



7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 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. 10. ... the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (Revelation 12)

We looked at this passage when we studied the overview that John was given of the kingdom of God, and of Satan's desire to nullify God's purposes for it. The turning point for Satan, when he knew that his fate was accomplished, came when the Lord Jesus Christ willingly gave His life for the sins of mankind, and then rose from the dead, thereby forever breaking the power of sin – namely, death (Romans 6:23)! From that day forward, everything was changed for Satan; there was a battle in heaven between Michael and his angelic forces, and Satan and his demonic hosts. Satan and his hordes lost the battle at the cross of Christ, and, more importantly for us, he also lost his access to heaven. Heaven was now off limits for the devil; the one who at every opportunity brought charges against (*accused*) the children of God on earth, had been struck down (*cast down*).¹

In what is considered by many to be the oldest book of the OT, we read: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1:6). We are not given the full explanation of what this might mean, but we do see that Satan, in his fallen state, still had access to the Lord God, even though he spent most of his time “going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7). To be sure, Satan is not strolling aimlessly throughout the earth: he “walketh about, seeking [trying to find] whom [someone whom (singular)] he may devour [bring under control, overpower]” (1 Peter 5:8).² What we must never lose sight of is the fact that he is looking for a child of God whom he might be able to seduce into becoming his; he is not looking for the children of the world, for they are already his (whom he endeavors to keep in the dark about the light of the Gospel; the parable of the soils explains this so well [Luke 8:12-15]). However, with the victory that Christ won at the cross, Satan no longer has the ability to come before God with charges against those who are His. After losing the war in heaven, the devil is now confined to the earth, and is making war with those who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Contained within the quoted verses are four names that are ascribed to our spiritual adversary: the *great dragon*, the *old serpent*, the *Devil*, and *Satan*. Let's take a moment to consider these names in order to determine what we can learn from them.

He is called a *great dragon* – *megas drakon*, which literally means a monstrous reptile.³ This name for Satan (either *great dragon*, or simply, *dragon*) is only used in the Revelation: 1) where he seeks to destroy the Savior and His kingdom (12:3), 2) when he is described as being the one who empowers the Antichrist (13:2), 3) when he (along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet) produces a demonic spirit out of his mouth (16:13), and 4) when he is bound during the millennial reign of Christ (20:2). Although the word *dragon* does appear in the OT Scriptures, nowhere is it

¹ Gingrich Lexicon; Friberg Lexicon.

² Friberg Lexicon.

³ Friberg Lexicon.

specifically used to identify Satan; rather, it is used to describe a large monster (along with *behemoth* [Job 40:15] and *leviathan* [Isaiah 27:1]), or it is a term applied to despotic rulers (Jeremiah 51:34; Ezekiel 29:3). *Dragon* often conjures up an image of a monstrous, fire-breathing creature with scales, which is actually less of an imaginary monster from children's literature than it is the creature that is described by the Lord in one of His discourses with Job (Job 41). Whatever image comes to mind when we hear the term, it most frequently is an unpleasant creature that can impart tremendous destruction – which, of course, is an appropriate description for Satan.

The second term used refers to the devil as the *old serpent*. *Old*, as it is used here, does not speak of that which is approaching the end of its usefulness, rather it identifies the serpent as having existed from the beginning.⁴ The serpent that approached Eve is described as *subtil* (Genesis 3:1), which we typically think of as crafty, but the Hebrew word is really much more than that, and includes the thought of being shrewd or intelligent.⁵ We must remember that this serpent did not come slithering along on the ground to Eve, but was considered to be the most intelligent of all of the beasts (wild animals) of the field;⁶ it was God's judgment that condemned the serpent to spend its days moving about on its belly (Genesis 3:14). Therefore, when Satan is given the name *old serpent*, we must bring to mind the character of the creature that came to Eve: very intelligent, and not at all unattractive (as most of us might describe snakes). Satan is the *old serpent*, and has been working his deceit from the beginning; he will come to us in forms that we will find attractive, and with a wisdom to which we will be able to relate. If Satan could make what he had to offer Eve seem to be better than what the Lord had provided, then we can rest assured that he will do no less today in his efforts to lead a child of God into error. Eve, who was without sin, fell for his well-phrased lie; therefore, it is incumbent upon us, who bear about a body of sin that we must continually reckon to be dead (Romans 6:11), to be vigilant against the tactics of this *old serpent*.

The *devil* (*diabolos*) identifies Satan's role as *the accuser of our brethren*; the word refers specifically to slander, or false accusation.⁷ During Jesus' ministry, there were several occasions when we are told that the people believed on Him (John 7:31; 8:30; 10:42, etc.), yet their belief was either particularly shallow, or misdirected (some, at one time, wanted to force Him into becoming their king – John 6:15). One day, as Jesus taught in the temple, and spoke specifically about His work and God the Father, we are told that "many believed on him" (John 8:30). However, when Jesus told them that He was their means to being made free, they objected: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:33). Clearly, they had forgotten their history of being in subjection to many different nations, including the Egyptians for some 400 years (Genesis 15:13). The Jews on this occasion took Jesus' words to speak of their physical situation (despite being under Roman law, they still had significant freedom), when Jesus spoke of their spiritual condition; He clarified this by saying that whoever is sinning is a slave to sin. After elaborating on the spiritual application of His words, Jesus tells them (these *believing* Jews) that, despite being of the physical line of Abraham, they are seeking to kill Him because His word has no place in them (John 8:37). Then, Jesus (being a

⁴ Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon.

⁵ Strong's Online; the LXX uses a word that means wise, intelligent.

⁶ BDB.

⁷ Strong's Online.

Jew) tells them: “I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and [accordingly] ye do [are doing] that which ye have seen with your father” (John 8:38); Jesus draws a contrast between His Father and their father. Feeling cornered, they first appeal to Abraham as their father, and, when they realize that their actions did not support this, they then identify God as being their Father (John 8:41). Through this debate Jesus has finally brought them into thinking spiritually, and then tells them plainly: “Ye are of *your* father the devil (*diabolos*), and the lusts of your father ye will [are intending to] do [their intent: *ye seek to kill me* – v.37]. He was a murderer [*anthropoktonos* – a man-killer] from the beginning, and abode not [never stood] in the truth, because there is [absolutely] no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).⁸ To these *believing* Jews, Jesus identifies the devil, in whom there is not a shred of truth, as being a *liar*, the *father* of all lies, and their father (not His heavenly Father, as they professed). On another occasion when the Jews accused Jesus of performing miracles through the power of the devil, Jesus very clearly stated that “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). Now the significance of the matter comes into focus! Unless the truth that we understand is 100 percent pure, we must reject it as being a lie from the devil. Fundamental to living as a disciple of Christ is having a love for the pure truth of God so that we might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10); without a love for God’s truth, we will be open to the devil’s deception. We (those with a living faith in Christ) have been given two resources for determining the absolute truth of a matter: 1) the Spirit of God Who is abiding within all who are in Christ (John 16:13; Romans 8:9), and 2) the Word of God, against which we must measure all things (1 John 4:1). Along with these resources that have been provided to us by God, comes our responsibility to use them so that we may faithfully abide in Christ and His truth, for it is only as we remain faithfully in Christ that we will one day be saved (Matthew 24:13).

The devil is no longer able to accuse us before the Lord in heaven (as he did with Job); nevertheless, he is not without his strategies to derail the child of God. If he can convince us to compromise regarding God’s truth, and if we accept the reasoning that he will readily supply to justify or rationalize our action or inaction, then he has brought us into a place where we have fallen from the grace of God. The Jews of Jerusalem believed that it was necessary to keep some of the traditions of the Mosaic Law, in addition to having faith in Christ, in order to be saved (Acts 15:1), and the Galatians were being convinced that this must be right. Paul identifies this as seeking to be justified before God by the Law of Moses (since some of the Laws needed to be kept in order to be saved), when the truth is that no one can ever be justified by keeping the Law (Galatians 2:16). For those who accepted this teaching, Paul declares that “Christ is become of no effect unto you ... ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Keep in mind that the Jews and the Galatians were simply retaining some of the Jewish traditions as being necessary for salvation – traditions that had been given to them by God; it was for this that Paul stated that they were *fallen from grace*, and that they had returned to paganism (Galatians 4:8-9). Simply adding to salvation something that God had instituted for a time (which was then removed at the cross through Christ – Ephesians 2:14-15) took them out of God’s grace into paganism, which is the territory of the devil. Although the Galatians had known faith in Christ, this readily justifiable act stood to render

⁸ Strong’s Online.

them as being apostate before God. Although not linked directly to salvation, there are many “Christian” traditions today that are completely outside of God, and will lead the unobservant participant into apostasy, since they are a product of mixing Biblical concepts with rank paganism.⁹ Jesus’ word for most Evangelicals today is: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die ... Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent” (Revelation 3:1b-3a).

The last name, in this text, that we have for the devil is *Satan* (*satanas*), or adversary; in the OT, the Hebrew word *satan* is most frequently translated as *adversary*.¹⁰ Within the Hebrew, it was given a more general application in referring to anything that stands in opposition; for example, the angel who appeared in front of Balaam is referred to as an *adversary* (*satan*), one who blocked the path that Balaam was taking (Numbers 22:22). However, particularly in Job, the same word appears with a definite article, and is then translated as *Satan*, the spirit-being who stands against God. In the NT, the Greek word *satanas* is always translated as *Satan*.

Peter tells us that we must be vigilant against the tactics of our *adversary the devil* (1 Peter 5:8). Here the word *adversary*, which clearly refers to Satan (*the devil*), is from the Greek *antidikos* (not *satanas*), a word that applies specifically to opponents in a lawsuit;¹¹ it is a compound word: *anti* – meaning against, and *dikos* – referring to the judgment of a matter, or to justice being served.¹² In a perfect judicial system, the decision will always be just and right; Satan, as the one who stands against the Lord and everyone who is His, is *against justice* being served, for he knows that the Lord’s judgment is against him.

There is another name that is applied to the devil in the book of Revelation, and that is *beast* (*therion* – a wild animal).¹³ However, this same word is also applied to both the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and so it is necessary to use discernment, paying special attention to its context, in order to determine to whom it is being applied. We’ve already clarified that the four beings in the presence of God are living creatures (*zoon*), and not *beasts* as the KJV translators have rendered it; therefore, these are not within the scope of our present study. Let’s briefly consider the use of the term as applied to the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and then look at what we can learn about the devil as the *beast*.

The first reference to the Antichrist as the *beast*, comes in chapter 13:1 – “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw **a beast rise up out of the sea**, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” We can readily identify this beast as being the Antichrist when we are told that “the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). The *dragon*, we have already seen, is the devil, the old serpent, or Satan. When Satan and the Antichrist are both referred to in the same passage of Scripture, then Satan is either called *the dragon* or *the devil* (Revelation 13:4; 16:13; 20:10).

The False Prophet is called the *beast* only once: “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon” (Revelation 13:11). Within

⁹ I am referring specifically to *Christmas* and *Easter*.

¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

¹¹ Liddell-Scott; Friberg Lexicon.

¹² Strong’s Online.

¹³ Strong’s Online.

the context of this passage, he is simply referred to as *he* (context provides the identity), and elsewhere he bears the title of *false prophet* (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Therefore, the greatest care must be taken to differentiate between the application of the term *beast* to the Antichrist and to Satan.



³ I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁹ The seven heads are ... ¹⁰ seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. ¹¹ And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. (Revelation 17)

The *woman*, the false religious system that the False Prophet will promote in order to bring the world together around the Antichrist, is supported by a *scarlet beast* that is filled with blasphemous names, and has *seven heads* and *ten horns*. This false religious system is dressed in purple and scarlet (v.4), two of the three colors that made up most of the fabric construction of the tabernacle that the Lord designed for Israel (Exodus 26:1,31,36). Since it was a rare dye, *purple* speaks of royalty and wealth; *scarlet* was a color that spoke of nobility, but, through Isaiah's writings, it is also likened to sin that can be cleansed by the Lord (Isaiah 1:18). The third color in the temple, which is noticeably absent from the *woman*, is blue; it was used extensively along with purple and scarlet in the tabernacle; however, the Israelites were also instructed by the Lord to make a fringe on their garments and then to put a cord of blue upon it, as a reminder of God's commands and their need to be obedient to them (Numbers 15:38-39). This *woman* is dressed in purple and scarlet finery showing a religious flare (but without God – there is no blue); however, in this case, not only can the scarlet be likened to sin, but it also reflects her association with the beast. There will be many aspects to the *woman* that will make her attractive to the peoples of the world, but, to the discerning, she will also reveal the beast upon which she is sitting.

The beast is filled with everything that is blasphemous against God; everything that is slanderous, injurious, insulting, and hateful against the Lord, and, of course, against those who are His. This beast, bearing all of these names, is a clear portrayal of the devil (*diabolos* – slanderer).¹⁴ The false religious system is sustained by the devil, and, to those who have eyes to see, Satan's influence will be evident in her.

The seven heads of the beast (Satan) are said to be *seven kings* of which five have lost their significance in the world (*fallen*), one is (there is a *king* that is presently in power), and there is one more *king* that is yet to come. We noted these when we looked at the rise of the Antichrist: the five fallen *kings* are the empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, the Medo-Persian alliance, and Greece; the *king* that is presently in existence (at the time of John's writing) is Rome; the empire that was not yet come is the Islamic Caliphate (that *dreadful and terrible* fourth beast of Daniel 7) that crushed so many peoples as it advanced around the Mediterranean Sea (the Antichrist will lead a revived, but compromised, Islamic Caliphate – the feet and toes made up of clay and iron as per Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2). These are the seven *kings* (a generic term applied to

¹⁴ Strong's Online.

the leaders of each of the noted empires), and the seven heads of Satan. Through each of these world empires, Satan has exercised (and will exercise) tremendous influence in his attempt to gain complete control of the world.

The beast (Satan) is described as *was* (past tense*) and *is not* (present tense⁺); how are we to understand this regarding the devil? Earlier (in verse 8) John saw the beast that “was [*], and is not [⁺]; and shall [is about to] ascend out of the bottomless pit [*abussos* - abyss], and go into perdition [utter ruin] ... the beast that was [*], and is not [⁺], and yet [but nevertheless] is”; this provides us with a very concise overview of the devil through to his end, and then an additional snippet of information that will help us put this all together.¹⁵ The devil *was*; this is a past tense form of the verb *to be*, which simply confirms existence – the devil has a history. We’ve already noted that his name, the *old serpent*, means that he has been here since the beginning; his history of deception and destruction began with Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the *seven heads* affirm his influence within all of the major kingdoms of the earth. Then we are told that the devil absolutely *is not* (*not* is an absolute negative).¹⁶ At this point we might begin to struggle with the text, for we are all too aware of the devil’s activities in the world today – so how are we to understand this?

The verb (*is*) is in the present tense, and, again, indicates existence (to be), and, when combined with the absolute negative, it means that the devil does not exist in the present. Nonetheless, we are also told that the people of the world, whose names are not in the Book of Life, will marvel when they see this beast (Revelation 17:8) – which tells us that he is very much alive and active. The closing two words of verse 8 (*yet is*) provide us with some additional information that will help us to understand this mystery. First of all, we are told very plainly that the devil *is not*; with the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross, the judgment and destiny of the devil was secured. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same [became flesh and blood]; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The word *destroy* means to cause to be useless, or to deprive of influence or power; rather than meaning a physical destruction (which most frequently comes to mind when we hear the word *destroy*), this identifies God as leaving the devil without strength.¹⁷ It was through His death that Jesus rendered the devil powerless; “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend [or entrust] my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [breathed out (active voice)]” (Luke 23:46).¹⁸ Jesus relinquished His spirit to His Father and died; He was not a victim of crucifixion, which would have meant that the devil had killed Him. Undoubtedly the devil was wringing his hands in glee as the life-blood of Jesus dripped from His body; God had taken on the form of man, and the devil, through the religious Jews, thought to gain the upper hand by killing Him. However, the moment that Jesus willingly gave up His life, Satan’s head was crushed, because Jesus had thereby broken the power of death that was held by Satan; “it [He] shall bruise [grind] thy head [a death-blow to Satan], and thou shalt bruise [grind] his heel [the suffering of Jesus]” (Genesis 3:15).¹⁹

¹⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

¹⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁹ BDB; the Hebrew pronoun is masculine-singular, and should not have been translated as *it*.

Therefore, through the death of the Lord Jesus upon the cross, Satan received his promised death-blow; his destiny in the lake of fire was sure.

The instant of Jesus' death was the precise moment when Satan's role in this world changed – his time of *is not* had begun, his power was broken and his eternal destination was sealed. However, even though the death-blow had been administered, that only served to seal Satan's fate and break his power; as a spirit being, the blow that the devil received marked him for ruination (his power had been broken), but it did not end his life. When God creates a spirit, it is eternal, whether angelic (both heavenly and Satan and his hosts) or human. Jesus spoke of the *everlasting fire* that has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41); those who enter the glories of heaven cannot die for they are *equal to the angels* (Luke 20:36); as Jesus spoke of the end of righteous and unrighteous men, He said that the wicked will “go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal**” (Matthew 25:46). Therefore, even though Satan's judgment is sure, and, within the realms of heaven, he is no longer present (John 12:31; Revelation 12:9); we are told that after his defeat at the cross, he declared war against the children of God's kingdom (Revelation 12:17). This is where the closing two words of verse eight come into play; Satan *is not* (his power is broken, and his destiny is sure), but nevertheless (*yet*) he *is*.²⁰ His destiny is confirmed, his presence in heaven as our accuser is over, his power has been broken but, as a spirit being, he is very active on earth where he will seek to wreak havoc in the saints of God until the time when the Lord will confine him to the *everlasting fire* that has been made ready for him. In the meantime, Paul tells us that he recognized a purpose in the devil's activities against him: “there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger [angel] of Satan [*satan*, Paul used the Hebrew word] to buffet [so that he might afflict] me, lest I should be exalted above measure [become overly proud]” (2 Corinthians 12:7).²¹ We, too, must know that the attacks of the devil should serve to increase our dependence upon the Lord for His daily protection.

Indeed, the Lord has not left us without protection from the devil. To the Ephesians, Paul provided specific instructions regarding a defense against the cunning work of the devil: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). *Put on* is in the middle voice (it describes an action [*put on*] that we are to do to ourselves), and it is in the imperative mood (it is a command).²² Paul then goes on to list several pieces of the complete armor (*panoplia*) of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Word of God (Ephesians 6:14-18).²³ After donning all of this armor, the Lord's instructions are very clear: stand! We are to put the armor on so that we are able to **stand** against the devil (v. 11), it will enable us to **stand** our ground (*withstand*) in the day of evil (v. 13), and, dressed in all of this armor, we are to simply **stand** (v. 14). We are not to wage an offensive war against Satan – he has already been defeated by Christ at the cross; what we need to do is to dress ourselves in God's armor for our protection against Satan's attacks: it is **His** truth, **His** righteousness, **His** Gospel, **His** faith, **His** salvation, and **His** Word! Our responsibility, as **His** children, is to ensure that we are properly clothed so that the devil's attacks against us will be met by the Lord's all-sufficient armor. If we

²⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

²¹ Friberg Lexicon.

²² Strong's Online.

²³ Strong's Online.

fail to stand against Satan's devious assaults, it is because we have not availed ourselves of the protection that the Lord has provided for His own. Yes, Peter warned us to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8); the Lord, through Peter, commands us to be clear-headed and alert.²⁴ Nevertheless, a significant part of being *sober* and *vigilant* is ensuring that all of God's armor is in place. Remember that Satan will not always come at us as the devil; he will frequently come against us as an angel of light, a friend, or a family member, always presenting that which may appear to be good, but, if we are discerning, we will see that it is not what is best before the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:14). Very often he will also provide us with convincing justification for our action or inaction, yet this will hold no appeal unless we have become careless in ensuring that the armor of the Lord is securely in place.

When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God comes into us for the purpose of guiding us into all truth (John 16:13); it is God's Spirit working in us Who will ensure that His truth will be found, if we seek it with a full heart (remember that truth is an essential part of God's armor). It was because Jesus spoke the truth to the Jews that they would not believe on Him (John 8:45); because His truth did not agree with what they had come to believe to be true, they refused to accept what He said – they would not *believe*. They sought for a truth that was consistent with what they already believed; they were not prepared to change their beliefs even if what Jesus taught agreed with the holy Scriptures – they were not Bereans (Acts 17:11). Likewise, if we read the Word of God with **our** beliefs firmly in mind, then we are not seeking for the Lord's truth, and, as a result, we will not find it. This is why theologians can study the Scriptures for a lifetime, and still not discover the Truth! Salvation comes by accepting the truth that is found only in God, and a refusal to accept the teachings of His Word will lead to a delusion sent by the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). "For the time will come when they will not endure [listen to] sound doctrine ... they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [myths, lies]" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The truth is specifically identified with Jesus (John 14:6) and the Word of God (John 17:17); when we refuse to accept the truth of God, then all that is left are the lies and half-truths of the devil.

There is a principle at work here that Jesus spoke of during His ministry, and it relates to why He spoke to the people using parables. Frequently, Jesus used the phrase "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9); in other words, whoever has a desire to hear, understand!²⁵ In this particular case, Jesus had just presented the people with the parable of the soils, and His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in such veiled word-pictures. Jesus explained that to those who were following Him, it had been given to them to understand the mysteries of God's Kingdom, but to the rest of the people (those who are *without* – Mark 4:11), such understanding was not given. However, He went on to explain that there was a more fundamental reason for this: "For this people's heart is waxed gross [fat, insensitive; passive voice, this is a product of their actions], and *their* ears are dull [have difficulty] of hearing [active voice, they have dulled their hearing], and their eyes they have closed [shut, refuse to learn; active voice, they have closed their eyes]; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand

²⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁵ Strong's Online.

with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15). In essence, these *outside* people have refused to accept the words of the Lord (they have dulled their hearing and closed their eyes), and, as a result, they are unable to understand His truth and to come to Him in repentance. Early in Jesus’ ministry, there were those who *believed in His name* because they saw the miracles that He did (John 2:23), but it was not long before that was insufficient: “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6:26). The crowds followed the Lord, first in hopes of seeing a miracle, and then with a desire for personal gratification; it was through His words that the Lord sought to open their understanding to what God had for them, but it was His words that they rejected – they did not have ears to hear; they refused to understand. Peter recognized that Jesus had the “words of eternal life” (John 6:68), yet the crowds who turned away from Him were unable see this truth. The basis for their blindness and deafness was the choice that they had made to reject the truth of God with which they were faced; the moment that we refuse the truth that God has placed before us, it is at that moment when we have entered a place of spiritual blindness and deafness.

“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost [perishing]: In whom the god of this world [age, an undefined period of time] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not [unfaithful], lest the light [discernment] of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto [enlighten] them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).²⁶ In light of what we have just learned, let us consider this very carefully. The phrase *blinded the minds* means to take away the ability for someone to understand, and, in this case, this has happened to those who *believe not*.²⁷ *Believe* can be a very misleading word, and care must be taken to understand exactly what the Word of God means by its use. I have heard on many occasions of someone being referred to as a *believer*, by which it is to be understood that that individual is a Christian. However, the term is decidedly vague, for a Biblical case could be made for saying that the devil is also a *believer*: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19); Satan and his minions have chosen rebellion against the God of heaven (they went from obedience to rebellion, from faithfulness to apostasy, which is an irreversible decision), yet they are *believing* in the Lord, and *trembling* because they know their destiny. Careless *believers* today seldom shudder when they consider the Almighty, Holy God before Whom they will stand. The Greek word for *believe* (*pisteuo*) means to be persuaded, with the additional thought of trust – it includes a willing dependence upon that persuasion; it is not simply giving credence to a matter, but goes beyond that to where the persuasion impacts our daily lives.²⁸ Within this definition, if what we profess to believe does not affect how we live, then we really cannot say that we believe it; consequently, being identified as a *believer* is really quite meaningless.

Therefore, those who have their minds blinded are 1) those who do not believe; they might profess to believe, but their beliefs have not made any impact on how they live; or, 2) they might, in fact, be pagans who refuse to believe²⁹ – either way, their minds are blinded to spiritual truths,

²⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁸ Vine’s “believe.”

²⁹ A pagan (or the natural man) cannot accept what is presented by the Spirit of God, for it is as foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14); the only spiritual truth that is available to the unregenerate is that God has paid for his sins, and, if he will commit to living in obedience to the Lord, then the Lord will forgive his sins and send His Spirit to be

and they are numbered among the perishing, those to whom the Gospel remains *hidden*. This blindness of mind is actively carried out by *the god of this world*; most theologians identify this as being the devil. However, let's exercise caution and examine this more carefully. The literal translation of the Greek is this: the god of the age (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος); yes, *theos* is preceded by a definite article (ὁ), which, in the NT, makes it understood to refer to God Almighty (*the God*).³⁰ *Age* is a term that refers to an undefined period of time that bears a specific spiritual characteristic; we live in an *age* that is very unique within the history of God's dealings with mankind. Within our present age, we can look back on the sacrifice that Jesus made to purchase salvation for all of mankind; additionally, Jesus instituted the New Covenant wherein God writes His Laws upon our hearts, and through faith in the Lord Jesus, we have the Spirit of God abiding within us for the purpose of guiding us into all of God's truth (John 16:13). We looked at this in our study of Revelation 12:10; we are in a very unique *age*, a time when God has provided personal resources like never before for our spiritual wellbeing – indeed, we have been blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). Over and above all of this, we live in a time when the power of Satan has been broken by the Lord Jesus at the cross. Considering all of the blessings from the Lord that we enjoy, it is only fitting that the Lord God Almighty should be called **the God** of this age. However, beyond that, Satan is **never** called *the god of this age*; several times Jesus referred to him as being the *prince of this world* (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), but *world*, in this case, is *kosmos* (not *age*), and refers to mankind who inhabits this earth.³¹ Jesus explicitly stated that His kingdom is **not** of this world (*kosmos*); Satan, on the other hand, is the ruler (*prince*) of this world (Luke 4:5-6; John 18:36; Ephesians 2:2). Therefore, we understand that it is God Who has blinded the minds of those who do not believe (they are unfaithful); however, we must not fail to notice that the unbelief **comes before** the blinded mind.

Finally, we come to Paul's teaching to the Thessalonians about the Antichrist (to which we've already referred): those who are perishing will accept the lies of the Antichrist “because they received [accepted (active voice)] not [absolute negative] the love [*agape*] of the truth, that they might be saved [in order to be saved]. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie [or, because they believed the lie]” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).³² What we must never lose sight of is the fact that, when it comes to spiritual matters, there are only two options available for us: we are either for the Lord, or we are against Him (Matthew 12:30); refusing to believe His Word (in the full understanding of *believe*), places us against Him. Therefore, for those who will not permit the truth of God to impact how they live (in essence, they do **not believe** it), they have refused to accept a love for the truth in order to be saved; for this reason, God will send them blindness so that they will embrace the lies of Satan. Unless our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (as the Way, the **Truth**, and the Life) is expressed through a life of obedience to Him (remaining faithful), we do not have a love for God's truth, and we are not saved but live in spiritual blindness – a blindness that will only increase as the Lord provides a harvest of error for the choices that we have made. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”

his guide. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that enables the one who is born-again to grow in his understanding of spiritual truths; pagans are without this spiritual understanding.

³⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³¹ Friberg Lexicon.

³² Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

(Galatians 6:7); God has given everyone the freedom to choose – we can choose to love His truth and *believe* it, or we can choose to reject it; however, what we do not get to choose is the consequences that will follow our choice.

Is there any hope for the ecumenical Evangelical today? The resounding response of Scripture is: YES! What we see throughout the Word of God is that the Lord's mercy is extended toward those who sin in ignorance, and I believe that many within the ecumenical movement are there through ignorance of what God desires. Nonetheless, they must still repent, or they will continue on the pathway that leads to the same destruction that is the destiny for those who deliberately choose to walk in ways that are contrary to God. Once again, the critical thing is that **believing must bring a new walk** with the Lord – a life of obedience to His truth as expressed through His Word; anything less reflects unbelief, in which case, saving faith is not present.

When we are *in Christ*, we wear the *new man*, which has been created by God in all righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4:24). Yet Jesus also explicitly warned us to “take heed [be discerning] that no man [no one] deceive you [to lead away from the truth]” (Matthew 24:4).³³ Jesus went on to explain why we must be discerning: “he that shall endure [to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [this is the one who] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13);³⁴ in other words, the one who does not remain faithful (obedient) to the Lord will not be saved. The child of God who loses faith, has lost his protection against the burning darts of the devil (his *shield of faith*), is become apostate, and so is without hope among those who are perishing. God has provided us with complete protection from the devil – it is our task to ensure that it is in place, and we do so by carefully studying and obeying the Word of God.

Satan has been defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ (he *is not*), yet he remains active in the world until the time of his final judgment (*yet is*), which is why the Lord has provided us with His adequate protection (His *armor*) against the crafty deceptions of the devil. By contrast, the Lord our God is described as He Who “is ... and was ... and is to come” (Revelation 1:4): the One Who is presently existing, Who has always existed, and Who is now coming. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). “Jesus Christ, yesterday [the past] and today [now] the same, and to the ages [forever]” (Hebrews 13:8, literal translation).³⁵ Our sure defense against the cunning devices of the devil comes from the Ever-living One.



7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. (Revelation 11) **1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (Revelation 9)**

³³ Strong's Online.

³⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

This is the first text where we find a reference to the devil as being *the beast*, and he is described as being a beast that is ascending out of the abyss (*abussos* – literally, bottomless; translated here as *bottomless pit*).³⁶ What does the Scripture tell us of this place?

Previously we've identified hades as being that place where the spirits of the unrighteous dead are held until the day when they will be resurrected to stand before God (Revelation 20:12). It is an unpleasant place of torment, including flames of fire (Luke 16:23-24), but one day hades will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). From this we can understand that, although it is a place of great misery, hades is only temporary, and it will be cast into something that is much more significant. Solomon made this observation: "Hell [sheol, the grave] and destruction [Abaddon] are never full [satisfied] ..." (Proverbs 27:20).³⁷ Abaddon is the Hebrew name of the king over the abyss (Revelation 9:11), from which we can deduce that the abyss (being without a bottom) will never be filled. When the hole to the abyss is opened, we are told that smoke comes pouring out (Revelation 9:2), supporting the fact that there is a fire in it. It seems clear that the abyss and hades are the same; even though it is a place of torment, there will come a time when the lesser (hades) will be swallowed up by the greater (the lake of fire). The rich man described being *tormented* in the *flame* of hades – a flame that will bring misery to the spirits of the dead; yet the torment of hades will pale in comparison with the agonies of the lake of fire. When Jesus confronted the many demons that occupied the man of Gadara, they pleaded with Him "not to command them to go out into the deep [the abyss]" (Luke 8:31); evidently, even the demons have no desire to be in the abyss or hades.

When Satan and his angels were thrown out of heaven, the earth became their dwelling place; however, this is not their permanent residence. As Jesus spoke of the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous that will come, He made this statement concerning those who are unrighteous: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). As Jesus taught His disciples that we need to be aware of what we do, He said, "And if thy hand [should] offend thee [to cause to sin], cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell [Gehenna], into the fire that never shall be quenched [literally: fire – the unquenchable]: Where their worm dieth not [absolute negative*], and the fire is not [*] quenched [being extinguished]" (Mark 9:43-44).³⁸ Gehenna is identified as a place of unquenchable fire, and where the worm that feeds upon bodies will never die; this can be nothing other than the lake of fire, a place of eternal torment that was prepared specifically for the devil, but will be the destination of all of the unrighteous (Revelation 20:15). Therefore, the lake of fire and Gehenna are synonymous. The lake of fire is described as *burning with brimstone* or sulphur, which burns with a blue flame, and is among the hottest of fires known on earth (Revelation 19:20).³⁹

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall [having fallen] from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:1). *Fall* is in the perfect tense here, which means that it is describing an action that has taken place once in the past, never to be

³⁶ Strong's Online.

³⁷ Strong's Online.

³⁸ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹ Flame temperatures vary according to color: red (525 – 1000°C), orange (1100-1200°C), white (1300-1500°C), and blue (1500°C plus); <http://maggie Maggio.com/color/2011/08/fire-ii-color-and-temperature/>

repeated; therefore, when this fifth angel sounds his trumpet, John is not seeing a *star falling* from heaven, but, rather, he is seeing this *fallen star* being given the key to the shaft of the abyss (*bottomless pit*), or the narrow opening that provides access to that which is bottomless.⁴⁰ The account of opening the access to the abyss, which John gives us here, is the only mention made of the shaft (*phrear – pit*) of the abyss; elsewhere when we read *bottomless pit* in the KJV, the Greek only refers to the abyss (*abussos*), not to its opening (*phrear*).⁴¹ When this fallen star (whom I believe to be Satan) opens the orifice to the abyss, smoke comes pouring out that darkens the sun and the air, and out of the smoke comes locusts like scorpions that sting everyone who does not have the seal of God in their foreheads (Revelation 9:3-4). My understanding is that the abyss is Satan’s domain, and that he is the ruler over these destructive hordes; as such, his name is given as Abaddon (Hebrew – meaning destruction) and Apollyon (Greek – Destroyer).⁴² His domain, the abyss, has infinite depth – there is no bottom.

The *star* mentioned (Satan), is said to have come from heaven to the earth – indeed, when sin was found in him, Jehovah cast him out (Ezekiel 28:17). However, as we have noted before, Satan still had access to the presence of the Lord, and used the opportunity to accuse the children of God (Job 1:6). His role as the accuser of God’s people came to an end when he lost his battle against the Lord Jesus at the cross (Revelation 12:7-8). John sees Satan being given a key to the shaft that opens access to the abyss, and three things are noteworthy at this point: 1) even if it is his domain, Satan does not have possession of the key to the abyss, 2) Satan is on earth when he receives the key to the opening of the abyss, and 3) smoke rises up out of it so that it darkens *the sun and the air* (Revelation 9:2). Notice that these latter two events take place on the earth; therefore, the orifice of the abyss is on the earth, because the smoke that pours out of it, when it is opened, darkens the sun and the air – namely, the lower air that surrounds the earth.⁴³ Based upon this, it seems that the abyss or hades is located in the center of the earth, a place of complete darkness and great heat – a place where the spirits of the unrighteous dead will await the day of resurrection when they will stand before God (Revelation 20:12).

Even though we are not told exactly where heaven (as the place where God abides) and Satan’s domain are, there is a distinction made in the Scriptures between them. Part of the difficulty that we have is that we are physical beings, whereas both God and Satan are spirits; this is a dimension that we cannot fully comprehend with our finite minds, which are restricted to time and space. However, despite this limitation, in the Scriptures access to heaven is always indicated as being up: concerning Elijah, we read that he “went **up** by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11), after Jesus spoke with His disciples, He “was taken **up**” (Acts 1:9), and when John was called into heaven to see what would take place hereafter, he was told, “Come **up** hither” (Revelation 4:1). Whenever the Lord came from heaven to speak with someone on earth, we are told that He came down: the Lord “came **down**” to see the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:5), when Jehovah met with Moses on Mt. Sinai, He “**descended** upon it” (Exodus 19:18), when Daniel had visions, he said that a “holy one came **down** from heaven” (Daniel 4:13), and Jesus spoke of Himself as “He that came **down** from heaven” (John 3:13). From this we can learn that the earth, in relation to God’s

⁴⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

⁴² Strong’s Online.

⁴³ Liddell-Scott.

dwelling place, is always referred to as being *down*. Likewise, when Satan lost his access to heaven, we are told that he and his angels were *cast down* into the earth (Revelation 12:10).



¹ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ³ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20)

After the Lord defeats the armies of the Antichrist and the ten kings at Armageddon, John sees an angel descending from heaven, who holds the key to the *bottomless pit* (the *abyss*) and a large chain. Earlier, upon the sounding of the fifth trumpet, the devil was given this key so that he could unlock the opening to the abyss; what we can learn from this is that the key is not his but is held in heaven by God, and that Satan was permitted to use it for the fulfillment of the fifth trumpet judgment – the first of three “woes.”

The key that the devil used to wreak havoc against his own followers (perhaps he anticipated that these *locusts* from the abyss would attack the children of God), will now be used to silence him for the 1000-year reign of the Lord Jesus upon earth. The angel from heaven has the key to the abyss and a large chain; he seizes (*laid hold on*) the devil and binds him with the chain;⁴⁴ clearly, this must be a spirit-chain in order for it to bind a spirit being. After binding him, the angel throws the devil into the abyss, and locks it (*shut*) and puts a seal on him so that he will be unable to deceive the people (*nations*) of the world for the 1000-year reign of the Lord.⁴⁵ The devil is locked and sealed in the abyss; however, the abyss will continue to receive the unrighteous dead (Proverbs 27:20). During this time, Isaiah tells us that the earth and the heavens will be transformed (*create* – Isaiah 65:17) to the extent that “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock” (Isaiah 65:25).⁴⁶ Although death will be less common, we are told that “the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed [viewed with contempt]” (Isaiah 65:20).⁴⁷ It would seem that longevity will once again be common, but the abyss (hades) will be there for all who die outside of the Lord.



⁷ And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ And shall go out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Revelation 20)

⁴⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁶ BDB.

⁴⁷ BDB.

At the end of the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus, we are told that Satan will be loosed from his chain, will ascend out of the abyss, and go forth to deceive the people of the world. Keep in mind that for one thousand years all of the people of the earth have lived under the just and righteous rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, He will rule with a rod of iron, but it will be the administration of true justice – there will be no corruption, and no wars. “And he [the Lord God] shall judge [settle differences] among the nations [non-Jewish people*], and shall rebuke [decide for] many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation [*] shall not lift up sword against nation [*], neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4).⁴⁸ Isaiah was a prophet to the people of Judah who had been taken captive by the Babylonians, and he spoke of a time when Israel would be at peace under the rule of the Lord. Undoubtedly, the people of Israel had Scriptures such as this in mind when they set out to make Jesus their King (John 6:15); they thought that they longed for a time of peace and security under the Lord, and not under Rome. Nevertheless, this prophecy will only find its fulfillment during the time of Jesus’ millennial reign over the earth; it will be a time of great prosperity and enforced peace. This will be a time when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb ... the lion shall eat straw like the ox ... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9). You would think that following the reign of the Antichrist, which resulted in tremendous bloodshed and when the *beasts of the earth* wreaked havoc against man (Revelation 6:8), and with a generally greater understanding of Who the Lord is, that this should be a time when the hearts of men would turn to their Creator in love and commitment. However, as we read of what will take place after the millennium, it is evident that the peace and prosperity of this time will only be a result of an external compliance with the rule of the Lord – the hearts of men will, for the most part, not be changed.

Satan springs from his prison, and immediately goes out to do what he has done from the very beginning – deceive! He convinces everyone that he should be their ruler; perhaps he emphasizes the *rod of iron* that they have been under for 1000 years (God has denied them their freedom), and, with the present quiet and productive state of the earth, he entices them with the promise that they can be as gods knowing *good and evil*, and will be able control their own destiny (Genesis 3:5). Whatever deceptive tactic he will take, it will work, for the people who fall for his lies, and those who will join him will be as numerous as the *sand of the sea*. In one final effort to gain absolute control over the earth and its inhabitants, Satan again musters a revolt against the Lord Jesus.

Center for Christ’s Rule

When a confederacy of kings defeated Sodom and Gomorrah, and captured all of their people and goods, Abraham (his name was still Abram at this time) launched an attack to rescue his nephew, and his people and goods. As Abraham returned from this rescue mission, he was met by Melchizedek, who is identified as the king of Salem and the priest of the *most high God* (Genesis 14:17-18). Melchizedek brings provisions for Abraham, blesses him, and gives praise to the Lord

⁴⁸ BDB; *gowy* is the Hebrew word for *nations*, and generally refers to non-Hebrew peoples. However, with the institution of the New Covenant by the Lord, we must understand this to refer to those who do not belong to the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile (Romans 4:13; 9:6-8; Galatians 3:28).

(*el-elyown*, God the highest) for his safety (v.19-20)⁴⁹; in return, Abraham gives him a tenth part (*tithe*) of everything.⁵⁰ Jesus is identified as being a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:20), a name that means *king of righteousness*, and who is also identified as the king of Salem or peace (Hebrews 7:2). The psalmist Asaph identifies Salem as being Jerusalem, where the tabernacle of the Lord was located (Psalm 76:2); therefore, it is only fitting that Jesus, in keeping with the order of Melchizedek, should use Jerusalem (meaning possession of peace) from which to reign as King over all.⁵¹

The writer of Hebrews very carefully underscores Jesus' identity as being our high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,15,17,21), and he explains the importance of our understanding this truth: "For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Hebrews 7:14). Within the Mosaic Law, all of the priests came from the line of Aaron, who was of the tribe of Levi, and the rest of the Levites bore all of the responsibilities of the tabernacle (Exodus 28:41; Numbers 1:50; 26:59). Since Jesus was born of the line of David, of the tribe of Judah, it was necessary to highlight the OT prophecy that spoke of the One Who was coming as being a "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). It is in Melchizedek that we see a merging of the priestly and kingly responsibilities. It is this unique combination that finds its ultimate expression in Jesus, Who was born of the kingly line of Judah, yet became a High Priest for the world through the personal sacrifice that He made, and the eternal remission for sin that He accomplished by entering into the heavenly holy place (Hebrews 9:12). However, from what we learn in Revelation, even more amazing is the fact that Jesus will bestow this unique role of king and priest upon those who are His. He "hath made us kings [or princes – sons of the King*] and priests unto God and his Father" (Revelation 1:6), "and hast made us unto our God kings [*] and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10).⁵²

Further to the link with Melchizedek, Isaiah spoke of a day "when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 24:23), which will take place during the Lord's 1000-year rule over the earth. Likewise, Jeremiah stated, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 3:17). During the millennium, Jesus will rule with a rod of iron; everyone will walk according to the Lord's ways, yet, as we have seen, that will not remove their *evil hearts*. During this time, those who have been a part of the first resurrection (which takes place when Jesus calls His faithful ones together) will be "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). Once again, we can see the order of Melchizedek presenting itself, except that this time it is expressed through those who belong to the Lord.

To the elder of Thyatira, Jesus reveals that, for the one who remains faithful to Him unto the end, He will give him authority (*power*) over people (*nations*) and he will *rule them with a rod of iron* – in exactly the same way that Jesus will rule (Revelation 2:26-27; 19:15). We are told that in the new heaven and earth the servants of the Lord will serve Him, and that they *shall reign for*

⁴⁹ Strong's Online.

⁵⁰ BDB.

⁵¹ Strong's Online.

⁵² Liddell-Scott.

ever and ever (Revelation 22:5). We might understand that, during the millennium, we will rule the peoples of the world under the authority of Christ, for sin will be present, but what about for eternity, when sin has been removed? Jesus also taught that we, as His disciples, are not to lord it over those who are fellow-disciples (Matthew 20:25-27); therefore, it would be inconceivable to have a king-servant relationship with one another in heaven. The word *reign* (*basileuo*) can mean either the oversight by a king or some such leader, or it can mean to be the master of or to control something.⁵³ We can assume that the new heavens and earth will not be empty. When God created mankind in His image, He gave them dominion over all of the rest of creation (Genesis 1:28); it will be within this context that the new heavens and earth will be placed under the rule of a forever sinless mankind. From this we learn that our reign with the Lord will last for all of eternity; we exercise His rule over people during the millennium, but that will change when we enter into the new heavens and earth with Him.

During the millennium, we will also fill the role of priests for the Lord; a priest being someone who bridges the separation between man and God (or god).⁵⁴ This was God's desire for Israel (Exodus 19:6), but they never filled that role; with spiritual Israel, the Lord's desire is the same (1 Peter 2:9), and it is necessary for us to point men to the Lord. There is only one Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), so we do not mediate between men and God, but, rather, we point people to the only Mediator, Jesus Christ. This will be a work that will continue throughout the millennium, but, obviously, will cease in the new heavens and earth.

During His millennial reign, those who remain faithful to the Lord Jesus in this life will rule with Him, and will be His priests to the people. According to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus will use Jerusalem as His control center in the world, and the activities of His servants will flow out from that city. As Satan is released from his prison and goes out into the world to deceive, he does so with the purpose of destroying the Lord Jesus Christ and all of those who are working with Him to maintain the justice and prosperity of the previous thousand years. Satan gathers his forces from all over (*the breadth of*) the earth, and they surround (*compassed*) Jerusalem and the *camp* (a military term) of all of the saints who are working with the Lord.⁵⁵ Generally, when an army completely surrounds a city, its defeat is inevitable, and this would appear to be Satan's tactic. However, once Satan has his noose in place, God in heaven rains fire down upon the gathered forces and destroys (*devoured*) them.⁵⁶ All of these people, who had experienced the prosperity and the justice of Jesus' rule over the earth, are destroyed in an instant. Their sinful hearts led them back to the devil, and they perished.



10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. ¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it ... ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books,

⁵³ Strong's Online; Liddell-Scott.

⁵⁴ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/priest?s=t>

⁵⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶ Strong's Online.

according to their works. ... ¹⁴. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

This is Satan's final act. With the destruction of his followers, he is taken and thrown into the lake of fire to join the Antichrist (*beast*) and the False Prophet where they will be *tormented* forever in the unquenchable fire and brimstone (*sulphur*). Jesus taught that this place of eternal torment has been prepared specifically for the devil and his messengers (*angels*), but that it will also be the final destination for the unrighteous (Matthew 25:41). We typically think of the lake of fire as being a place of flames and great heat, and that is undoubtedly the case; however, if we consider the matter a little more carefully, we will realize that a physical flame and heat would have little impact upon a spirit being. Therefore, we must recognize that this place of eternal torment is designed specifically so that the fire and brimstone will be particularly grievous to spirit beings.

Not much is written about God's dealings with the angels who followed Satan and were cast out of heaven with him (Revelation 12:9), although we are told that the devil took a third of the heavenly hosts with him into rebellion (Revelation 12:4). Peter tells us that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4; cp. Jude 6). *Cast ... down to hell* comes from one Greek word, *tartaroo*, which means to throw into Tartarus.⁵⁷ *Tartarus* is described as "the deepest abyss of Hell,"⁵⁸ and as "a place of torment and punishment below Hades."⁵⁹ From our earlier examination of hades and the abyss, we determined that they were both the same: a bottomless place for the unrighteous dead, and, now, we learn that it is also the dwelling place for Satan's demonic forces. However, even the demons do not like hades, for those whom Jesus cast out of the Gadarene pleaded not to be sent out *into the deep* (Luke 8:31); *deep* is from the Greek word *abussos*, the abyss.

There are a couple of indications made as to the temporary dwelling places of the demons. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He dealt with people who were possessed by demons, and He would bring healing to that person by sending the demon, or demons, away (Matthew 9:33). Clearly, they can live within a person, but it is equally evident that this is only a temporary dwelling place for them; when the person dies, or if they are removed from that person, then they must find another place to live. What is noteworthy is the observation that Jesus "preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils" (Mark 1:39); the religious Jews were not exempt from being demon possessed. In like manner, it should not be surprising at all that the false religious system of the Antichrist (even including ecumenical Evangelicalism) "is become the habitation [dwelling place] of devils, and the hold [refuge] of every foul spirit" (Revelation 18:2).⁶⁰ Since we are told that this false religious system is filled with demons, it is only fitting that those who drink of the waters of this philosophy would also, at the very least, be exposing themselves to demonic activity, with the very real possibility of becoming possessed by a demon or demons. We have

⁵⁷ Strong's Online.

⁵⁸ Strong's Online.

⁵⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

previously identified the ecumenical movement (including its Evangelical arm) as being a significant part of this false religious system, and, as its influence grows through the efforts of the pope of Rome, it is becoming increasingly dominant. It is so important that we cling to the truth of God, and test all things against His Standard, which we find in the Word of God – we must learn to judge righteously (John 7:24), for failure to do so could mean that we will be led away from the truth. Jesus warned His disciples (and, therefore, us as well): “Take heed [a command to be continually discerning] that no man [one] deceive you [should lead you away from the truth]” (Matthew 24:4).⁶¹ In order to guard against being led away from God’s truth, we must do all that we can to know and understand His Word; “Study [make every effort] to shew thyself approved [proven through testing] unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [teaching accurately] the word of [the] truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).⁶² Although Paul directed this specifically to Timothy, his young protégé, we are all involved in *teaching* God’s truth through how we live; it is our responsibility to be those who do the will of God so that His righteousness will shine forth through our lives (Romans 8:4). We must be careful to examine how we are living so that we are accurately reflecting the truth of God’s Word; we must test and prove that we are genuine before God (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The messengers of Satan are bound with *chains of darkness* or gloom (2 Peter 2:4);⁶³ again, we must recognize that these are not physical chains, as they would have no restraint on spirit beings. In essence, these former angels of heaven are inextricably tied to darkness; they rejected the light of God, and all that is left for them is darkness and gloom. They might appear to be ministers of righteousness for the purpose of deceiving the elect (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), but they will never be able to shake off the darkness that is eternally bound to them (Jude 6). The final destination for these fallen angels is the same as that of Satan – the lake of fire; we are told that hades (the main residence of these demonic beings at this present time) will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). Satan, and all who are his, whether spirits or human, will be together for eternity in that place of torment.

Jesus said, “... the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice [the voice of the Son of Man], And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). Those who are *in Christ* will be a part of the first resurrection that takes place when Jesus returns in the clouds for His Bride; the resurrection (bringing body and spirit together) for everyone else will not take place until after the millennium (Revelation 20:4-5). There can be no mistaking that the unrighteous will be resurrected to stand before God; this is the second resurrection, which takes place after the destruction of Satan’s forces that he musters after the millennium (Revelation 20:5,12). Although it is not called the *second resurrection*, it is held in contrast to what is called the *first resurrection*, which, as we have seen, takes place when the righteous are joined to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:6).

When all of the unrighteous dead (now resurrected) stand before God, they are judged according to their works, and the Scriptures are clear that no one can be justified by works (Ephesians 2:8-10; Revelation 20:12) – even the works of the Law of Moses did not bring

⁶¹ Strong’s Online.

⁶² Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶³ Friberg Lexicon.

justification (Galatians 2:16). The moment that they died and entered the torments of hades, their eternal destiny was assured; however, even though their condemnation is sure, God still provides them with the opportunity to understand why it is that they have been condemned. For the unrighteous dead, we are told that “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15) – into Gehenna that was prepared specifically for spirit beings, namely, the devil and his hordes. From what we have learned from the rich man, hades is a place of torment for the spirits of mankind; “and in hell [hades] he [the rich man] lift up his eyes, being in torments [acute pain]” (Luke 16:23).⁶⁴ It was the spirit of the rich man that was in hades and in torment, since his body remained buried in the earth. In the eternal lake of fire, both the body and the spirit of the unrighteous will be subject to everlasting torment.

Those who argue against the reality of an eternal place of fire for man, who was fashioned in the image of God, do so on the basis of a skewed view of God’s love. Their position is that since God is love (and He is), then it would be inconceivable that He would send anyone to a place of endless torment. Don’t forget that Jesus made it very clear that there are only two possible loyalties in life: “He that is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30a), and, therefore, it is only fitting that those who are *against* Him will not receive His approval. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [is doing] 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).⁶⁵ From this we can discern that even doing spiritual activities in the name of the Lord is not sufficient to receive His approval; rather, we must be doing the Father’s will. Therefore, it is very important that we understand what God’s will is for us, and the most logical place to learn of His will is in His Word. What we can see, from Jesus’ words above, is that speaking God’s truth, casting demons out, and performing miracles, even in His name, does not qualify as doing God’s will. This should incite within us a sense of caution as we look into exactly what God’s will is for us.

Paul exhorted the Ephesians that they were to “put on [to clothe one’s self in] the new man, which after [according to] God is created in righteousness and true holiness [holiness of the truth]” (Ephesians 4:24).⁶⁶ This is preceded by removing the old man of corruption, and permitting our spirits to be renewed by the Lord (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-23); this is what Paul, to the Romans, called accounting ourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God (Romans 6:11). The building block for all of this is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that what He accomplished at Calvary brings release from the bondage of sin. However, unless we understand the essence of *faith* and *believing* from a Biblical perspective, we, like most Evangelicals today, may still stand in jeopardy of missing what God has so graciously purchased for us. Unless *faith* is accompanied by obedience to the Lord’s commands, it is no faith at all; “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). What we learn from Jesus’ words in Matthew 7 is that the *works* that James writes of must flow out of a relationship with the Lord, otherwise the works are still of no value.

⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

Moreover, it is vitally important that we understand what these *works* truly are, lest we become consumed with doing spiritual activities, and lose sight of maintaining a living faith in the Lord.

The *new man* that we are to put on is described as being created according to God's standards in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4:24). God's righteousness and His holiness must increasingly fill our lives so that all that we do will bear the evidence of this *new man*: Christ came so "that the righteousness of the law [the Law of God] might be fulfilled [should become full] in us, who walk ... after [according to] the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).⁶⁷ It is as we yield to the guidance of the Spirit of God that His righteousness will find expression through us, and our degree of surrender is directly dependent upon our love for God's Truth, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus openly declared, "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), and "If ye love [might be loving (*agapao*)⁶⁸] me, [then] keep [attend carefully to] my commandments" (John 14:15).⁶⁹ One of the many names that is given to the Lord Jesus Christ is *the Word of God* (Revelation 19:13); Jesus IS the Truth; He IS the Word of God; the Word of God IS Truth (John 17:17), and unless we accept a love for the Truth, we cannot profess to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Therefore, it is as we hold a love for the Truth that the Spirit of God will find a compliant heart in us that is willing to change in order to remain obedient to the commands of the Lord that we understand.

The elder of the assembly in Ephesus was praised for many things, but he had come to neglect his love for the Lord (Revelation 2:4). All of the activities that he was doing were commendable, but his love for the Truth had waned; it seems that the truth was no longer his guide – he had plateaued in his commitment to the Lord, and considered where he was at to be adequate. He was comfortable with where he was spiritually; he undoubtedly considered himself to be a good Christian, and a review of his activities shows that he was not a laggard. Despite all that was worthy of praise, the Lord tells him that he has *fallen*, and that he must *repent* and return to his *first works* – those works that flowed out of a heart of love for the Truth (Revelation 2:5). This elder no longer desired to grow in his understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ; he may well have been spiritually more astute than many of his peers, but, because he was contented with where he was at, he is called *fallen*. "But grow [an imperative] in grace, and *in* the knowledge [understanding] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).⁷⁰ What we need to learn from the elder of Ephesus is that we must never stop desiring to know more about the Lord and what He desires of us; if we find ourselves in a place where we are content and don't want to know any more, then Jesus' words to us are: "I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:4-5).

Evidence of spiritual self-satisfaction can present itself in various ways. As the Lord has opened the eyes of my wife and me to many truths that we failed to see while part of the Evangelical movement, we have had opportunity to share them with others. Here are some responses that we have received – see if they strike a chord of familiarity with you. First, there are those who permit conflicting views to both be acceptable: if you want to believe that way that's okay, but I will continue to believe my way. The difficulty in this is that, before God, there is only

⁶⁷ Frieberg Lexicon.

⁶⁸ This is the verb form of *agape*, the love that is an act of the will and not a product of our emotions.

⁶⁹ Strong's Online.

⁷⁰ Strong's Online.

one way – there is no contradiction, and, therefore, a careful examination of His Word must be undertaken in order to determine His mind on the matter. Within the Evangelical mind, that is not possible since they are following the teaching of someone whom they admire, and who is far more educated. Most Evangelicals do not know why they believe what they do because they have never studied God’s Word to confirm what they believe – they simply take what someone else says as the truth. Moreover, the whole ecumenical system is based upon permitting conflicting beliefs to exist among those who unite in spiritual fellowship.

Then there are those who feel that they have made enough changes for the Lord in their lives, and so they do not want to hear anything more. They feel that being a follower of the Lord has cost them enough, and they are not prepared to face anything else that might require something further of them. Jesus sacrificed His own life in order to become the propitiation for the sins of the world, yet any further personal sacrifice in temporal things is considered to be too much. Jesus made it very clear that unless we are prepared to place Him as the **first priority** in our lives, then we are not worthy of being called His disciples (Luke 14:26-27,33). Indeed, if we refuse to follow the Lord in the truth from His Word with which we are faced, then we cease to be His follower. We do not get to pick and choose among the Lord’s teachings in order to find those that fit our lifestyle the best; the moment that we turn away from **one** of His teachings that we have come to understand, at that moment we have departed from the Lord. This is a serious matter, and warrants a careful examination of our hearts before the Lord to ensure that we are genuine before Him: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith [check for hypocrisy]; prove your own selves [test to be sure you are genuine before God]” (2 Corinthians 13:5a).⁷¹ A refusal to walk in obedience to the commands of the Lord is an indication that our love for the Lord has failed; our only acceptable response is to repent before Him, and do our *first works*, which were carried out in obedience to the commands of the Lord because of our love for Him, the Truth (Revelation 2:5).

In another situation, I was given the adage: a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still; a companion adage that fits so well with this is: for there are none so blind as those who will not see. In other words, he was telling me that even if I presented a sound Biblical case for the truth in question (in this case it was regarding Biblical separation), he would not change his mind. This was very difficult to understand, except that, because his children were active in the “Lord’s work” among compromisers, perhaps for the sake of his children he could not bring himself to believe that they were living in error. His justification for refusing to acknowledge the clear teachings of Scripture came down to the Evangelical “judge not” philosophy: how can I, who am so imperfect, condemn someone else? What he failed to realize is that it is not about condemning the other person, it is a matter of obedience to what the Lord has given to us in His Word! This is another instance where the devil has twisted the truths of Scripture in the minds of professing Christians, and made it into something completely contradictory to what is intended. We are not to practice a hypocritical judgment (find fault with someone else while we are guilty of the same thing [Matthew 7:1-5]), but we are to practice a righteous judgment by using the Word of God as our Standard (John 7:24). If we truly understand that to judge simply means to make a choice, then we can see that even those who profess to “judge not” are, in fact, judging; by refusing to accept the teachings of the Lord in a matter, they have chosen to accept the devil’s twisted

⁷¹ Strong’s Online.

alternative – they have *judged* the devil’s teaching to be acceptable, and the Lord’s to be “rejectable.” However, even though we have the freedom to judge, we do not get to choose the consequences of our judgment (Galatians 6:7). Our acceptance or rejection of a teaching must be based solely upon the Word of God, which makes it *righteous judgment*; anything other than that means that we have set God’s Standard aside, and have made a choice based upon some other criteria, whether family, friends, tradition, an esteemed theologian, an eloquent preacher, etc. Once the choice has been made to turn away from God’s truth, all that is left for us are fables (2 Timothy 4:4) and deception (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

Jesus explicitly stated: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [it is the faithful one who] shall be saved” (Mark 13:13).⁷² It is the one who remains faithful to the Lord to the very end of their life on earth, who will be saved; i.e., this is the one who lives in obedience to the Lord’s commands. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12);⁷³ this warning is to those who are faithful so that they will guard against being drawn away into a position of apostasy. For such a one (an apostate), there is no hope of restoration: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [continues to exist] [absolutely] no more sacrifice for sins’ (Hebrews 10:26; cp. Ezekiel 18:24).⁷⁴ Jesus died only once, and, in like manner, we can appropriate His sacrifice to cover our sins only one time! Our attitude toward the truth of God is most important, for it will determine our eternal destiny.

Jesus said, “fear not them which kill [are putting to death (present tense)] the body, but are not able to kill [put to death] the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy [utterly ruin] both soul and body in hell [Gehenna]” (Matthew 10:28).⁷⁵ Satan, through the work of the Antichrist, will bring great physical devastation to the people of the world, particularly to the children of God, killing millions of people in an effort to establish his control; Jesus tells us to have no fear of him, for he cannot reach beyond our bodies. “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*” (Psalm 111:10); we are to *fear* the Lord Who is able to send both body and soul to Gehenna, and our *fear* must secure our obedience to Him.

⁷² Strong’s Online.

⁷³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁵ Strong’s Online.