

# What on earth is God doing?



**Satan's  
Conflict  
with God**

**by RENALD E. SHOWERS**





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**LOIZEAUX BROTHERS**

Neptune, New Jersey 07753

FIRST EDITION, NOVEMBER 1973  
FIFTH PRINTING, OCTOBER 1980

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and to the Spread of His Truth

ISBN 0-87213-784-8  
*Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 73:81551*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*This book is dedicated to  
my wife, Eleanor,  
and my daughters, Renée and Marbeth,  
who have contributed so much  
to my life and ministry*





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## INTRODUCTION

Satan worship, witchcraft, spiritism, and astrology—the present revival of the occult is only one phase of the continuing war of the ages between God and Satan. Apart from a knowledge of this war it is impossible to understand what life is all about, and the only way to learn about this conflict is to study the philosophy of history presented by the Bible.

For centuries mankind has been wrestling with three major questions: Where have we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? Numerous attempts have been made to answer these questions. Each attempt could be called a philosophy of life or history.

The Bible deals with these three questions; therefore there is a Biblical philosophy of history. The purpose of this study is to attempt to trace the Bible's philosophy of history from eternity past to eternity future. In making this attempt it is important to call to the reader's attention several factors. First, time and space will not permit this study to deal with most historical events related in the Bible or in extra-Biblical sources. The intention is to demonstrate God's purpose for history by giving a bird's-eye view of events.

Secondly, statements will be made to the effect that God or Satan did certain things. Such statements are not meant to imply that in every instance God or Satan was the person actually performing the action. Occasionally God and Satan do intervene directly in history, but more frequently they carry out their purposes through intermediate agents. They

both prompt and use the actions of humans, nations, and angels for their own purposes.

Thirdly, the Bible records selected historic events only to the end of the first century A.D. It also deals prophetically with future events. However, it does not cover specific events that have transpired from the end of the first century to the present. In spite of this last factor, the Bible does present its philosophy of history in such a way as to provide a framework by which events of the present dispensation can be interpreted. For this reason the scope of this study will include selected events from the end of the first century to the present.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE SETTING FOR THE CONFLICT

#### *From Eternity Past Through Creation*

The Bible's philosophy of history begins with the eternal, personal God who existed as three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. Prior to creation nothing else existed but God.

In eternity past God determined to have a kingdom over which He could rule as sovereign King (1 Timothy 1:17). Since it is impossible to have a kingdom without subjects, and since nothing else existed to serve Him, God created the subjects over which He was to rule.

The personal, created subjects were of two major kinds. First, God created angelic subjects. These angels were spirit beings, not possessing bodies of flesh and bone (Hebrews 1:13-14; Matthew 22:30), but they did possess intellect (2 Samuel 14:20) and the ability to communicate (Genesis 19:1-2). They were more powerful than the other kind of created beings (2 Peter 2:11). Although made to dwell in the heavens, they were given access to earth after its creation (Matthew 24:36; Genesis 19:1). Certain angels were made superior in intelligence, power, and authority over others (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; Daniel 10:13). The Bible does not reveal exactly how many angels God created, but it does mention one hundred million plus thousands of thousands more (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11; Hebrews 12:22).

The second major kind of personal subject created for God's kingdom was the human being. Inasmuch as God had



created the earth to be part of His domain, He intended to have on it a kind of subject that would administer His rule over everything else on the planet. Just as some kings divide their kingdoms into provinces, place a subject as governor over each province, and hold each governor responsible to administer his province well on behalf of the king, so God created man, placed him as governor over the earth, and held him responsible to administer the earth well on behalf of God (Genesis 1:26,28; Psalm 8:3-9). In other words, God intended the government of the earth to be a theocracy. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, a theocracy is:

A form of government in which God (or a deity) is recognized as the king or immediate ruler, and his laws are taken as the statute-book of the kingdom, these laws usually being administered by . . . a representative or representatives as his ministers and agents.

Man had to be specially equipped in order to govern the earth for God. It was essential that he be able to understand his earthly, physical province; therefore God formed for him a physical body from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). It also was necessary that he be able to receive and understand God's directions; therefore God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28) as a personal being possessing intellect and the ability to communicate.

With the creation of man, God's work of bringing His kingdom into existence was completed. The universal kingdom of God was a reality, and everything in it was very good by God's perfect standard of evaluation (Genesis 1:31).

*From the Fall of Angels Through  
the Promise of the Redeemer*

*The Rebellion of Satan*

After creation was completed, one of the highest angels became so proud of his great intelligence and powers that he



deceived himself into thinking that he could overthrow the sovereign rule of God (1 Timothy 3:6; perhaps Isaiah 14:12–14 and Ezekiel 28:11–17). He hoped to make himself the king of the universe by establishing a kingdom of his own that would war against and destroy the kingdom of God. Because of this angel's rebellion against God, his name was changed to Satan, which means "adversary."<sup>1</sup> He had become the great revolutionary, the enemy of God and every member of God's kingdom (Matthew 13:25,28,39; Luke 10:18–19).

At this point it is important to note one thing about Satan. In spite of his proud plans, he would never be more than a creature of God. In this respect the Biblical philosophy of history differs radically from those religious and philosophical systems that picture a struggle between two equal gods, one good and one evil. According to the Bible, there can be no doubt about God, the Creator, defeating Satan, the creature. In fact, God could have crushed Satan's rebellion as soon as it began, but in His sovereign will He chose not to do so. The reason for this choice will be seen later.

### *The Rebellion of Other Angels*

In order to establish his kingdom, Satan had to obtain subjects over which to rule. As a creature he lacked ability to create beings. For him the only possible way to obtain subjects was through the persuasion of other creatures of God to join his rebellion. If his kingdom were to rule over both heavenly and earthly spheres, he had to persuade both angels and humans to join him.

A sizeable number of angels did join Satan's rebellion and place themselves under his rule. There are several Biblical references to Satan "and his angels" (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7). As a result of this angelic decision, Satan became the prince of angels (Matthew 12:24–26), the ruler of the authority of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Satan organized his angels in several ranks, so that they could carry on the work of his kingdom efficiently (Ephesians 6:11).



Although a sizeable number of angels transferred their allegiance from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of Satan, a huge host of angels chose to remain faithful to God. These are called the “holy” and “elect” angels (Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 5:21). God remained the Lord of these hosts (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 31:35). Thus, the kingdom of God continued to possess a multitude of angelic subjects within it.

### *The Rebellion of Man*

In a very subtle way Satan entered man’s perfect earthly environment and tempted man to disobey a specific command of God. The bait that Satan used was the notion that, if man would disobey, he would be as God (Genesis 3:1–5). In other words, he was telling man that he could be his own sovereign, that he could rule his own life, if only he would rebel. In spite of God’s warning, man decided to disobey the directive of his divine King. Thus, the governor of the earthly province of the kingdom of God joined the rebellion against God.

### *The Consequences of Man’s Rebellion*

Several tragic consequences resulted from man’s rebellion. First, man died spiritually at the moment of his disobedience (Genesis 2:16–17). This does not mean that the immaterial part of man passed out of existence. Instead, it means that man suffered a drastic change in his nature. God had created man with a governing disposition that was oriented toward God and that controlled the rest of man’s nature. As a result, man fellowshiped with and served God in a proper way. When man rebelled, his governing disposition became actively confirmed in an attitude of enmity against God (Romans 8:7). Man’s whole being became so fully controlled by this attitude of enmity that his entire nature suffered a perversion called total depravity. As a result of this depravity, man’s relationship to God, the Source of life, was broken.

Secondly, eventually man died physically. When man



rebelled, a process of decay began operating in his body. It made him subject to disease, deformity, and death (Genesis 3:19; 5:5; Romans 5:12; 6:23; Hebrews 9:27). In addition to death by decay, man became subject to death by hazards, accidents, and violence (Genesis 4:8; 9:5-6; Luke 13:4). Because of his rebellion, man was denied access to a source that would cause him to live forever (Genesis 3:22-24).

Thirdly, man's ability to exercise dominion over the earth was changed. He lost ability to govern some things (Hebrews 2:5-8). The ability that he did retain became perverted. As a result, he became doomed to abuse the earth. Because of his attitude of enmity against God, man began to exercise his dominion in a manner contrary to what God had intended.

Fourthly, because man was the governor of the earthly province of the kingdom of God, his rebellion brought tragedy to his domain. A province of a kingdom often suffers as a result of its governor's choice to rebel against the king. In man's domain the productive level of the soil was reduced greatly (Genesis 3:17), and for the first time the soil brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18). Animal nature changed drastically from a tame, noncarnivorous state (Genesis 1:30) to a wild, carnivorous state. Romans 8:19-22 indicates that all of God's earthly creation became subject to vanity and corruption because of man's rebellion. As a result, it continues to groan and travail in pain to the present day. Through his own sin man lost his perfect environment.

Fifthly, man was transferred from membership in the kingdom of God to membership in the kingdom of Satan. This consequence had a tragic effect upon the whole human race. Because the original parents of the race chose to rebel against God, and because humans reproduce after their kind, every human (except Christ) born in the world is born with a governing disposition at enmity against God. Thus, every human is born spiritually dead and a member of Satan's kingdom (Ephesians 2:1). Unless he accepts God's way of salvation (to be discussed later), each human continues through life to be energized by Satan and to live his life according to Satan's ways (Ephesians 2:2); to be blinded to



the truth by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4); to be deceived by Satan into believing that error is truth (2 Corinthians 11:14–15); to be in spiritual darkness and to be held in Satan's power (Acts 26:17–18); to be a child of Satan (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8,10; Matthew 13:37–39); and to head for the same place of judgment as Satan (Matthew 13:40–42; 25:41; Revelation 20:10,15). Second Corinthians 6:14–15 indicates that every unsaved person belongs to Satan and his kingdom of darkness. Satan uses unsaved people to do some of the work of his kingdom (Job 1:9–15,17; Luke 22:3–6; John 8:37,40,44,59; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 John 3:12).

Sixthly, because the governor of the province had become a member of Satan's kingdom, the earth became a province of Satan's kingdom. Through man's rebellion Satan usurped from God the position of king over the earth. The earth's government changed from a theocracy to a satanocracy. For this reason Christ called Satan "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11); Satan had authority to offer all the kingdoms of the world to Christ (Luke 4:5–6); some of Satan's angels are called "the world-rulers of this darkness" (Ephesians 6:12); "the whole world lies in the evil one" (1 John 5:19); and Satan dominates the present age of the world so completely that the Apostle Paul called him "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

These tragic consequences reveal that man had been duped by Satan into believing a lie (John 8:44). Instead of bringing man freedom, rebellion against God's authority had brought man slavery to a sinful disposition (Romans 6:6,16–23), to death (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27), and to the continual fear of death throughout life (Hebrews 2:15). Instead of becoming his own sovereign, man had been brought under the dominion of a new king. His original King was a loving, benevolent Ruler who offered man life, peace, happiness, and fulfillment in return for willing obedience. But his new king was a hard, selfish taskmaster who offered man death, sickness, conflict, grief, and frustration in return for service to him. Instead of improving himself by rebellion against God, man had prevented himself from obtaining the



fullness of his original potential. He had debased himself and had lost much of his intended dignity (Romans 1:18–32).

Man's rebellion had confirmed him so strongly in his tragic predicament that he was rendered totally incapable of rescuing himself from it. Quite frequently his invention of ingenious devices or programs to improve his lot would boomerang and bring new problems not previously anticipated. Nothing short of supernatural, divine intervention would be able to save man from the predicament he had brought upon himself by his own choice (Isaiah 43:11).

With the fall of man the personnel of Satan's kingdom was complete. He had succeeded in transferring many of God's angels and all of God's humans into his domain. In the process he had made the earth a province of his kingdom. In this he appeared to be enjoying initial success in his challenge of the sovereign rule of God.

### *The Purpose of History*

Now there were two opposing kingdoms in existence. The kingdom of Satan had attacked the kingdom of God with the goal of destroying it. If God were to remain sovereign, He must crush Satan and his kingdom. Thus, the stage was set for a fantastic conflict—the conflict of the ages. This conflict would be waged both in the heavens and on the earth (Revelation 12:7,13,17; Ephesians 6:10–12). Since the Bible is God's written revelation to *man*, it deals primarily with the earthly phase of the conflict.

This conflict of the ages provides the key for unlocking the mystery of the ultimate purpose of history. Both God and Satan have a purpose for history, but, since God is God, and Satan is only a creature, God's purpose is the ultimate one. Satan's purpose for history is to make himself the only sovereign king of the universe by establishing his kingdom as the only permanent one of the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. When first set up, his kingdom was not permanently established as an everlasting one. It can become such only if Satan can crush God and His kingdom. This he has



been attempting since his own rebellion began, and the attempt will continue almost to the end of this present world's history.

God's purpose for history is to demonstrate His sovereignty by totally and permanently crushing Satan and his kingdom, ejecting the rebellious ones from His original domain, and restoring His theocratic rule in those provinces that have been usurped by Satan. Inasmuch as God's purpose for history is the ultimate one, it is correct to conclude that *the ultimate purpose of history is the demonstration of God's sovereignty.*

In order to demonstrate His sovereignty during history, God must restore the present earth to the basic original condition it enjoyed before man's rebellion. Old Testament prophets received revelation to the effect that He would do just that (Acts 3:21). It is important to note that the restoration must take place on this present earth, not the new earth to be created by God for eternity future (Revelation 21:1). Should God permit the present earth to pass away at the end of history without restoration to its original conditions, it would appear that He is incapable of overcoming the devastating work of Satan and his kingdom. Thus, there would be no demonstration of divine sovereignty during history.

In order to restore the present earth to its original conditions, God must reverse during history all the tragic consequences of man's rebellion. First, He must make humans spiritually alive again. This would involve His giving to people a new governing disposition that is actively confirmed in an attitude of love and obedience toward God and that controls the whole of a man's nature in accordance with God's will.

Secondly, God must abolish physical death. This would involve ending and reversing decay in man's body; abolishing disease, deformity, hazards, accidents, and violence; and resurrecting the bodies of those already dead.

Thirdly, God must cause man to govern the present earth



in the manner that He intended originally. This would involve a restoration of the governing ability man lost, a correction of the ability he retained in perverted form, and an end of man's abuse of the earth.

Fourthly, God must restore the perfect environment that man enjoyed before the fall. This would involve the changing of the soil to its original, fertile condition, the restoration of animal nature to its state of being tame and noncarnivorous, and the removal of the vanity and corruption to which all earthly creation has been subject since man rebelled.

Fifthly, God must transfer human beings from membership in Satan's kingdom to membership in the kingdom of God by causing these humans to experience a new, spiritual birth.

Sixthly, God must dethrone Satan as king of the world and restore the earth as a province of His own kingdom. In other words, God must re-establish His theocratic kingdom with all its power and glory on this present earth and rid the world of Satan, his angels, and his people.

The reversal of the consequences of man's sin could be called God's program of redemption.

### *The First Promise of the Coming Redeemer*

In light of the necessity of God's crushing Satan and his kingdom in order to demonstrate divine sovereignty, it is interesting to note that no sooner had Satan usurped the earth for his kingdom than God delivered a prophecy concerning Satan's doom (Genesis 3:14-15). In this prophecy God addressed Satan in the subtle form that he had taken to tempt man. God forewarned Satan that eventually a man born of woman would deliver a devastating blow to him. Later Scripture revealed that this prophecy was God's initial way of promising that a Redeemer would be born in the world and that this Redeemer would do the work necessary to crush Satan's kingdom and work. In other words, the Redeemer was to be God's Counterrevolutionary who would



make possible the defeat of the great revolutionary. The Redeemer, then, was to be the key to the fulfillment of God's purpose for history.

In order for God to reverse the consequences of man's sin, it was necessary to get rid of the cause of the consequences. This meant getting rid of human sin. Later Scripture revealed that only the payment of an adequate penalty to divine justice could remove man's sin. It also revealed that death was the only adequate penalty (Romans 5:12; 6:23). Because of this, in the Genesis 3:15 prophecy God also foretold that, while the Redeemer would crush Satan, Satan would bruise Him. This was God's way of saying that the promised Redeemer would suffer death in order to defeat Satan. Later Scripture revealed that through His death the Redeemer would pay the penalty for man's sin, thereby causing the removal of sin (Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12; John 1:29) and making it possible for God to reverse the consequences of man's rebellion.

### *The Strategy of the Conflict*

Genesis 3:15 made it evident that God intended the Redeemer to be the heart of His strategy in the war against Satan. The Redeemer, however, would not be the only person to serve the kingdom of God in the conflict. The holy, elect angels would fight against the forces of Satan (Daniel 10:20; Revelation 12:7). Through the redemptive work of the Redeemer, God would save people out of Satan's kingdom and make them members of His own kingdom (Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:13). These redeemed humans would remain in the world for the rest of their lives to act as representatives of the kingdom of God in Satan's earthly province. Although they would live in Satan's world system, they would not belong to it (John 17:14-18). They would be strangers and pilgrims in the world with their citizenship in Heaven (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 1:17; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20).

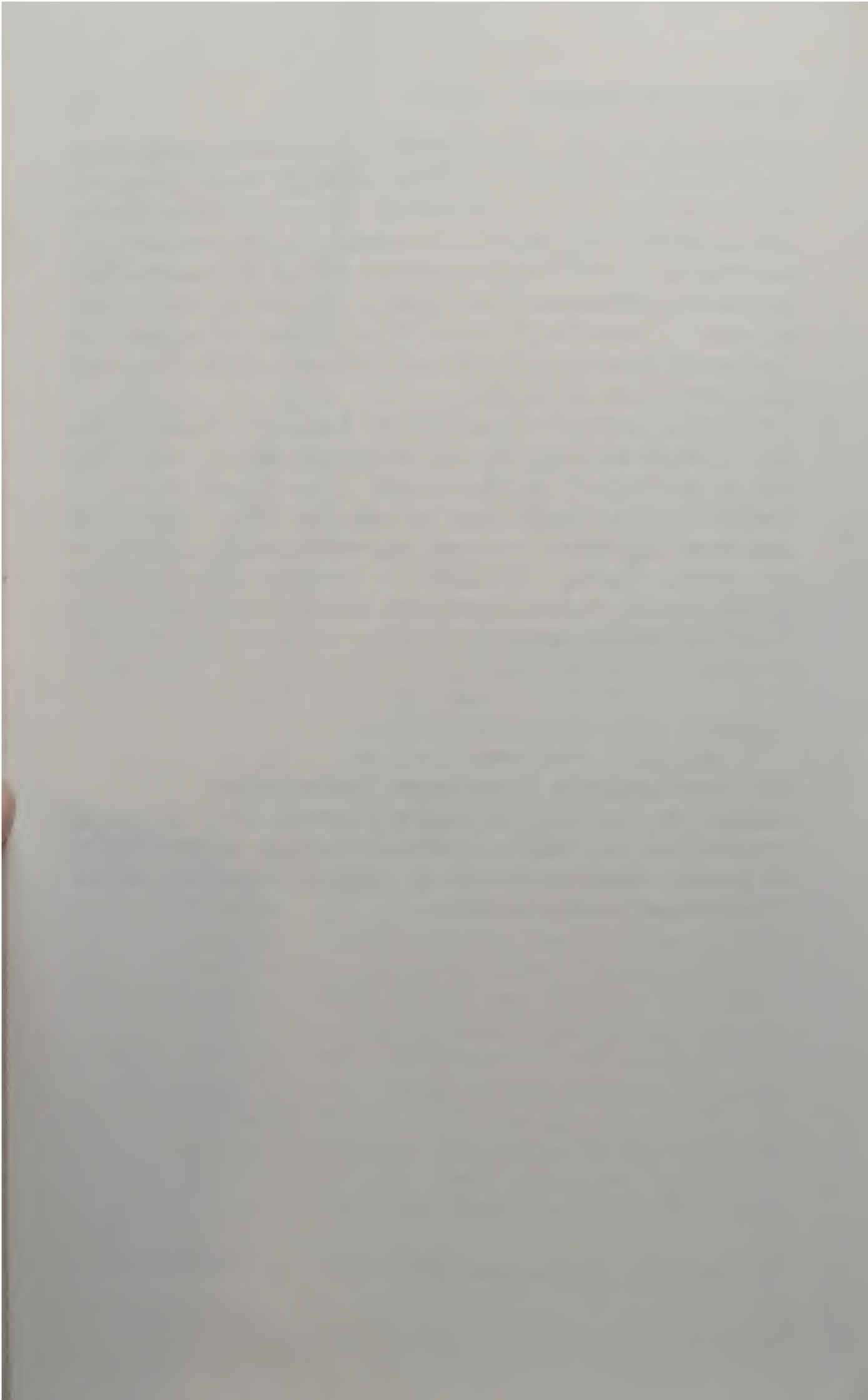
Occasionally God also would use nations and even un-



saved people to serve His purposes (Isaiah 10:5–6; Jeremiah 25:9; Isaiah 44:28—45:5). Thus, although God's kingdom would not exist in a worldwide theocratic form during certain periods of history, it would be represented and working in the world during every period of history. This continuing function of the kingdom of God in the earthly province of the kingdom of Satan helps to explain the continuing presence of good alongside of evil in the world (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43).

Since the coming and work of the Redeemer would be the key to God's strategy, the key to Satan's strategy would be the preventing of the Redeemer's coming and work. In addition Satan would war against the holy angels and redeemed humans who would represent God's kingdom in the world (Daniel 10:13, 20–21; Ephesians 6:11, 16). He would use his fallen angels, the human members of his kingdom, nations, and occasionally even humans from God's kingdom to do his work (Daniel 10:13, 20–21; Ephesians 6:12; Job 1:9–15, 17; Luke 22:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Matthew 16:21–23; Acts 5:1–3).

A study of the Scriptures indicates that Satan intended to use interchangeably two different lines of attack: (1) try to destroy the members of God's kingdom, and (2) try to pervert the witness of God's kingdom with apostasy in belief or practice. Both tactics will be observed repeatedly as the drama of the conflict unfolds.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE FIRST HUMAN BIRTH THROUGH THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

#### *The First Birth and Murder*

Satan was present in Eden to hear God's first promise of the coming Redeemer. He realized that it would be fatal for him and his cause if the Redeemer were to come. Thus, Satan's primary goal throughout Old Testament history became the prevention of the Redeemer's coming.

Sometime after Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel, it became evident that one son was godly in attitude and that the other was ungodly. Evidently Abel's godly attitude convinced Satan that Abel was either the Redeemer or the one through whose line of descent the Redeemer would come. Thus, it became imperative to Satan to get rid of Abel. Inasmuch as Cain already was controlled by a rebellious, angry attitude, it didn't take much to prompt him to kill his brother (Genesis 4:1-8). That Satan was involved in Cain's slaying of his brother was made evident in 1 John 3:10-12. Because of Satan's involvement Christ stated that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). Thus, the first murder in history was committed because of Satan's goal to prevent the Redeemer's coming.

#### *The Apostasy of the Human Race*

In His war against Satan, God counteracted the murder of



Abel by giving Adam and Eve another godly son named Seth (Genesis 4:25). Since this name means “substitute,” it is apparent that God meant Seth to be a substitute for Abel.<sup>1</sup> The genealogies found in Genesis 5; 11:10–32; and Luke 3:23–38 reveal that God also intended the Redeemer to come through Seth’s line of descent.

It was apparent to Satan that, for every godly son he could destroy, God would raise up another to take his place. Thus, Satan changed his tactic. He determined that he would pervert the whole human race, including Seth’s line of descent, with apostasy. He began his attack by developing an ungodly line through Cain. Cain and his descendants started to build an advanced civilization that was godless in outlook and was characterized by polygamy and violence (Genesis 4:16–24).

Through time, as Seth’s godly line had contact with Cain’s ungodly line, it too became infected with apostasy. The human race became so perverted that it filled the earth with violence and corruption (Genesis 6:11,13). As God looked at the situation He “saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). God was so grieved that He announced His determination to destroy man from the face of the earth (Genesis 6:6–7).

### *The Flood*

Although Satan had been successful in perverting most of the human race, he was not able to pervert all of it. God counteracted him again by preserving one righteous man who was a descendant of Seth (Genesis 5:6–29; 6:9). The man’s name was Noah. In spite of tremendous pressures, Noah stood his ground and refused to be influenced by the apostate attitude and conduct of his contemporaries. Thus, God had His man. He was only one man, to be sure, but he was all that was necessary, together with his family, to carry on the godly line of Seth through which the Redeemer was to come.



God was determined to destroy the perverted human race, not just for the purpose of judgment, but also for the purpose of ending the perversion before it could infect even Noah's descendants. Destruction was to be His instrument for preserving the line of the Redeemer so that Satan could not win the war against His kingdom.

God instructed Noah to build a huge ark in which Noah, his family, and representatives of every kind of birds and land animals could escape the coming destruction (Genesis 6:8—7:16). Once the occupants of the ark were safely inside, God caused the entire earth to be inundated by a cataclysmic flood (Genesis 7:10–12). The end result was that every human being and every land animal outside the ark were destroyed (Genesis 7:21–23). Thus, God counteracted Satan's move to pervert the whole human race so thoroughly that the Redeemer could not come through it.

### *The New Beginning and the New Apostasy*

The flood destroyed the human members of Satan's kingdom. This gave the human race an opportunity for a new beginning with God. After the flood ended, Noah led his family in the worship of God (Genesis 8:20). Because it was the continued existence and influence of a murderer that had begun the perversion of the human race before the flood, God now instituted capital punishment for the purpose of hindering the development of perversion again after the flood (Genesis 9:5–6). This involved the institution of human government also, for a form of government was necessary to inflict the punishment. Thus, capital punishment and human government were begun by God as external restraints upon man's tendency to perversion. Their purpose is to hinder the work of Satan's kingdom in the world. It is for this reason that Paul wrote in Romans 13:1–6:

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance



of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgement. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

In a covenant with Noah, his descendants, and all animals, God promised never again to destroy all flesh with a flood. The rainbow was given as the token of this covenant (Genesis 9:8–17). Satan determined to use this promise to his advantage. Since God would not destroy all flesh, even perverted flesh, with a flood again, Satan decided to pervert the human race again. He began the perversion through an inclination to homosexuality in Ham, one of Noah's sons (Genesis 9:18–23).<sup>2</sup>

Ham's immoral attitude prompted Noah to utter a prophecy concerning his descendants (Genesis 9:24–27). This prophecy foretold that God would bestow great blessing upon the line of Noah's son, Shem (Genesis 9:26). Later revelation indicated that the Redeemer would come through Shem's line of descent (Genesis 11:10—12:3).

Satan was not satisfied to pervert just Ham's line of descent. He wanted to make the whole human race, including Shem's redemptive line, apostate again. God had commanded Noah and his descendants to fill the earth with their offspring (Genesis 9:1). "Mankind" was "not to concentrate in some few spots but" was "to spread out so that the earth" would have "no unoccupied and uncultivated areas."<sup>3</sup> Satan, however, wanted mankind to remain close together in one area, for obvious reasons. First, it is harder to control a mass of people when they are scattered far apart. Secondly, apostasy spreads faster and easier when people have regular, close contact with each other.



In order to keep people together, one must give them a symbol of unity or a common project to work on. Satan gave Noah's descendants both things by prompting them to build a large city and tower on the plain of Babylon to which they had migrated after the flood (Genesis 11:1-4). They were able to contemplate such a project because the entire human race spoke the same language.

God counteracted this move toward apostasy by causing the people to speak different languages (Genesis 11:5-7). For the first time in human history more than one language was in existence. As a result of this confusion of language, the building activity halted, and the human race scattered over the earth (Genesis 11:8-9). Those who spoke one language in common separated from those who spoke other languages. They migrated to one part of the earth and began to build a nation on the basis of their common language. For the first time in history different nations began to form (Genesis 10:10). Thus, the beginning of different languages and nations started as a result of the war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Genesis 11 gives a summary of the geographical distribution of the human race after the confusion of language.<sup>4</sup>

No doubt the scattering of Noah's descendants did slow down the spread of apostasy; however, it did not stop it altogether. Satan was determined to turn all people away from God. Through time Noah's descendants began to suppress the truth about God. They refused to teach succeeding generations about Him, and they rejected the truths concerning God revealed through nature. They boasted that they were wise in doing this, for their denial of God's truth made it appear that man is sovereign. Man's willful apostasy produced two tragic results. First, man invented several idolatrous religions as substitutes for worship of the true God. Secondly, man degenerated progressively into moral perversion. He gave free reign to vile passions and approved of gross displays of depravity (Romans 1:18-32). Thus, false religions and the most perverted



forms of depravity developed as a result of Satan's war against the kingdom of God.

### *The Abrahamic Covenant*

After nations began, God revealed that He intended to bring into existence a new nation, Israel, that would play a key role in His warfare against the kingdom of Satan. This revelation came in the form of a covenant that God made with a man whose name was changed eventually from Abram to Abraham. Abraham was a member of Shem's line of descent (Genesis 11:10–30). In spite of Satan's new perversion of the human race, once again God had a man who was willing to obey Him (Hebrews 11:8).

As a result of God's covenant with him, Abraham moved to Canaan (Genesis 12:1–7). In the covenant God made three kinds of promises to Abraham: personal, national, and universal. The national promise stated that God would make of Abraham a great nation (Genesis 12:2). The universal promise stated that in Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). This was God's way of promising in veiled terms that the Redeemer, whose redemptive work would bring blessing to all mankind, would come through Abraham's line of descent (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:23–24).<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Redeemer's line of descent was narrowed down to Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel.

### *The Sojourn in Egypt*

After several generations the descendants of Abraham migrated to Egypt (Genesis 46:1–7). As they sojourned there for several centuries, God prospered them greatly (Exodus 1:1–7). By then there could have been no doubt in Satan's mind that Israel was the nation of God's special choosing, and that God intended to send the Redeemer and to fulfill His purpose for history through Israel. Satan realized that, if he wanted to defeat the kingdom of God, he must destroy



Israel. In Egypt he began a series of attacks upon Israel that has continued through history to the present day. Thus, Satan became the author of anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitism is the result of his war against the kingdom of God.

In his first attempt to annihilate Israel, Satan used the stubborn will of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Pharaoh devised a fiendish way to destroy Israel systematically (Exodus 1:8–22). Mackintosh wrote of Pharaoh: “Vain man! how little he knows of his real condition and character! He is but the tool of Satan, taken up and used by him, in his malignant efforts to counteract the purposes of God.”<sup>6</sup>

God counteracted this satanic move by raising up Moses to lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan and by sending a series of ten plagues upon Egypt to break the will of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:1—12:28).

### *The Exodus*

After the tenth plague, Pharaoh’s stubbornness was subdued. He and his people urged the Israelites to leave Egypt (Exodus 12:29–51). Thus, the exodus of Israel from Egypt began. This event proved to be one of the greatest happenings for Israel in Old Testament times.

Israel headed for Canaan. The route that she took led her toward the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. This journey afforded Satan several opportunities to attack the nation in various ways. The first attack came shortly after exodus began. Pharaoh changed his mind about letting Israel go, so he pursued the nation with his chariot force and army (Exodus 14:1–9). He appeared to have Israel trapped, for the Red Sea blocked her escape (Exodus 14:10–14). God counteracted this threat, however, by dividing the waters of the sea to enable Israel to walk across unhindered. When Pharaoh’s chariots gave pursuit, God allowed the divided waters to come together, thereby destroying Egypt’s chariot force in short order (Exodus 14:21–31).

The conflict over Israel continued. Satan threatened to destroy the people through lack of water, then tormented



them further with water unfit to drink. God counteracted this by revealing to Moses how to make the water fit (Exodus 15:22–26). Next, Satan threatened the nation with starvation, but God provided quail and a daily supply of special food called manna (Exodus 16). Satan attacked with lack of water again, but God supplied water from a rock (Exodus 17:1–7). Satan's next tactic was an attack by the Amalekites, but God gave Israel military victory while Moses prayed (Exodus 17:8–16).

### *The Mosaic Covenant*

Within three months of her departure from Egypt, Israel encamped around Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1–2). While the nation was there, God established a covenant with her through Moses. This covenant united God and Israel to each other officially (Exodus 19:3–8). Although it has been called the Mosaic covenant, it is known more popularly as the Law (Exodus 20:1—23:19).

Because Israel was to be the nation through which the Redeemer would come, it was essential that she be kept free from the apostasy and perverted life style of other nations. In order to insure this freedom, God placed Israel under the Law. The Law was to be an external restraint upon sinful, apostate tendencies until the Redeemer would come (Galatians 3:15—4:5). In order to exercise such restraint, the Law required that those guilty of apostasy and perversion be put to death immediately (Exodus 21:12–17; 22:18–20). The coming of the Redeemer was more crucial for the benefit of mankind than was the life of an individual rebel or pervert.

Whether or not Israel kept the Law, then, was no idle matter. In order to impress this fact upon Israel, God warned the nation that her relationship to the covenant would determine her future course of history. As long as she would keep the covenant, God would bless her more than any other nation and protect her from harm (Leviticus 26:3–13; Deuteronomy 28:1–14). On the other hand, if she would break the covenant, God would withdraw His protective



presence from her and chasten her with conquest, desolation, and scattering by Gentile nations (Leviticus 26:14–39; Deuteronomy 28:15–68). God did promise, however, to preserve a remnant of the nation that would repent of any apostasy (Leviticus 26:40–46). Thus, the nation never would go out of existence.

### *The Threat of Apostasy*

While Moses was on Mount Sinai communicating with God, Satan attacked the nation again. In the Law God had forbidden the Israelites to make or worship any image of Himself or other gods. Thus, Satan knew that any idolatry on Israel's part would stir the wrath of God against her. Therefore, he prompted the Israelites to ask Aaron to make an image that they could worship. Aaron complied, so the people indulged in idolatry and immoral practices (Exodus 32:1–6). God put an end to this apostasy by punishing only those people who had participated in it (Exodus 32:7–35).

### *The Tabernacle and Sacrifices*

Because of Israel's special relationship to God, it was essential that she have a place to worship Him and that He have a place to dwell in a special sense in her midst. To this end God revealed to Moses plans for a portable worship-dwelling structure called the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31). Once the Tabernacle was built and erected, the glory of God filled it as the sign of God's protective presence in Israel (Exodus 40:34–38). God also gave Israel a system of sacrifices to be offered at the Tabernacle (Leviticus 1–7), a priesthood to offer the sacrifices (Leviticus 8–10), and a system of worship to be observed (Leviticus 11–25). Although the sacrifices could not remove the sins of the people who offered them (Hebrews 10:4), they did have teaching value. They taught the Israelites that the only way a sinful person can be brought into right relationship with the holy God is through a substitutionary, blood sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> Symboli-



cally they pictured ahead of time the coming Redeemer's blood sacrifice of Himself that would take away sin completely and forever (Hebrews 10:1,10-14).

*The Failure at Kadesh-barnea and  
the Wilderness Wanderings*

When Israel arrived at Kadesh-barnea on the border of Canaan, Satan attacked again. He used human fear to produce unbelief, perhaps hoping that this would stir God's wrath to destroy the nation. In spite of God's promises to give them victory over the peoples of Canaan (Exodus 23:20-31), the Israelites panicked when their spies reported that the Canaanites were greater in size than they (Numbers 13:25-33). In unbelief they slandered God and decided to return to Egypt (Numbers 14:1-10). God countered this unbelief by turning the Israelites back into the Sinai wilderness to wander for forty years until those twenty years old and older would die. The older generations would not enter Canaan (Numbers 14:11-35).

During the years of wandering, Israel was attacked again and again by Satan. He used dissatisfaction, boredom, lack of water, and foreign powers as his instruments. As a result, the Israelites rebelled against their leaders (Numbers 16) and complained against God (Numbers 20:2-13; 21:4-9). Thus, Satan tested God's patience, hoping that God would destroy the people through whom the Redeemer was to come. God did judge the nation each time, but He never destroyed her. When these satanic attempts failed, Satan sent Canaanites and then Amorites against Israel to destroy her (Numbers 21:1-3,21-35). God counteracted these attacks by giving Israel military victories. When Israel came to the Plains of Moab, Satan attacked again. Balak, king of Moab, hired the Prophet Balaam to curse Israel so that the Moabites could destroy her. God countered this move by causing the prophet to bless Israel instead of cursing her (Numbers 22-24).

Satan wasn't finished using the prophet, however. Balaam devised another fiendish way to destroy Israel. He advised



Balak to use the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the Israelites into immorality and idolatry (Numbers 31:16). The advice worked. In order to prevent wholesale judgment of Israel, God ordered the guilty Israelite leaders to be hanged immediately.<sup>8</sup> When another Israelite man brought a pagan woman into the nation, a plague broke out among the people. It was stopped when Phinehas the priest killed the man and woman (Numbers 25:4–8). Thus, through judgment God ended this new outbreak of apostasy.

When the forty years of wandering were nearly ended, Moses prepared the new generations of Israelites for the conquest of Canaan (Numbers 26—36; Deuteronomy). He warned Israel to destroy the peoples living in Canaan (Numbers 33:50—34:15). These idolatrous peoples had become so perverted that their cup of iniquity was full and ripe for judgment. They were to be destroyed so that Satan could not use them to drag the Israelites into such gross apostasy and perversion as to make Israel's total destruction necessary (Leviticus 18:24–28; Deuteronomy 12:31; 20:17–18). In other words, the coming of the Redeemer was more essential for the benefit of mankind than was the continued existence of the depraved peoples of Canaan.





## CHAPTER 3

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN THROUGH THE FALL OF JUDAH

#### *The Conquest and Distribution of Canaan*

When it was time for Israel to cross the Jordan River to invade Canaan, God's work on behalf of the nation became evident again. First, Egypt, which had been controlling Canaan, let go of that control even though she had the resources to continue it.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, God miraculously stopped the waters of the Jordan River and dried its bed so that Israel could cross over to Canaan (Joshua 3). Thirdly, God appeared in special form to Joshua, Israel's new leader, to give instructions for the conquest of the land and to remind Joshua that victory depended upon God (Joshua 5:13-15).<sup>2</sup>

When God gave Israel its first great victory at Jericho (Joshua 6), Satan attacked. God had commanded the Israelites not to keep anything from Jericho for themselves (Joshua 6:17-19). One man disobeyed. As a result, Israel was defeated soundly when it attacked the next city, Ai. God countered Satan's move to start general disobedience in the nation by ordering the guilty man and his family to be stoned to death (Joshua 7).

Satan's next attack caught Israel off guard. He was determined to preserve some of the depraved Canaanites so that Israel would be exposed to their degeneracy. The people of the city of Gibeon deceived Israel into believing that they

were not Canaanites. Without consulting God first, Israel made a covenant not to destroy the Gibeonites. Thus, these pagan people were permitted to remain in the midst of Israel (Joshua 9).

God gave Israel great victories over the southern and northern confederacies of Canaanite city-states (Joshua 10; 11:1–15). Although Israel controlled Canaan, there still were areas and cities within it occupied by Canaanites. It was the responsibility of individual Israelite tribes to clear these out of the portions of land distributed to them.<sup>3</sup>

When the land was distributed, God gave the Levites cities throughout the land. These cities were to be centers of instruction in the Law (Joshua 21:1–42). This was God's way of safeguarding the nation of the Redeemer from apostasy.

Before he died, Joshua warned Israel of the consequences of keeping or breaking the Law, and he exhorted them to keep themselves separate from the pagans and their practices and to serve God (Joshua 23–24). These things were necessary for Israel's survival so that the Redeemer could come.

### *The Period of the Judges*

After Joshua died there was no outstanding, godly man available to lead Israel, and the nation had no centralized government. Satan saw this as an opportune time to press the attack vigorously. As a result, Israel's history was characterized by apostasy and anarchy for the next 350 years.<sup>4</sup> The nation broke God's Law while every man "did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Satan used three kinds of Israelite disobedience to create this tragic situation. First, the people did not rid the land of all the Canaanites as God had commanded (Judges 1:1–2:5). Secondly, the Israelites began to adopt the Canaanites' worship of Baal and Ashtaroath (Judges 2:6–3:4). Thirdly, God's people married Canaanites in direct violation of God's orders (Judges 3:5–6; Deuteronomy 7:1–5).

As a result of this apostasy, Israelites began to practice



gross perversions. Dishonesty, thievery, situation ethics, priests leading idolatrous worship for the sake of money and position, homosexuality, sexual abuse of women to the point of death, and a determination to protect sexual perverts from judgment were the order of the day (Judges 17—20).

During this period of Israel's history, the apostasy never did become nationwide at any one time. Instead, it was sporadic, breaking out in separate areas at different times. No doubt Satan hoped that each beginning of apostasy would spread nationwide, but God stopped it each time before it grew to large proportions. Every time apostasy began God raised up a foreign power to oppress the apostates until they would repent and return to Him. Upon their repentance God raised up an Israelite deliverer to drive out the oppressor. This cycle of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance was repeated numerous times throughout the period of the judges (Judges 3:7—16:31). Thus, although Satan's kingdom did its devilish work repeatedly, God preserved the nation by preventing the apostasy from becoming nationwide.

### *The Ministry of Samuel*

In order to end Israel's repeated excursions into apostasy during the period of the judges, God raised up a strong, godly leader for the whole nation. The leader's name was Samuel (1 Samuel 1—3).

Samuel began to minister during days of grave national crisis. The Philistines had defeated Israel and stolen the ark of the covenant, and the high priest had died. The nation was in a turmoil. Samuel took control of the situation by calling the nation together and directing the people to repent of their apostasy, to put away their false gods and to return to God. All this the people did. As a result, God delivered Israel from all oppressors as long as Samuel lived (1 Samuel 4:1—7:14).

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges, but they were corrupt. Satan used this corruption to prompt the Israelites to request a king from Samuel. Israel wanted a



monarchy with a human king instead of a theocracy with God as King. Samuel protested this sinful decision and warned the people that eventually they would regret having a human king, but the Israelites insisted on having their way (1 Samuel 7:15—8:22). Therefore, God directed Samuel to anoint and present Saul as the first king (1 Samuel 9—10).

Before he retired, Samuel rebuked Israel for her sin and warned her to serve and fear God with all her heart so as not to be consumed (1 Samuel 12). Samuel had been God's "man of the hour" to help preserve the existence of the Redeemer's nation during a very threatening time.

### *The Apostasy of Saul*

Satan had a purpose for prompting Israel to ask for a king. While Israel had been without a central government, he had found it impossible to get the whole nation to go apostate at one time. Now that Israel had a king, a central government would be formed. This situation would provide a better opportunity for perverting the entire nation at once. If the king would go apostate, surely the nation would follow suit.

Satan began the attack with the first king. After Saul had been king two years, he began to disobey God and to show poor judgment (1 Samuel 13—15). When rebuked for his sins, he excused his actions with a self-justifying spirit. Because of these sins and attitudes, God withdrew His Spirit from Saul and gave it to David, whom God had instructed Samuel to anoint as the new king (1 Samuel 16:1—14).

Saul came under satanic influence (1 Samuel 16:14) and developed three tragic traits: abnormal self-interest, insane jealousy, and full apostasy (1 Samuel 16:14—28:2; 29—30). When the Philistines came to fight Israel, God refused to respond to Saul's appeal for directions. As a result, Saul appealed to a member of Satan's kingdom, a spiritist (1 Samuel 28:3—25). Because of Saul's apostasy, he and his sons died in battle, and Israel came under Philistine control (1 Samuel 31). Thus, through death and defeat God ended this new threat of apostasy.



*The Davidic Covenant*

After David united the kingdom, captured and made Jerusalem the national, political capital and worship center, and put an end to Philistine domination of Israel (2 Samuel 1—6), he desired to build a permanent house for God in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:1—2). It was to be called the Temple.

In response to David's desire, God established a special covenant with him (2 Samuel 7:12—16). In this covenant the Lord made the following promises concerning David:

First, he was to have a posterity. The covenant explicitly states that he would have a son and that David's house would be established forever. This clearly has reference to David's physical descendants, for David's line would always be the royal line. Secondly, David's throne was to be established forever. Thirdly, David's kingdom was also to be established forever. This has reference to the earthly, political kingdom over Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Later divine revelation and historical events revealed what God meant by "forever." He did not mean that the kingdom of Israel would continue as a political entity in Canaan with a descendant of David as king *without interruption* through the end of history.<sup>6</sup> What He did mean was this: the line of David would continue to exist throughout the rest of history.<sup>7</sup> Thus, when it would be time for God to establish the theocratic form of His kingdom in the world toward the end of history, a physical descendant of David would be available to set up David's kingdom of Israel in Canaan, to rule that kingdom with David's authority, and to govern the whole world for God.

These promises made the Davidic covenant very significant for the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. They meant that Israel never would be annihilated totally at any time in history, and that Israel always would have available to her a legitimate heir to the throne and the potential of becoming an earthly, political

kingdom again. Later revelation to the prophets indicated that the Redeemer would be a descendant of David and that the promises of the Davidic covenant would find their ultimate fulfillment in Him. In light of all this, it became imperative to Satan that David's royal line be destroyed.

### *The Troubles of David*

God used David to bring Israel to her ancient golden age (2 Samuel 8; 10). With David and Israel enjoying many triumphs, it was time for Satan to strike again. Since the nation and the royal line were his targets, the best place to begin was the king himself. David committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11).

God caused David to be miserable until he finally sobbed out repentance (Psalm 51). Once David repented, God graciously forgave. However, because David and Israel were to play such key roles in the coming of the Redeemer, it was essential that lessons be taught concerning the consequences of such sins. Thus, God brought severe troubles to David and the nation (2 Samuel 12—20). This was His way of preventing David's perverted actions from spreading throughout the nation.

Satan attacked again by prompting David to take a military census of the nation (1 Chronicles 21). Evidently this numbering was sin because David was motivated by pride and a sense of reliance upon Israel's military strength instead of upon God.<sup>8</sup> God struck at the source of pride and reliance by destroying 70,000 of Israel's men in a pestilence. The pestilence stopped when David repented and offered a sacrifice to God. Thus, God ended this satanic sin in the king and nation and reminded them of the source of their strength.

### *The Apostasy of Solomon*

Due to the legendary wisdom that God gave him, Solomon



brought Israel to her peak of glory and luxury after David died. One of his greatest accomplishments was the building of the Temple (1 Kings 5–6). When the Temple was dedicated, the glory of God came to it as a sign of God's special presence there (1 Kings 8). God covenanted with Solomon to bless Israel greatly as long as she remained faithful to Him, and to drive her out of the land and to reject the Temple if the nation were to go apostate (1 Kings 9:1–9).

Satan still wanted to plunge the whole nation into apostasy and to get rid of David's royal line. Thus, once again he began his attack with the king. His philosophy was this: as goes the king, so goes the nation. Solomon built a large chariot and horse force in direct disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 17:15–16). Again, contrary to God's command (Deuteronomy 17:17), he married many wives. Altogether he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Many of these were foreign, idolatrous women whom he married for political expediency. Here again he violated the divine command that Israelites were not to marry foreigners (1 Kings 11:1–2). These women pressured Solomon to build worship places for their gods in Israel and to worship their idols with them (1 Kings 11:4–8). Thus, the king became apostate. His practice diluted the influence of the Temple and confused the Israelites concerning the difference between God and the false gods.<sup>9</sup>

Because of Solomon's apostasy, God promised to take most of the kingdom away from his son, and He raised up enemies against Solomon in the last part of his reign (1 Kings 11:9–40). To one of these enemies, Jeroboam, God promised to give the ten northern tribes to rule (1 Kings 11:29–39). This was God's way of attempting to isolate the larger part of the nation from the source of apostasy in Judah and to teach the line of David and Judah the folly of apostasy. The coming of the Redeemer was more important than the unity of the nation. In order to prevent God from doing this, Satan used Solomon to try to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam escaped (1 Kings 11:40).



*The Division of the Kingdom*

Through the folly of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the ten northern tribes revolted and set up their own government with Jeroboam as king (1 Kings 12:1–24). Thus, the united kingdom divided into two kingdoms: the kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah in the south.

*The Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom*

Satan was not content to have apostasy exist just in the southern kingdom. He used fear as his instrument for introducing apostasy to the northern kingdom. Jeroboam feared that, if his people were to continue to worship at the Temple in Judah, eventually they would give back their allegiance to Rehoboam. To prevent this Jeroboam erected two idols and established a counterfeit priesthood and false religious system for the northern kingdom. He himself led the northern Israelites in this apostate worship (1 Kings 12:25–33). Because Jeroboam persisted in this apostasy, God promised to smite the northern kingdom and to send it into captivity beyond the Euphrates River (1 Kings 13:1–14:16).

Although the northern kingdom adopted apostasy later than Judah, it pursued its most gross forms more persistently than Judah. The northern kingdom had a total of nineteen kings during its history. Every one of these kings was apostate in character and action. The worst king was Ahab, whose wife was the devilish Phoenician princess named Jezebel (1 Kings 21:25–26; 16:31). Under Jezebel's influence, Ahab built a temple to Baal in the capital city, made Baal worship the official religion of the kingdom, imported and supported 850 prophets of Baal and Astarte, murdered most of God's prophets, and abolished the worship of God.

God countered the apostasy by sending several prophets and different forms of judgment to the northern kingdom as warnings to repent. The prophets declared that, if Israel would not repent, God would raise up a foreign power to



smite her and to carry her into captivity (Hosea 11:5; Amos 6:14; 9:8–10).

In spite of the many warnings and judgments, the people of Israel refused to repent. Thus, God raised up Assyria to be His instrument for chastening His apostate people (Isaiah 10:5–6). Assyria invaded the northern kingdom in 734 and 732 B.C., took control of Galilee and the land east of Jordan, carried into captivity Israelites from those regions, and made a vassal of the Israelite king (2 Kings 15:29).<sup>10</sup> After the northern kingdom rebelled and made an alliance with Egypt, the Assyrians came again in 725 B.C. and besieged the capital city, Samaria, until it surrendered in 722 B.C. The Israelites were carried captive to the regions of Persia.<sup>11</sup> This ended the northern kingdom. Because of its persistent apostasy, it lasted little more than two centuries (931–722 B.C.).<sup>12</sup>

### *The Decline and Fall of the Southern Kingdom*

Rehoboam and most of his successors followed the poor example of Solomon and plunged the kingdom of Judah deeper into apostasy. Throughout its history the southern kingdom had a total of nineteen kings and one queen. Of these twenty rulers, only seven were godly.

While Satan was working to prevent the Redeemer from coming by pushing Judah deeper into apostasy, he also worked to accomplish the same goal by trying to annihilate the royal line of David. His instrument of attack was Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, the notorious duo of the northern kingdom. Athaliah married into the royal house of Judah (2 Kings 8:16–18). After her husband and son died, she seized the throne of Judah and made herself queen. To secure her position as ruler, she ordered the extermination of every royal person descended from David (2 Kings 11:1).<sup>13</sup>

God countered this satanic attempt to destroy the line of the Redeemer by preserving one of David's royal descendants. The infant Joash was hid in the Temple for six years



by the high priest and his wife (2 Chronicles 22:11–12). At the right time Joash was crowned king, and Athaliah was slain (2 Kings 11:4–16).

God counteracted the growth of apostasy in Judah by prompting several revivals through godly kings. The greatest revival took place under Hezekiah. Because of this return to God, the Lord kept His promise, delivered by Moses centuries earlier, to protect His people from harm. In 701 B.C. a huge Assyrian army invaded Judah.<sup>14</sup> When it threatened to besiege Jerusalem, God killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, thereby forcing the remainder of the army to return home (2 Kings 18:9—19:37).

Because of the occasional revivals, Judah lasted longer than the northern kingdom. However, in spite of these revivals, the most persistent trend of Judah was into apostasy. Once again God raised up prophets and various forms of judgment to warn His people to repent, but once again the people refused to heed. Apostasy reached its worst depth during the long reign of Manasseh, Judah's most wicked king (2 Kings 21:1–18). Manasseh led his kingdom into more perverted practices than those of the Canaanites. The apostasy of his reign became so gross that God's judgment of Judah was made irrevocable. Even a later revival under Josiah could not cancel it out (2 Kings 23:26–27; 24:3–4).

After Assyria fulfilled God's purpose for her—the chastening of the northern kingdom of Israel, she continually declined in power. Because God no longer needed her for His service, she was crushed completely by the Medes and Babylonians by 605 B.C.<sup>15</sup> With Judah's cup of apostasy coming to the full mark, it was time for God to raise up a new foreign power to be His instrument for chastening her. That new power was Babylon.

After he crushed Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince of Babylon, led his armies into Judah in 605 B.C. and claimed treasures and hostages in Jerusalem. The Prophet Daniel and his friends were among the hostages carried captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:1; Daniel 1:1–6).<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Babylonian captivity of the Jews began.



In 597 B.C. the Babylonian armies returned to Jerusalem, stripped the Temple, and took the royal treasuries of Judah. The king of Judah, other political and cultural leaders, and Ezekiel the prophet were carried captive in this second deportation of Jews to Babylon (2 Kings 24:8–16).<sup>17</sup>

After Ezekiel arrived in Babylon, somehow God caused him to witness the withdrawal of His glory from the Temple and city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8–11). This was a very significant event in the war between the kingdom of God and kingdom of Satan. It signified the withdrawal of God's protective presence from the midst of His people because of their persistent apostasy. Now the way was open for the Babylonians to destroy the Temple and Jerusalem.

Due to the rebellion of their puppet Judean king, the Babylonians returned to Jerusalem. In 586 B.C. they entered the city, slaughtered many Jews, destroyed the Temple, left the city in ruins, and carried most of the remaining Jews captive to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1–11).<sup>18</sup> Thus, the kingdom of Judah came to an end after an existence of nearly 350 years (931–586 B.C.).<sup>19</sup>

One thing should be noted about the fall of Israel and Judah. Because of His holiness, God did permit many of His people to be slaughtered for their apostasy. However, He did not permit the nation to be annihilated totally. He preserved a remnant. The punishment of His people was intended to cure them of their apostasy so that the Redeemer could come.





## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY THROUGH THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

#### *The Babylonian Captivity*

Once the Jews were captive in Babylon, Satan attacked again. Nebuchadnezzar decreed that all his subjects should worship an image of himself (Daniel 3:1–7). Jewish obedience to this decree would have involved God's people in apostasy again. God countered this satanic move by miraculously preserving through their punishment the first Jews who refused to obey the king's decree (Daniel 3:8–27). As a result, the Jews were released from any obligation to worship anyone except God (Daniel 3:28–30).

After Babylon fulfilled God's purpose for her—the chastening of Judah, God no longer needed her for His service. As the end of the Babylonian captivity drew near, Babylon fell suddenly to Medo-Persia in 539 B.C. (Daniel 5).<sup>1</sup> In fulfillment of Isaiah 44:28; 45:1, Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree in 538 or 537 B.C. permitting the Jews to return to Palestine to rebuild the Temple.<sup>2</sup> This decree ended the Babylonian captivity for the Jews.

#### *The Persian Period*

The majority of Jews decided to remain in Babylon after the captivity ended. However, nearly 50,000 did return to Palestine under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua

(Ezra 1—2). Upon their arrival in the homeland, the returning Jews built an altar and reinstituted the feasts and offerings prescribed in the Law (Ezra 3:1–7). In the second year of their return they began to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 3:8–13). It was at this juncture that Satan attacked again.

Inasmuch as it would be easier to lead the Jews into apostasy if they didn't have a permanent place to worship God, Satan desired to prevent the rebuilding of the Temple. Samaritan enemies of the Jews resisted the rebuilding of the Temple so severely that all building activity ceased for at least sixteen years (Ezra 4:1–5,24). God counteracted this satanic move by raising up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to exhort the people to continue rebuilding the Temple. As a result, the building activity began again in 520 B.C. (Ezra 5:1–2).<sup>3</sup>

Satan threatened to stop the building again through a letter sent to King Darius of Persia by more enemies of the Jews (Ezra 5:3–17). God countered this move through the king. Darius found Cyrus' decree concerning the Temple, then ordered the Jews' enemies not to interfere with the building activity but to give the Jews material assistance for the Temple. Darius even threatened to execute anyone who would hinder the project (Ezra 6:1–12). Thus, the Jews finished the Temple in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:13–16).

During the reign of King Xerxes (486–465 B.C.), Satan attempted again to annihilate the people through whom the Redeemer was to come.<sup>4</sup> Haman, the prime minister of Persia, persuaded the king to decree that all Jews should be executed on a certain day (Esther 3:7–15). God countered this attack by bringing the king to authorize a new decree permitting the Jews to defend themselves at the prescribed time of execution (Esther 4–9). Thus, God's people were preserved.

Satan was determined to get the Jews in Palestine involved in apostasy again. Inasmuch as Israel had gone apostate on a grand scale several centuries earlier through the marriage of Israelite men to foreign, pagan women, there was good reason to believe that the same method could work again. In



violation of the Law numerous Jewish men, including Temple priests and political leaders, married foreign, pagan women. These forbidden unions led the Jews into idolatrous practices once more (Ezra 9:1-2). God countered this new outbreak of apostasy by sending Ezra, a teacher of the Law, to Palestine in 458 B.C. with a decree from King Artaxerxes I. This decree commanded Ezra to establish a centralized government in Jerusalem, to teach God's Law to the Jews of Palestine, and to punish any Jews who refused to obey it (Ezra 7). Ezra ordered the Jewish men to repent of their sin and to put away their pagan wives (Ezra 10). Thus, the spread of apostasy was stopped.

In 445 B.C. Nehemiah received from Artaxerxes I a decree granting permission and aid to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> As long as the walls remained broken down, the Jews in Palestine remained subject to great affliction and reproach; therefore, it was to Satan's advantage to keep the walls down. Thus, the Jews' enemies tried to prevent the rebuilding of the walls through derision and threat of armed aggression. But God used Nehemiah to urge the Jews to build with weapons in hand. Next, the enemies laid traps to get rid of Nehemiah, but God gave him wisdom to avoid them. Thus, the walls were rebuilt in fifty-two days (Nehemiah 1-7).

Satan continued to persist. After a while, pagan people were allowed to live with the Jews in Palestine; a former pagan enemy was given a Temple chamber in which to live; the Jews stopped paying the tithe, thereby causing the Temple to be deserted by its ministers; merchants were allowed to desecrate the Sabbath by conducting business on that day in Jerusalem; Jewish men married pagan women again; the people offered blemished sacrifices to God; the priests dishonored God by their actions; the Jewish men divorced their wives; and the people called evil good and concluded that it was useless to serve God (Nehemiah 13; Malachi). God countered all these evil tendencies through the preaching of the Prophet Malachi and the reforms instituted by Nehemiah.



*The Message of the Prophets*

The Old Testament prophets foretold many things concerning the coming Redeemer. They pictured Him in two major ways: as the suffering Servant who would die to pay the penalty of man's sin (Isaiah 52:13—53:12), and as the glorious King who would establish the theocratic rule of God's kingdom over the world again (Isaiah 9:6–7; Daniel 7:13–14).

The prophets revealed that, when the Redeemer would establish the future theocratic kingdom, He would begin to reverse all the tragic consequences of man's sin. For example, He would change animal nature, so that all animals would be completely tame again (Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25); He would reverse the effects of death by healing all diseases and deformities (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5–6), eliminating hazards (Ezekiel 34:25–29), and increasing the lifespan of man (Isaiah 65:20,22); He would restore the fertility of the earth to such an extent that there would be a great growth and fruitage of trees (Isaiah 55:13; Ezekiel 47:12; Joel 2:21–22), a huge multitude of fish (Ezekiel 47:9–10), an abundance of grain and wine (Joel 2:24; Amos 9:13), and such a superabundant supply of food in general that famine would be abolished (Jeremiah 31:12–14; Ezekiel 34:27–29; 36:29–30; 47:12; Joel 2:24–26; Zechariah 8:11–12), He would control the environment for the benefit of man (Ezekiel 34:26–27), even healing its pollution (Ezekiel 47:1–12), and He would abolish war and injustice (Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:2–5; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9–10; Micah 4:1–3).

The prophets called the coming Redeemer the Anointed One (Psalm 2) or Messiah (Daniel 9:25–26) and indicated that He would rule God's future, theocratic kingdom as a descendant of David, sitting on David's throne (Isaiah 9:6–7; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:14–17; Ezekiel 34:23–24; 37:24–25). Thus, He would fulfill the Davidic covenant (Jeremiah 33:20–26).

Finally, the prophets declared that the coming theocratic



kingdom would not be set up until Israel would repent or turn back to God (Deuteronomy 30:1–10; Jeremiah 31:16–40; Ezekiel 36:32–38; Zechariah 13:9; Hosea 3:4–5). Thus, the nation of Israel is a key to the establishment of the earthly, political form of the kingdom of God.

### The Grecian Period

Persia served God's purpose for her—the restoration and reestablishment of Jews to their homeland. Once that purpose was fulfilled, God no longer needed her for His service. Thus, in 334 B.C. the Persian Empire was invaded by a Greco-Macedonian army under the leadership of Alexander the Great.<sup>6</sup> By 331 B.C. the Persian Empire had been totally consumed by the new empire from Greece.<sup>7</sup>

Alexander pushed his armies as far east as the Punjab area of India.<sup>8</sup> When his soldiers could not keep up the intense forced marches, Alexander discharged them in groups. Many of these men “settled where they were discharged, married native women, and raised their families.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, a common language and culture were established “from east to west and down into Egypt . . .” and they were the Greek language and culture.<sup>9</sup>

After Alexander died suddenly in 323 B.C., his empire experienced internal struggles as his generals and their successors fought for control.<sup>10</sup> Eventually Ptolemy and his successors gained control of Egypt and Palestine, while Syria, Babylonia, and Asia Minor went to the House of Seleucus.<sup>11</sup>

The Jews fared well under the Ptolemies, but, after the Seleucids of Syria captured Palestine from the Ptolemies in 199 B.C., the situation of the Jews changed drastically.<sup>12</sup> Satan attacked the people of the Redeemer again. One of the Seleucid rulers, Antiochus Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.), determined to impose a common Greek culture and religion upon his whole kingdom.<sup>13</sup> This involved an attempt to stamp out the Jewish worship of God. To accomplish his goal, Antiochus abolished Jewish sacrifices.<sup>14</sup> He entered the holy of



holies of the Temple and desecrated it, sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt offering, and outlawed circumcision and Sabbath observance.<sup>15</sup> He erected heathen altars, enforced pagan sacrifices, instituted the worship of Zeus and other Greek deities, and executed any Jews found with a copy of the Law.<sup>16</sup> Compliance with these policies involved God's people in apostasy again.

One party of Jews accepted the policies of Antiochus enthusiastically. This party received its leadership from the priestly aristocracy.<sup>17</sup> Eventually this group became known as Sadducees.<sup>18</sup> God counteracted this move toward apostasy through the orthodox party of Jews. Under the leadership of a family of men called the Maccabees, this party fought Antiochus and his forces until religious freedom was won and the Temple worship fully restored in 164 B.C.<sup>19</sup> Eventually the orthodox group became known as Pharisees.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Beginning of the Roman Period*

Greece fulfilled God's purpose for her—the provision of a universal language for the Mediterranean Sea world. Later this common language would facilitate the spread of the gospel and the New Testament Scriptures. After the Greek Empire completed her service, she fell to Rome. In 63 B.C. Palestine came under Roman domination.<sup>21</sup> Eventually the Romans appointed Herod the Great to be king of Judea for them. Herod began his reign in 37 B.C.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ*

Although Satan tried repeatedly either to destroy Israel or to make her totally apostate throughout Old Testament times, God continually preserved a faithful remnant of His people. Finally, through a young woman who was a member of that remnant, the Redeemer came. An angel announced to Mary that her Son was to be called Jesus, the Son of the most High, and that He would receive the throne of His father



David and a kingdom which would last forever (Luke 1:26–33).

Jesus Christ was born around 5 or 4 B.C.<sup>23</sup> Thus, “when the fulness of time came, God sent forth” the Redeemer, “born of a woman . . .” just as He had promised in Genesis 3:15 (Galatians 4:4). Despite his many frantic attempts to prevent the Redeemer from coming, Satan had failed. The Person who was the key to the fulfillment of God’s purpose for history was now present on earth. He had become human flesh for the purpose of putting away man’s sin by the substitutionary sacrifice of Himself, so that He could crush Satan and the works of his kingdom (John 1:1,14,29; Hebrews 2:14; 9:26; 1 John 3:8).

Now that the Redeemer had come, Satan’s goal was to prevent the Redeemer from dying the substitutionary death and from establishing God’s theocratic kingdom. Satan tried several methods to accomplish his goal. For one thing, he tried more than once to destroy the Redeemer before He could finish His work. Not long after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, King Herod, in an attempt to kill the new Davidic King, ordered the slaughter of infants in that city (Matthew 2:16). God countered that move by forewarning the Redeemer’s foster father to flee with Him to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15). When Jesus preached to His hometown people for the first time, they became so enraged that they tried to kill Him (Luke 4:16–29). Jesus countered that attempt by miraculously walking through their midst unharmed (Luke 4:30). On at least two other occasions the Jews attempted to stone Jesus to death, but He escaped (John 8:59; 10:31,39). The Redeemer recognized that these attempts on His life were prompted by Satan’s kingdom (John 8:37–47).

A second method of attack that Satan used against the Redeemer was apostasy. If he could get Jesus to depart from God’s purpose for Him, he could accomplish his goal. Apostasy had worked well with the human race and Israel; he hoped it would work with the Redeemer. To this end,



Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11). In one of the temptations Satan offered to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, if He would bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8–9). This was Satan's way of offering Jesus the rule of the world without the sufferings of the cross. Had Jesus accepted the offer, Satan would have disrupted God's purpose for history. In response to Satan's offer, Jesus rebuked him and refused to become apostate (Matthew 4:10).

Satan tried more than once to make the Redeemer abort His mission (Luke 4:13). Once he used Peter to try to persuade Jesus to avoid the cross, but again Jesus rebuked him (Matthew 16:21–23). In spite of all his efforts, Satan could not make the Redeemer become apostate. As a result, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus could say that the prince of the world had nothing in Him (John 14:30). Jesus had rejected every scheme that would make Him a party to Satan's cause. Thus, it was only a matter of time until Satan would be cast out of his sphere of authority in the world (John 12:31).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus offered the promised theocratic kingdom to Israel. As noted earlier, the prophets declared that the theocratic kingdom would not be set up until Israel would meet the spiritual requirement of repentance. For this reason John the Baptist—who prepared the way for the coming of the Redeemer, Jesus, and the disciples all preached the same message: “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1–2; 4:17; Mark 6:7–13). Since Israel was a key to the establishment of the kingdom, Jesus commanded His disciples not to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but only to Israel (Matthew 10:5–7). For the same reason, when Jesus was approached by a Gentile woman for help, He said: “I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:21–26).

Through His miracles Jesus demonstrated that right then Israel had in her midst the One who possessed the powers necessary to establish the kingdom. When He cast out demons, He demonstrated His ability to devastate the



kingdom of Satan (Matthew 12:22–30). His miracles of casting demons into pigs, and causing a fish with a shekel in its mouth to come to Peter, displayed His ability to control animal nature (Mark 5:1–20; Matthew 17:24–27). His healing of all kinds of diseases and deformities (Mark 3:1–6; 7:31–37; John 5:1–9; 9:1–41) and raising of dead people to life (Matthew 9:18–26; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:1–44) revealed His ability to reverse the effects of death. When He cursed a fig tree and caused it to die (Matthew 21:18–22), produced huge multitudes of fish (Luke 5:1–11; John 21:1–9), turned water into wine (John 2:1–11), and expanded small amounts of food to feed crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 (John 6:5–14; Mark 8:1–9), He demonstrated His ability to produce the great fruitage of trees, multitude of fish, abundance of wine, and superabundance of food that the prophets declared would characterize the theocratic kingdom. His calming of storms and walking on water displayed His power to eliminate hazards and control the environment for the benefit of man (Matthew 14:24–33; Mark 4:35–41).

It is interesting to note that, when Jesus sent out His disciples to preach repentance and the kingdom to Israel, He gave them power to perform miracles characteristic of conditions to come in the literal, earthly, theocratic kingdom (Mark 6:7–13; Matthew 10:5–8). The purpose of Jesus' and the disciples' miracles was twofold: first, to point out Jesus as the One who could establish the theocratic kingdom with its regeneration of the earth (Matthew 19:28), and secondly, to substantiate the declaration that the kingdom could be set up if Israel would repent as a nation.

Satan hated the preaching of the kingdom message. He knew that, if Israel were to believe the declaration and were to repent, he and his kingdom would be crushed. Therefore, it was imperative to him that the nation reject the offer of the kingdom. To this end he worked diligently in the hearts of the Jews to prevent the message from taking root and bearing fruit in them (Matthew 13:18–22). The end result was that the majority of Jews did not believe the declaration concerning the kingdom. They wanted the literal, political, theocratic



kingdom (Mark 11:8–10), but they didn't want to meet the spiritual requirement necessary to have it. They felt that, because they were Abraham's descendants, they didn't need to repent (Matthew 3:7–9). Thus, the nation of Israel rejected the offer of the theocratic kingdom.

By prompting Israel to reject the offer of the kingdom, Satan ironically sealed his own doom (John 12:31; 16:11). In accordance with His sovereign plan for the world, God used Israel's rejection as His means of providing the substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin (John 12:37–40; Acts 2:22–23; 4:27–28). Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom by rejecting the Redeemer who made the offer (John 12:37–38). In its rejection of Jesus as its King, Israel cried for His crucifixion (John 19:13–16). When Jesus was crucified, He died as "the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His death paid the price that satisfied or propitiated divine justice (Romans 3:24–25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

In light of this, Jesus' statement, "It is finished," at the end of His cross experience, was most significant. John states that He made this statement after knowing that all things were finished (John 19:28–30). This statement meant that, through His crucifixion, the Redeemer had finished the work that was necessary for God to fulfill His purpose for history—the crushing of Satan and his kingdom, the establishment of the theocratic kingdom, and the reversal of the tragic consequences of man's sin. This statement must have sent a shudder through Satan. In spite of all his efforts to prevent the Redeemer from coming and doing His work, he had failed. The sovereignty of God had overruled.

On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose bodily from the dead (Matthew 28:1–10; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). His resurrection was significant for several reasons. First, it was evidence that His death, as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin, had satisfied the divine justice of God. Had God not been satisfied, He would not have raised Jesus (Acts 2:24). Secondly, it proved that the Redeemer had won for man a victory over death and over Satan, who has the power of death (Hebrews 2:14; 1 Corinthians 15:20–24). Thirdly, it



was the assurance that the establishment of the theocratic kingdom had not been abandoned by God. When Jesus died, His disciples lost hope that He would establish the theocratic kingdom (Luke 24:13-21). The resurrection made the Redeemer available again to set up and rule the kingdom at God's appointed time (Acts 1:3,6-7).

For forty days Jesus gave proof of His bodily resurrection by making numerous appearances (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7; Luke 24:36-43). At the end of those days He ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19), there to remain until Israel would repent (Matthew 23:37-39).





## CHAPTER 5

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE REMOVAL OF ISRAEL FROM THE PLACE OF BLESSING THROUGH THE REFORMATION

#### *The Removal of Israel From the Place of Blessing*

When Israel rejected her Messiah, the promised Redeemer, it was obvious that she was not prepared to make herself right with God through repentance. The Scriptures make it clear, however, that eventually the day will come when the nation will repent. At that time the Redeemer will return and set up the theocratic kingdom, bringing to the earth “seasons of refreshing” and “the times of restoration of all things” that God promised through the prophets (Acts 3:19–21; Zechariah 12:10—13:2; Ezekiel 36:25–38).

Because of Israel’s attitude of unbelief toward Jesus, God removed her temporarily from the place of blessing that He had given her centuries before through the Mosaic covenant. Israel will continue to remain outside that place of blessing until she repents by believing in Jesus Christ. Until that time comes, God does a special work among the Gentiles, bringing many of them to salvation from sin (Romans 11:11–27).

#### *The Anti-Semitism of the Present Dispensation*

Because Israel rejected her Messiah, she doomed herself to centuries of desolation and persecution at the hands of the

Gentiles (Matthew 23:37–38; Luke 19:41–44). This persecution will continue until the nation is willing to change its mind about Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:39). Being outside the place of blessing, Israel cannot rely upon God to protect her from all harm. Her unbelief has exposed her to vicious anti-Semitism.

It would appear that Satan is the one who prompts the anti-Semitism even of this present dispensation. Although Israel is in a state of spiritual rebellion against God, she still is a key to the establishment of the theocratic kingdom. Being aware of the fact that the kingdom will not be set up until Israel repents, Satan has been striving to prevent that repentance. The surest way to prevent it is to annihilate Israel before she can repent. Thus, throughout this present dispensation, one of Satan's goals has been the destruction of Israel.

In trying to accomplish his goal Satan has used several agencies for anti-Semitism. In ancient times he used the Roman Empire to slaughter thousands of Jews while Rome crushed their rebellions. During the Middle Ages he used the predominant, organized church to institute the Inquisition against Jews. In the era of the Second World War he used Nazi Germany to annihilate some six million Jews in Europe. More recently he has used communism in Russia. Ultimately it is Satan's desire to destroy Israel that lies behind the Arab-Israeli dispute of the Middle East.

Although God permits Israel to be chastened in this manner for her unbelief, He does not permit the total annihilation of the nation. The Jews are a vital key to the fulfillment of His purpose for history; therefore, God is careful to preserve at least a remnant throughout history, just as He had promised (Jeremiah 30:9–11; 46:27–28; Ezekiel 6:8; 14:21–23; 36:16–31; Romans 9:27–28).

### *The Birth of the Church*

God never allows the world to go on without a witness concerning Himself and His universal kingdom. With Israel



being out of joint spiritually, God was determined to raise up a new witnessing agency. Instead of being comprised of one nation, this new agency was to consist of people from many nations and tongues. Instead of being limited just to Jews, its membership was to include believing Jews and Gentiles, bound together in harmony as one body (Ephesians 2:11—3:11). This new agency was to be known as the Church, the body and bride of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4–6; 5:22–32; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). It was to continue in the world until God would begin to work with Israel again to bring her to repentance.

Immediately before His ascension, Jesus delivered a special commission for the Church: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). He also promised to give the Church the power to perform this witnessing ministry by giving it the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Several days after Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, and the Church was born (Acts 2).

### *The Early Attacks Against the Church*

With the birth of the Church, Satan had a new enemy to contend with. The Church’s preaching of the gospel posed a serious threat to his kingdom. Everytime the gospel is preached to members of Satan’s kingdom, they are in danger of believing it. Such belief transfers a person out of Satan’s kingdom of darkness and into the universal kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13; Acts 26:17–18; Galatians 1:4). Thus, in order to prevent the membership of his kingdom from being depleted, Satan determined to blind the minds of his people to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3–4) and to attack the Church.

Satan’s attacks have had two major thrusts. On the one hand, he assaults the individual members of the Church by tempting them (1 Thessalonians 3:5; Acts 5:3), accusing them (Revelation 12:10), persecuting them to the point of death (Revelation 2:10; 1 Peter 5:8), hindering their work (1 Thessalonians 2:18), trying to defeat them (Ephesians 6:10–



20), and deceiving them into believing wrong things by sowing among them his people who fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:13–15; Matthew 13:38–39). It is because of Satan's war against Christians that they are exhorted to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3–4), to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–18), and to resist Satan (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9). Thus God counters these attacks by giving the Christians adequate equipment and instruction.

On the other hand, Satan attacks the Church as an organized institution. Very shortly after the Church had begun, Satan tried to annihilate it through persecution by Jewish enemies of the gospel. The apostles were imprisoned (Acts 4–5; 12); Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 6:8–7:60); James, the brother of John was slain with a sword (Acts 12:2); and James, the half-brother of Jesus, had his brains dashed out with a club.<sup>1</sup>

The early phase of Jewish persecution was organized and executed by a young Jew named Saul. Saul wreaked havoc on the Church (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2). God countered this satanic persecution by converting Saul to Christianity while he was on the road to Damascus to persecute more Christians (Acts 9:1–22). Eventually Saul became Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 13:9; 14:15). Thus, the greatest opponent of the gospel became the foremost proponent of it. Sometime after Saul's conversion, Herod Agrippa took over the leadership of the persecution of the Church, but God countered that by causing Herod to die a premature death (Acts 12:1, 21–23).

While Satan attacked the Church outwardly with persecution, he assaulted it inwardly with apostate teachings. False teachers penetrated the Church with such heresies as legalism, gnosticism, and antinomianism (Acts 20:29–30). God counteracted this move toward apostasy through the apostles, who taught and wrote against these false views (Galatians; Colossians; 1 and 2 John; Jude), and through the decision of the apostles and elders at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).



### *The Roman Persecution*

The Jews were not able to destroy the Church. In fact, the more they persecuted the Church, the more the Church grew (Acts 8:1,4–8,25,40; 11:19–21; 12:24; 13:49). Thus, in order to accomplish his goals of annihilation and apostasy, Satan turned to the greatest military power on earth—Rome.

Nero (54–68 A.D.) was the first Roman emperor to persecute the Church.<sup>2</sup> He turned Christians into living torches to illuminate his gardens at night.<sup>3</sup> He also was responsible for having Paul beheaded and perhaps Peter crucified head downward.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to 250 A.D. most of the Roman persecutions were local and sporadic.<sup>5</sup> From 250 A.D. on they became universal in scope.<sup>6</sup> Christians were ordered to participate in worship of the emperor and pagan gods.<sup>7</sup> Such worship involved apostasy for God's people. When many Christians refused to comply, the government made the total annihilation of the Church and its Scriptures an empire goal.<sup>8</sup> Satan was determined to destroy not only God's people but also God's book that foretold his defeat. The cruel persecution and execution of Christians were carried out systematically. Thousands were martyred for their faith.

God countered the persecutions by using them to His own advantage. Once again, the more the Church was persecuted, the more it grew. In fact, the Church grew so amazingly during the persecutions that Tertullian, a church leader who lived during the time, made a statement to the effect that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Apostasy of the Church*

In 311 A.D. Emperor Galerius issued an edict granting toleration to the Church.<sup>10</sup> Then, Emperor Constantine granted total freedom to Christianity through the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D.<sup>11</sup> By 324 A.D. Christianity had become the officially favored religion of the empire.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in 380



A.D., Emperor Theodosius I issued an edict that made Christianity the official and only religion allowed within the empire.<sup>13</sup> Now the government began persecuting other religions.

At first the transition from being the persecuted to being the exclusive religion of the state appeared to be a tremendous victory for the Church. However, time was to prove that the "victory" was a defeat in disguise. Satan recognized the union of church and state as a golden opportunity to introduce apostasy to the church. Once Christianity was made the only religion allowed, local churches became swamped with large masses of pagan people who wanted to become "Christians." Through this contact the pagans found the worship of the churches to be considerably different from that of their temples. Whereas the pagans had bowed and prayed to images of their gods, goddesses, and national heroes, the churches had no images. The pagans had had one goddess whom they adored as the queen of heaven; they also had had numerous heathen festivals, blood sacrifices, and priests. The churches had none of these. Because of these differences, the pagans felt that the church was irrelevant to them.

Because of this pagan attitude, many Christians began to panic. They feared that, unless the church were made relevant to the pagans, they never would be reached for Christ. In their zeal to make the church relevant, these Christians attempted to Christianize the pagan practices and then adopted them into the church. They substituted images of the apostles and martyrs for images of gods, goddesses, and national heroes. Veneration of Mary as the queen of heaven replaced veneration of the pagan queen. Communion was changed from a memorial to a sacrifice, elders were transformed from teachers into priests, and heathen festivals were incorporated as special church days.<sup>14</sup>

At first it appeared as if this process of adopting the methods of Satan's kingdom in order to reach the members of that kingdom was correct. The immediate results were



spectacular. Local church memberships swelled as the pagans professed to be Christians now that the churches seemed more relevant to them. However, time was to demonstrate that most of these people were still pagans at heart—Christianized pagans to be sure, but still pagans. The end result was that the churches became largely pagan in practice and membership. Through time “Ambitious, worldly, unscrupulous men sought office in the church for social and political influence.”<sup>15</sup> In western Europe they built the church into a monstrous political machine that gradually usurped power over the state.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the organized church of the Middle Ages became characterized, not by true, Biblical *Christianity*, but by “a more or less corrupt *hierarchy* controlling the nations of Europe.”<sup>17</sup>

As organized Christendom became more apostate, even the true gospel became perverted. The Scriptures had revealed and the apostles had taught that salvation was solely by God’s grace through personal faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 4:1—5:2; Galatians 2:15–16,21). As paganism came into the church, the heathen concept that human works are essential for salvation was added to the gospel. As a result, the only way of salvation became hidden from huge masses of people for centuries. Thus, while Satan was leading the organized church into apostasy, he also was changing the message that it was to preach, so that members of his kingdom could not be transferred into the kingdom of God.

Satan realized that, if he were to keep the organized church apostate and the gospel hidden, he had to pervert the interpretation of Scripture and even prevent the study of the Bible if possible. In 230 A.D. Origen, a church leader who had been influenced greatly by pagan philosophy, published a work in which he developed an allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>18</sup> Instead of giving the words of the Bible their common, ordinary meaning, this method searched for symbolic, hidden meanings. It distorted the meaning intended by the writer into what the interpreter



wanted to find in the Bible.<sup>19</sup> Because of Origen's position and influence, this method strongly affected the organized church.

As the church became more pagan, it had to look for support outside the Scriptures to justify its apostate teachings. Thus, eventually it departed from the view that the Bible is to be the church's sole source of authority for faith and practice. It placed church tradition on a level of equal authority with the Bible and through time asserted that the church is the ultimate source of authority.<sup>20</sup> Finally, it forbade the laity to read the Scriptures and strongly opposed the translation of the Bible into the languages of the common people.<sup>21</sup>

Because he hated the teaching concerning the future, political, theocratic kingdom, Satan was determined to obliterate it from the belief of the church. In the East the concept of the future kingdom was "inseparably bound up with the Christian faith down to the middle of the second century."<sup>22</sup> But by the close of the second century, church leaders in Alexandria, Egypt, began to attack the concept. Having been influenced by the pagan philosophical concept that anything physical is evil, they rejected the idea of a future kingdom with physical blessings as being too carnal and sensual.<sup>23</sup> Origen's allegorical method of interpretation helped to advance this rejection.<sup>24</sup>

In the West, belief in the future, theocratic kingdom was still a point of orthodoxy in the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> It began to disappear there at the same time that the church became united with the state and began to go apostate.<sup>26</sup> The writings of Augustine (354–430 A.D.), the most influential ancient church leader in the West, caused most of the organized church to reject the belief in the coming kingdom.<sup>27</sup> In *City of God* Augustine taught that God's promised kingdom is present on earth now in this present age; that the organized church is that kingdom; that Satan is bound now; that eventually the church will conquer the world, and that the kingdom age will end at the second coming when the history of this world will end.<sup>28,29</sup>



Augustine rejected the idea of a future kingdom for the same reason as the Alexandrian leaders.<sup>30</sup> In addition, with the church having become the exclusive religion of the empire, it did appear that it was conquering the world.<sup>31</sup> In order to hold to his position, Augustine used Origen's allegorical method to interpret Old Testament prophecies about the kingdom.<sup>32</sup> Augustine's view led the Church of Rome to conceive of itself "as the universal church destined to bring all within its fold."<sup>33</sup>

As a result of the inroads of paganism, the perversion of the gospel, the abuse and neglect of the Scriptures, and the rejection of the theocratic kingdom concept, the organized church of the Middle Ages departed drastically from what God had intended it to be. It was because of its apostate condition that the church instigated such things as the military crusades against other professing Christians as well as Muslims, and the Inquisition against Jews and others who disagreed with it.<sup>34</sup> Satan used the church of the Middle Ages as a tool to bring dishonor to God and His kingdom.

### *The Threat of Islam*

Although the church had moved into apostasy after the fourth century, it still retained certain elements of divine truth, such as the deity of Christ. It also was very careful to preserve copies of the Scriptures, even though it did abuse their interpretation and study. As long as any Christian truth and the Scriptures continued to exist, Satan could not rest. He felt it imperative to rid the world of these elements of the kingdom of God.

Satan attempted to accomplish his goal through the rise of a new religion in Arabia. Mohammed began his career as the founder of Islam in 610 A.D.<sup>35</sup> By the time of his death in 632 A.D., he had converted all of Arabia to his faith.<sup>36</sup> During the next one hundred years, his followers conquered Palestine and Syria, all of the eastern Roman Empire except Constantinople, all lands eastward to India, Egypt, all of North Africa, and the greater part of Spain.<sup>37</sup> In much of this



conquered territory the church dwindled and died because of its apostate condition.

The forces of Islam threatened to conquer all of Europe, thereby converting it into a Muslim continent. God countered this threat, however, when the Franks and other European tribes, under the leadership of Charles Martel, defeated the Muslims at the Battle of Tours in 732 A.D.<sup>38</sup> Thus the Church, the Scriptures, and such truths as the deity of Christ were saved from possible extinction.

### *The Divine Counteraction of Church Apostasy*

From the time that the organized church began to go apostate to the time of the Reformation, God preserved a small remnant of people who opposed the apostate church. Here and there throughout Europe were groups of people who repudiated the authority of the Roman Church and its pope and rejected its pagan beliefs and practices. They held to the true gospel, regarded the Scriptures as their source of authority, encouraged the study of the Bible by lay people, observed the Lord's Supper as a memorial rather than a sacrifice, and had pastors instead of priests. Many of these groups believed in the future, political, theocratic kingdom.<sup>39</sup> Some, such as the Waldensians, sent out lay evangelists to preach the gospel to the members of Satan's kingdom. Satan could not tolerate such true, Biblical faith and witness. Therefore, he prompted the organized church to persecute these groups severely. Special crusades and the Inquisition were used against them. Some groups were annihilated. Many people were tortured, executed, or driven from their homes and countries to be hunted like fugitives.<sup>40</sup>

Toward the end of the Middle Ages God raised up several men who began calling for reform within the organized church. Among the most prominent of these were John Wycliffe of England (1324–1384 A.D.), John Huss of Bohemia (1369–1415 A.D.) and Jerome Savonarola of Florence, Italy (1452–1498 A.D.). Wycliffe opposed monasticism, the authority of the Roman Church and pope, the idea that



God was determined to use the Renaissance as His tool to prepare Europe for the coming Reformation. Thus, in northern Europe the movement developed into a religious humanism. There scholars became more interested in the Judeo-Christian past than in the classical past. "They were more interested in man as a human being with a soul than they were in him as a rational creature."<sup>47</sup> They studied Biblical manuscripts in the original languages, applied the humanistic techniques to the study of the Scriptures, reemphasized the historical-grammatical interpretation as opposed to the allegorical, produced grammars and dictionaries of the Biblical languages, and printed the Greek New Testament. The invention of printing by movable type in 1455 A.D. made the printing and distribution of the Scriptures and the writings of reformers easier, more rapid, and less costly.<sup>48</sup> All of this made it possible for men to see how drastically the church of their day had changed from the Church of the New Testament.<sup>49</sup>

During the time of the Renaissance, a strong middle class and a spirit of nationalism developed. God used these also to prepare Europe for the Reformation. People were beginning to resent the fact that a foreign pope ruled their national churches, appointed their church leaders, demanded a tax to support him and to build ornate churches in Rome, exempted his clergy from their national laws and courts, and dictated political policies to their governments.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Reformation*

God's greatest counteraction of the apostasy in the organized church was a new spiritual movement known as the Reformation. This movement developed in several stages. It began in Germany in 1517 when Martin Luther, a monk and professor of the Roman Church, started to write and speak against the wrong beliefs and practices of the church. Luther called for reform, but the church refused to heed the call. It condemned and excommunicated Luther and demanded that he be delivered for trial and punishment. With the new wave



the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, and the corruption of the priesthood. He urged that the church reform itself to New Testament standards. He was instrumental in producing the first Bible in the English language, and he sent out lay preachers called Lollards. These were persecuted and finally extinguished.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of reading Wycliffe's writings, Huss began proclaiming the same evangelical concepts in Bohemia. His views caused so much trouble for the Roman Church that the pope excommunicated him and ordered him to appear before the Church Council of Constance. At first Huss refused to go, but finally consented when the emperor promised him safe conduct. At the council he was condemned and burned at the stake in spite of the emperor's guarantee. The church claimed that faith did not have to be kept with heretics.<sup>42</sup>

Savonarola was a fiery preacher of reform who attacked corruption in government, society, and the church. On one occasion he even wrote that the pope was not a Christian. He was excommunicated, imprisoned, hanged to death, and burned by order of the church.<sup>43</sup> Thus Satan tried to squelch these attempts to reform the church to God's standards.

### *The Renaissance*

Between 1350 and 1650 A.D. Europe experienced a great cultural change which marked the transition from medieval to modern times.<sup>44</sup> A new interest in the classic literature and art of Greece and Rome and in science was aroused. This new awakening has been called the Renaissance.

Satan attempted to use the Renaissance as his instrument for turning the thoughts of man away from God altogether. Thus, in southern Europe the movement developed into a secular, skeptical humanism with man, rather than God, being the focus of attention. People did continue to observe the formal ritual of the church, but "the tendency was to forget the claims of God upon the individual in daily life."<sup>45</sup> Even the popes of the time were more interested in culture than in spiritual things.<sup>46</sup>



of nationalistic spirit, the princes of northern Germany supported and protected Luther. Thus, the Lutheran Church was able to be formed. When the Diet of Spires (1529) condemned Lutheran doctrine and made rulings against Lutheranism, the northern princes registered a formal protest. From that time on they and all others who called for the apostate church to reform were called Protestants.<sup>51</sup>

While the Reformation was beginning in Germany, it also was springing up in Switzerland. Under the leadership of Ulric Zwingli, the canton of Zurich established the Reformed Church. The Presbyterian Church was started in Geneva through the work of John Calvin.<sup>52</sup> The Anabaptist movement came into existence and grew in Germany and Switzerland under such men as Grebel, Manz, and Hubmaier.<sup>53</sup>

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway adopted the Lutheran faith.<sup>54</sup> In France groups of people adopted Protestantism and became known as Huguenots.<sup>55</sup> In northern Netherlands most people accepted the Reformed faith, while a good-sized minority became Anabaptist in belief but called themselves Mennonites.<sup>56</sup> Under the fiery preaching of John Knox, Scotland accepted the Reformed faith.<sup>57</sup> The Reformation also began in England when Henry VIII broke the English Church away from Rome.<sup>58</sup>

The Protestant Reformation emphasized three New Testament truths. The first was justification by faith alone. The pagan concept of human works for salvation was rejected, and the original, pure gospel was declared once again. The second was the priesthood of the believer. The Reformers did away with the Roman Church's wide cleavage between clergy and laity. It stressed the New Testament concept that every Christian is a priest before God and thereby has the privilege of ministering and of studying the Bible on his own. The third was the concept that the Bible, not the church, is the final authority for faith and practice.<sup>59</sup>





## CHAPTER 6

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE COUNTER REFORMATION THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHY OF RITSCHL

#### *The Counter Reformation*

With the rise and widespread growth of Protestantism, Satan was confronted with a twofold task. First, it was imperative that he prevent the entire organized church from going Protestant. Secondly, it was essential that he get rid of Protestantism, since it had rejected much of the apostasy and was preaching the true gospel. In order to accomplish his task, Satan used a new wave of religious fervor that began to energize the Roman Church in response to the Reformation. This revitalization of the Roman Church became known as the Counter Reformation.

One important phase of the Counter Reformation was the Council of Trent which met from 1545 to 1563. Although this council did adopt some healthy reforms, it reasserted the Roman Church's continued belief in many of its traditional doctrines, such as the following: justification is by faith plus subsequent works; the seven sacraments are channels of grace; the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice; and the tradition of the church is of equal authority with the Scriptures. For the first time the church declared the apocryphal books to be canonical and of equal authority with the Bible. The council turned the Roman Church's beliefs into a dogma that was binding upon all its people.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Satan succeeded in preventing the entire Roman Church from returning to New Testament principles.

The Counter Reformation gave birth to the Jesuits, a monastic order devoted to fighting Protestantism and spreading the Roman faith. Although they frequently used unethical means, the Jesuits were able to regain Poland, southern Netherlands, and large parts of Germany for the Roman Church. Their missionaries spread their faith to several new lands.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Church instituted the Index, a list of books which its people were forbidden to read. The Index kept many of the church's members from reading Protestant literature.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Satan was able to prevent these people from becoming exposed to New Testament teaching.

Finally, the Counter Reformation employed persecution in its fight against Protestantism. Governments controlled by the Roman Church were prompted to annihilate the Reformation faith. The Spanish government led in this activity in behalf of the church. It established the Inquisition both in Spain and the Netherlands. Multitudes of people were tortured and burned. Many were forced to recant their Protestant views. In the Netherlands the Spanish troops instituted a reign of terror that executed at least seventeen thousand.<sup>4</sup>

In France the government persecuted the Huguenots fiercely from 1538 to 1559, then conducted eight bloody wars against them from 1559 to 1598. In the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 some ten to twenty thousand Protestants were butchered for their faith.<sup>5</sup>

In England Queen Mary Tudor (1553–1558 A.D.) executed some three hundred Protestant pastors and forced the rest to flee the country.<sup>6</sup> When Queen Elizabeth I restored a moderate form of Protestantism to the land, the pope began training Jesuits to conduct guerrilla warfare in England. He also persuaded the king of Spain to conquer England for the Roman Church by sailing the great "invincible" Spanish Armada against her.<sup>7</sup> The Armada sailed in 1588, but she suffered a very embarrassing defeat as a result of good English seamanship, contrary weather, and other circumstances beyond human control.<sup>8</sup> Thus God destroyed the



that church and state should be kept separate and that no one church should enforce its beliefs upon others. One reason for this conviction was the fact that many Anabaptists rejected the idea that the church is the kingdom promised in the Old Testament. They believed in a future, theocratic kingdom on earth.

Satan attempted to stamp out this belief in the future kingdom by trying to destroy the Anabaptist movement. Because the Anabaptists disagreed with certain views of the other Protestants, they were persecuted severely.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Satan used Protestants to attack other parts of the Reformation faith. Although many Anabaptists were put to death, God continued to preserve the movement.

Since he could not destroy those who taught the doctrine of a future kingdom, Satan tried to disgrace the doctrine. He used a group of fanatical Anabaptists at Munster, Germany, who introduced to the concept of the kingdom extreme ideas and practices contrary to Scripture. Their radical practices not only disgraced belief in a future kingdom, but also brought further persecution from Protestants and Romans.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Apostasy of the Modern Era*

#### *The Rise of Rationalism and Empiricism*

Satan had not been able to destroy Protestantism, but he still was determined to rid the world of the true gospel, the belief that the Bible was God's inspired revelation to man, and the hope of God establishing His future, theocratic kingdom with all its blessings for man. With this goal in view he prompted the rise of some new movements that would trigger a chain reaction of apostasy. This apostasy would affect the whole world, including much of Protestantism.

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a new intellectual movement known as rationalism developed in Europe.<sup>15</sup> The rationalists stressed the importance of human reason and the senses, as opposed to divine revelation, as the key to discovering truth. Men began to look at the universe



naval power of the Roman Church's most powerful ally and established England as the champion of Protestantism in Europe.<sup>9</sup> This defeat aided the cause of Protestantism not only in England, but also in the Netherlands, where it limited Spanish power.<sup>10</sup>

By 1609 much of Europe was divided into two armed camps of Protestantism and Romanism. For political as well as religious reasons these two camps waged the Thirty Years' War against each other (1618–1648 A.D.). Finally, when the war was settled by the Peace of Westphalia, Lutheranism and Calvinism became recognized religions, and the boundaries of Protestant and Roman Church states were fixed.<sup>11</sup> This ended the Reformation Era and the systematic persecution of the Protestant movement by the Roman Church. God had preserved Protestantism from external destruction.

### *The Internal Attacks Against Protestantism*

While Satan was attempting to destroy the Protestant witness of the gospel through outside forces, he also was working to disgrace and destroy the movement from within. Although all the Protestant groups had rejected much of the apostasy of the Roman Church, many still carried with them some of the Roman beliefs and practices. Most groups continued to reject the concept of a future, theocratic kingdom. They believed that their church was the kingdom of God on earth, and that it was to operate basically as Israel had in Old Testament times. This meant that the Protestant Church and the state were to be united, with the state enforcing the church's policies. No one was to be permitted to hold beliefs contrary to the official teaching of the church. These concepts were contrary to Scripture. Because of these wrong beliefs, some Protestant groups resorted to the same tactic as the Roman Church—the bloody persecution of those who held other beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Through this means Satan brought disgrace to the Protestant movement.

The Anabaptists disagreed strongly with the policy of persecuting those of contrary belief. They were convinced



as a machine that operates solely by natural law, not by divine providence or intervention. As the knowledge of non-Christian religions grew, some thinkers began searching for a natural religion that would be common to all men apart from the Bible and the Church.<sup>16</sup>

The rise of rationalism was accompanied by the introduction of empiricism. Empiricists believed that no idea should be adopted unless its truth has been established through repeated tests that can be observed by the human senses.<sup>17</sup> In other words, it is reasonable to believe only those things that can be demonstrated through the scientific method. When carried to its logical conclusion, empiricism ruled out belief in truths that came by divine revelation. Such truths deal with spiritual things, and spiritual things are not subject to scientific tests that can be observed by the senses.

### *The Development of Deism*

Rationalism and empiricism gave birth to a new religion called deism. This new faith began in England during the seventeenth century, then spread to France, Germany, and America in the eighteenth. It could be called a natural religion or religion of reason.<sup>18</sup> Deism accepted the rationalistic concept that the universe is governed solely by natural law apart from divine providence or intervention, but it could not explain the origin of the universe apart from God. Thus, one of its major teachings was as follows: a Supreme Being created the universe, but, after He created it, He totally withdrew Himself from it and had nothing more to do with it.<sup>19</sup>

This major concept led deism to several conclusions. First, there has been no supernatural revelation of truth to man since the world began. Secondly, there is no such thing as miracles. Thirdly, the Bible is not a supernaturally inspired book. Fourthly, Jesus Christ was not God incarnate in human flesh.<sup>20</sup> Deism had to draw these conclusions in order to avoid the idea that God has been active in human history.

Another major teaching of deism was this: since there has



been no supernatural revelation, man's only means of discovering truth is through human reason by use of the scientific method. Deism practically ignored the problem of human sin. It believed that man is essentially good and perfectible; therefore, it expected continued progress to a more perfect order on earth.<sup>21</sup> In other words, deism believed that man would establish an earthly utopia through his own efforts, without the supernatural intervention of God. This new faith proved to be an ancestor of liberal Protestantism.<sup>22</sup>

*The Divine Counteraction of Rationalism,  
Empiricism, and Deism*

Through rationalism, empiricism, and deism Satan was striking blows at the gospel, the Bible, and the concept of a future, theocratic kingdom. God countered these movements in order to preserve a continuing witness for the kingdom of God. The counteraction in Germany was in the form of the pietist movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. People of established churches began to gather together for Bible study and prayer and to emphasize a life of piety. Pietism gave birth to the Moravian Church, which, in its warm evangelical zeal, sent out missionaries to preach the gospel.<sup>23</sup>

The counteraction in England was the eighteenth century Wesleyan revivals, which reached millions with the gospel, gave birth to the Methodist Church, and saved England from national disaster.<sup>24</sup> In America God used the Great Awakening, which evangelized multitudes through such men as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards.<sup>25</sup>

*The Philosophies of Kant,  
Hegel, and Schleiermacher*

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Satan began to build a superstructure upon the foundation of modern apostasy laid through rationalism, empiricism, and deism. The original building materials used in this super-



structure were the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher.

Kant (1724–1804 A.D.) declared that knowledge is limited to the world that the human senses can perceive. Since man can know only what his senses experience, there can be no knowledge that comes through special, divine revelation.<sup>26</sup> In fact, there is no such thing as special revelation. Religious beliefs can be based only upon the universal concept of duty or law that all men possess.<sup>27</sup> In other words, man's concept of God and spiritual things must be derived from his daily, moral experience.<sup>28</sup> Kant's philosophy ruled out the belief that the Scriptures are God's special revelation to man.

Hegel, who died in 1831 A.D., concluded that the true essence of Christianity resides in its great ideas, not in the historical events that gave birth to them. Indeed, whether or not the ideas are based upon true historical facts is unimportant. Thus, although the ideas of Christianity are derived from the Bible, their truth is not dependent upon the historical accuracy of that book.<sup>29</sup> Thus, according to Hegel, an inerrant Bible is not essential to true Christianity.

Schleiermacher (1768–1834 A.D.) proposed that, at its heart, true religion is neither belief in nor obedience to a system of theology or a code of moral absolutes. Instead, religion is "an immediately experienced relation to God."<sup>30</sup> Thus, doctrine and standards of conduct are not important. What is important is experience. The Bible is not a divinely inspired book of instruction. Instead, it is a human interpretation of man's religious experience. Thus, according to Schleiermacher, the Scriptures are not the final authority for faith and practice. Only living religious experience is the final authority.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Development of Destructive Criticism*

These new philosophies of religious authority and of the meaning of revelation made possible the development of destructive criticism of the Bible.<sup>32</sup> This movement appeared at the time Schleiermacher was completing his work.<sup>33</sup>



Protestant scholars began to abandon the belief that the Bible is a divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant record of divine revelation to man.<sup>34</sup> They substituted the idea that the Scriptures are a human record of the development of man's religious consciousness.<sup>35</sup> Thus, although they possess some records of historical value, the Scriptures contain widely differing concepts of God and His will for man, legends, fiction, errors, and contradictions.<sup>36</sup>

Scholars began to evaluate the Bible like any other piece of literature.<sup>37</sup> They questioned the reliability of the Old Testament, especially its record of creation, the flood, and the development of Israel.<sup>38</sup> Some concluded that the Gospels did not always present an accurate record of the true Jesus of history: therefore, it was necessary "to distinguish the words and character of Jesus from the interpretations which the church had later placed upon Him and His work."<sup>39</sup> Predictive prophecy and miracles were rejected as unauthentic, and the teaching about the future, theocratic kingdom was either rejected or interpreted in terms of nineteenth century thought.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, Satan, knowing that the account of his rebellion and defeat is presented in the Bible, was trying desperately to discredit that book. He directed his attack especially against those portions of Scripture which record the origin of himself and man, the first promise of his fall and the Redeemer, the prophecies of his defeat and the establishment of the theocratic kingdom, and the miraculous powers that the Redeemer possesses to destroy his kingdom and to establish God's.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Rise of Commercialism*

With science giving birth to many new discoveries and inventions, and with the industrial revolution providing the means for mass production of goods, man was faced with the glowing prospect of an unprecedented abundance of material things. Numerous people made mammon their god and



materialism their philosophy of life. Satan used commercialism as a tool for getting man so absorbed with temporal things that he had no time to think about God or his own destiny after this life.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Birth of Communism*

Along with its promise of material benefits, commercialism brought some grave injustices. Working people often were exploited, as their employers made themselves wealthy at their expense. The situation became so severe that it was only a matter of time until someone would cry for a revolution to change the social order. That time came when Karl Marx published his *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867).

Marx believed that history is controlled by economic factors and is characterized by continual class conflict. Thus everything is either a direct or indirect result of the economic struggle between workers and capitalists. Even religion is a product of economic forces.<sup>43</sup> Capitalists use its concept of punishment and reward in the hereafter as their means of persuading the workers to accept quietly their exploited status in the present life. Thus, religion is the "opiate of the people."<sup>44</sup> In the class struggle religion should be annihilated.

Because of these Marxist ideas, communism waged war against the Bible, the organized church, belief in the existence of God and life hereafter, and the concepts of human sin and divinely revealed moral absolutes.<sup>45</sup> In place of these it substituted materialistic atheism and the hope of a future man-made utopia on earth. This utopia would be a communistic society in which every man produces according to his ability and shares in the goods of society according to his needs.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in communism Satan not only had an enemy of Christianity but also a counterfeit hope to substitute for belief in the future, theocratic kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

*The Impact of the Evolutionary Theory*

The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 shook the scientific and religious worlds. In his work Darwin offered evidence for the gradual evolution of living things from simpler to more complex forms, gave a reasonable explanation as to how evolution takes place—through the process of natural selection or survival of the fittest, and used his theory “to account for the origin of the human race.”<sup>48</sup>

Through time the theory of evolution was applied to religion as well as biology. The impact of this application upon Christianity was earthshaking. First, by asserting that man evolved from lower forms of life, it struck at the Biblical view that man originated by a direct, special, creative act of God.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, by setting back the date of man's origin by aeons of time, it raised doubts about the centrality of the Judaeo-Christian influence in the history of mankind.<sup>50</sup> Thirdly, by questioning the Biblical account of the fall of man, it caused a new definition of sin. To evolution sin is merely the remnant of animal instinct in man.<sup>51</sup> Fourthly, this new concept of sin led to new views concerning redemption. There was no need of a redeemer dying as a substitute to pay the penalty of man's sin. Thus, Jesus Christ was not the Redeemer making vicarious atonement.<sup>52</sup> Redemption is the gradual process of educating man to overcome his animal instincts.<sup>53</sup>

Fifthly, evolution portrayed Christianity, the Bible, and the concept of one God as being products of the evolutionary development of man's religious consciousness.<sup>54</sup> Thus the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions is not that of absolute truth as opposed to error. Instead, the various religions represent different stages in the development of man's religious insight, with Christianity being the most advanced stage thus far.<sup>55</sup> Sixthly, with religion being in a continual state of development, there can be no such thing as moral absolutes that are binding upon all men at all times.



“Good conduct is merely those actions deemed suitable by each generation for the conduct of society.”<sup>56</sup>

Evolution caused two different mental attitudes among those who accepted it as being true. One attitude was that of despair. Some people found it impossible to reconcile the horrible “red in tooth and claw” struggle and waste of the evolutionary process with the existence of a good and sovereign Creator.<sup>57</sup> This destroyed their belief in God. Everything appeared to exist and operate purely by chance. They concluded that there is no intelligent purpose for life and the existence of man.<sup>58</sup> A modern day evolutionist who came to this conclusion expressed it this way:

Man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is material.<sup>59</sup>

For many nineteenth century Protestants evolution caused an attitude of optimism. They concluded that evolution is the process that God used to create and to maintain life. Thus, God works within natural processes instead of by miraculous intervention in the natural order. This view stressed the immanence of God—the idea that He is everywhere present in nature.<sup>60</sup> It rejected the Biblical concept of a perfect order coming through the direct intervention of God in the establishment of His future, theocratic kingdom. It substituted the idea that the world would become increasingly better through human effort.<sup>61</sup> In evolution Satan had a powerful tool with which to attack Christianity in many different areas.

### *The Divine Counteraction During the Nineteenth Century*

While Satan was assaulting the kingdom of God with faulty philosophies, destructive criticism, commercialism,

communistic ideas, and evolution, God was countering his attacks with an active witness of His own. The nineteenth century was a time of unprecedented Protestant missionary activity. Mission boards were founded both in England and America. The gospel was carried to India, Africa, China, and other lands by such pioneers as William Carey, David Livingstone, and Adoniram Judson.<sup>62</sup> America experienced the second awakening and numerous frontier revivals during the earlier part of the century.<sup>63</sup> As some schools became apostate, God raised up new ones, such as Andover and Princeton Seminaries, to train men in the true faith.<sup>64</sup> Over the course of the century great evangelistic efforts were put forth by such men as Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and R. A. Torrey.<sup>65</sup> Through all of this many souls were added to the kingdom of God.

### *The Philosophy of Ritschl*

During the latter half of the nineteenth century the philosophy of Ritschl began to affect Protestant thinking. Ritschl (1822–1889 A.D.) agreed with Schleiermacher that all religious belief is grounded in religious experience, but he also agreed with Kant that religious experience is essentially moral in nature.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Christianity is not doctrine; instead, it is totally the daily practice of life.<sup>67</sup>

Ritschl emphasized the love of God so much that he suppressed the concepts of God's holiness and justice and denied divine wrath. This caused him to reject the idea of original sin and the doctrine of the punishment of the lost.<sup>68</sup> According to Ritschl, the kingdom of God is "the organization of humanity through action inspired by love."<sup>69</sup> He believed that the goal of religion is the victory of man over his bondage to nature.<sup>70</sup> Ritschl's philosophy helped to develop the social gospel.<sup>71</sup>



## CHAPTER 7

### THE CONFLICT FROM LIBERAL PROTESTANTISM THROUGH THE PRESENT

*The Apostasy of the Modern Era Continued*

*The Principles of Liberal Protestantism*

Through the combined influence of the philosophies and movements of the nineteenth century, Satan succeeded in getting much of Protestantism to go apostate. Liberal Protestantism developed during the latter part of the century and reached its peak in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Its development could be described as a Protestant response and adjustment to nineteenth-century trends in scientific, philosophical, economic, and political thought.<sup>2</sup> The liberals thought it was necessary to reinterpret the gospel so to be able to present it in the thought forms of the modern world.<sup>3</sup>

Several principles became characteristic of most of liberal Protestantism. First, there was a spirit of openmindedness and tolerance toward new modes of thought and toward other groups within Christendom. Theological and denominational differences were considered insignificant.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, there was confidence in the scientific method as a means to truth not only in the study of the material world, but also in the realm of Biblical criticism and the history of religion.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, a strong feeling against theological dogmatism developed. Men became skeptical about the possibility of

obtaining sure knowledge of ultimate reality.<sup>6</sup> Fourthly, there was a desire to emphasize similarities rather than differences. Liberals began to look for the common features of Christianity and non-Christian religions. They stressed the immanence of God so as to eliminate the differences between the supernatural and the natural and between God and man.<sup>7</sup>

Fifthly, liberal Protestantism expressed great confidence in man and his future. It believed that man and his society were perfectible.<sup>8</sup> Sixthly, it stressed the authority of individual, religious experience as opposed to Biblical or church authority.<sup>9</sup> Seventhly, it made the example and ethical teachings of Jesus Christ central to everything.<sup>10</sup> Eighthly, it criticized many of the traditional beliefs of Protestantism. Many things formerly believed were now regarded as unessential to Christianity. Belief had to be accommodated to new knowledge and ways.<sup>11</sup> Ninthly, liberalism became permeated with social idealism. It concluded that the church is responsible for righting social wrongs and for bringing the social structure into conformity with the ideal of the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>12</sup>

Liberal Protestantism developed a theology that would agree with its basic principles. In its doctrine of God it stressed the immanence of God so strongly that it practically assumed a unity of God and the world. It erased the clear distinction between the infinite, perfect God and the finite, corrupt world. It stated that God is present in all the processes of nature.<sup>13</sup>

This emphasis upon the immanence of God colored almost all the rest of liberal theology. It disposed of belief in miracles and the distinction between the supernatural and the natural.<sup>14</sup> In the doctrine of man, it implied that man has a spark of divinity within him. Thus, there was no fall of man or inherited guilt; man is essentially good.<sup>15</sup> In the doctrine of the church, it denied the sharp distinction between the Church and the world; thus, it de-emphasized the importance of the organized church.<sup>16</sup> Concerning eschatology, it rejected the concept of eternal punishment and stressed the fulfillment of life now rather than the hereafter.<sup>17</sup> With



regard to revelation, the notion that God is in everything led to the conclusion that He can be known in every experience.<sup>18</sup>

Concerning the doctrine of Christ, it implied that Jesus was only a man, being subject even to error. However, as a man, Jesus raised humanity to its highest level by allowing God to be supremely immanent in Him. He was not the kind of Redeemer that Paul and the Church pictured. Instead, He was the great Teacher of ethics who gave the greatest example of how man can allow God to become supremely immanent in him.<sup>19</sup> In the matter of salvation, the idea of immanence ruled out the concept of God entering a person's life in an instantaneous moment of conversion. The liberals concluded that, since every person is born with God in him, conversion is simply a matter of educating a child to act like Christ.<sup>20</sup> Finally, in the area of religious authority, liberalism says that, because God is immanent in each person, the final court of appeal for faith and practice is the individual's own reason, conscience, and intuition. Nothing is authoritative for an individual unless it is meaningful to him personally.<sup>21</sup> In essence, this means that each person is his own authority, and that there are no absolutes of faith and conduct to which all men are responsible.

### *The Development of the Social Gospel*

Although commercialism had produced many social injustices, there was a great air of optimism that arose in society during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It reached its peak in the years before World War I.<sup>22</sup> The amazing accomplishments of science, the concept of evolutionary progress, and the liberal Protestant ideas of the perfectibility of man and of God working immanently in the world all contributed to the belief that the transformation of society was possible.<sup>23</sup> Men began to preach the message of social change so extensively that eventually their message became known as the social gospel.

Liberal Protestant advocates of the social gospel declared



that the church should be concerned primarily with this world.<sup>24</sup> It should divert its efforts from the salvation of individuals to the salvation of society.<sup>25</sup> The church should bring in the kingdom of God on earth instead of teaching about a future, theocratic kingdom to be established in Person by Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> It can do this by reconstructing the entire social order in accord with the ethical teachings of Jesus.<sup>27</sup>

In its theology the social gospel movement emphasized the immanence of God as the basis of social oneness. It concluded that, since God is immanent in all men, He is the Father of all, and all men are brothers.<sup>28</sup> Christ's redeeming work was regarded as the battle against religious bigotry, graft, political power, injustice, mob action, militarism, and class contempt.<sup>29</sup> The church was to save the world, not be saved out of it. Thus Satan was able to pervert the true gospel again and to turn much of Protestantism away from preaching it.

### *The Divine Counteraction of Liberal Protestantism*

While liberalism and the social gospel were permeating Protestantism, God was preventing total apostasy by maintaining His witness in the world. He did this through various means. In addition to reaching the unsaved through the evangelistic campaigns of Moody, Torrey, and Sunday, He fortified believers through the establishment of Bible and prophetic conferences at numerous places.<sup>30</sup> These conferences helped to ground Christians in the basic doctrines of Christianity and to confirm their hope in the second coming of Christ to establish the theocratic kingdom.

As many Christian schools yielded to the liberal apostasy, God raised up new schools to take their place in the task of giving sound, Christian instruction. One interesting aspect of this phase of the counteraction was the rise of the Bible school movement. From the 1880's through the early decades



of the twentieth century numerous Bible schools were founded in such cities as New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. New Christian liberal arts colleges and seminaries also were begun.<sup>31</sup>

In 1909 two Christian laymen financed the publication of a set of volumes that defended the basic beliefs of Biblical Christianity against the apostasy of the day. The set was called *The Fundamentals*, and hundreds of thousands of copies were sent to church leaders all over the world. Because of the title of these volumes, those people who held to the doctrines defended therein came to be called Fundamentalists.<sup>32</sup> The publication in 1909 of the Scofield Reference Bible, with its explanatory notes, aided lay people in their understanding of the Scriptures and emphasized the hope of the future, theocratic kingdom.

From 1918 to 1931 the Fundamentalists challenged the growing liberal control of several of the major Protestant denominations. This led to the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversies within various church groups.<sup>33</sup> As the leadership of various denominations surrendered to liberalism, many Fundamentalists withdrew from those organizations and began new denominational and interdenominational groups.

### *The Birth of the Ecumenical Movement*

The latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the birth of a movement toward unity within Protestantism. This movement was prompted by several factors. First, many people were disturbed over the contrast between Biblical statements about Christian unity and the divided state of Protestantism.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, liberalism de-emphasized the importance of theology.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, there was the desire to end the confusion and duplication of efforts caused by church divisions on the mission field.<sup>36</sup> Fourthly, the social gospel advocates wanted Christendom to give a united expression of concern about the ethical and social issues of



redeeming act of God can overcome it.<sup>46</sup> It stated that the final authority for faith and practice is not religious experience.<sup>47</sup> It concluded that, although the church is obligated to speak about social evils, the social order cannot be transformed progressively into the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>48</sup> These theological statements sounded so much like orthodoxy that eventually the movement became known as the new orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy.

Although neo-orthodoxy frequently used the language of orthodoxy, it often gave the language unorthodox meanings. In several crucial areas it differed with orthodox, Biblical Christianity altogether. In the area of God's revelation to man, neo-orthodoxy declared that the final authority for faith and practice is not the Bible. In fact, God never has given divine revelation through declared statements of truth, whether spoken or written. According to neo-orthodoxy, the final authority is the revelation of Himself that God gives to an individual when He encounters him personally.<sup>49</sup> This means that no divine revelation is the same for all men. God may reveal one thing to one man, but something else to another. The Word of God to an individual is whatever God used to speak to that individual personally. Thus, if God speaks to a person through a passage of the Bible, then that passage *becomes* the Word of God for that person. But, if God never speaks to a person through the Bible, then, the Bible never is the Word of God for him.<sup>50</sup> This view also means that, even if a man wanted to learn something about God through nature, he could not do so unless God spoke to him personally through some aspect of nature. In essence, neo-orthodoxy believed that there is no objective revelation of God in the Bible or nature.

Neo-orthodoxy differed from orthodox Christianity in other ways. It believed that the original Scriptures contained error. It held that the Biblical accounts of creation, the Fall of Man, and the last judgment are not referring to actual historical events. Instead, these accounts are myths or symbolic ways of presenting important truths that could not be expressed in any other way.<sup>51</sup> Actually, the Fall was not a



the modern world.<sup>37</sup> Fifthly, through various youth and student movements young people expressed their impatience with the differences that divided Christendom.<sup>38</sup>

In response to these factors the Federal Council of Churches was formed in 1908 in America to provide a central organ for united Protestant action on social problems, to afford opportunity for the denominations to understand each other better through calm discussion of their differences, and to facilitate cooperation on the mission field.<sup>39</sup> At first the emphasis was upon interdenominational cooperation on a worldwide scale, rather than upon the organizational merger of all bodies into one.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Development of Neo-orthodoxy*

The great scope and horrors of World War I severely crippled the social gospel concept of the gradual perfecting of man and society. The optimism of liberal Protestantism didn't seem to agree with reality.<sup>41</sup> The war had demonstrated the corruption rather than the supposed inherent goodness of man. There was need for a revision of liberal, Protestant theology. Thus, in 1918 a new theological movement began within Protestantism in western Europe.<sup>42</sup> Through time it spread to America and dominated much of Protestant thinking even into the post-World War II era.

This movement began as a severe criticism of the fallacies of liberal theology. It accepted some concepts from existentialism, a nineteenth-century movement which had been critical of liberal theology and the institutional church.<sup>43</sup> In its theology the new movement stressed the sovereignty, transcendence, wrath, and judgment of God, as well as His mercy and love. God is infinitely above and supreme over the world. This emphasis was opposed to the liberal concept of the immanence of God.<sup>44</sup> The new movement also emphasized that Christ was more than just a man; He was God come to man—truly God and truly man.<sup>45</sup> It also stressed the sinfulness of man and of every human movement, and indicated that sin is so deeply rooted in man that only a



once-for-all, past event; it is the turning away from God that is true of every human life and action.<sup>52</sup> Neo-orthodoxy stated that the kingdom of God will be established by God, not man, but that its establishment is beyond history. The Biblical idea of the future, theocratic kingdom is a symbol. Its purpose is to picture a divine purpose for history. It is God's way of promising a final victory over evil beyond history.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, although neo-orthodoxy opposed numerous liberal tendencies, it also continued several other of those tendencies.<sup>54</sup> The fact that it used Biblical language to express unbiblical concepts made some of its teachings an even more deceptive tool than liberalism in Satan's war against the kingdom of God.

### *The Denial of a Personal God*

Satan realized that one of the best ways to establish the permanent, visible form of his kingdom in the world was to prompt man to deny the existence of his archenemy—God. Thus, from the time of rationalism on, he used one philosophy and movement after another to move man closer to his goal. Rationalism propagated the idea that the world operates purely on a natural basis without the intervention of God; empiricism ruled out belief in truths that come by revelation; deism denied the existence of all forms of special revelation in the world; Kant declared that there can be no knowledge of God through revelation; Hegel raised doubts about the record of God's actions in the world being true, historic fact; Schleiermacher placed the final authority for faith and practice in experience rather than in revelation; destructive criticism rejected the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, supernatural revelation of God to man; commercialism took man's thoughts away from God and spiritual things and focused them on the material things of this life; communism pictured belief in God as being detrimental to man; evolution in its purest form denied the necessity of a



personal God to explain the existence of man and his world; Ritschl placed final authority in experience rather than in revelation; the amazing accomplishments of science gave man confidence that he could solve his own problems apart from God; liberal Protestantism came close to equating God with nature; the social gospel declared that man could establish the kingdom of God on earth without the supernatural intervention of God; and neo-orthodoxy taught that there is no objective way that man can learn about God.

Through all of these movements and philosophies Satan kept eating away at the vital organs of man's belief in a personal God with the cancer of unbelief. However, until the era of World War I, the disease remained well hidden. Man still had an outer shell of belief intact; therefore, at least he continued to pay lip service to God, although in actual practice he often acted as if God didn't exist.

As the twentieth century has progressed to the present, Satan has used one tragic situation after another to chip away more and more of man's outer shell, thereby revealing his growing unbelief in a personal God. The brutalities of modern warfare, as displayed by World War I, the failure of the League of Nations to maintain peace, the economic hardships of the depression of the twenties and thirties, the systematic annihilation of six million Jews by Naziism, the mass death and destruction of World War II, the threat of the annihilation of humanity through a nuclear holocaust, the injustices of racism, the frustrating conflicts of Korea and Vietnam, the hideous assassination of key leaders, the constant friction of the Middle East crisis, and the frightening prospects of environmental pollution and the population explosion have progressively driven more and more of humanity to conclude that man is all alone in his predicament. Because man has rejected the Biblical testimony that his situation is caused by his own rebellion against God, he has the problem of understanding "human misery, tragedy, and bestiality."<sup>55</sup> Since human suffering does exist, he concludes that it must be because there is no good, personal,



sovereign God.<sup>56</sup> Thus modern man sees all of life and reality on one level—the material, and the cry is made that the idea of a personal God is dead.<sup>57</sup>

### *The Results of the Denial*

The results of this growing denial of the existence of a personal God are becoming increasingly evident in the present day. First, there is a deep-seated attitude of despair. Despair permeates current art, literature, music, philosophy, and theology. The denial of a personal God who controls history and moves it toward an ultimate good end has led man to conclude that there is no intelligent good purpose for history. Science and materialism have not been able to provide humanity with a satisfying replacement for a personal God—a replacement that would give man meaning for life and comfort from the fear of death.<sup>58</sup> As society seems to be falling apart in disorder and conflict, it appears to man that everything happens purely by chance; thus there is no rhyme or reason to this present existence.

In reaction to his despair, man tries desperately to find release or meaning through many vain means: alcohol, materialism, constant entertainment, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, drugs, astrology, spiritism, Satan worship, witchcraft, Oriental mysticism, and other false religions. When the individual finds that none of these things satisfies, in a sense of futility he frequently turns to suicide. The denial of a personal God is leading man to preach the following message: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Secondly, there is a growing cry for revolution, especially among the younger generations. The young man interprets the horrible suffering and ominous trends of the twentieth century as an indication that chance is moving him toward ultimate destruction. Thus, he feels that the very existence of humanity is threatened. Since his society has conditioned him to reject the idea of a Supreme Being, he concludes that



there is no good, personal, sovereign God who can intervene to prevent the annihilation of humanity. Therefore, he believes that, if humanity is to be saved from its predicament, man must do the saving by forcing a radical change in the present social order that is leading toward destruction. As a result, the young man cries for revolution; demonstrates against war, injustice, and pollution; and attacks racial bigotry, poverty, the government that conducts war, the university that researches weapons of war, and the industry that produces weapons and pollutes the environment. He feels so desperate about the preservation of man that, when his nonviolent methods of producing change fail, he advocates the use of violence to obtain the goal.

Thirdly, there is a painful generation gap. In response to their own despair, the older generations have substituted their material accomplishments in place of God. Any threat to these accomplishments is viewed with alarm. Thus the present social order which enabled them to make these gains has become their security in an insecure world. As a result, they regard the attack of youth upon the present order as an attack upon the only security they have. Thus they cry for law and order. The young believe that the only way to preserve humanity is by radically changing the present social order, but the old are convinced that the only way is by maintaining stability within the status quo. In between are people who don't know what to believe.

Fourthly, there is a denial of the existence of moral absolutes which are binding upon all men. Man concludes that, if there is no personal God, who has revealed to man in a propositional way how He wants him to live, who holds man responsible for his actions and who has a future judgment reserved for him, then there can be no standards of morality to which humanity must conform. The traditional standards of morality, then, must have been made by men in a past age which is no longer relevant to this one. Since all standards of morality are man-made, who has the right to say that one standard is right and another is wrong? Morality is a



relative, not an absolute, thing. It is relative to the attitude of the individual and to the circumstance in which he finds himself.

As a result of this line of thinking, the so-called new morality, playboy philosophy, and situation ethics are replacing the old standards. Because man has rejected the Biblical revelation of God, he has rejected the moral absolutes of God contained in that revelation. As a result, although God severely condemns all sexual relationships outside of marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, divorce and remarriage, drunkenness, murder, obscene language, public display of nudity, immodest dress, stealing, and lying, man not only is denying that such things are wrong but also is pressuring society to approve such things as obscenity, homosexuality, free use of drugs, and abortion and to disapprove capital punishment. Some go so far as to call illicit and perverted sexual relationships a sacred experience. Permissiveness and lack of discipline are becoming the order of the day. Because man has rejected God, he is losing his human dignity (Romans 1:18–32). While he praises his new moral “freedom,” he becomes a slave to his own lusts.

Fifthly, there is a growing spirit of anarchy or lawlessness in society. This is closely related to the rejection of moral absolutes. Man is becoming progressively irritated with external restraints being placed upon his conduct. He reasons that, if there is no Supreme Being ruling over man to control his conduct, certainly mere men and man-made institutions have no right to do the same. Each individual should be free to do that which is right in his own eyes whenever and however he wants to. Charles Darwin gave expression to this attitude when he said:

A man who has no assured and no present belief in the existence of a personal God or a future existence with retribution and rewards, can have for his rule of life, as far as I can see, only to follow those impulses and instincts which are strongest or which seem to him the best ones.<sup>59</sup>



As a result of this attitude, man is acting more and more like a spoiled, pampered child who is determined to throw a temper tantrum if he can't have what he wants when he wants it. Thus, government finds its laws deliberately violated and attacked. Ironically, the very educational institutions that have espoused the godless philosophy that leads to anarchy, have been torn by student revolts against their rules and policies. Institutions of society in general find themselves pressured to become progressively unstructured.

Sixthly, there is an attempt to annul the distinctive roles and appearances that God ordained for the sexes (1 Corinthians 11:2–15; Ephesians 5:22–33). The conclusion is drawn that, since there is no God, these traditional distinctions were man-made, devised in past times by the male for the purpose of keeping the female in subjection. Thus, there is the emphasis of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Seventhly, there is an increasing desire to abolish the very institutions that God has ordained for the good of man. Since man is rejecting God and His Biblical revelation, he is concluding that such things as government, marriage, and the church are nothing more than institutions devised by men of another age. But who is to say that what was good for an earlier age in man's evolutionary development is good for this one? The very fact that these institutions are part of the present social order that appears to threaten man's existence, and the fact that they restrain personal moral conduct and desires, prompts a growing proportion of mankind to reject these institutions as being irrelevant today. A special target of rejection is those churches that believe in a personal God, the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, and submission to higher authority and the divinely revealed moral absolutes.

Eighthly, there is the growing conviction that the goal of man should be unity. If man is to save himself from suffering and destruction, he must unite into a common, human community.<sup>60</sup> There must be a movement toward one world government and a single world church or religion.<sup>61</sup> All



differences of opinion and convictions that divide man must be abolished.<sup>62</sup> In the area of religion, there can be no theological absolutes. The idea that a particular faith is the only true one because it alone was divinely revealed must be rejected. Since there is no personal God, there never has been a divine revelation of theological truth or of any religion. All dogmas and religions are man-made; therefore, they are relative. Thus, man has the right and even the obligation to abolish them for the sake of unity.

As a result of this desire for unity, the United Nations was formed and there is a movement toward economic and political union in western Europe. In the religious realm, the emphasis of the ecumenical movement has shifted increasingly from that of interdenominational cooperation to that of organizational merger into one body. The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948. Numerous Protestant groups have merged to form larger denominations. The Orthodox Church has been part of the ecumenical movement for several decades, and now overtures are being made between the Roman Church and the movement. The overall trend is toward the formation of a single world church. Some men even dream of the eventual union of all religions.

Another result of the drive toward unity is the current stress upon the themes of peace, love, and the brotherhood of man. Such slogans as "Love is the answer" have become very prominent, together with talk about the theology of love. The tragedy is that, because this love is divorced from God who is the source of true love (1 John 4:8), it ends up being a perverted, false love. Thus frequently those who scream the loudest about love and peace are the very ones who vent their wrath upon individuals and institutions that disagree with them or stand in the way of their desires.

Ninthly, there is a tendency to make a humanistic symbol out of Jesus Christ for support of the drive for unity and the radical change of the social order. Men are concluding that, since there is no God, Jesus Christ was not God incarnate in human flesh. His "divinity" was nothing more than His



perfect humanity. Because, as a perfect man, Jesus showed compassion for people, He is the ideal of humanity—the great symbol of human social concern.<sup>63</sup>

As a result of this emphasis, Jesus is being portrayed as the Great Revolutionary who wore long hair and a beard, trained a band of revolutionaries, and refused to take employment so that He could be free to roam the countryside fighting the establishment of His day. He is pictured on posters as a fugitive, wanted by the government for His subversive activities. His death is regarded as an example of what the establishment does to those who oppose it. The implication of all this is that, if the perfect man was a revolutionary fighting the established order of His day, those who desire to be perfect men today should do the same. They should follow Jesus, their Superstar.

Tenthly, there is the development of a pantheistic, religious attitude that deifies man. Man has within him the inherent need to worship something. Since he has rejected the personal God, the only thing left for him to worship is the material world of which he is the highest, supposedly-evolved representative. Thus, man is concluding that the secular realm is the sacred one.<sup>64</sup> He has come to believe that, what traditionally has been called a relationship to God, is not a relationship to a Supreme Being who is absolute in power and goodness. Instead, it is a new life for others. Thus, God in human form is the man who exists for others.<sup>65</sup>

The trend toward a pantheism that deifies man can be seen in the statements of several modern thinkers. Paul Tillich rejected the idea that God is a Person. He stated that God is the impersonal Ground and Source of Being—the Source of all that exists and upon which all things depend.<sup>66</sup> Thomas J. J. Altizer stated that, since man has denied the existence of a personal God he must as a race achieve human self-transcendence, which is “man-godhood.”<sup>67</sup> John Cooper wrote that theology must see the transcendent within this world; it must be based on a philosophy that recognizes no other world.<sup>68</sup>



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Roman Church scholar, stated that humanity is evolving into a collectivity of fellowship that will end ultimately in the unity of God and man.<sup>69</sup> He concluded that, when a person loves the earth and especially loves man who is the crown of the evolution of the earth, he is loving God.<sup>70</sup> Teilhard believed that scientific studies, communications, the growth of liberal social democracy, and the increasing dependence of man upon man that draws them into socialistically based communities, are forces that contribute to the growth of corporate humanity. In this corporate humanity "all men are to become part of one living organism that covers the face of the world."<sup>71</sup> Thus, the God to be worshiped is the one who will arise out of the eternally evolving human race.<sup>72</sup> In other words, according to Teilhard, man is becoming God through the evolutionary process.

Eleventhly, there is a naive denial of the sinful nature of man. Man has decided that, since there is no personal God, there never was an original rebellion against Him. The Biblical story of the Fall is a myth; therefore, there was not a time in history when man received a corrupt nature. Instead of possessing a sinful nature, man has some of the instincts of the lower forms of life from which he has evolved. As the process of evolution continues, man overcomes more and more of these animal instincts. Thus, one can expect improvement in man's actions.

This denial of man's sinful nature has led many to the false conclusion that humanity can live together as one harmonious unit without war, bigotry, and injustice if only there is a radical change in the social order. On the basis of the same denial, many naive souls have assumed that, if one nation lays down its arms and refuses to fight, all other nations will do the same.

Man's denial of a personal God is proving to be no light thing. It is producing earth-shaking, revolutionary results. The tragedy is that man believes he is following great wisdom in making this denial (1 Corinthians 1:21). The truth is that he is being blinded by Satan, the god of this age (2



Corinthians 4:4). It could be that Satan is using the results of man's denial to prepare the world for his coming attempt to establish the visible, political form of his kingdom on earth.

While Satan continues his work, God also is busy saving individuals from Satan's kingdom and adding them to the true Church—that body of people who personally have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE CONFLICT FROM THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH TO ETERNITY FUTURE

#### *The Rapture of the True Church*

When the time comes for God to prepare Israel for restoration to her original place of blessing, His purpose for the true Church in the world will have been fulfilled. Thus, at an unannounced time, Jesus Christ will return to the air above the earth and, in an instantaneous moment, will resurrect from the dead all true Christians who have died, transform the bodies of all true Christians still living, and snatch both groups out of the world together. The Christians will meet Jesus in the air and return with Him to Heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). This great event has been called the rapture of the Church. According to the Scriptures, it is the next prophetic event to be fulfilled.

Although the true Church is part of organized Christendom, it by no means comprises all of Christendom. Satan has sown many false professors of Christianity among the true believers. Thus, when the true Church is raptured out of the world, a large segment of Christendom will be left. Its entire membership will be comprised of people from Satan's kingdom. With the true believers gone, these false professors will have no difficulty in uniting all of Christendom into one, great, apostate church with its headquarters located in one great city (Revelation 17).





*The Seventieth Week of Daniel*

After the rapture of the Church, the world will enter a unique seven-year period, the latter half of which will be characterized by great, unprecedented tribulation (Matthew 24:21). Because Daniel foretold that this period would be the last of seventy periods of seven years planned by God for Israel, it has been called the seventieth week of Daniel. Because it will be characterized by tribulation, others have called it the tribulation period.

*The Purposes of Satan for the Seventieth Week*

In his war against the kingdom of God, Satan will have four major purposes for the seventieth week. These will be considered under separate headings.

*The permanent establishment of a visible, political form of his kingdom.* Satan's first purpose will be to establish permanently and worldwide a visible, political form of his kingdom. In order to do this, he must have a king who will rule this kingdom for him. This king must be a man who will do what Christ refused to do—turn himself over to Satan's control in order to rule the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8–10).

Satan will find such a man, but it will not be possible for him to reveal this one as his great king for the world until after two things happen (2 Thessalonians 2:3,6–7). First, there must be “the falling away” or “the apostasy” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Before the world will be ready to accept Satan's man as its ruler, man must experience a falling away from God. It could be that man's present, growing denial of the existence of a personal God is that falling away. It also could be that the revelation of Satan's man will be Satan's answer to the spiritual vacuum caused by that denial.

Secondly, before Satan's man can be revealed, the Restrainer must be taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:6–7). Although Satan has worked desperately throughout



history, he never has been able to accomplish his desires fully. The Holy Spirit has restrained the activities of his kingdom continually.<sup>1</sup> At the time that the Church is raptured and the world is left to the members of Satan's kingdom only, the Holy Spirit will cease His restraining work. This will afford God's enemy the opportunity to reveal his man.

This man is given several names in the Bible, and each name reveals an aspect of his character. He is called the Antichrist by the Apostle John. As the Antichrist, he will propagate man's present lie by denying the existence of the personal God and denying that Jesus Christ was God incarnate in human flesh (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

Daniel called this man the willful king (Daniel 11:36), and Paul named him the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:3,8). These titles indicate that he will be the ultimate expression of the current spirit of anarchy and lawlessness. He will tolerate no external restraints upon his own desires and no law except his own. He will demand that everyone do what he wants when he wants it. Like a spoiled child who throws a tantrum, he will vent his wrath upon everyone who dares to oppose him.

Paul also called him the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3). As a son receives his nature from his parents, so this one will receive his nature from Satan, the source of all evil that deserves perdition. He will be energized and controlled by Satan in such a way that he will perform the will of that great revolutionary (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:4). Having denied the existence of God, he will turn himself over to Satan to find meaning and purpose for life. Satan will empower him to be his superstar.

Antichrist will have an amazing career. After the Church is raptured, he will become the head of a revived form of the Roman Empire. Initially this empire will consist of a confederation of ten western nations (Daniel 2:40-43; 7:23-25; Revelation 13:1; 17:12-13). Through an impressive display of the supernatural powers given to him by Satan, he will deceive the western world into believing the lie that he is



the answer to all of its problems (2 Thessalonians 2:8–12). No doubt he will promise to unite humanity, bring law and order, radically change the social order, abolish injustice and poverty, bring total peace through the union of nations under one government, and solve the problems of pollution and population explosion in exchange for all authority being turned over to him. Being convinced that he has the powers necessary to fulfill his promises, and being frantic over its own failures to cope with the problems that seem to threaten mankind, the western world will acclaim Antichrist to be its savior-messiah and will grant absolute control to him. No doubt any who object to this dictatorship will be called an enemy of mankind.

In his rise to power, Antichrist will ally himself with the one apostate church of the western world for the purpose of gaining the powerful support of it and its people (Revelation 17). In addition, in the beginning of his rule as head of the western world, Antichrist will make a covenant with the nation of Israel, guaranteeing her protection from her enemies and freedom to reestablish her Old Testament worship (Daniel 9:27). Because of this promised protection, Israel will phase out her defense program and focus her attention upon peaceful pursuits (Ezekiel 37:11,14). She will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and reinstitute her Old Testament sacrifices. Thus during the first three and one-half years of his reign, Antichrist will appear to be very benevolent to most people in the western world, the apostate church, and Israel.

Satan will inspire Antichrist to pursue the goal of a worldwide kingdom. However, in his attempt to reach this goal, Antichrist will be opposed by a huge military power north of Palestine. Sometime before the middle of the seventieth week Syria and Egypt will challenge Antichrist's guarantee of protection to Israel by invading that land from the north and the south (Daniel 11:40). It may be that these nations will be persuaded to do this by the power to the north. In reaction to this invasion, Antichrist will rush his western army to the Middle East, crush Syria, and march



south to invade Egypt (Daniel 11:40–43). While conquering Egypt, he will hear disturbing news out of the east and the north (Daniel 11:44).

The news from the north may be to the effect that the great power north of Palestine has invaded Israel in response to the western world's intrusion into the Middle East (Ezekiel 38:1–16). When Antichrist will receive this news in Egypt, he will rush his armies north toward Israel with the goal of furiously destroying the northern invader (Daniel 11:44). However, before he will be able to get there, God will have destroyed the huge northern army supernaturally (Ezekiel 38:17—39:20).

This destruction of Antichrist's major opponent in the middle of the seventieth week will enable him to extend his rule to worldwide proportions. With no one left to challenge his authority, he will be free to do whatever he pleases. It is at that time that his false face of benevolence will come off and his true beastly character will be displayed. He will establish his headquarters in Israel (Daniel 11:45), will break his covenant with that country by forcing her to cease offering her Old Testament sacrifices (Daniel 9:27), and will destroy the apostate church (Revelation 17:16).

Having brought an end to these other forms of religion, Antichrist will erect an image of himself in the holy of holies of the Jewish Temple, will declare that he is God, and will demand that everyone worship him (Daniel 9:27; 11:36–37; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Satan will prompt him to do this, because through the worship of Antichrist he himself will receive worship (Revelation 13:4). Most of the people of the world will have no problem worshipping Satan's king (Revelation 13:8). As a result of the current philosophy that man is evolving toward deification or man-godhood, the world is being conditioned for this kind of worship. Because of Antichrist's supernatural powers, it will be easy for the world to conclude that he is the ultimate product of evolution; therefore, he should be worshiped as the representative of what man is becoming—deity.

Satan will give supernatural powers to another man to



enable him to be the high priest of the Antichrist cult. This man, called the false prophet (Revelation 16:13; 19:20), will develop and lead a highly organized religious system on behalf of the king (Revelation 13:11–18). With the development of this system, Antichrist will reach the peak of his career. He will be given authority to remain in his high position for three and one-half more years (Revelation 13:5).

*The destruction of all testimony for God.* In spite of the intense activity of Satan, God will save many people during the seventieth week. These people will carry on an active witness for God and Christ in the world. One of Satan's goals will be the total annihilation of all testimony about his Enemy. Thus, he will prompt the apostate church, Antichrist, and the false prophet to make war against God's saints (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:7,15; 17:6). Many believers will be martyred for their faith (Revelation 20:4), but the witness never will cease.

*The destruction of Israel.* Since the repentance of Israel will be a major key to the establishment of God's theocratic kingdom, Satan will continue to attempt annihilation of Israel during the seventieth week. Realizing that his time is growing short, he will attack the nation with extreme intensity (Revelation 12). When the Jews will rebel over the king's image being placed in their Temple, Antichrist will persecute them more severely than they have ever been persecuted (Matthew 24:15–20). Anti-Semitism will be the worst in history. For this reason Jeremiah referred to this period as "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:4–7). At the end of the seventieth week Satan will draw all the armies of the world to Palestine (Revelation 16:13–14,16). This will threaten the existence of Israel (Zechariah 14:1–2), but God will continue to preserve at least a remnant (Jeremiah 30:7).

*The gathering of the armies.* Satan's last purpose for the seventieth week will be to gather all the armies of the world together at Armageddon in Palestine. In order to accomplish this feat, he, Antichrist, and the false prophet will resort to demonic activity (Revelation 16:12–16). As the seventieth week nears its end, Satan will realize that Christ soon will



come to Palestine to establish the theocratic kingdom. For this reason he will want the military might of the whole world there to help him wage war against the Redeemer (Psalm 2:1-3; Revelation 19:19). This will be his last ditch attempt to prevent the theocracy from coming.

*The Purposes of God for the Seventieth Week*

In His war against the kingdom of Satan, God also will have four major purposes for the seventieth week. These will be considered under separate headings.

*The salvation of many people.* Near the beginning of the seventieth week God will save 144,000 Jewish men, seal them from all harm, and send them throughout the world to preach the gospel everywhere until Christ will return (Revelation 7:2-8). As a result of their evangelistic effort, a great multitude of Gentiles from every tongue, tribe, and nation will become saved (Revelation 7:9-17).<sup>2</sup> To the nation of Israel God will send two special witnesses who will dress like Old Testament prophets, perform great signs, and preach the gospel together with repentance in preparation for the coming, theocratic kingdom (Revelation 11:3-13).<sup>3</sup> Through their testimony many Jews will become saved, and they in turn will become witnesses (Revelation 12:17).<sup>4</sup> Thus, God will use the seventieth week to enlarge the membership of His kingdom.

*The crushing of the kingdom of Satan.* From the fall of man to the seventieth week God has been allowing Satan to try every means possible to overthrow the kingdom of God. Although God has been preventing Satan from accomplishing his goal, He has not begun to execute the sentence of judgment upon him and his kingdom. Thus, Satan has been having his day. However, once the Antichrist is revealed and Satan begins his ultimate attempt of overthrow, God finally will begin to close in upon him to crush both him and his kingdom. Thus, God will start to have His day, and the seventieth week will begin a period of time called the day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).



The seventieth week will be characterized by divine judgment, as God pours out His wrath upon the godless people and domain of the earthly province of Satan's kingdom (Zephaniah 1:14–18). Over the course of the seven years the judgments will increase in their severity, so that the latter three and one-half years will be far worse than the former. For this reason, Jesus said that the latter half of the seventieth week would be a time of “great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved” (Matthew 24:21–22). As wave after wave of judgment comes, much of the earth's surface will be ravished, and the apostate church, the capitol of Antichrist's kingdom, and huge segments of the world's population will be destroyed (Revelation 6; 8—11; 16—18). As a result, the world will learn the horrible consequences of denying the existence of its Creator.

Near the middle of the seventieth week God will direct one stage of judgment against Satan himself. Michael, the archangel, and those angels of God that are under his command will attack Satan and his angels in the heaven which is their dwelling place (Revelation 12:7). As a result of this war in the spiritual realm, Satan and his angels will be evicted from their heaven and cast down to earth in partial defeat (Revelation 12:8–9). Thus, Satan and the whole of his kingdom will be confined to earth to await the final battle with Christ.

As God pours out His judgments upon Satan and his kingdom, it will become evident that He is beginning to execute His program of establishing the theocratic kingdom. Thus, in eager anticipation of that blessed, coming event, the creatures of God in Heaven will cry out in great exultation:

“The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

“Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ: for the



accuser of our brethren is cast down, [who] accuseth them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

*The gathering of the armies.* Satan will not be the only one involved in gathering all the armies of the world together in Palestine at the end of the seventieth week. God will have a hand in this too (Revelation 16:1,12; Zephaniah 3:8). His purpose for the gathering will be that of destroying these armies of godless men (Psalm 2:4–12).

*The repentance of Israel.* One of God's greatest purposes for the seventieth week will be that of bringing the nation of Israel to genuine repentance. For centuries Israel has been in a state of rebellion, refusing to repent so that the theocratic kingdom could be established. As a result, she has suffered wave after wave of persecution, as one Gentile nation after another has indulged in anti-Semitism. Thus far, however, there have been other nations to which the Jews could appeal for refuge and aid in their times of oppression. Now, after some 1,900 years of worldwide dispersion, they exist once again as a united nation in their homeland (as the Scriptures implied that they would at least by the time Antichrist would be revealed).

When Antichrist will persecute the Jews worse than they ever have been persecuted before, there will be no nations to which they can appeal for refuge or help because of the worldwide rule of their persecutor. When the armies of the world will be gathered in their homeland at the end of the seventieth week, the Jews will be threatened with total annihilation. God will use these fantastic pressures as His instrument for backing Israel into such a tight corner that there will be no release, no means of escape unless the nation turns to Him and His Redeemer. Thus, at the end of the seventieth week, Israel finally will respond with genuine repentance. She will mourn the fact that she had crucified her true Messiah, Jesus Christ, and she will cry out for God's deliverance (Zechariah 12:10–14). In response to this repentance, God will cleanse the nation from sin and send Christ to establish the theocratic kingdom (Zechariah 13:1).



*The Second Coming of Jesus Christ*

Once the armies of the world have gathered in Armageddon, and Israel has repented, Jesus Christ will come riding out of Heaven on a white horse—the sign of a victorious conqueror. With Him will be all the angelic armies of Heaven. Antichrist, the kings under him, and their armies will unite to make war against Christ and His angels, but they will be overcome completely by the word and brilliant glory of the Redeemer (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11–16,19). Antichrist and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire, there to remain forever (Revelation 19:20). The kings and their godless armies will be killed, and the birds will feed on their flesh (Revelation 19:17–18,21). Thus Satan's kingdom will be crushed completely.

Satan himself will be bound and cast into the abyss for the next one thousand years. This means that he will be rendered totally inoperative during the reign of Christ on this present earth. Thus he will have absolutely no influence in the world during the theocratic kingdom (Revelation 20:1–3).

Once Christ reaches earth, He will gather to Palestine all the Jews who are yet scattered across the world. Then He will enter into judgment with them. Any rebels left in the nation will be purged out, but the saved Jews will enter the theocratic kingdom (Ezekiel 20:34–38; Malachi 3:2–3,5; Matthew 25:1–30; Romans 11:26–27).<sup>5</sup>

After Israel is judged, Christ will gather the living Gentiles to judge them. Once again, the unsaved will be banished, “into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” but the saved Gentiles will enter the theocratic kingdom (Joel 3:1–2; Matthew 25:31–46).<sup>6</sup>

At the time of His second coming Christ will resurrect the Old Testament saints and the seventieth week saints who died before Christ's return (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19; Revelation 20:4–5).<sup>7</sup> They also will enter the theocratic kingdom.



*The Nature of the Theocratic Kingdom*

After Christ has completed the work associated with His second coming, He will establish the promised, theocratic kingdom (Revelation 20:4–6). The entire world will come under the rule of Christ, who, as a man born of woman, will govern the earth for God in accordance with His divine will (Psalm 2:7–8; Revelation 11:15). As a descendant of David, He will rule as King over Israel (Isaiah 9:6–7; Luke 1:31–33). As King of kings and Lord of lords, He will rule over all the Gentile monarchs and their nations (Revelation 19:16). Thus, once again the world will enjoy a theocratic government; once again it will be a province of the universal kingdom of God.

When He establishes the theocratic kingdom, Christ will begin to reverse many of the tragic consequences of man's rebellion in Eden. He will make all animals tame again (Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25); heal all diseases and deformities (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5–6); eliminate hazards (Ezekiel 34:25–29); increase the lifespan of man (Isaiah 65:20,22); cause a great abundance of trees and fruit (Isaiah 55:13; Ezekiel 47:12; Joel 2:21–22), fish (Ezekiel 47:9–10), and grain and wine (Joel 2:24; Amos 9:13); control the environment for the benefit of man (Ezekiel 34:26–27); heal the effects of pollution (Ezekiel 47:1–12); and abolish war and injustice (Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:2–5; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9–10; Micah 4:1–3). All these changes will constitute what Christ and Peter called “the regeneration,” the “seasons of refreshing,” and “the times of restoration of all things” (Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:19–21). Truly, this will be the present earth's golden age.

During the theocratic kingdom, Israel finally will fulfill the spiritual role that God originally intended for her (Exodus 19:5–6). As a kingdom of priests, she will lead the rest of the world in true worship. Every year all the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Christ (Zechariah 14:16–21).



The saints of all previous ages of history will constitute the total population of the theocratic kingdom in its beginning. No unsaved people will enter the kingdom from the seventieth week. As time progresses, however, those saints who survived the seventieth week alive and entered the kingdom with mortal bodies, will give birth to unregenerate children. No doubt many of these children will become saved as they grow up, but many others will reject Christ throughout their lives. This rejection will take place in spite of the glorious presence of Christ, the near-perfect conditions of the world, and the total absence of Satan's influence. Thus, these people will demonstrate that, since the Fall, human rebellion against God really has not been the result of Satan's influence, bad world conditions, or the invisibility of God. Instead, it has been the result of man's own, sinful nature.

These unsaved will chafe under the iron-hand rule of Christ. They will be irritated by the absolute justice and inflexible righteousness that He will enforce incessantly throughout the whole world (Isaiah 11:3–5; 9:7).<sup>8</sup> Any who rebel outwardly or sin blatantly in the open will be punished immediately with physical death (Psalm 72:1–4; Isaiah 11:4; 29:20–21; Jeremiah 31:29–30).<sup>9</sup> Rather than suffer death, many will hide their rebellion inwardly, hoping for an opportunity to overthrow Christ's reign.

The theocratic kingdom will last for 1,000 years on this present earth (Revelation 19:4–6). For this reason, many Bible scholars have called it the millennial kingdom and its period of time the millennium.

### *The Final Attempt of Satan*

As Satan remains bound in the abyss for 1,000 years, he will have plenty of time to think over all the mistakes he made in his war against the kingdom of God. Having learned much about God's strategy through his defeat, he will reflect on what he could have done better to overcome that strategy. Through time he will deceive himself into thinking that, if



death (Revelation 20:14). Because death is to be the last enemy of man abolished, this act of God will be the sign that all the tragic consequences of man's rebellion have been reversed completely through the work of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24–26). Having crushed Satan and his kingdom forever, having established His own theocratic kingdom on earth, and having reversed the tragic consequences of man's rebellion, God thereby will have demonstrated that He alone is the sovereign God.

With His purpose for the history of this present world accomplished, God will destroy the present heavens and earth which are stained with their record of rebellion, and will create new heavens and a new earth to replace them (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:10–13).

### *The Nature of the Future Eternal State*

All the angelic and human members of the kingdom of God will inhabit the new heavens and new earth in eternity future. They will enjoy the glorious presence and fellowship of God and Christ, together with other unspeakable blessings, forever. One great blessing will be the total absence of sin, death, pain, and sorrow (Revelation 21–22). Never again will there be a rebellion against God and His kingdom.

## CONCLUSION

### *Proposed Solutions to Problems*

The Biblical philosophy of history poses at least two problems to many minds. The first problem is this: in light of all the pain and suffering involved in the consequences of rebellion, why did God create His personal subjects with a potential for rebellion? This is another way of asking why God made angels and men with a will of their own and the ability to choose between obedience and rebellion.

The Bible does not answer this question. It would seem reasonable to assume, however, that God desired to enjoy fellowship with and to receive love and worship from His creatures (Genesis 3:8–9). Genuine fellowship, love, and worship are not forced or mechanical; they must be given voluntarily. Only persons who have a will of their own and the ability to choose are able to offer such things voluntarily. Evidently God decided that voluntary response, even though it involved the risk of rebellion, was worth more than a programmed, mechanical response that would guarantee no rebellion.

The second problem is as follows: why does God let the rebellion go on so long? Why couldn't He have demonstrated His sovereignty by crushing Satan as soon as he rebelled? Again, the Bible does not give an answer. Perhaps if God had destroyed Satan immediately, other creatures later on would have concluded that the only reason for Satan's failure was



that he didn't try the right method, or that he didn't have enough time to execute his plan fully. Thus, others, thinking that they could do better, might be tempted to try their hand at overthrowing the rule of God, and the kingdom of God would experience one rebellion after another. In order to avoid any further rebellions, God gives Satan full time to try every means of overthrow possible. Through this painful object lesson, He teaches all His creatures an indelible lesson—that no one, no matter how long, how hard, or what methods he tries, can ever overthrow the sovereign rule of God. All attempts can do nothing except bring agony and defeat.

### *Answers to the Basic Questions of Man*

The Biblical philosophy of history provides answers to man's three basic questions. First, in response to the question of where have we come from, the Bible answers that we were created by the sovereign, omnipotent God. Secondly, when asked why we are here, the Bible replies that the purpose of life is to know God personally and then to serve Him actively as members and witnesses of His universal kingdom.

Finally, the Biblical answer to the third question of where we are going is twofold. First, as a world and a race, we are headed for the ultimate defeat of Satan and his kingdom and the glorious victory of God and His kingdom. Secondly, as individuals, we are headed either for eternal blessing or eternal punishment, depending upon which kingdom we belong to. All of us were born into this world as members of the kingdom of Satan, which has a sentence of divine judgment waiting to be executed against it. But, because Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for our sin, our membership can be transferred to the kingdom of God, and all judgment can be removed from us, if we will trust Him personally to be our Saviour (Colossians 1:13–14; Romans 8:1). Since the rule of God, the sovereign King and Judge, cannot be overthrown, a person would be foolish indeed to “neglect so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:1–3; Psalm 2:10–12).



only he could have one more chance, he could beat the sovereignty of God.

In order to demonstrate that there is absolutely no way in which His sovereign rule can be overthrown, God will afford Satan the opportunity to try his best-laid plan. Satan will be set free from the abyss for a brief period of time after the 1,000 years of the theocratic kingdom have ended (Revelation 20:3,7). Through deception he will gather together all the malcontents of the kingdom who have been hiding their hatred of Christ's righteous reign inwardly (Revelation 20:8). As they begin to make war against the saints, God will crush this revolution immediately by destroying them with fire from Heaven (Revelation 20:9). This time Satan will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented with Antichrist and the false prophet forever (Revelation 20:10). No doubt all of Satan's angels will be cast in with him.<sup>10</sup> This will be his final defeat. Never again will he challenge the sovereignty of God.

### *The Judgment of the Unsaved*

After Satan's final defeat, all the human members of his kingdom from all periods of history will be resurrected from the dead to appear before God's great, white throne of judgment. Since all of these are unsaved, the purpose of this judgment will be to determine their degree of eternal punishment, not the fact of their lost condition.<sup>11</sup> Once this judgment is completed, all the unsaved will be cast forever into the lake of fire to suffer eternal torment (Revelation 20:11–15). Thus, the entire kingdom of Satan will remain in conscious judgment, totally separated from God, for all eternity.

### *The Destruction of Death, the Heavens, and the Earth*

Before God brings the history of the world to a close by destroying the present heavens and earth, He will abolish



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## Chapter 7: *From Liberal Protestantism Through the Present*

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
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RENALD E. SHOWERS' education includes the bachelor's degree in history at Wheaton College, master's in church history at Dallas Theological Seminary, and doctorate in theology at Grace Theological Seminary. He is presently on the faculty of Philadelphia College of Bible.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH. Apollo 13 View of Earth taken from NASA's Apollo 13 spacecraft during its transearth journey home. The most visible land mass includes southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico, particularly the Baja, California, peninsula. Most of the land area is under heavy cloud cover.