of Moses: "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine

¹⁷⁰ Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁷¹ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 30:6).¹⁷² However, Jesus then goes a step further, and pronounces a second command that is just as great as the first one (*like unto it*): your love for your neighbor is to be as great as your love for yourself. In essence, Jesus stated that all of the Ten Commandments are important, not just the ones that deal with how we relate to God. Although you will not find the command to love your neighbor as yourself within the OT (in these words), what you will find are a multitude of ordinances given by God to govern the lives of His people in matters of living with those around them (the Law of Moses). The Law of Moses served to flesh out the Ten Commandments: through the priestly and sacrificial ordinances came the determination of how to approach the Lord, and honor Him (Laws one through four), and through the judicial and social ordinances came the system for community justice (the latter six Commandments).



The First Covenant (the Ten Commandments, Exodus 34:28), which the Lord made with Israel, was the expression of His desire to have Israel become “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6a). The ordinances that Moses received of the Lord (the Law of Moses) were to govern the lives of the people as they became that priestly and holy nation before a world that did not know the Lord. Although Israel did not fulfill the Lord’s desire to be that kingdom of priests, they were the means of carrying the promise of a Deliverer forward; despite their failure to live as they should, out of their number came One Who was the perfect Lamb of God Who “taketh away the sin of the world [not just Israel]” (John 1:29). Through the New Covenant, which Jesus implemented with His disciples (Luke 22:20), comes a new and more powerful expression of

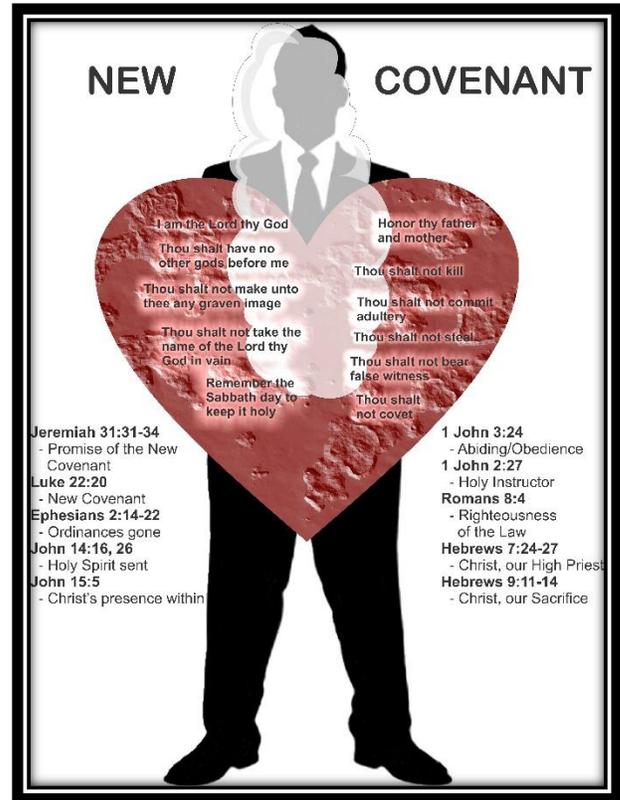
God’s righteousness; the expression is new, but the essence of the Covenant has not changed. What God wrote upon stone tablets for Israel has now been written upon our minds (Hebrews 10:16, in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33), and the abiding presence of the Spirit of God will bring the Law of God to life within us (John 16:13; Romans 8:1-4). The ordinances of Moses have been fulfilled in Christ, and ended at the cross (Ephesians 2:15), therefore, we are no longer subject to them; however, we have not been left to our own devices, for the Spirit of God, now living within us, is come to guide us in how we are to live (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17). It is not that it doesn’t matter how we live, it’s only that we are not governed by the Mosaic Law, which ended at the cross of Christ. Nonetheless, the foundation for how we live before God has not changed: it

¹⁷² The last two references do not include the *might* or strength, and simply refer to the heart and the soul, which, when these two are used together in the Hebrew, also includes the mind (BDB).

continues to be the Ten Commandments. Under the Old Covenant, the Law of God was fleshed-out through obedience to the Law of Moses; under the New Covenant, it is expressed through carefully following the leading of the Spirit of God! The significant change from the Old to the New Covenant is what the expression of obedience to the Ten Commandments looks like. Jesus said, “If ye love [are loving] me, [then you will] keep [attend carefully to] my commandments” (John 14:15); if the former is true, then the latter is a command!¹⁷³

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day considered themselves to be righteous before God; as the interpreters of the Mosaic Law, they were convinced that they had it right, and were critical of anyone, and everyone, who did not live as they did. However, on one occasion, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy regarding the Fifth Commandment, which is a call to honor your father and mother: “But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban* [a gift or offering to the Lord], that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited [be helped] by me; *he shall be free*. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered [passed along]: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:11,13).¹⁷⁴ In essence, these self-righteous men would “dedicate” everything that was theirs to the Lord, which meant (in their minds) that they could not use their resources to be of help to their parents, because it all belonged to the Lord. Jesus condemns them for making their tradition a means of displacing the need to keep the Lord’s Commandment; their tradition became a means to preserve their wealth, and gave them a carefully-crafted, spiritually-deceptive excuse for not using their means to be of benefit to their families.

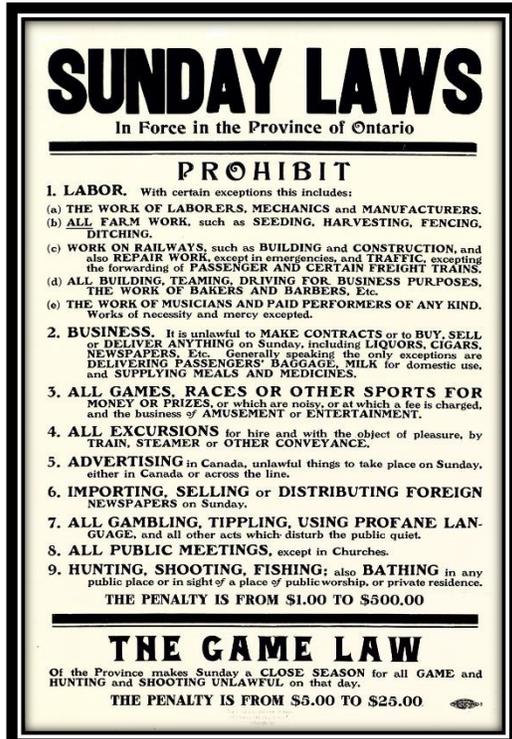
We might be somewhat incensed by the Pharisees for supplanting God’s Law with something that, even though it might seem to be very spiritual, served only to protect their personal wealth. However, it might be fitting if we saved some of that indignation for the next time that we look at ourselves in the mirror. Take, for example, the Fourth Commandment that enjoins us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy unto the Lord; this is one of the Commandments that shows us how we can honor the Lord. The Pharisees kept this Commandment religiously and with great flare (going so far as to accuse the Lord Jesus of violating the Sabbath – Mark 3:2), but they failed elsewhere! However, modern-day Evangelicals have a consistent history for not examining the Scriptures carefully – especially when they think that there might be something that would require them to change their pattern of living. The tradition that I grew up with was that Sunday was kept as a day



¹⁷³ Strong’s Online.

¹⁷⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

of rest (Canada's misnamed Lord's Day Act of 1906 prohibited business transactions on Sunday, and in 1985 it was declared to be unconstitutional¹⁷⁵), with no unnecessary work, and certainly no personally-pleasurable activities; conservative Evangelicals may still perpetuate this tradition, but the new liberated generation spiritualizes the "rest" that is to be ours, and doesn't bother to keep any day as holy unto the Lord. Nevertheless, in the Fourth Commandment we are called upon to *remember* (the infinitive absolute form of *zachar*, which is used in the Hebrew, makes this an



c. 1911

imperative¹⁷⁶) to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. So, what happened? Even Matthew George Easton, in his Bible dictionary, stumbled concerning this matter: "If any change of the day has been made, it must have been by Christ or by his authority. ... True, we can give no text authorizing the change in so many words. We have no express law declaring the change."¹⁷⁷ After stating that only Christ could make the change, and then affirming that we do not have any record of Him doing so, Easton then goes on to present a number of the traditional "reasons" that are used to justify the change. In essence, Evangelicals, like the Pharisees before them, have opted to accept and rationalize their customs rather than receive the clear commandment of the Lord. Are we among that number?

Characteristic of those who are a part of the kingdom of God on earth, and, consequently, targets of Satan, is that they are attending carefully to *the commandments of God*. As we look at Evangelicals today (or, perhaps, look in the mirror), if there is one thing that characterizes them it is that they have little or

no regard for the commands of God; as a matter of fact, they typically show contempt for anyone who endeavors to live according to God's standard. Isaiah wrote of this very situation: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear [reverence] toward me is taught by the precept [commandment] of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish [vanish], and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid [carefully concealed]" (Isaiah 29:13-14).¹⁷⁸ Truly, the average Evangelical will claim to know and honor the Lord, and, perhaps, even proclaim their assurance of attaining heaven someday. However, their words, and their understanding of Who God is and what He requires of His faithful ones, have been shaped by their theologies (the commands of men), rather than being founded upon the everlasting Word of God. They are quick to follow those who are more educated – those who have invested their

¹⁷⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_freedom_of_religion_in_Canada

¹⁷⁶ Angela Wagner, *The Imperative Function of Biblical Hebrew's Infinitive Absolute*, p. 11-12.

¹⁷⁷ *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, "Sabbath."

¹⁷⁸ Strong's Online.

lives in working through the Scriptures; after all, they should know! Yet, because these men have worked at formulating a theology (man's understanding of God), rather than permitting God's Word to speak for itself, their Biblical wisdom has been brought to naught (*perish*) and their understanding of the Word of God cannot be found (*hid*). Even though they no longer hold the words of truth, it seems that that does little to reduce their zeal for their message, or to assuage their influence among the naïve. The average Evangelical continues to cling to their every word, for they have been duped by their "good words and fair speeches" (Romans 16:18); in truth, they are well-educated deceivers (for they have departed from God's truth) who are leading those with itching ears (who believe what they hear without examining the Scriptures) to forsake the truth, and embrace their lies (2 Timothy 4:3-4); they are deceiving and being deceived – it is a double-edged deception (2 Timothy 3:13).

If it is our desire to remain a part of the kingdom of God, then we must be attending carefully to the commands of the Lord; however, by doing so we also make ourselves a target for Satan's attacks. "Yea, and all that will live [who are desiring to live] godly **in Christ Jesus** shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).¹⁷⁹ However, if it is our desire to stand before God without condemnation, then we must be *in Christ!* "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk [live] ... after [according to] the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).¹⁸⁰ This is not salvation by works; this is Biblical salvation where our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is demonstrated by our obedience to the commands of the Lord through the leading and guiding of His Spirit.

The second characteristic of the *seed* of the woman is that they hold the *testimony of Jesus Christ*. What exactly are they holding? Paul, in his final exhortations to Timothy, declares: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of [a lack of courage to stand up for] the **testimony of our Lord**, nor of me his prisoner: but [expresses a contrast] be thou partaker of the afflictions of [undergo affliction along with] the **gospel** according to the power of God..." (2 Timothy 1:8).¹⁸¹ The parallel that Paul draws shows that the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel message as it is expounded in the Scriptures. However, considering the day in which we live, we must be certain that we understand what the Gospel message truly is, for there is much that is passed off as being the Gospel, when it is not. Since holding to the Gospel is a sign of those who are a part of the kingdom of heaven, then it is very important that we understand what this means.

The word *Gospel* (*euaggelion* [*yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on*]), as a noun, simply means good tidings; as a verb (*euaggelizo* [*yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo*]), it means to bring good news.¹⁸² When Paul spoke at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, he included this: "And we declare unto you glad tidings [are bringing the Gospel to you], how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again ..." (Acts 13:32-33a). Here, in a nutshell, is the timeless message of the Gospel: in fulfillment of the promise of Jehovah to send a Savior (first made to the serpent in the Garden of Eden – Genesis 3:15), Jesus died in full payment for the sins of mankind, and was resurrected from the dead, thereby affirming His role as the Savior of mankind. As Paul explained to the Corinthians, if Jesus was not raised from the dead,

¹⁷⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁸² Strong's Online.

then our faith is in vain; in other words, our faith rests upon the resurrection of the Lord because death was conquered thereby (death entered this world through sin [1 Corinthians 15:21-22], and Jesus, by being raised from the dead, confirmed that sin has been dealt with). The debt for the sins of the world was laid upon the sinless Lamb of God (1 Peter 2:22-24); through His death, the power of Satan was destroyed (Hebrews 2:14), He made “one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Hebrews 10:12; Romans 6:23), and then He rose again, thereby forever breaking the grip of death for those who are in Him (1 Corinthians 15:55)!

Paul liked to draw upon the OT Scriptures to explain New Covenant teachings. In writing to the Romans he reminded them of when Moses was rehearsing with Israel the blessings and curses that Jehovah had promised; as Moses came to the end of his discourse, he reminded them that the commandment of the Lord was not something that was far removed from them so that they would have to send someone to bring it to them; rather, “the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deuteronomy 30:14). His conclusion was this: “I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ... therefore **choose life** ...” (Deuteronomy 30:15,19) – recognize the presence of faith in this! Paul picks up on this significant moment in the life of Israel as a nation, and proclaims to the Romans: “The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith [*pistis*], which we preach; That if thou shalt [should] confess [make a public acknowledgement] with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt [should] believe [*pisteuo* – be persuaded of the truth] in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved [future tense; therefore, the necessity of 2 Corinthians 13:5]” (Romans 10:8-9). Central to the saving message of the Gospel that Paul taught is an **enduring** belief that Jesus died and was raised to life again; “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death [we must identify with Christ in His death]: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also **should walk** [the choice that we must make by faith] in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Both Jesus’ death and resurrection are of paramount importance to the Good News: if He had not died, then the power of Satan would not have been broken (Hebrews 2:14), and “if Christ be not raised, [then] your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

However, we must be alert, for not every gospel message is the true Gospel of God, and it is only the true Gospel that is borne by those who are in the kingdom. Satan, who is the author of all false gospels, did not wait long to begin his work of corruption. Paul was amazed that the Galatians were so soon being drawn into “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6), that is, a gospel that was different from that which he had delivered unto them.¹⁸³ The purveyors of this different message were intent on just making a minor change to the Gospel; all that they wanted was for the Gospel message to include the requirement to keep the Law of Moses – after all, God had given it to Israel (Acts 15:1)! However, Paul is very clear that even this seemingly innocuous change turned the Gospel message into something that was its opposite (*pervert* – Galatians 1:7); these Judaizers believed that they were holding the truth, yet they were being used by Satan to propagate a distorted message that no longer contained spiritual life. The Gospel that Paul proclaimed was a message of life in the Lord; the altered gospel was one of spiritual death (the opposite; like to that of the Pharisees, Matthew 23:13). We must be careful not to accept things at face value, but to measure all things

¹⁸³ Strong’s Online.

against the standard of God’s Word (1 John 4:1); many things will be done and proclaimed in the name of the Lord, but not all of them will have His approval (Matthew 7:22-23). In this very important task of spiritual discernment, God has not left us without resources – we have His Word and His Spirit! “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God [Who will guide us into all truth – John 16:13]; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God [*know (oida)* is in the perfect tense; with the Spirit of God will come full discernment, **if** we are willing (it is in the subjunctive mood)]. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth [not in learned words of human wisdom], but which the Holy Ghost teacheth [learned by the Holy Spirit]; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural [the worldly-minded] man receiveth not the things of [absolutely is not accepting that of] the Spirit of God: for they are [it is (singular pronoun)] foolishness unto him: neither can he know [he is absolutely not able to come to understand] *them*, because they are spiritually discerned [it is spiritually investigated or examined (singular pronoun)]” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).¹⁸⁴ The Spirit of God has been given to us so that we might **know** God’s desire for us, and understand His Word. What we must not lose sight of is that if we are living carelessly, and not in obedience to the Scriptures (i.e., unfaithfully), then we have lost our position *in Christ* (Hebrews 3:12); the Spirit of God is no longer our Guide, and the righteousness of the Law of God will not be evident through us (Romans 8:4). “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7); sowing a life that is only casually faithful (a faith of convenience is really faithlessness) will not result in harvesting “well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23), but rather “depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). How we live now (our *sowing* time) has a great impact on (it will determine) our eternal destination; “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [to remain faithful through oppression] unto the end, the same [this is the one who] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).¹⁸⁵

There was a time when being identified as an Evangelical actually placed you within a group where the true Gospel message was known and upheld. However, since Harold Ockenga’s bold New-Evangelical announcement in 1948, the Evangelical position has been in a perpetual downslide; there was an immediate response and rapid descent into apostasy (most Evangelicals threw off the Biblical mandate for spiritual separation, and embraced the “New” accommodation of error), which was followed by a continued descent into the mire of deception. Evangelicalism is now filled with accommodation of error (truth becomes subjective), and compromise with error (pragmatism reigns); it teaches a gospel that no longer carries the message of spiritual life in Christ (the words might still be there, but they are now lifeless because they have been mixed with error). To further complicate the matter, Evangelicals have been hoodwinked into believing that they are still looking forward to eternal life



Harold J. Ockenga, the father of New Evangelicalism

¹⁸⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁸⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

with the Lord. Here is Satan's perfect deception: taint the truth of the Gospel (thereby removing its life), yet convince the people that they still have life; the result is that, since they believe (are persuaded) that they hold the truth (even when they don't), they have no motivation to seek the truth, and are openly critical of anyone who would suggest that they have overlooked some critical teachings in God's Word. We are exhorted to "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith [test yourself to be sure that your spiritual talk and daily walk agree]; prove your own selves [carefully examine yourself to be sure that you are genuine according to God's Word]. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates [unless you failed the test; are rejected]?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).¹⁸⁶ Jesus made it very clear that there would be many who would be convinced that they were His, when they were not! "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). Obviously, such a delusion is deep; Satan loves religion, and particularly when its practitioners are persuaded that their eternal destination in heaven has been secured, when it has not.

It is critically important that we recognize that our faithful walk with the Lord is only confirmed by our obedience to His commands; obedience and faith work hand-in-hand (James 2:17; 1 John 2:3-4). Often Evangelicals will label someone who is living Biblically as a legalist. However, consider a definition of legalism: "strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, **especially** to the letter rather than the spirit ... the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works" (emphasis added).¹⁸⁷ A legalist has a strong motivation to elevate his position through adherence to prescribed activities. The scribes and Pharisees were legalists, and Jesus exposed their failure in this regard: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). They had their observance of the letter of the Law down to a science, but they overlooked the spirit of the Law, and received the Lord's condemnation. Jesus made this promise: "For I say unto you, That except [unless] your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The righteousness of the Pharisees didn't go beyond their public appearance; they failed to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24), and they loved to apply the letter of the Law of Moses without mercy (John 8:3-11), yet an acceptable faith before God can only flow out of a heart that is right with Him (John 14:23-24). Jesus was very clear: "If ye love [are loving] me, keep [attend carefully to (a command)] my commandments" (John 14:15).¹⁸⁸ The Pharisees, through their legalism, sought to gain the approval of God (or, thought that they had it!); the disciple of Jesus may do the very same external acts but from a motivation of love for the Lord – that is the difference! Obedience is NEVER legalism when it flows out of our relationship with the Lord Jesus. When we enter into Christ by faith in His finished payment for sin, then, and only then, will our works be acceptable to the Lord;

¹⁸⁶ Strong's Online.

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/legalism?s=t>

¹⁸⁸ Strong's Online.

until we are *in Christ*, our works are empty; they follow the pattern of the Pharisees' unacceptable "righteousness," and will not be recognised by the Lord (Matthew 7:22-23).

Jesus made it very clear that we are either for Him or we are against Him – there is no middle ground for the indecisive, or for those who aren't quite fully committed (Matthew 12:30). Jesus said, "... If a man love [may be loving] me, he will keep [attend carefully to] my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23)¹⁸⁹ It is only through our obedience to the commands of the Lord (the Scriptures) that we are able to demonstrate our commitment to Him. "And hereby [because of this] we do know [are knowing] that we know [have known] him [God], if we keep [are carefully attending to] his commandments" (1 John 2:3).¹⁹⁰ We are kept *in Christ* as we live in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit of God: "There is therefore now [at this moment] no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk [are walking] ... after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1)¹⁹¹ – our present position of remaining *in Christ Jesus* is dependent upon our obedience to the leading of the Spirit of God. It requires a commitment on our part; Jesus said, "No man [No one], having put his hand to the plough [a commitment to the task at hand], and looking back [turning away from what is ahead; our focus is to be on the Lord alone (Hebrews 12:2)], is fit [useful] for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).¹⁹² Rest assured that we, who are in Christ by faith and living in faithful obedience to His commands, will be the targets of Satan's attacks. "Yea, and all that will live [are living] godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12); "Beloved, think it not strange [do not be amazed] concerning the fiery trial [painful suffering] which is to try [test] you, as though some strange [surprising] thing happened [is happening] unto you ..." (1 Peter 4:12).¹⁹³ These are also among the promises that are ours in Scripture, yet they have been largely overlooked among Evangelicals; today there are many deceivers who proclaim a message of health, wealth, and happiness – anything less, in their estimation, demonstrates a lack of faith. Any kind of hardship or suffering does not enter into their thinking – and Satan is very, very content to permit them, through "good words and fair speeches," to spread their message of spiritual destruction to the "simple," the gullible, and the naive (Romans 16:18).

The devil is angry, and we are his targets; therefore, "... if ye suffer [should be suffering] for righteousness' sake, happy [blessed] *are ye*" (1 Peter 3:14).¹⁹⁴ "My brethren, count [consider] it all joy [a cause for gladness] when ye fall into [may experience] divers [varied] temptations [trials] ..." (James 1:2).¹⁹⁵ If we are not suffering because of our stand for and commitment to the Lord, then we must examine ourselves to ensure that we are truly in Him (2 Corinthians 13:5); since the Lord, the sinless Son of God, experienced suffering, it is only fitting and natural that we, His disciples, should find the cross that we must bear for Him will include suffering. As Jesus explained end-time events to His disciples, He said, "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure [to remain faithful in the face of trials] unto the end, the same

¹⁸⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁹⁰ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

¹⁹¹ Strong's Online.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁹⁴ Strong's Online.

¹⁹⁵ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

[this is the one who] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).¹⁹⁶ May we be numbered among the Lord’s overcoming ones who will endure in Him to the end!! It is as we are attending carefully to the commandments of the Lord (beginning with the Ten Commandments that He has written upon our hearts), and as we are holding tenaciously to the true Gospel of God that we will be numbered among the remnant of the kingdom of God on earth. Are we Satan’s targets, or his allies; put another way, are we for the Lord Jesus Christ, or are we against Him (Matthew 12:30)? The question is the same either way – we must choose!

¹⁹⁶ Strong’s Online.