

The Adversary

Satan Exists and is Active

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 31-Jan-04; Sermon #649

About a month ago I received an e-mail from a man in Australia. He was a rather brash and brazen man. First off, he challenged our belief in the existence of Satan.

I think that our doctrine concerning Satan and the demons is quite clear. It is very easily seen from the Bible. It agrees in the main with the teaching of most professing Christian churches. If you go through the commentaries and read the things that they say about the various scriptures that have to do with Satan the Devil, it is pretty much on par with what we would say. There would maybe be a few things here and there that we might tweak one way or the other. But like I said, in the main, we agree with the Protestant world about Satan, and the demons.

So, I suggested to this man in my first e-mail reply to him that he read Herbert Armstrong's booklet, "Did God Create a Devil?" I also sent him hyperlinks to a couple of articles and sermon transcripts that we had on the website so he could see what it is that we believe exactly.

Well, I have to assume that he read them, because he replied that our beliefs are "pretty much ill-considered, and just plain wrong." He just said, "There is no Satan the Devil."

I was getting a bit frustrated with him because he just kept coming on like a steam engine, saying "there is no Satan the Devil, you guys are wrong, your doctrines are wacky, you don't know how to put two and two together, blah, blah, blah, etc."

So, in my second e-mail reply to him I said, "This is what I need from you: Please let me know what you believe regarding Satan the Devil, so that I

might know where you're coming from, so I can have an idea how to answer you. I'm not going to go back and write you point by point our belief about Satan the Devil because I have given you the references. Please look there."

But, he refused to tell me what he believed. He basically said, "there is no Satan the Devil, and it's up to you to prove to me that he does exist."

He did tell me that he believed in some sort of logic that sounded very much like circular logic—I cannot remember exactly what name he gave it. He said, "It's an accepted form of logic, and I use this to come to my conclusion that there is no Satan the Devil."

And, I told him, "I don't care what kind of logic you used, the Bible says that Satan exists, and there are scriptures to show that very plainly." Then I asked, "Do you believe Jesus Christ? Because Jesus says in very many places that there is a Devil named Satan, and He had done business with him." He had that temptation there with Satan making all these assertions, and trying to get Him to do things.

This man would not budge. "There is no Satan. And, you must prove to me that there is!"

So I got very frustrated at this point because we had sent back and forth three or four e-mails by this time. He had an argument for everything, and would not concede one point. He would not even concede that Jesus believed!

So, exasperated with his stubborn attitude and intransigence, I just simply said that "I'm not going to communicate with you any longer. There's no way that you're going to change my position, or that I'm going to change yours. So, we are wasting each other's time."

And do you know what? He sent back another e-mail crowing that he confounded a Christian minister! "You've proven yourself a false minister because you can't prove even this simple doctrine!"

So, I just deleted it. That is the best thing to do with a person like that.

This rattled me quite a bit. Even though we do not have a problem with this doctrine, I thought it might be a good idea to go back and give you the basics of our belief that Satan the Devil really does exist, and just set the record straight.

I doubt he is ever going to hear this sermon, and I do not care, actually. He just seems so far gone that he will not hear anything.

Even so, what I am going to say here today is nothing new. It can be found in the booklet, "Did God create a Devil?" My dad did a sermon series on Satan early on back in 1992. And so, this sermon will be a repeat of the same doctrine. I may get to something that has not been covered in a great deal of detail, but there is not going to be any change in the way that we believe after this sermon. I just want to go over it again and make sure that we understand this doctrine.

So, if you will turn with me to Luke 10—probably a strange place, you think, to start going over the doctrine of Satan the Devil. But, as disciples of Jesus Christ, I think that this is the very best place to start. We start with what *He* says! This was the occasion of the 70 Jesus sent out two by two, and they were returning joyful about the things that they were able to accomplish.

Luke 10:17-20 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Mainly, the thing I wanted to pull out of here was Jesus' statement, "I *saw* Satan fall from heaven like lightning."

This is a very direct statement from Jesus Christ; an eyewitness statement from Him that Satan exists and that he fell from heaven. He was there. He witnessed it. There should be no doubt in our minds that this being of great power, over whom we have some authority now, does indeed live, and is

active out there trying to destroy us. That is what He goes on to say. He has given us authority over all the power of the enemy, and given us protection so that by none of these means will we be hurt.

Here we have a beginning—a way to look at Satan the Devil from this time.

Now we know that there was some history of Satan the Devil before this time—before he fell from heaven—in Isaiah 14. Notice that this is an Old Testament version of the same event that Jesus was describing in His eyewitness account.

Isaiah 14:12-15 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

Notice the imagery here that coincides with what Jesus said in Luke 10. The imagery has Satan cut down to the ground, and in verse 15, "brought down to Sheol." *Sheol* is normally translated correctly as "the grave." But, we are talking about a spirit being here who cannot go to the grave, necessarily. The grave could not contain him. But, there is an alternate meaning of *sheol* in terms of a place of exile.

II Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

The word "hell" here is an equivalent of the word *sheol* in the Old Testament, except that it is a Greek term, *tartarus*, which has a bit more meaning than that of *sheol*. *Tartarus* has the idea of place of restraint, or a prison, and that helps to define what *sheol* means back there in Isaiah 14. Where Satan was cast was a place of restraint for him.

Notice here as we leave that there was sin involved. The angels sinned. This is one of the points that the e-mail correspondent would not admit—that the angels could sin, which was really wacky. I had a hard time getting around that one.

Like I said, every verse that I gave to him, he had an answer for. This verse was one of them that says very plainly that angels could sin, but he said that Satan is not an angel. So where could I go with that? It was almost impossible. I got the impression that I was not dealing with a normal human being.

That was why I was quick to shut off communication with him, because I do not want to deal with that any more than I have to. We should also pick up the thought that there are chains of darkness being reserved for judgment.

Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He [God] has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Here we have a development of the sin that was committed, which we already saw there in Isaiah 14, but this explains some of the angels' sins—not just Satan the Devil's sin, but also the angels' sin—which was that they did not stay in their proper place. They had a domain—a place where they had authority—but they did not stay there. We will go back to Isaiah 14 in a moment and see just what exactly they were trying to do.

Then Peter explains a little bit more—that their being cast down to earth has imprisoned them until the time of judgment of the great day when they will be dealt with.

But what is interesting and scary to think about is that their prison is our own backyard. We are living in their prison. We know that from other places in the Bible he is called the "prince of the power of the air," "the ruler of this world." And, we are among those he is ruling over, or were. There is one place that we will go to later that shows that we have been taken out of that, but we still have to deal with Satan being the ruler of this world, and that all of his demons live among us.

I am going to go through Isaiah 14 verse by verse, or phrase by phrase, as I think needs comment, and I want to begin with the middle of verse 12, where it calls him "Lucifer."

Isaiah 14:12 O Lucifer, son of the morning. . .

Lucifer is a Latin word. It is not a very good translation of the Hebrew word here. I am not exactly clear why Lucifer was even put in here. They needed a proper name, and so they used the Latin term. But I do not know why the English translators kept "Lucifer" in there, because *Lucifer was not his name*. His name was Helel. It means "brightness, or bright one, or shining one." He was an angel of great glory, or brightness.

Lucifer means "light bringer, or light bearer." I guess it could be part of the definition of his name, but what I question is the need to use that term. Why did they not just translate it straight?

His name is "Brightness," or *Helel*." They do that with Michael and Gabriel, two other angels of his former stature and authority. So why did they not do that with him? Instead, they changed it to Lucifer, which has other connotations—pagan connotations—in the Latin/Roman mythology and such.

I do not like the name Lucifer, if you had not figured that out yet. I think that it could change our approach to him somewhat. We surely should not call him Lucifer now; he is not a light bringer. He is not a shining one in terms of God's glory. That was his name then, and should only be properly applied to him before his fall, if you should use it at all. *Helel* would be better.

Notice in verse 12 of Ephesians 6 (just to back up this point that he is no longer bright, or no longer of the light):

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are not talking about an angel of light anymore. We are talking about an angel of darkness.

Just a few pages over in Colossians 1 is the verse I mentioned earlier:

Colossians 1:13 He [God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

So, as the called and converted sons of God, we have been taken out from under his authority. We are no longer in the kingdom of darkness. We are children of light, as Paul says in another place, not of darkness.

But do not stop there. In II Corinthians 11 we see that although he is the power of darkness, sometimes he can transform himself and make himself look good.

II Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

But his normal guise is as the power of darkness. He is a bad guy! He is not one to mess with. He can deceive us by putting on a façade—a disguise—of goodness. But, it is only a disguise. It is micrometer thin.

Of course, as Paul is warning here, this goes all the way down the ranks of his people—there are false apostles, and deceitful workers who transform themselves to seem like one of the good guys—God's apostles—so we need to be careful.

We have talked about Lucifer not being the appropriate name for him. *Helel* would be better. But, his name now is Satan. That is what Jesus calls him. Satan means, "Adversary."

In the Old Testament, that is a normal word that means any type of adversary. If someone sues you, he would be your *satan*. But, over time, especially when accompanied by an article (a, an, or the) it came to mean this one who used to be *Helel*.

So, by the time that you get through the Old Testament into the New, Satan was the name of this being. He was also called the Devil—*diabolos*, which means accuser, or slanderer.

So, when you use the name, "Satan the Devil," you are saying, "My adversary, the slanderer, or accuser." And, those describe him to a "T." He is our enemy, and God's enemy, and spends his time accusing and slandering us before God. We will see this more in a bit.

Now this passage here in Isaiah 14 tells us a great deal of the history of this being. Mostly we get it out of his own heart.

Isaiah 14:13 For you have said in your heart. . .

These were his innermost thoughts and feelings that God records for us so that we can understand just what he was thinking.

Isaiah 14:13 'I will ascend into heaven. . .

Listen to this. Let me put the proper emphasis here:

Isaiah 14:13-14 ' *I* will ascend into heaven, *I* will exalt my throne. . . *I* will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I* will be like the Most High.'

Or you could put the emphasis on "will."

Isaiah 14:14 I *will* ascend into heaven, I *will* exalt my throne. . . I *will* ascend. . . I *will* be like the Most High.'

He had gotten to the point here that he felt he could do anything. All he needed to do was will it to happen.

You have heard the phrase, "Will to Power!" That is a satanic idea. For all you think it takes is the use of your will to crush others, and to mold your own destiny. That comes directly from Satan the Devil.

Turn down here to the end of verse 14 where it says, "I will be like the Most High."

The word "like" is actually in the Hebrew text of this verse. "I will be like the Most High." But when we think of this phrase, we think, "similar to."

This word is stronger than that. It means not only "I will resemble" (which is what we normally think of), but "I will compare to." "I will compare to the Most High."

"We will be equals" is what he is saying. What he meant was, "I will be the Most High because I will not stand for being equal with Him."

"I will ascend," he says, "I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. . ." What that means is, "I will sit on God's throne, and He will obey me!"

Stupid! When I read this, I just think, "Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! How could he think that?"

This One whom he wanted to overthrow was the One who had created him! He had made him the way that he was. He had given him the power he had. He had placed him on his own throne under Him. He had created the entire universe. He sustained it second by second by His own power. And here, this created being felt that he could not only be equal to the Most High God, but that he could actually overthrow Him!

How big does one's vanity need to be to get to that point where you think that you could defeat God? His reason just went all to pieces. All he could see was, "I, I, I, I, I!" He had no concept any more of his weakness.

I get the impression here in verse 15 by the way, that God put it in here that though a titanic battle took place, and ruined the universe in many respects evidenced by the scarred planets, God brushed him off.

It all builds up. "I am going to ascend to heaven; I am going to sit on the throne; I am going to be like the Most High." And the next thing is, "No! You shall be brought down to the pit."

It is almost like God does not even need to say anything about Him marshaling His forces, or meeting him head-on. It is just, "No, Satan. You are going to be brought down to Sheol."

How limitless is God's power? He made the world. Satan's attack would be like swatting a fly. At least that is how I imagine it. God's power is so expansive. But Satan forgot all that in his self-exaltation, his self-glorification, his pride, and presumption! Oh, what presumption! He thought so much of himself that he forgot everything else. Even common sense left him.

Ezekiel 28 is another view of this same thing, same event. Some try to argue that this passage here (verses 11 through 17) and the one in Isaiah 14 describes human beings—human kings of Babylon and Tyre. But if you read what it says, it just does not wash. There is no way that these things can apply to any human being.

Ezekiel 28:11-12 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."

Now, could you apply that to a person? Could you call anyone the seal of perfection? Like the Hallmark seal of approval? This is the seal of perfection. Has any man other than Jesus Christ been perfect? Has any man been full of wisdom? Perfect in beauty? I do not think so.

The very next phrase is another one that cannot apply to any human being but Adam and Eve, and they are long dead.

Ezekiel 28:13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God. . ."

Well, that rules out any king of Tyre. No king of Tyre that I know of was in the Garden of Eden.

Let us go on. This is another thing that no human being has ever had:

Ezekiel 28:13 "Every precious stone was your covering. . ."

Have any of you been encrusted with gems lately?

Ezekiel 28:13 "Every precious stone—the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold."

Here is another one:

Ezekiel 28:13 "The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created."

Sounds like these musical instruments are a part of him. And also that last phrase, twice in this passage it says, "on the day you were created?"

If you are talking about human beings you normally say, "on the day you were born." But this is talking about a created being. Someone whom God made, fashioned personally like He did Adam and Eve. The rest of us from those two have been born. Well I guess you could say, "Yeah, you were created," but normally with human beings you say "born."

Here is another one! You would not say this about another human:

Ezekiel 28:14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I [God] established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones."

Well, all these things have just ruled out any human being ever, because Jesus tells us plainly that no man has gone to heaven, and no man has come from heaven, except the Son of Man.

We are obviously not talking about a human being here. And we know that we are not talking about Jesus Christ because of verse 15:

Ezekiel 28:15 "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you."

We have now just eliminated everybody that has ever lived, except Satan the Devil. That is the only one whom these descriptions could fit.

Ezekiel 28:16-17 "By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you."

So, here we have a very full description of Satan the Devil as he was before he rebelled. Then we have the process of his rebellion, and what happened within it. He was full of pride and vanity. He was narcissistic. It was his beauty that lifted his heart up. It made him corrupt his wisdom—that is, his moral conduct.

What did it produce? It produced sin—iniquity.

It says here that he became filled with violence within, and he sinned. Now the violence was against God Himself. You must call any attack upon God's throne violence. God cast him out and defeated him, and called him profane. There was nothing holy about him anymore. He was not even just common, but rather profane. He was an unholy thing. He brought sin and iniquity to the very throne of God. And God cast him out—threw him down—with as much violence as He could.

I want to go back and cover "the anointed cherub who covers," from verse 14, and again in verse 16. We will look at Exodus 25 to see what this means,

what this implies about Satan, or *Helel*, as he was at that time. We have God's instruction concerning the construction of the mercy seat on top of the ark (of the covenant).

Exodus 25:17-18 "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim [cherub plural] of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat."

So we have a rectangle 2½ cubits in length, which is roughly about 50 inches or so, and a cubit and a half which is about 24 to 30 inches. On each end are two angels made of hammered gold, it says, and they are facing each other.

Exodus 25:19 "Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat.

These were coming right out of the seat, the symbol of God's throne.

Exodus 25:20-21 "And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark."

What we have here (for those of you here in Charlotte) is a lectern. It is not quite the correct size, but it is close enough. It gives fairly good dimensions for you to see. What we have is an angel coming out of this side, and an angel coming out of this side. They have at least two wings. In Ezekiel, we find out that those who carry God's portable throne have six wings. But we will say that they have at least two wings.

The two angels are facing one another this way and their wings are thrown forward like this so that they could touch the other cherub's wings.

We have a picture, then, of these two angels covering God's throne.

Do you remember seeing these Oriental potentates in the old movies with somebody always with a palm frond shading them? This is the impression I get with the angels' wings. They were overshadowing, they were shading the throne of God, over His head where He sat.

This was the office that *Helel* had when he was a covering cherub. He was right there at God's throne at all times, while God was governing. So, it was not that he did not know what was going on, and it was not that he had not seen God's power at work, but he was quite knowledgeable of the things that God did. Who knows how long he had been there, doing that job—able to soak in the principles of God's governance.

We can see this case being built—that he was without excuse for what he did, and why God cast him out then as a profane thing from the mountain of God—the government of God. He should have known better.

But Satan became so full of himself, so full of pride, so full of worthless narcissism that he lost his head. Really! He went mad! You have to be insane to try to overthrow God. And Satan's madness is this world's basic spirit.

This whole world thinks that they are just as good as God. They (Satan and his demons) have made everyone in this world basically make himself into his own god to a greater or lesser extent. We are all following the prince of the power of the air who radiates this spirit, this idea, all the time, that he is his own god. Is that not the first thing he said to Eve? "Did God say that you're not supposed to eat of this? Don't you know that if you do, you will be gods? You will be just as good as He is! You will be able to make all your own decisions. God won't be able to push you around."

That is the first thing he taught our parents, and that is still what he teaches the people of this world even today. His revolt is still going on! We will see that in a few moments.

I want to pick out a few more statements from Jesus Christ to show that this being is still in control. Maybe that is not the correct term. He (Satan) is still on his throne over this earth.

Now, the Bible is correct when it says that these messages were addressed to the king of Babylon and the king of Tyre, and this is why:

John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."

This is Jesus saying that by His sacrifice, Satan will be ultimately defeated, and cast out forever.

John 14:30 takes place during His sermon there on the Passover evening. He says to His disciples:

John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."

He says that we are as far apart as any two beings can be; total opposites. Turn over a couple of more chapters to chapter 16. I just want to pull out this phrase again, verse 11—He says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world.

John 16:11 ". . . of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

Which is a similar thought to what He said before in John 12:31. What we see here is Jesus three times declaring that Satan is ruler of this world, and still is ruler of this world.

If we would go back to the temptations there in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, we would see that Satan says, "I have the power to give you the rule of this whole world—all the kingdoms of this world I could make yours." Jesus does not contradict him because Satan is still sitting on the throne of the earth. It is his prison, but he still has a measure of authority and rule over it.

II Corinthians 4:4 backs this up:

II Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age [or world] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

This tells us about his authority, not just as ruler of this world, but as the god of this world. He has enough spiritual power to blind people's minds to the truth. That is why it takes God to open up a person's mind to the truth, and call them. It has to be a personal invitation because at this point, Satan has put a blanket of blindness on the rest of the people of this world. So God must reach in and pick people out individually and open their minds to it.

We are dealing with a being here that not only has political power as king of Babylon or Tyre, or the United States, or Europe, or this, that, and the other nations, but he is also a spiritual god—lower case "g." And the people of this world willingly obey him. We did this once also—willingly obeyed him.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He [Christ] made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you [you personally!] once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [another title of Satan], the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once 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, just as the others.

So none of us got out of it. We all went through a period of time in our lives when we obeyed him. Even now, we have to be careful that we do not slip into obeying him again.

Satan still has great power and authority on earth. He rules over the nations of this world in terms of politics, and international affairs, and he still wields great spiritual power and influence as well.

Though Jesus has defeated him and qualified to replace him (as we saw there in John) as the ruler of the earth, Satan is not to be trifled with. He is still (though stripped of some of his authority, and cast down to this earth, and

put into prison) more powerful than we are. And he will be the power behind the beast that will arise, and he will be the one that is the ultimate cause of the great tribulation.

Notice this in Revelation 9. We will pick up a few more of his titles. This is during the 5th trumpet plague. We will just pick out verse 11. This is the armies that are coming:

Revelation 9:11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Abaddon means, "destruction," and Apollyon means, "destroyer." That is what he loves to do—slander, accuse, and destroy. Not somebody you would like to meet in a dark alley.

This passage in Revelation 12 contains two of Satan's assaults upon heaven: one in prehistory (verse 4) and one that evidently occurs sometime before the return of Christ (verses 7-9).

Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

Do you see the similarity to the beast? It just shows you who really controls the beast. The beast looks like Satan, who here is a fiery red dragon.

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

That gives you a bit of the time frame here. This is quite a bit before Jesus was born that these things happened. It comes all the way up to the time of His birth.

We have the male child being born, and the woman fleeing into the wilderness, and then in verse 7:

Revelation 12:7-9 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they [the dragon and his angels] did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old. . .

Which is a direct reference back to the Garden of Eden. That was another point of this fellow who wrote me those e-mails. He said the serpent in the Garden was not Satan the Devil. He did not explain who it was. But it is just another point.

Satan is a dragon. A dragon is a serpent. And here we have, directly in verse 9, that this dragon was the one who was in the Garden of Eden, "that serpent of old."

Revelation 12:9 . . . called the Devil and Satan. . .

So, it identifies all four of those names—Dragon, Serpent, Devil, Satan—they are all the same person.

Revelation 12:9-12 . . . who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.'

He is described here as deceiving the whole world. The emphasis is on *whole*. Not just a few. Not just the heathen. Everyone has been deceived by this great dragon, this serpent of old. That includes you and me.

We have been called out of the world, and had our eyes opened to the truth. But we are still unlearning, even after so many years, many of the deceptions—the satanic deceptions—that we believed before our conversion. We are still trying to work them out.

We have asked forgiveness, and we have repented. And lo and behold—sometimes within just a few minutes—we find there is something else we need to work on. It is a life-long process, year after year after year, finding these things in us that Satan has put in there as little time bombs to go off down the road, or maybe they are his spirit being there, catching us at a weak moment. We need to be careful, every day, all the time that we are not drawn back into his deceptions. He can still deceive us.

Remember Mr. Armstrong after some of those doctrinal blow-ups? He would say, "You can still be deceived! Don't think that you can't!" And just as soon as we start thinking that cannot be deceived, we are probably going to be deceived, or are already.

You might just want to jot down Matthew 24:24, which to me means that the very elect can be deceived, except for the grace of God.

Matthew 24:24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

So, if we consider ourselves the elect, we had better keep on guard because we can be deceived.

There is also a place in chapter 12, where he is called "the accuser of our brethren," meaning slanderer and accuser. He slanders us before God constantly, as he tried to do with Job (in Job chapters 1 and 2).

"Oh come on God! You've put a hedge around him! He's not all that strong. Just take away Your little protection, and he will curse You to Your face."

"OK, Satan. Go ahead. I know Job. He is My servant. He is blameless."

Then when Satan finds out that he cannot get him that way, he says, "Aw, come on God! You won't let me touch him!"

"OK." God says, "Go ahead, do what you want to him, just don't kill him."

His wife says, "Job, curse God and die." And Job says, "God gives good things, and He allows evil things to come. Blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Or is it, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away?")

He did not give in. That is a similar thing that happens with us. Now, we do not have very many Jobs around today, which makes me wonder: Are we giving Satan ammunition before God to prosecute us?

"Oh! Look at Richard down there! He just ran a red light! Did you see that God? He doesn't care about the traffic laws or the laws of the nation! I bet he doesn't care about Your laws either! Let me try to trip him up with something! Let me put the Super Bowl on Saturday and let's see if he'll watch it!"

I do not know if he does that, but that is the sort of thing that he might do. Now, if it was the Daytona 500. . . No! Just kidding!

But, he accuses us of sin and rebellion, because he expects everyone to be sinful and rebellious just like him. He cannot see any good in us, and he wants to trip us up. He wants to make us just as condemned as he is because he hates us. He hates what we are going to become.

And so he is willing to make slanderous lies and accusations against us before God so that God might take action against us, or to allow him (Satan) to take action against us. Satan wants to trip us up and cause us to sin, and eventually repudiate God and all that He has done for us.

He does not want us to be sons of God because he himself gave that up to become an angel of darkness. So we have all this going against us. Satan is a very powerful being, still able to accuse us before God.

How do we overcome that? We are just human beings! Well, even in this section, here, we have a three-part formula for doing just that.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Part one of this formula is, "by the blood of the Lamb."

Obviously, we are talking about the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ covers our sin.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [Jesus] likewise shared in the same, that through death [His sacrifice] He might destroy him [this is another time where 'destroy him' would better be 'render him powerless'] who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

But that is not the only thing the blood of Christ does for us. *This* benefit, if you want to rank them, *may* even be more important to you:

Hebrews 10:19-23 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

What does the blood of Christ do? It opens the way to the Father! We can have a relationship with Him. It is this relationship that is so important. We cannot overcome just by having our sins forgiven. It is that relationship with God that gives us the strength and motivation to do what we need to do to overcome Satan, and his wiles, and all his temptations.

If we do not have the strength of God in us by His Spirit through that relationship, we are going to fail.

And how many people (I do not have the answer to this) have started on this way, but did not have the relationship to fall back on, and Satan got to them, and they fell back into the world? They became his again. They initially had the covering of Christ's blood, but they did not have that relationship with God that the blood of Christ opened up to them.

So, it is the deepening relationship with the Father and the Son that will give us the strength to hold Satan off. And then, we can ultimately overcome him.

The second part of the formula: "by the word of their testimony." To me this has always been a confusing phrase. What is "the word of their testimony"?

Well, when you look in the Greek, if I can put the English and the Greek together, it is "the *logos* of their *marturios*." You know what *logos* is, "the word." *Marturios* is where we get our word "martyrdom". It also means testimony. It also means witness. The best translation I have seen is, "they overcame him *because of the message of their witness*."

What it means is that the conduct of their lives, as well as any preaching that they might do. We witness by preaching. Remember the old saying, "I would rather see a sermon than hear one." The witness of their lives gave testimony to the truth of God.

In other words, these people overcome Satan by living what God has revealed to them and the testimony, or the witness of their lives, is proof of this. They do not just believe, but they live it! They do not just accept it as the truth, but they put it into practice!

That is how you overcome Satan, by doing the commandments! By living the right way! By inculcating all these experiences and tests and trials into our character that conforms to the image of Jesus Christ.

That is how we overcome Satan. By constantly adding to our character by the way that we live our lives. According, then, to the word of God—the *Logos*.

By that we give a witness of ourselves before the world. Sometimes it may end in martyrdom, as the word *marturios* there brings out, but sometimes it is merely the example that we set.

So first of all, we have the blood of the Lamb, by which we are forgiven, and brought before God the Father so that we can have a relationship. Secondly, we overcome Satan by how we live our lives in a godly way.

Now third, "They loved not their lives unto death."

I believe that the *New Revised Standard Version*, or the *New American Standard Version*, I am not sure which one, translated this verse as, "They did not cling to life even in the face of death."

Or, as it says back there in Hebrews 11:35, "others were tortured not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection."

It is the same idea here (in Revelation 12:11)—the principle of sacrificial love and partaking in the sufferings of our Savior spoken about so often in the New Testament. We overcome the Adversary by never giving in, never compromising, never recanting any part of God's truth, and as it says here, even if it leads to our death—"loved not their lives unto death."

Now with that said, let us not just understand this only in the extreme, meaning a gun to your head, or on the rack, or about to be hanged, or whatever. Do not think that this just applies to these things. Temptations to love our own lives, to love ourselves first, happen frequently—every day! Too often we tend to give in to these temptations, and our lives are far from being on the line. This is where we show our spiritual weakness.

Perhaps the temptation is another piece of cake; or, a lingering look at that sexy young thing; or, pocketing something from the office to use personally; or, letting our anger at the driver in the next lane spill over into open hatred.

It does not have to be the Inquisition that we are talking about here. There are ways every day that we love our lives too much. We love the things that we can do for our bodies. We love the things that make us feel good. We love the things that exalt ourselves, and make us look better in other people's eyes.

These are all things that we do to love our lives rather than sacrificing, or suffering, or displaying our love for God and others in obedience.

Peter has a long section on this in I Peter 3. I want to read this so that you get the flavor.

I Peter 3:8-18 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify [set apart] the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

I Peter 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

This is what we have been called to, following this example of Jesus Christ, not to give in to the things that tempt us. As he says here, to go on and suffer for them if need be, because if we are suffering for this evil, we have ceased from sin. We are not the one doing the sinning. We may be suffering, but we have actually done a good thing by resisting and not recanting, not giving in.

What do we do? Peter writes:

I Peter 5:6-10 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

Our Adversary is out there. He is lurking, prowling like a hungry lion for prey. Believing that he does not exist is just plain stupid. Probably even more so as believing that there are no lions on the savanna in Africa.

I have been to Africa. I have not been through all the nature parks, but I have seen some things. I would not want to go out on the savanna and think, "I wouldn't get hurt. There are no lions out here."

Have you ever seen the savanna? It is the same color as a lion. You cannot see lions very well on the savanna. They hide. They are camouflaged. And they can sneak up and be right there at your throat in a moment.

That is the way that Satan is. This is his world. He is hidden in it. He is camouflaged by it. And the best thing he could do for his cause is to get people to believe that he does not exist, because they will then ignore him, and be open and susceptible to his temptations, and his spirit.

So, what do we do? Peter's advice is very simple: Be humble. Trust in God to take care of you. Be sober-minded, or self-controlled. Do not let yourself get all willy-nilly. Get a grip on yourself. Know what you are getting into. Be aware—watchful, he says—for signs of Satan's presence.

In this regard, once we start practicing being aware of Satan's presence, we can come to understand it and see it more readily whatever you do, wherever you go. You will be able to see the signs because you know Satan's character, and it will pop out at you.

I am not talking about his physical presence, but I am talking about his spirit at work.

Then he says here to resist him with all your spiritual strength. And if you have to, endure any suffering that may come as a result of your resistance. But as James says, "if you do this, he will flee from you!"

He cannot overcome faithful godliness! We have the assurance here in verse 10 that God will work with us every step of the way to perfect us, to establish us, to strengthen us, and settle us.

I Peter 5:11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.