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# Who Is God's Adversary; Satan?

According to the Bible, eternity past was not some murky, ethereal, and mysterious period or stage. Instead, it was a period of unprecedented brilliance and glory. Angelic choruses worshiped the Creator with music and shouts of joy. The most beautiful angelic creature in of all God's creation, Lucifer, evidently led much of this worship in the throne room of God. At some point, the serenity and exuberance of this scene became broken and nullified by rebellion in heaven when Lucifer tried to exalt himself above the throne of God and wanted to be worshiped as God. As a result, **Lucifer** was cast out of heaven and became **Satan**, the devil. One third of all the angels in heaven who followed Satan in rebellion against God, were cast down from heaven to earth along with him (Rev. 12: 3-9).

Scripture teaches that, before man and the world were created, God had created an "innumerable company of angels" (Heb.12:22), a heavenly host of spiritual beings of great strength and intelligence. The highest of these beings are the cherubim, who are attendants at the very throne of God and the "*anointed cherub*" at God's throne was Lucifer himself (Ezk. 28:14). He was "*full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*"

God did not create Satan as an evil being, however. The angels, like man, were created as free spirits, not as unthinking machines (robots). They were fully able to reject God's will and rebel against His authority if they should choose to do so.

The original sin of the universe was pride, when Lucifer rebelled against God, rejected God's word, and tried to become God himself. The root of all sin, in both man and angels, is the twin sin of unbelief and pride; a refusal to submit to God's will as revealed by His own word.

The fall from heaven of Lucifer is described in Isaiah 14:12-18. The reason for his fall is found in verses 13 and 14: *"You have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will make myself like the Most High.'"* This has always been Satan's desire; to be God, and it is the very temptation Satan used in the Garden of Eden to get Eve to disobey God: *"You shall be as God (Genesis 3:5)."*

A similar fall is depicted in Ezekiel 28. Although it begins with Ezekiel being commanded by God to *"take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre"* (v. 12), and the evil adulterous king, it soon becomes clear that the passage is referring as well to the power behind that king – Satan. Verse 13 says he was *"in Eden, the Garden of God."* Clearly, the king of Tyre was never in Eden. Verse 14 says, *"You were anointed as guardian cherub, for so I ordained you."* Apparently, Lucifer had a position of guardian angel in heaven *"among the fiery stones,"* thought to be the shining precious jewels that are seen in other descriptions of heaven (Ex. 24:10; Rev. 21:18-21). Since the king of Tyre was never in heaven, this can only be describing Lucifer. The rest of the passage describes the reason he was cast out of heaven. Because of his beauty, his heart became proud and his wisdom was corrupted (v.17). Pride in his perfection, wisdom and beauty (v.12) became the source of his downfall and God threw him to the earth (v.17). This was witnessed by the Lord Jesus in heaven before His incarnation in Luke 10:18, when He said, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*

### **Is Satan a person or a force/personification of evil?**

Evil is not something, but someone. He is invisible but active on earth. Although he has persuaded many people that he doesn't even exist, Satan very definitely is a real, personal being, the fountainhead of all unbelief and of every kind of moral and spiritual evil in the world. The devil and demons are two entirely distinct orders of beings. This means that the devil is a living being with thoughts, a personality, an agenda, etc., not some vague "evil

force." They exist in the invisible spirit realm and affect our physical world. The devil is called by various names in the Bible, including Satan (meaning, adversary); the evil one, slanderer, Lucifer, the serpent, and many others. Throughout the history of Satan, evil has been his identity because he is directly opposite God's character.

People's beliefs concerning Satan range from the silly to the abstract, from a little red guy with horns who sits on your shoulder urging you to sin, to an expression used to describe the personification of evil. The Bible however, gives us a clear portrait of who Satan is and how he affects our lives. Satan is the master of **counterfeit** and **deceit** and one of his many successful devices is to convince people that he does not exist, that it's only a myth. Satan masquerades as an "angel of light," deceiving humans as he deceived Eve in the beginning. Most people today are being deceived by him and are totally unaware of it.

Many people in regards to spiritual things; have wrong thoughts as to God and His plan of salvation for lost man because of Satan's deception. Satan deceives man into thinking that God is hard, cruel, or non-existent. This is exactly what Satan wants man to believe about God and His Son, when the real truth is, *"The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20). This is what God wants you to know and believe that you might be delivered from the dreadful peril of eternal separation from God, the second death in the lake of fire.

To the believer in Christ, the existence of Satan as a real person is proved by the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ recognized him as such. He referred to him frequently by name and indeed called him *"the ruler of this world"* (John 12:31; 14:30; 6:11). The apostle Paul called him the *"god of this world"* (2 Cor. 4:4) and *"the prince of the power of the air"* (Eph. 2:2). The apostle John said, *"The whole world is under the control of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19) and that he is the one *"that leads the whole world astray"* (Rev. 12:9). These could hardly be the descriptions of a force or a mere personification of evil.

## How is Satan the "god of this world?"

The greatest tragedy of human history took place in the Garden of Eden. Deceived and tricked by Satan, Adam and Eve traded their God-given inheritance for a piece of fruit. This disobedience affected every part of Adam's triune nature. His SPIRIT was cut off from God. In his SOUL he became a rebel, henceforth at war with his Creator. His BODY became subject to sickness, aging, decay and ultimately physical death.

When Satan deceived our grandparents Adam and Eve into following him and disobeying God, Satan legally took over from Adam and Eve and he is now the rightful ruler of this world. After the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan along with his fallen angels (evil spirits) now have power to directly influence our health, moods, imagination, and our thought processes.

It was by deception that Satan tricked Adam and Eve into rebellion against God and this has been his main weapon against humanity ever since. In Revelation 12:9, he is called "*that serpent of old.....who deceives the whole world.*" After the fall of Adam and Eve the "*world*" has become an enemy of God, run by His adversary, Satan.

He counterfeits all the things that God does, hoping to gain the worship of the world and encourage opposition to God's kingdom. Satan is the ultimate source behind every false cult and world religion. Satan will do anything and everything in his power to oppose God and those who follow God. However, Satan's destiny is sealed – an eternity in the lake of fire.

In our scientific, rational age, spiritual beliefs are scorned as myth. Satan, however, doesn't mind those who rebuff the reality of fallen angels or demons. By masking himself, he can tempt and deceive people without blame. Satan compels or entices his prey to follow him whether they realize it or not. Maybe they are simply ignorant and confused. Many would rather believe human theory

(evolution) than obey divine revelation and natural law. Whether blind, bound, or brazenly willing, they join Satan for a doomed destiny. They condemn themselves to an eternity separated from God.

Through his intelligence, he deceived Adam and Eve and took over their rule of the world for himself (Gen.1:26; 3:1-7; 2Cor.11:3). His cleverness enables him to carry out his deceptive work almost at will, although his power is subject to God's restrictions.

Satan's nature is malicious. His efforts in opposing God, His people, and His truth are tireless (Job 1:7; 2:2; Matthew 13:28). He is always opposed to man's best interests. Through his role in introducing sin into the human family (Genesis 3), Satan has gained the power of death; a power which Christ has broken through His crucifixion and resurrection (Hebrews 2:14-5). He tempted Christ directly, trying to lead Him into compromise by promising Him worldly authority and power (Luke 4:5-8).

The great falsehood which he uses so frequently is that good can be attained by doing wrong. This lie is apparent in practically all his temptations. As the great deceiver; Satan is an expert at falsifying truth (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

*"How is Satan god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)?"* The phrase indicates that Satan is the major influence on the mind-set expressed by the ideals, opinions, goals, hopes and views of the majority of people. His areas of influence also encompass the world's philosophies, education, and commerce. The thoughts, ideas, speculations, and false religions of the world are under his control and have sprung from his lies and deceptions.

Scripture says that Satan is the *"prince of the power of the air,"* that is to signify that in some way he rules over the world and the people in it. This does not say that he rules the world completely;

only God does this. But it does mean that God, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed Satan to operate in this world (within the boundaries God has set for him) and has allowed Satan to operate with an agenda. When the Bible says Satan has power over the world systems, it must be made clear that God has given him dominion over **unbelievers** alone. Believers are no longer under the rule of Satan (Colossians 1:13). Unbelievers, on the other hand are caught "*in the snare of the devil (2 Timothy 2:26),*" lie in the "*power of the evil one (1 John 5:19),*" and are in bondage to Satan (Ephesians 2:2).

So, when the Bible says that Satan is "*the god of this world,*" it is not saying that he has ultimate authority. It is conveying the idea that Satan rules over the unbelieving world in a specific way. In the case of 2 Corinthians 4:4, the unbeliever follows Satan's agenda. According to 2 Corinthians 4:4; the "*god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.*" Satan's agenda includes pushing a false philosophy onto the unbelieving world. A false philosophy that binds the unbeliever from the truth of the Gospel. Satan's philosophies are the fortresses in which people are imprisoned and need to be set free and brought captive to Christ in obedience to the Truth.

An example of a false philosophy might be a belief that man can earn God's favor by a certain act or acts. In fact, earning eternal life is a predominant theme around the world. Earning God's favor by works, however, is contrary to biblical revelation. Man cannot work to earn God's favor; eternal life is a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9). That free gift is available through Jesus Christ and Him alone (John 3:16; 14:6). You may ask why does mankind simply not receive the free gift that enables them to truly be called children of God (John 1:12)? The answer is that Satan "*the god of this world*" pushes a false philosophy onto the world. Satan sets the

agenda, the unbelieving world follows, and mankind continues to be deceived. It is no wonder that Scripture calls Satan a liar (Jn.8:44) who completely opposes God, doing all in his power to thwart God's purposes.

## **The influence and power of Satan on mankind**

**Satan is the most intelligent and most powerful being ever created. He is the second-most intelligent, second-most powerful being in existence, second only to God.** In carrying out his activities, Satan often relies on the fact that humans do not give him full credit for his abilities. Non-believers or those with weak faith often refuse to believe he even exists. Alternatively, Christians often think, at least subconsciously, that the mere fact that their belief in Christ is enough to protect them from demonic attacks. In fact, quite the opposite is true; someone once said, "If you never meet the devil on the road of life, it's probably because you are both headed in the same direction."

His great power is seen in his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4: 7-10). Satan led Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them and said, "*All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.*" Jesus did not rebuke him because He knew that the present kingdoms of this world are inspired and controlled by Satan and will continue to be until the end of this age; when Jesus returns and deals with him for good.

Satan's great power is seen in his magnificent ability to take men captive at his will (2 Tim. 2:26). Satan has the power to seize men's minds and hold them captive. No man has the ability to release himself from such mighty power. He captivates their minds, affections, will, emotions and heart. Their lives are entirely controlled by him.

His great powers are also seen in the effectiveness of his deceptive ministry, in the church and in the realm of religion, where he is

most active. His specialty is religion. He is the originator of religion, starting off with the Tower of Babel in Babylon. He is not so much concerned about men and their places of iniquity (brothels, bars or honky-tonk's); those he already has in his back pocket. He is concerned about getting those in the churches and other religious institutions. He tries to infiltrate and corrupt such churches with his own type of false ministers, deacons, elders, priests, auxiliary leaders and all types of church workers. He tries to institute his programs (false doctrines) and activities in the church so that God's word will become neglected and His will concealed (liberalism). He wants people to have religion and plenty of it.

Satan would love to get you into religion and religious works and will do everything in his power to keep you from knowing Christ Jesus, and having an intimate relationship with God. Satan is God's adversary; he will do everything he can to keep you from intimately knowing Jesus. He infiltrates the churches to deceive them; he twists the words of God and totally confuses you where you don't know right from wrong anymore. Satan often disguises error with a veneer of truth. Satan seeks to destroy the truth of God's word while derailing its effectiveness through the insertion of false doctrine and you can see it in our churches and religions of the world.

Satan leads people to think that they will be all right should they die, when they would not. He inspires multitudes of religious people with hope and belief that they are going to heaven and even assures them to the point that they have a settled peace about the matter, when in reality they are not saved and are not going to heaven. It is no doubt that many of these same folks who are religious but lost, are serious and sincere but are nevertheless deceived by the "prince of this world." It is the devil's delusion that we can be saved by our own works; justified by our own deeds, accepted by our own righteousness, pardoned by our own morality, and win the favor of God by our own efforts. One of Satan's great damaging lies is getting people to believe that maybe if they try to be good, try to be a good neighbor, try to volunteer and help others

and try to do good things; then, they might be accepted by God and go to heaven.

Proverbs 14:12 warns us that, *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* There will be many who will be cast off by God in the great day of judgment who were sincere and made honest resolutions (trying to be good), but who never saw themselves as lost, guilty sinners needing the cleansing blood and adorning righteousness of our Savior Christ Jesus. Be aware of putting your trust and faith in the wrong thing; you may be sincere but you may also be sincerely wrong and will ultimately have to face the consequences of your actions. Remember, sincerity never has altered reality and never will.

Much of the turmoil, the battles between God and His fallen angels and the forces of darkness occur beyond our knowledge. In fact, beyond our ability to comprehend! We can never really understand what is going on around us in the spiritual realm. But the Bible does inform us that Satan presides over a whole order of fallen spiritual beings; among them are the demons and the fallen angels. In Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, it gives us a glimpse into the hierarchy of Satan's kingdom. It says, *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places."* This earth, it seems, is the stage for the spiritual battle between God and Satan and we are center stage in this spiritual battle. This is the battle for your soul where ultimately your mind must decide whether to take the physical path (broad road) that leads to destruction or the spiritual path and narrow gate which leads to life and only a few find it. (Matt.7:13, 14)

Even though we may not understand or comprehend what is really happening around us in the spiritual realm: quite frankly, there is no need for us to know because there's nothing we can do about it even if we understood! Thus for us, the fact that we gather so little in the Bible about angels and demons and "spiritual warfare" should give us a clue as to what is really important and that is loving each other and consequently, spreading the gospel and the

good news about God's love for the human race and what Christ Jesus accomplished for us on the cross of Calvary. By reconciling us to God we can have that relationship with God just as Adam and Eve had before they were deceived by Satan and before sin entered the human race!

## **How Amazonian Ants best illustrate Satan's world and man's predicament**

In 1965, a British rock group called the "Animals" came out with their big hit: "It's my life." Living in Trail, B.C. at the time, I do remember that this was my rebellious anthem song I used to sing to along with many others in those days. The lyrics went something like this: "It's my life... Let me do what I want... Don't tell me." I think some of you might remember the song.

Anyway, all of us have times when we'd like to be completely free to do whatever we want. We long to break out of our restricting circumstances. But total freedom or complete independence is never an option for us. The Bible declares that we are servants by nature, even though we might not realize it.

A number of years ago, I read about some slave-making ants from the Amazon that I think illustrates man's predicament on earth. Thousands of these ants periodically swarm out of their nest to capture neighboring colonies of weaker ants. After destroying resisting defenders, they carry off cocoons containing the larvae of worker ants. When these "captured children" hatch they assume that they are part of the family and launch into the tasks they were born to do. They never realize that they are forced-labor victims of the enemy.

Just as these little creatures are captives from the time of their birth, so are we, when we enter this world at birth enslaved to sin and to Satan. Every one of us at birth is born into Satan's "world." We're like puppets and Satan is pulling the strings. You're in his world and he is the "god of this world." Your thinking reflects his thoughts and ideas he puts into your head. You think you are

independent, thinking your thoughts, but that is not the case. Its thoughts he puts in your mind. It's his world and we're oblivious to what's happening around us; spiritually. We just go about our daily life not knowing that we're slaves in bondage to Satan's sinful world.

We didn't know that we were children of God, that our grandparents, Adam and Eve were created by a loving God who wants to have fellowship and a love-relationship with us. We didn't know that Satan deceived our grandparents and tricked them into disobeying God and then sin entered into the human race nor that Satan took over ruler-ship from Adam and Eve and we are now being held hostage; born into Satan's world. We are not aware of our sin nature when we're born into this world. We were not aware of how each and every one of us was born spiritually dead as we come into this world and separated from our Creator. We were not aware of our condition or destination at birth and if we just went about our life from day-to-day and if we did nothing in this world to change or repent of our sins, we'll be on the same road as Satan and his demonic beings; thrown into the lake of fire.

That's why Jesus came down to earth to reveal to man our true sinful nature and His plan to set the captives free. He freed us from our slavery or bondage to sin and our enslavement to Satan. God coming down in the Person of Jesus Christ, laying down His life for us and becoming the atoning sacrifice for our sins and paying the sin death penalty for us that we were not able to pay.

Jesus came to tell us what our true condition is and who we really are. He came to tell us that we are sinners and in need of salvation. He came to tell us that God loves us and God is willing to forgive us and God is willing to heal us. He came to tell us that God wants to bring us back to that same love-relationship that he had before with Adam and Eve. He wants us to know that we can be reconciled to God through faith in His Son Christ Jesus and what He accomplished for us on Calvary's cross.

It doesn't matter how intellectual those slave ants or you and I might be – they could not know where they came from. They just

went about doing their business thinking, well that's life, that's the way it is. If God didn't send down His Son to reveal Himself to man and man's condition, we would be in the same boat as those slave ants and no wiser about our predicament.

We're like pawns in a spiritual war; the conflict of the ages between God and Satan. It's reassuring to know that when we read the last pages of the book of Revelation, we find out that we win and Satan is destroyed. My question to you is: "Whose camp are you in – God's or Satan's?" If you know you're not in God's camp following Him, then you must be in the enemy's camp. My next question is: "Why would you want to be on the losing side?" Why would you want to play into the hands of your enemy, Satan; the one who is trying to destroy you by taking away your eternal salvation? In the end he is going to take all unbelievers with him; like sheep to the slaughter house. Why would you let him do this to you?

Imagine being separated from God; being all alone and consciously tormented night and day for all eternity in a place that was not reserved for you, but for God's adversary Satan and his demons. Think about it seriously, is that really where you want to go? God has given you a free will to choose to either follow Him or to be condemned with Satan and thrown into the lake of fire. Please read Revelation chapter 20 verses 11 through 15 where sinners are judged and *"anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

I know you may say, "Oscar, are you not being kind of harsh?" Yes, I am, but that is the reality according to Scripture. God never forces anyone; if that is your choice He will abide by it. By procrastinating and not making a decision – is a "no" decision. If this all makes you uncomfortable then maybe it's a good thing because it made me very uncomfortable. I had to swallow my pride as I read the Bible with the Holy Spirit convicting me that I am a sinner, in need of salvation, in need of Christ Jesus. I was born into this world serving Satan, who is the ruler of this world and I didn't know it. I was a slave to my sinful nature and did not know it, if

God's Holy Spirit hadn't convicted me of it. Glory and praise be to God for all the things that He's done in my life.

## **Spiritual battleground; the control of your mind**

Jesus is the Messiah and the only source of redemption, through whom God seeks to redeem those who are estranged from him. Success in life from His vantage point, which is the "TRUTH," is reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. There exists a SPIRITUAL BATTLE then to move people forward or away from grasping this reality.

The fall of man plunged mankind into two kinds of slavery: slavery to sin and slavery to Satan. In fact, fallen man willingly follows his new leader because he doesn't know any different because he was born into Satan's world and that's all he knows just like those Amazonian slave ants. Speaking of those who came to know the Lord; Paul says, *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air, the spirit which now works in the sons of disobedience..... conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2; 2-3)."* Even more, Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 4:2, *"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving."* John writes in 1 John 5:19, *"The whole world lies in the power of the evil one."*

You wonder why things are a mess! This is part of the reason. Non-believers, according to Paul, are blinded by the god of this world, under his dominion and live in darkness; these people are held captive by him to do his will. If the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, do you think the people in slavery realize they're enslaved? Generally speaking, are they aware of their captivity to Satan? The answer is "no."

There is something that is going on that keeps them enslaved, but they are not aware of it because what is being used to enslave them is not some dark, supernatural force that is evident in their lives. They're not demon possessed. The forces of darkness do not hold them down, as if they lived in a horror movie. They're just living regular lives. Everything seems or appears to be just fine. They're just being held captive by the ideas they believe.

Satan gained ruler-ship from Adam and Eve originally by deception, and currently maintains it by craftiness, deceit, and subterfuge. This was his strategy in the Garden of Eden, and it is his strategy today. The devil does not stand in the "Truth." Jesus said, *"There is no truth in him."* What many people think is that what really matters is that you try and live a basically good life. This presumes that anyone can live the kind of good life that is necessary for salvation to satisfy God. Is that possible? It's an idea called "moralism." It is enough to keep a person from being saved, from humbling themselves before God, asking for forgiveness and asking Christ Jesus to come into their lives; to be reconciled to God and having a relationship with God because they basically think they are good people. But scripturally speaking, it's enough to keep you separated from God for all eternity, just as Satan has intended, by getting you to think and believe that all you have to do is just try to be a good person. Your destiny will be sealed as is his destiny; thrown into the Lake of fire – separation from God for all eternity.

You see, when Paul gets precise about spiritual battle, he says, the battle that is being waged is not just a battle between flesh and blood, it is a battle of ideas (Eph.6:12). Where the idea gains ground, Satan captures people's minds by feeding them falsehoods that they believe, and that's all he needs to delude them and enslave them. The principal way that the devil captures and enslaves people in this culture is through false ideas, false doctrines, etc.

And since I've become more, in a sense, sensitized to that, I have become more aware of the false messages that are preached all around me that hold people in slavery to Satan. They are *"lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God (Prov.30:11-14)."* They are speculations and they sound great. Just try to be a good person: that's really what matters. But, friends, that is a lie directly from Satan because the truth is nobody is a good person. Jesus said it Himself. *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but God alone (Matt.19:17)."* The fundamental nature of spiritual warfare is not, in my view, power encounters with the devil, but rather "Truth" encounters opposing the lies and the deception of the enemy.

Bank tellers are trained to spot counterfeit money by being so familiar with the real thing that they can readily detect the imitation. The fact is Satan counterfeits God's truth. Our defense against Satan's lies is to become so familiar with truth as revealed by God in Scripture that, when we are confronted with error, it can be readily detected.

Satan is a master counterfeiter and his plan and purpose has been; are, and always will be to seek to establish a rival rule to God's kingdom. He is promoting a system of which he is the head and which stands in opposition to God and His rule in the universe. If you grasp this, then you will be well on the way to a successful defense against him. If not, it will be all the more easier for him to deceive you.

Jesus gives us many examples of Satan's devices and deception. One good example is in the parable of the wheat and the tares found in Matthew 13:24-30 and explained by Jesus in verses 36 to 42. Here Jesus gives an example of Satan's tactic in his sowing of tares among the wheat in this church age. Tares are the plant known as the "bearded darnel" which in the blade is indistinguishable from wheat. Since tares are unsuitable as human

food they must be separated from the wheat, which can be done with greater ease when the grain matures. Sowing tares in a field for purposes of revenge was a crime under the Roman government. In the parable, our Lord likens the tares which Satan sows to children of the devil, while the wheat symbolizes the children of God. In sowing the two together in the field (which is the world), the devil today deceives many. People who are in reality tares may be deceived into thinking they are wheat because they have made a profession of Christianity and exhibit some of the characteristics of believers. This gives them a false sense of security. Undoubtedly there are many tares (unbelievers) sitting in church pews and serving on church boards who do not realize that they are headed for "a furnace of fire" where *"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt.13:42)."*

What we have here in this parable is a picture of professing Christendom (apostasy). Wherever true believers are found, Satan will also have his counterfeits. Just because a person goes to church, it doesn't make them a true Christian. It's just like if I go to a garage, it doesn't make me a mechanic. They can sit right next to you in church and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference from their outward appearance; only God knows the heart. Only Jesus knows His sheep. In most cases their identity will not be known until Jesus comes back at the end of the age with His angels to separate the wheat from the tares, or to separate the possessing Christians from the professing Christians.

## **In Closing**

After reading this chapter some of you must be asking, "Why didn't God just destroy Satan after he sinned?" You have to remember that one third of all the angels followed Satan in rebellion to God. If God had chosen to destroy Lucifer at that point; some of the angels would have served God from fear rather

than from love. Lucifer's influence and the spirit of rebellion would not have been fully eradicated. Instead, for the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, God allowed Lucifer to fully develop his charges against the divine government so that they might be seen in their true light. Sin must run its course for its enormity to be fully abhorred. Another thing, the angels in heaven are carefully watching events on earth to see how this conflict of the ages unfolds.

We know that God will one day defeat Satan once and for all by throwing him into the lake of fire where he will be tortured day and night forever (Revelation 20:10), but for the time being, it simply doesn't suit God's purposes to get rid of Satan. Perhaps we will never know God's reasoning in this particular situation, but we do know certain things about Him.

First, we know God is absolutely sovereign over all creation, and this includes Satan, who is "on a very short leash." Certainly, Satan and his demons wreck havoc in the world, but they are only allowed to go so far and no further. We also know that God has planned everything from the beginning of time to the end. Nothing can thwart His plans, and things are proceeding exactly on schedule. *"The Lord of hosts has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand' (Isa. 14:24)."*

Second, *"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)."* Whatever God has planned for Satan, that plan will be the best one possible, resulting in God's perfect wrath and justice being satisfied and His perfect righteousness being glorified. Those who love Him and who wait for His plan to be fulfilled will be thrilled to be part of that plan and will praise and glorify Him as the scene unfolds.

Third, we know that calling into question God's plan and its timing

is to call into question God Himself; His judgment, His character and His very nature. It is not wise to question His right to do exactly as He pleases. The psalmist tells us, *"As for God, His way is perfect (Psalm 18:30)."* Whatever plan comes from the mind of the Almighty is the best plan possible. It is true that we can't expect to understand that mind perfectly, as He reminds us: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,"* says the Lord. *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9)."* Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

In the case of His timing for Satan's demise, it has to be the best possible plan because it is God's plan.