

THE END TIMES

Bible Report Quarterly

Fall 2002: Issue Number 22

THE REAL AXIS OF EVIL

The past Century was one of unprecedented evil: 20 million killed in Stalin's purges, Hitler's extermination of six million Jews, 1.7 million massacred in the killing fields by Pol Pot, and the millions of lives lost collaterally in trying to defend or defeat these monsters. And the carnage has plunged quickly into the 21st century as mankind witnessed the falling of over 3,000 to their fiery deaths from suicide missions in the United States, Israel and around the world.

Are these acts simply the function of an evil twist of character, or are they triggered by a sinister, intelligent, invisible force? Many today believe that the concept of a personal devil is a myth—merely a representation of wrong or sin, and not an individual capable of organized thoughts and intents. But an investigation of Scripture will prove that Satan exists and is the great Adversary of God and His divine plan.

SATAN NOT A PRINCIPLE OF EVIL BUT AN INTELLIGENT BEING

The Word of God leaves no doubt as to the existence of a personal devil. It gives a comprehensive description of his being, his emissaries and his aims. Satan is represented as being the orchestrator and source of all evil in the universe, and the unrelenting enemy of God and man. The Scriptures uphold the assertion that Satan is *"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."* (Eph. 2:2) These words imply not only that there are evil *principles* at work, but that behind them there are invisible, evil *spirit beings* opposing all that is good. *"We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and wicked spirits in high positions."* Eph. 6:12

The Apostle Paul recognized the existence of a personal Satan and gave him the title *god of this world.* (2Cor. 4:4) In fact, Satan's dominion is so great and his arrogance so bold that he offered all the kingdoms of the world to the Son of God on the one condition that Jesus would *bow down and worship* him. (Matt. 4:9) And our Lord did not challenge Satan's right to make such an offer, but upon another occasion, acknowledged him to be the *prince of this world*—but only for a limited time. John 12:31; 14:30

Whoever has failed to discern that a real devil exists is all the more liable to come under his malevolent influence. What a master stroke on Satan's part to successfully convince many, even some

Christian ministers that he does not exist. This ignorance is exactly what Satan desires and is an important factor to his success.

Indeed, Satan is the *real axis of evil*, and it is for this necessary discernment of the great Adversary and his deceptions that this study is presented. *"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil."* Eph. 6:11



SATAN EXISTED FROM THE BEGINNING OF GOD'S CREATION

At one time Satan, or Lucifer, was a perfect, glorious angel with the shared responsibility to assist Adam and Eve in their Garden paradise. The Bible speaks of Satan as having been a *bright morning star* singing together with all the angelic realm. (Job 38:7) At his creation, Satan was described as having *"had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."* (Ezk. 28:12_{NAS}) *"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God... thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire [stars]. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."* Ezk. 28:13-15

Satan was not created an evil being, but he became evil by the improper exercise of personal liberty in rebellion against his creator. God did not desire to create any of His intelligent beings mere machines, incapable of choice. On the contrary, He has been pleased to instill in all His intelligent creation *free moral agency.* But with freedom comes the power to rebel against God's laws. Even though rebellion has been *temporarily* permitted, God is in control and will soon put a stop to anything contrary to His will. His loving plan has been to manifest the harmony of His righteous law and the evil consequences resulting from its violation.

THE SEED OF PRIDE AND AMBITION

While most of God's angelic realm exercised their free will toward obedience, Satan misused his freedom by permitting the seeds of pride and ambition to gain control of his heart. *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation... I will be like the Most High..."* Isa. 14:12-14

The Scriptures indicate that rebellion first entered Satan's heart

as he beheld Adam and Eve in the Garden. He saw in them the power of procreation, and thus a means by which he might set up a separate and rival kingdom. If he could gain control of this first pair and their posterity he would have an empire of his own on the earth, similar to the empire of Jehovah amongst the spirit beings. He would thus grasp a position higher than the other angels. He would be like God, an emperor, a ruler over a vast domain.

As soon as these ambitious designs found a place in Satan's heart, he then began to measure the Almighty by his own false standards. He imagined that God was withholding wonderful knowledge from the human pair that they had every right to secure for themselves. This mutinous thought was shared with Eve, and thus began the rebellion against the divine law. Our first parents were seduced into disobedience through Satan's lust for power.

SATAN'S ASSOCIATES IN EVIL—LEGIONS OF DEMONS

"The great dragon was cast out [of heaven], that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan... was cast out into the earth, and his angels with him." (Rev. 12:9) Although this text is speaking symbolically of Satan's earthly, ecclesiastical empire, it illustrates well that Satan gained a legion of angels or messengers both in heaven and on earth who support his evil schemes. Satan and his spiritual legion were all cast out of heaven and placed in "chains of darkness"—relegated to the earth's atmosphere. Jude 6

After Adam's disobedience, some of the angelic host were permitted contact with the fallen race to help restrain them from further depravity and to prove whether they could bring mankind back to God. (Heb. 2:5) Interaction with fallen man was the first experience of these angels with sin. This became to them a test of their loyalty and obedience to God, because it suggested possibilities of an evil course, contrary to the divine will. Under this test some of the angels, who previously had been holy and obedient, became contaminated by sin. Both Jude and Peter speak of "those angels which kept not their first estate." (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) These fallen angels have since been known as demons or devils, and Satan is recognized as the "prince of devils"—their leader with whom they cooperate as mischief workers among men. *"The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* 1Pet. 5:8

Throughout the centuries, these demons have preyed upon the weakest of humanity—those who have suffered mental and physical abuse, or those who have been trained from childhood to hate and inflict harm without empathy. These develop a distorted sense of justice and imagine that God tells them to be His instrument of Divine retribution. Here is where Satan and his demon host have entered the mind and supplied suggestions in hideous proportions. Cases such as Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma City bombing, the Muslim extremists of 9/11, and the Palestinian suicide bombers all believed that they had a God-directed mission in the execution of their victims.

Satan and his legion use opportunities such as these to discredit God in these tragic events. In the aftermath of such carnage we often hear the cry: *"Where was God? Why didn't He stop this?"* In fact, the blame should be focused instead upon the true perpetrator of the evil acts, the true *axis of evil* and his demon host.

SATAN'S PLANS FOILED BY GOD'S LOVING PLAN

Satan's plans may be summed up under three heads: 1.) to deny the Word of God; 2.) to destroy the promised seed of blessing; and 3.) to prevent the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

1.) In his attempt to deny the Word of God, every available weapon was employed in the early centuries of the Christian Era to annihilate the Bible. In addition, for centuries, the Word of God was cloaked in dead languages, hoarded by the clergy and kept from the congregations. Satan successfully substituted truth with creedal errors by transforming himself into an angel or messenger of light. (2Cor. 11:14) But the Bible has survived and is shining more and more as the Millennial day dawns.

2.) When God declared to Satan that the seed of the woman would cause a fatal blow to his head, Satan tried to eliminate the one most likely to be that seed—Abel. Cain murdered his innocent brother in a jealous rage. Later on, God told Abraham that in his seed should "all the families of the earth be blessed." Satan has repeatedly sought to destroy Israel, the channel through which Jesus, the chosen seed was to come.

When the fullness of time was come and Jesus was born, Satan promptly made an effort to destroy his life. Through Herod he slew all the children in Bethlehem from two years old and under. But his effort was in vain, for being warned of God in a dream, Joseph fled into Egypt with Mary and the young child. Again, Satan appeared for a time to be successful at destroying *the seed* when the chief priests and Pharisees caused the death of our Lord on the cross; but this was the very means by which Jesus entered into glory.

In the case of the true Church, Satan seeks to destroy and discredit them, as well. However, God is using this for good as a way to test their characters and make them stronger for the struggle. *"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."* 1Pet. 1:7

3.) Satan sought to prevent our Lord from offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. The supreme occasion was while Jesus was upon the cross itself. Weakened by his sufferings and tortured by his merciless enemies, Satan challenged him to come down from the cross. *"If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross."* (Matt. 27:40) But Jesus never faltered, he patiently and valiantly bore his sufferings in silence until he cried in triumph, *"It is finished!"*

God is making use of Satan's adversities, and is causing the wrath and opposition both of men and of devils, to praise Him. (Psa. 76:10; Rom. 8:28) God's loving purpose will soon completely and eternally overthrow His adversaries.

STRIKING BEAUTY MARRED BY AN UGLY CHARACTER

Although Satan was a beautiful angel, his character became distorted and ugly. To understand how one so beautiful could become so wicked, there is a perfect illustration in the life of Absalom, the rebellious son of King David. Of Absalom it was said that in *"all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him."* (2Sam. 14:25) Yet, with



all his beauty, pride grew in his heart to the point where he not only rebelled against his father, usurped his throne, and turned the kingdom against David, but he also sought to kill his own father.

Absalom's remarkable beauty and wretched character compares exactly with the beauty and character of Satan. Just as Absalom manipulated and turned the hearts of the nation against his father David, Satan attempts to blind the minds of mankind respecting the true character of God, filling them with blasphemous lies.



Yes, Satan, like Absalom has cast an evil light upon his Father before the people. The story of Absalom ended when the symbol of his pride, his glorious long hair, became entangled in the branches of a tree. There he was slain with three arrows through the heart. Thus it will be with Satan. His pride will finally be his undoing, and his reign of terror will come to an end. *"Thou wast lifted up because of thy beauty... I will cast thee to the ground..."* Ezk. 28:17

HOW SATAN VILIFIES HIS FATHER

Instead of presenting the truth—that suffering and death are the results of disobedience to God, Satan has effectively convinced the majority of Christians that, before the beginning of man's creation, God predestinated that billions of them

should be eternally tormented in fire. Satan has, indeed *"blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel... should shine unto them."* 2 Cor. 4:4

In opposition to this glorious Gospel light, most Christians today believe that Satan and the demons live in a fiery *underworld* where lost souls writhe in torment eternally. There are no scriptures which describe such a condition, and yet, there are those who even claim to know the temperature of this hideous place. As shown, Satan and his host were *cast out into the earth*—not under it. Rev. 12:9

Indeed, the Bible *hell* is used only in a highly symbolic context describing a condition of total destruction. For example: *"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet... These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."* (Rev. 19: 20) Note that the *beast* is recognized by most Christians as being symbolic, and yet, these same Christians will claim that the *lake of fire* is literal.

A second illustration is found in Mark 9:43: *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched..."* Thank the Lord that Christians as a whole believe that the first half of this text is highly symbolic, and yet, again, it is maintained by most Christians that the second half of this text is literal. The careful Bible student will not mix symbolic and literal context to determine the meaning of a scripture.

What is the origin of such a doctrine that God created a fiery *underworld* where lost souls burn forever? The disturbing truth is that Christianity became tainted by mythological images of tormented souls in the fourth century at the semi-conversion of Constantine. In his desire to blend pagan and Christian beliefs to satisfy the masses of his regime, he instituted many of the concepts

still taught today as church creeds. If one did not accept the new compromising dogma of church and state, the threat would be an afterlife of the most horrific torment imaginable.

As a *priesthood* arose in the church, these false teachers put away the writings of sacred Scripture and studied instead the catechisms of their mixed doctrines. Of course, Satan fueled the flames of the imagination until paintings and murals began to adorn the walls and ceilings of church buildings. These served to reinforce the notion of impending doom for those who would not wholeheartedly support the infiltration of pagan ideas. Further, the clergy were convinced that their congregations were unlearned and did not have God's approval to interpret the Bible—that only they, the clergy, had the right to interpret the Word of God.

Thus, the doctrine of eternal torment was ingrained in church creeds, and these were not seriously challenged until the early 1800's after the yoke of Papal bondage had been broken by Napoleon. Bible societies then began to form, making the Word of God available to anyone for their study. Christians soon began to see that they had a personal responsibility: *"Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* 2Tim. 2:15

GOD WILL VINDICATE HIS LOVING CHARACTER

At last the Scriptures were open to the wonderful mercy and compassion of God, and it was seen that *"God is love"* and that *"there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment."* (1John 4:8, 18) Those who are still in darkness on this subject have a great conflict: how does one harmonize the love of God with the concept of a God who could create a place of eternal torment for billions of His children? Satan has successfully fostered the idea that God is a monster capable of the worst acts of evil. If we call those who caused the fiery death of thousands in the World Trade Center monsters, would this title not aptly fit our Creator if He caused such fiery torment to last for ever?

All who thoroughly study the subject of hell, without prejudice, will come to the conclusion that the doctrine of eternal torment is the creation, not of our loving heavenly Father, but of Satanic influence upon zealous, yet misguided minds. No, if God had intended that sin would result in eternal punishment by fire, then He would have warned Adam and Eve, *"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely burn forever."* No, thank God, He said *"thou shalt surely die."* (Gen. 2:17) Satan's attempt to make our heavenly Father into a monster has worked for centuries, but now, in the light of reason, along with the availability of Scripture study, his masterful plans to discredit God are beginning to fail.

This is the cause for which Jesus came: to *bear witness unto the truth* of his Father's loving character and to give his life a *ransom for all*. (John 18:37; 1Tim. 2:6) We are living near the time when this *ransom* will be the means by which *all* mankind will be raised from the grave. Then, as promised, Satan and the fallen angels will no longer be allowed to influence mankind, and Christ and his Church will begin the work of teaching righteousness to all who have ever lived. (Rev. 20:3; Isa. 26:9) The lessons learned from the permission of evil will have been for the purpose of showing the vast contrast between the wages of sin and the wages of righteousness. If, after ample time one fails to make progress in righteousness and continues to choose evil, divine justice will close the door for the opportunity to live among the sinless. But, thank God, the vast majority will choose righteousness and will gain eternal life!

We are living in the *end times* which will witness the transition of the dominion of earth from Satan to the rightful prince—Messiah! God has permitted His adversary to reign in evil for now over six thousand years. But the great Almighty will only allow the *prince of devils* to reign long enough to test the hearts of men and demonstrate the importance of living in harmony with His righteous arrangements. "...*this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.*" Eccl. 1:13

The light of the Millennial Age will expose every evil deed of the Adversary. All will then fully appreciate the degrading influences of every other course than righteousness, and of every other influence than the spirit of God and the spirit of His truth. All will thus find how thoroughly they have been ensnared by Satan and his evil will. 2 Tim. 2:26

Soon, when Satan's lease of power has expired, the Scriptures assure us that God will destroy him. Not only Satan, but "*all the wicked will He destroy.*" (Psa. 145:20) Jesus bought the right to conquer Satan, sin and death: "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through [sacrificial] death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil...*" (Heb. 2:14) Note the word, *destroy*. In due

time, God proposes to blot out of existence all who are not in heart harmony with Him. This is described as the *second death*: "*The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ...This is the second death [annihilation].*" Rev. 20:10,14



Satan is now struggling for his very existence, evidenced by the fact that evil is rampant in every sector of society. (Rev. 12:12) Everything that Satan does in this *present evil world* is to extend his *stay of execution*. He knows that his days are numbered, because the Scriptures state that he will be bound during the time of Christ's thousand year reign. "*He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ...that he should deceive the nations no more*

till the thousand years should be fulfilled." (Rev. 20:2,3) After the thousand year reign of righteousness, Satan will be let loose a little season to test the obedience of all people whether they have truly become loyal to God in their hearts.

For all eternity, those who prove faithful to the divine will, shall do so, not because of fear or force, but because all will genuinely love God and righteousness. At the close of the Millennial reign of Christ, when he shall have conquered sin and when Satan shall have been destroyed, then absolute peace and harmony will exist throughout the universe, and God will be all in all. ICor. 15:28



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The End Times Bible Report Quarterly
is a Free Publication of

The Associated Bible Students of Central Ohio

P.O. Box 813, Westerville, Ohio 43086-0813

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