

Is
There
Really a
DEVIL?

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Introduction

“My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

Most people who live in advanced nations find it easy to believe that the state of humanity has never been better. For them, evidence they see every day would make it hard to argue otherwise.

Technologically advanced countries command the highest standard of living in history. They enjoy comfortable, affordable housing; fast, efficient transportation; plenty to eat and drink; mostly secure employment; educational opportunities; and a dizzying array of entertaining gadgets and opportunities. They benefit from incomes high enough to meet their basic needs and have plenty left over for many of their wants.

But such is not the case for most of mankind. Most people go to sleep with hunger gnawing at their stomachs. Their meager income goes to purchase just enough food to keep them alive. Some have a little left over for housing, clothing and transportation. Every day 35,000 children—enough to populate a fair-sized city—die of starvation or disorders related to chronic malnutrition.

Premature death from disease takes the lives of tens of thousands more every day. Cholera, malaria, tuberculosis and typhoid—almost eradicated in the advanced countries—are deadly throughout much of the world. Even in advanced nations cancer, heart disease and AIDS kill thousands by the hour.

None of us has experienced a truly peaceful world. During the last few decades humanity has developed the horrifying ability to

exterminate all human life. Now we have the weaponry—nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional—to kill every man, woman and child on earth *many times over*.

The last century alone saw catastrophic wars that took the lives of more than 150 million men, women and children—mostly civilians. In more recent years dozens of armed conflicts, uprisings and insurrections have raged around the globe every year, shattering the lives of millions. Few realize that even now the stage is being set for far greater catastrophes.

Why does so much conflict, violence and downright evil permeate our societies? Where can we find the answer?

If a bright spot could be found in the world, surely it would be in the arena of religion, wouldn't it? But, sadly, even religion, to which many look for solutions to the world's problems, is in disarray. Many recent wars have seen Christian fight Christian, Muslim kill Muslim, Jew confront Jew.

Confusion abounds in the religious world. Even many pre-Christian religions with their pagan rites, practices and superstitions are making a comeback as people search for the meaning they no longer find in conventional rituals and beliefs.

Why are we plagued with these problems? Why such chaos and confusion? Is the anguish of the human race simply the result of uncontrollable circumstances—time and chance? Is our collective suffering simply the way things always have been and the way they always will be?

Scientists recognize that a basic law of the universe is that a *cause* exists for every effect. Things do not just happen; they occur because something or someone *causes* them to happen.

In fact, we can find a cause for every evil we see in the world. Crime, war, religious confusion, famine, starvation, disease and premature death in their many tragic forms all exist *for a reason*. Broken marriages, broken families, broken relationships and broken societies do not just happen.

You *can* know the cause for this world's problems, the underlying reason for so many of the difficulties you face in your own life. This booklet will help you understand that cause and—more important—*what you can do about it*.

The Enemy of Mankind

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, New International Version).

One primary cause lurks behind the suffering and tragic circumstances that afflict so many people. The Bible reveals that a powerful, intelligent and seemingly infinitely influential being actively orchestrates the wickedness that dominates our planet. Most of us have heard of him. The Bible most often calls him *the devil* and *Satan*.

You may have wondered whether he really exists. After all, to many the devil seems like a fairy-tale character—a grotesque, blood-red creature with horns, a pointed tail and bat’s wings that carries a pitchfork and inhabits an infernal region of ever-burning flames. Because he is typically depicted so fancifully, it isn’t surprising that few take the idea of a devil seriously.

Does such a being exist? Where could such a creature have come from? What is his purpose, his goal, his intent? What does he do? Is he, as many believe, simply a mythical embodiment of evil?

Most people aren’t sure what to believe. They either haven’t given the concept of the devil that much thought or don’t know where to look to find the answers.

Through the centuries belief in the existence of the devil—a being

responsible for evil—has waxed and waned. During the Middle Ages belief in the evil one and his influence on mankind was unquestioned. But, as scientific advancements during the Renaissance dispelled myths and superstitions related to demons, the notion of the devil as a literal being fell into disfavor.

Subsequent scientific advancements and increased education encouraged skepticism regarding the existence of a spirit world, good or bad. Today many ridicule the idea of an evil being who is responsible for the misery and suffering we see around us.

Finding a reliable source of knowledge

Where can we find reliable, accurate information on the spirit world? Only one source can give us the answers, revealing to us information we could find nowhere else. That single dependable source is the Bible. Beyond it, everything concerning Satan and whether he exists is only mythology and speculation. (For clear evidence of the reliability of the Bible, be sure to request your free copy of *Is the Bible True?* from any of our offices listed at the end of this booklet.)

The Bible contains unequivocal internal evidence that it truly is the Word of God. Through its pages God reveals true *spiritual* knowledge, information unavailable from any other source. It tells us in sobering terms that the devil *does* exist. It explains that this being and the spirit world are every bit as real as our own.

It shows us that Satan is an incredibly powerful spirit being with a pervasive influence over humanity. Along with his cohorts—called *demons* or *devils*—he is mentioned frequently in the Scriptures. He shows up from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation.

The Bible reveals much about this being. It shows us his origin, how he came to be what he is. It reveals his intentions and the methods he uses to accomplish them. It describes his character and nature and the motivations that drive him. It helps us see the staggering impact his influence can have on us individually as well as his sway over the whole of humanity. It gives us knowledge we could never discover or understand on our own.

Real-life encounters

Jesus Christ spoke of the devil as a powerful, conscious, real entity. If we accept Jesus as real, as the Son of God—and the Bible as

including the truthful account of His ministry and teachings—we must also accept the devil as real.

The writers of the four Gospels record instances in which Christ confronted Satan and his cohorts, the demons. The Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, show Satan to be the enemy of Christ, determined to thwart and undermine His work. Just before Jesus began His ministry, Satan tried, through temptation, to turn Him aside from His divine purpose (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Failing at every turn, Satan was finally allowed to influence other human beings to execute Jesus (Luke 22:2-4; John 13:2, 27)—making Him, as our Messiah and Savior, the atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

The apostle Peter, who experienced his own struggles with Satan (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 22:31-32), warns us to be on guard against this powerful wicked spirit: “Be self-controlled and alert. *Your enemy the devil* prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, New International Version, emphasis added throughout). Peter’s warning helps us realize that not only is the devil the enemy of Christ, he is the enemy of all Christ’s followers, seeking to devour them.

Mankind’s enemy

But we find more to the story of Satan. A central message of the Bible, from beginning to end, is that *the devil is the enemy of all humanity*. As we discover what the Bible says about him, we find him continually intent on mankind’s harm, waging war against human beings in every way imaginable.

The very name *Satan*, the name the Bible uses most for this evil being, helps reveal his malicious intent. God calls things what they are. *Satan* is a Hebrew noun meaning “adversary”—the *enemy, opponent, antagonist, foe*. The verb forms of the noun mean to “accuse,” “slander” and “be an adversary” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, 1992, “Satan,” p. 985).

The other term the Bible uses to describe this being, *devil*, is also revealing. *Devil* is translated from the Greek word *diabolos*, the root from which we get such words as *diabolic* and *diabolical*, used to describe something wicked or sinister. *Diabolos* means “an accuser, a slanderer” (W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*

of *Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, “Devil, Devilish”).

The Bible reveals much more about this evil being’s nature and character. Christ says Satan is “a liar and the father of it” and that “there is no truth in him” (John 8:44).

It is through his lying, deceptive nature that Satan most successfully influences mankind. The Bible reveals the enormity of Satan’s lies—that he “*deceives the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9).

Did you catch this stunning testimony to Satan’s handiwork? He “*deceives the whole world*”! What does this mean? What is God telling us when He reveals that this malignant spirit deceives the whole world? Consider the staggering implications of this statement.

The apostle John did not say that Satan *deceived* the world only at some time in the distant past. The word John uses—translated “deceives” in the New King James Version of the Bible—is in the present active tense, meaning that Satan’s deception started in the past and is a continuous, ongoing process that *is not yet finished*. The book of Revelation shows that Satan’s great deception will continue until God miraculously intervenes to put an end to his influence over mankind.

The beginning of Satan’s influence

Satan has seduced humanity for thousands of years. But when—and how—did his influence begin? How did he gain his firm foothold in human thinking? What is it about him and his methods that allows him to deceive not just a handful, but virtually the entire human race?

The story begins with the very origins of humankind. As stated in the book of Genesis, God created our first human parents, Adam and Eve, and provided a beautiful garden paradise in an area called Eden as their home (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7-8). There He began personally instructing them (Genesis 2:16-17), laying the foundation for them to develop a close personal relationship with Him.

But something happened that suddenly derailed that relationship. “Now the serpent [the devil, Revelation 12:9; 20:2] was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden?”’” (Genesis 3:1, NIV).

God had told Adam and Eve they could eat of all the trees in Eden except one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis

2:16-17). He warned them they would perish if they ate of its fruit.

Satan, appearing in the form of a serpent, came privately to Eve and subtly contradicted what God had told her and her husband. “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:4-5).

Eve believed the serpent. She ate the fruit and shared it with Adam. Together Adam and Eve set in motion a tragic pattern that mankind has followed ever since: choosing to decide their own way—which is in reality nothing more than falling prey to Satan’s deceptive influence (1 John 3:10)—rather than the truth of God. Life for man would never be the same. *Sin*—rebellion against God’s instruction—had entered the world (Romans 5:12). Mankind would now reap its tragic fruit.

Satan, who accused God of lying, was himself shown to be a liar. Rather than leading to life and becoming as wise and understanding as God like Satan had promised, the way of disobedience Adam and Eve chose would lead only to confusion and death.

Adam’s and Eve’s surrender to Satan’s influence was the beginning of “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). Satan managed to inject his cunning deceptions into the relationship between God and God’s human children. By convincing Eve that God was lying to them about the consequences of partaking of the forbidden fruit, Satan showed early in human history that he is the *adversary* of both God and humanity, the ultimate *false accuser* and *slanderer*—the meanings of his biblical names.

A murderer from the beginning

Jesus referred to this incident in the Garden of Eden when He confronted those who opposed His message and work—murderous men who wanted to kill Him for identifying Himself as the Son of God. Jesus recognized the source of their motivation: “*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it*” (John 8:44).

Satan was truly “a murderer from the beginning.” Yet he did not

need to physically harm Adam and Eve to bring about their deaths; he knew that if he could influence them to sin—to disobey God—they would bring death on themselves (Romans 6:23). His lies—his deception—did lead directly to Adam’s and Eve’s eventual submission to the clutches of death. By influencing all human beings since then to likewise choose the way of sin and disobedience to God, Satan has played a part in the deaths of all humans since Adam and Eve who have died (Romans 5:12).

Christ also said Satan is “a liar and the father of it.” His lies undermined and then destroyed the relationship between God and His children. By following in Adam’s and Eve’s footsteps in accepting Satan’s ways of sin and rebellion, we have cut ourselves off from God’s guidance and assistance and desperately need the redemption that can come only through Christ (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:23-24; Acts 4:12).

The world suffers because of sin

Humanity as a whole has continued to follow the pattern set by Adam and Eve long ago. Satan, by deceiving us into rejecting God’s instruction and influencing us to follow him instead, has seen to it that we, just as did Adam and Eve, would continue to resist God’s rule over us (Romans 5:10; 8:7; Ephesians 2:1-3). We suffer the painful consequences of our choices and actions just as they did. (Of course, Jesus came to die for our sins and show those of us whom God would call to salvation in this age the way to repent and come out of our miseries. To understand more, please write for our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.)

Why is the world so full of misery? The answer, as revealed in God’s Word, is simple: We reap what we sow. “Do not be deceived,” writes the apostle Paul. “God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction . . .” (Galatians 6:7-8, NIV). Our actions bring consequences. Much of the world’s suffering can be traced to people’s actions and decisions. We haven’t learned that many of our choices lead to tragic results regardless of our intentions.

The prophet Hosea understood the principle of cause and effect as he observed the sad spiritual condition of the kingdom of Israel in the

700s B.C. Hosea 2 and 4 show that idolatry, violence and sexual immorality were rampant in Hosea's time. Within a few years the mighty Assyrian Empire would sweep down from the north and lay the Israelite kingdom waste, slaughtering and enslaving its inhabitants.

God revealed to Hosea what was coming and why: "They *sow* the wind, and *reap* the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). "You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies . . ." (Hosea 10:13). In other words, said God, it was inevitable that the

Is the Whole World Deceived?

If you were the devil and wanted to deceive the entire world, how would you approach such a challenge?

You first would probably convince people that you don't exist and that the only source of information that reveals your motives and methods is little more than a collection of fables that have nothing to do with their lives.

We have seen exactly that. Starting several centuries ago, and prompted by the theories of men such as Charles Darwin—who fabricated a way to explain creation without the Creator—many people began directly challenging the authority and inspiration of the Bible. They began to ridicule, as mere myth and superstition, the existence of a spirit world, long accepted without question by those who believed the Bible.

In the world's leading universities skeptics challenged the validity and accuracy of the Bible, and scientific reasoning—much of which rejects anything that cannot be detected by the physical senses—became the order of the day. Generations of leaders were taught to discard

anything that could not be measured by scientific methods.

Then came two world wars. Two successive generations saw their fathers, husbands and sons lost on bloody battlefields in far-flung corners of the world, with neither war gaining a lasting peace. Civilian casualties, too, were appalling, with tens of millions of lives snuffed out. Numbed by such wholesale mass destruction of lives and property, many lost their belief in God, thinking that an all-powerful Supreme Being would never allow such carnage and suffering.

Thus, in only a few generations, belief in an almighty, all-loving God and trust in the Bible as His revelation to mankind were shattered.

In our modern world, although many people still claim to believe in God, few take their stated belief seriously enough to let it guide their lives. The Bible is consistently one of the world's best-selling books, yet it is one of the least read and least understood. Most people think the Bible and the spirit world have nothing to do with them and their lives.

people's sins would catch up with them: "Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you" (Jeremiah 2:19).

When we search for the main reason people suffer, we can learn a great deal by tracing their circumstances back to their cause. Most often we will find that *sin* is the underlying cause—and suffering and misery are merely the natural consequences.

By influencing mankind to sin, making it attractive and appealing, Satan holds our world in a deceitful grasp of lies, suffering and death.

Although religion should be the source of an understanding of God and the spirit world, it is too often only another source of confusion and disagreement. For example, Christianity is the professed religion of approximately a third of the world's population and is the largest single religion. But it is splintered into thousands of sects and denominations, many of them claiming to represent the true teachings of the Bible and Jesus.

Never in human history, of course, have professing Christians comprised a majority of the world's population. Most people during the last two millennia have followed a bewildering array of deities, gurus and religious teachers. Some have believed in God, others in various good and evil spirits or no God and spirit world at all.

Obviously these incompatible and often opposite beliefs cannot all be right. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). The effect of so much religious confusion and division is exactly what one would expect of a being whose aim is to "deceive the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Many people do not believe in the devil at all, and many of those who do aren't sure what they should

believe, since so many religious teachings are confused and contradictory.

Most people are deeply sincere in their beliefs. But, since the beliefs of so many professing Christians contradict the beliefs of other professing Christians, they cannot all be right. Many of them are sincere, but *sin - cerely wrong*. They, along with the rest of the world, *have been deceived*. So what are the implications to professing Christians of Satan's deception and its resulting confusion?

Christ challenged people in His day who were sincere yet deluded: ". . . Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and *do not do the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46).

He cautioned His followers to be aware of religious deception. "*Take heed that no one deceives you,*" He warned (Matthew 24:4). He prophesied that religious leaders would arise who would claim to represent Him but in fact they would be impostors who would "deceive many" (verse 5).

Rather than a source of information and understanding about the great malevolent spirit that is the enemy of mankind, religion has actually been one of the major tools the devil has used to deceive people!

Did God Create the Devil?

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” (Isaiah 14:12).

Where did the devil come from? How did such a creature come to be? Did God purposefully create an evil being? The Bible reveals the answers to these questions. They can help us understand *why* Satan really is the enemy of mankind.

To understand Satan’s origin we must go far back in time, before man existed. Genesis 1:1 tells us that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” However, as is usually the case, the Bible doesn’t tell the whole story in one or even several verses. We find more details elsewhere in the Bible, in this case in the book of Job.

When Job, because of difficulties he was having, began to question God’s judgment, God responded with pointed questions to help him realize he didn’t have the wisdom to question God. In His response, in the form of questions to Job, God revealed some details about His creation of earth. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” God asked him. “Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? . . . On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7, NIV).

God here reveals information no man could know, since no man

was present at creation. God described the earth at its creation as a dazzlingly beautiful jewel floating in space. The creation events were so magnificent that “all the angels shouted for joy.” The angels—spirit beings God had created—already existed when God made the earth. They were united in their joy when God had created the world, singing and shouting in exultation. They were in perfect harmony and agreement at that time.

A beautiful earth becomes a wasteland

Some time after this, however, the situation dramatically changed. Genesis 1:2 tells us that, after its creation, “the earth was *without form, and void.*” This English translation doesn’t adequately convey the meaning of the original Hebrew. The words *tohu* and *bohu*, translated “without form” and “void,” are better translated “waste and void” (Young’s Literal Translation).

However, in Isaiah 45:18, God expressly says that He “*did not create it [the earth] in vain.*” Here the same Hebrew word, *tohu*, is used. If God did not create the earth in a state of “waste and void,” how did it come to be in that condition?

Part of the answer is indicated in Genesis 1:2. The Hebrew word *hayah*, translated “was,” can also properly be translated “became,” as it is translated in Genesis 2:7 and 19:26. The earth was not *created* waste and void but *became* that way at some point after its creation. The Rotherham translation of Genesis 1:2 appropriately reads, “Now the earth *had become* waste and empty.”

God created the earth in such sparkling beauty that the angels were overjoyed at its creation. But something happened to bring it to a condition of devastation and waste. Its original beauty was destroyed. God then reshaped it, forming it into a beautiful home for the first man and woman, as recorded in the remainder of Genesis 1. But the Genesis account does not tell us the entire story. Something else happened between the first two verses of Genesis that is not recorded there.

God does give us additional details of what brought on this condition of confusion and waste in several other chapters of the Bible. In 2 Peter 2 the Bible records several examples of God’s judgment for wrongdoing. Verses 5 and 6 discuss the flood of Noah’s time, then the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But before this, in verse 4, we read that “God did not spare *the angels who sinned*, but thrust them down into Tartarus [a place of restraint], and delivered them into chains of darkness, being reserved for judgment” (Modern King James Version). When did these particular *angels* sin, and *what* was their sin?

Again, we must look at other verses to find the answer. Jude 6 gives us additional details: “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these [God] has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day” (NIV).

We saw earlier that at earth’s creation *all* the angels were happy and joyous, singing and shouting together. Obviously, then, at a later time some sinned—*destroying* the wonderful harmony and cooperation they had once enjoyed. What was the nature of their sin? They “did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home”—they left the place and position God had given them. They rebelled against their Maker, the Creator of the physical universe and the spirit world of angelic beings!

The first war

In Isaiah 14 we find more information. This chapter describes this angelic rebellion and identifies its ringleader. It gives us many important details we could learn of in no other way.

In verse 4 God addresses the “king of Babylon.” In Isaiah’s time the city-state of Babylon was emerging as the major power in that region of the world. Its king was a warmonger, expanding his empire through brute force. He enslaved, plundered and devastated the nations around him. His philosophy was satanic—acquiring wealth and power at the expense of others, gaining it through violence and bloodshed. This king of Babylon *exemplified* Satan and his characteristics.

In verse 12 the subject shifts from this physical king to *another* powerful being, here translated “Lucifer.” The original Hebrew word for this being—used only this one time in the Bible—is *Heylel*, which apparently means “brightness” or “shining one.”

Many scholars recognize that the original language here is in the form of *a lament*, an exclamation of mourning over a great loss. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” (verses 12-14).

Who is this being who dared to exalt himself above the stars (angels; Revelation 1:20) of God, to challenge God Himself as ruler of the universe?

In Ezekiel 28 God gives us the answer. This chapter is written much like Isaiah 14. God begins by discussing a human ruler, then shifts to the spiritual power behind the earthly throne—the behind-the-scenes ruler who controls the kingdoms of this world (compare Luke 4:5-7).

In Ezekiel 28:2 God addresses the “prince of Tyre.” Tyre, a coastal port city north of ancient Israel on the Mediterranean coast, was famous as a trading center. Its rulers had grown haughty and presumptuous because of their wealth and influence. In verses 6-10 God tells this ruler that because of his arrogance, his might and wealth would fail and he would be overthrown.

But notice in verse 12 that God begins to address “the *king* of Tyre” rather than the prince. This being is the *true* ruler, the real power behind the throne.

God’s description of this “king of Tyre” makes it clear that He is speaking to no physical human being. “. . . ‘You were *the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty*. You were *in Eden, the garden of God*; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you *on the day you were created*’” (verses 12-13).

No mortal human could accurately be described as being “*the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty*.” This being was *created*—unlike humans who are *born* rather than created. This being had also been “in Eden, the garden of God.” Other than Adam and Eve, no people had been in Eden. God had expelled Adam and Eve, after which He placed an angel there specifically to prevent anyone else from entering (Genesis 3:24).

In the next verse God mentions some of the history of this being.

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

Why Does God Allow Satan to Influence Mankind?

God is all powerful. Yet He allows Satan to carry out his deceitful and destructive activities—within certain limits—for a purpose. To understand that purpose, let’s begin with an example from the book of Job.

“One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the LORD, ‘From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.’ Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.’

“Does Job fear God for nothing?’ Satan replied. ‘Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.’ The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger’” (Job 1:6-12, NIV).

God understood Job’s heart better than Satan perceived it. Though God

granted Satan permission to afflict Job, the devil failed in his attempt to turn this righteous man against God. Nevertheless, the story of Job’s suffering under Satan’s affliction reveals much about why God sometimes allows us to suffer.

As with Job, God tests the character of every human being. Paul wrote, “We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4, NIV). Moses explained to the ancient Israelites, “Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger [a form of suffering] and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:2-3, NIV).

God allows mankind to learn—partly by firsthand experience—that the *only way of life* that will work is the way of life He reveals in His Word, the Bible. That lesson will not be complete until all of humanity has learned that “every word” of God’s revealed

Fall of a superangel

What do these remarkable statements mean? What is a “cherub who covers”?

instructions is vital to our physical, mental and spiritual well-being (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 5:29). No alternative way of life achieves God’s purpose or ultimately leads us to happiness.

But how can God get this point across to people who are born into the world with no knowledge or understanding? He could have pre-programmed us to behave only according to harmless predetermined instincts. But then we would be mere automatons, having no choices, no individuality, no character.

Such existence is not what God intends for us. He has created us to become members of His own family—His sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18)—able to carry great responsibilities within His family.

At the beginning of human existence God stated His purpose for us: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

God created mankind to be like Him, to rule—have dominion—over His creation. To learn to properly exercise such a level of responsibility, man must first learn how to discern right

from wrong, good from bad and the wise from the foolish. Learning real wisdom involves *learning how to make wise choices*. From the beginning God pointed out the right way, but He allowed humans to be exposed to and make foolish choices.

God allowed Satan, the epitome of evil, to enter the Garden of Eden and discuss his view of life with Adam and Eve. They then had to make a choice. They *chose* to follow Satan rather than God. Satan’s tragic delusion of mankind has been the result.

However, when Jesus Christ returns to earth, God will remove the delusion of Satan. God then will begin, on a grand scale, the process of reversing the damage Satan has done. Eventually none of the devil’s influence will remain.

Mankind can then review thousands of years of tragic history and compare it with the blessings of Christ’s rule. The Bible reveals that when this occurs the overwhelming majority of humanity will reject Satan’s deceptions and enthusiastically embrace every word of God.

God is in control, but He has allowed Satan to dominate humanity for two basic reasons. First, Adam and Eve, our first parents, *chose* Satan’s domination over them. Second, God wants all of humanity to learn that “*the way of man is not in himself*; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the tabernacle established by Moses—the portable sanctuary the Israelites carried with them through the desert—was “a copy and shadow of *what is in heaven*” (NIV). In Exodus 25:18-20 we find that God instructed the Israelites to make a representation—a physical model—of His throne for the tabernacle they would carry with them in the wilderness. At either side of the “mercy seat,” which represented God’s throne, was a golden cherub with wings extended to cover the mercy seat. These two cherubim, fashioned out of gold, represented real angelic beings—the great superangels whose wings cover God’s throne.

The being God addressed through Ezekiel is called the “cherub who covers,” indicating that once he had been one of the great angels depicted in the model of God’s throne. God gave these angels the awesome distinction of serving at and covering the very throne of God.

Many other scriptures say that God “dwells between the cherubim,” showing that these wondrous creatures accompany and serve Him at His seat of power (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 37:16). This magnificent being apparently held a position of honor and distinction in God’s angelic realm.

This same great cherub is also described as being “on the holy mountain of God.” In the Bible, “hills” and “mountains” are often used to symbolize governments (Revelation 17:9-10). Apparently this superangel administered and assisted in the governance of other angels, who number in multiple millions (Daniel 7:9-10).

God also says to this cherub, “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:15). Like the description in Isaiah 14, this passage describes a *created* being, not a human. This being was extraordinary, *perfect* until he sinned.

“. . . You were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones” (verse 16, NIV). This once-marvelous being sinned and was expelled from God’s throne, cast away in disgrace.

What was the sin that brought this great angel banishment from God? Isaiah 14:13-14, which we read earlier, gives us the answer:

“You said in your heart, ‘I will *ascend to heaven*; I will *raise my throne above the stars* [angels] *of God*; I will *sit enthroned on the mount of assembly*, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will *ascend above the tops of the clouds*; I will *make myself like the Most High*’” (NIV).

This powerful spirit entity decided to challenge God for control of the universe!

Totally transformed from good to evil

What had been an amazingly beautiful, immensely talented spirit being with great responsibility in God’s angelic order became,

Following the Footsteps of a Different God

The Bible makes it clear that civilizations and societies are influenced by Satan. John writes that “the *whole world* lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). The entirety of civilization has been seduced by this cunning being through his persuasive deception and insidious lies.

The result has been thousands of years of human anguish, misery and suffering. Deceived by his lies, humans have willingly adopted *Satan’s way* of life rather than *God’s way*. The result of following Satan’s way, which through his deception appears appealing and natural to most people, is predictable: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25, New International Version).

Satan’s deception is so complete, so pervasive, that the Bible calls him “the *god of this age*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The apostle Paul, in the original Greek,

identifies him as the *theos*—the god, the one who is worshiped—of this *eon*, this age, this period in history.

Consider the magnitude of Satan’s influence over humanity—that most of mankind unwittingly worships and follows *the devil* as its god. That is the incredible truth revealed in your Bible! Understanding that reality explains so many of the troubling paradoxes we see in the world around us.

Paul explained that, as a result of Satan’s hold on humanity, most people do not believe the truth of the Bible. They do not understand the gospel—the good news—of God’s plan for mankind. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds *the god of this age has blinded*, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

through his rebellion against Almighty God, a reprehensible, despicable creature. He became *Satan*—the adversary, slanderer, accuser and destroyer. He became *the devil*—the enemy of God and humanity!

The immense powers he had used in God's service were turned, not to *serve* God, but to try to *thwart* God's purposes. This creature remains an enormously powerful spirit being, but now his powers are used for wicked, destructive ends.

This being became so vain and proud that he thought *he* should be ruler of the universe. God tells him, "Your heart became proud on

God: Ruler of the Universe

Although the Bible identifies Satan as the "prince of the power of the air" and the ruler of this world (Ephesians 2:2; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), God maintains overall control as "Lord of heaven and earth" (Matthew 11:25). He gives the devil considerable latitude in what he does, but God retains the right and power to intervene.

The biblical record shows that God sparingly uses His power to intervene, often letting the natural course of events work out His purpose and plan for mankind. Remember that Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "You could have no power at all . . . unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11).

"The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Father" is the main subject of Ephesians 1 (verses 3 and 17, Revised English Bible). His throne is "far above all government and authority, all power and dominion, and any title of sovereignty that commands allegiance, *not only in this age* but also in the age to come. He put all things in subjection beneath His [Jesus'] feet . . ." (verses 21-22, REB).

Israel's King David recognized God's sovereignty: "The LORD has established his throne in heaven, his kingly power over the whole world" (Psalm 103:19, REB) and "The LORD looks down from his sanctuary on high; from heaven he surveys the earth" (Psalm 102:19, REB).

The gentile ruler Nebuchadnezzar eventually came to see these same truths after God humbled him for seven years. "His [God's] sovereignty is everlasting and his Kingdom endures throughout all generations," said the king. "All who dwell on earth count for nothing [by comparison]; he does as he pleases with the host of heaven [the angelic kingdom] and with those who dwell on earth" (Daniel 4:34-35, REB; compare 5:21).

The first two chapters of Job show the earthly authority of the devil and how it fits into God's supremacy over the universe. Although the patriarch Job suffered immense tragedies because of the devil's activities, the narrative shows that in no case could Satan do anything that God did not allow. God remains in control.

account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor" (Ezekiel 28:17). His enormous talents and abilities led him to believe he was equal to, if not better than, God Himself. His thinking became corrupted. He rebelled against God and tried to overthrow Him. By his rebellion against his Creator he transformed himself into Satan the devil.

He was not alone in this rebellion. Millions of other angels joined him in rejecting God's authority and leadership. We find this symbolically described in Revelation 12:3-4: "And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon . . . His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth . . ." Verse 9 identifies this dragon as Satan. As we saw earlier, the Bible uses stars as a symbol for angels (Revelation 1:20). This apparently indicates that a third of the angels followed Satan in this rebellion.

The Bible refers to these rebellious angels as *demons*. They are *fallen angels*—who had plummeted from their purpose of serving God and humanity (Hebrews 1:13-14), reduced to hatred and bitterness toward God and His holy purpose for humanity. In Scripture they are shown to be able not only to influence but *possess* humans (that is, exercise even more direct control than a human hypnotist could). Such demonic control can often cause people to exhibit violent and self-destructive behavior (Matthew 8:28; 17:14-18; Acts 19:14-16; Luke 8:27-33).

God's servants are not to be fearful or overly anxious about such demonic influence affecting them. Evil spirits are fewer in number and inferior in power to God's faithful angels, who are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Christians are to be confident because "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

A strong mind spiritually attuned to God's way of life is the best way to resist demonic influence. Faithful servants of God are to be filled with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), enabling them to resist such influence and causing evil spirits to flee (James 4:7). Also, the true ministers of Christ have been given authority over demons, enabling them to cast demons out of those possessed (Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 6:13, 16:17). After all, God is the ultimate source of power.

Satan's Work in Our World

“. . . The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . .” (2 Corinthians 4:4, New Revised Standard Version).

Now that we have seen that Satan is a real being with real powers, we need to understand how he uses his powers. We should also understand his intentions and overall goal.

We saw in the previous chapter that Satan led other angels astray in a misguided attempt to overthrow God's authority. His vanity, pride and lust for power led him into war against the ruler of the universe.

Failing at that, Satan tried to thwart and disrupt God's dealings with mankind. He did not waste time before he began to interfere with God's relationship with humans. Genesis 3 describes Satan's appearance on the scene shortly after God created Adam and Eve.

The first thing Satan tried to do was to destroy God's relationship with the first humans. He subtly asked Eve, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (verse 1). He cleverly avoided mentioning all that God *had* given to her and Adam—every other plant, tree and kind of fruit in the garden. Instead he succeeded in getting her to concentrate on the fruit of the *one* tree from which God had forbidden them to eat.

He slyly began to deceive Eve. He introduced his first lie, telling her she would not die if she took of the forbidden fruit (verse 4). He followed with another untruth, slandering God by accusing Him of holding Eve back by withholding valuable knowledge from her (verse 5). She was seduced by his persuasiveness. She took of the fruit, then shared it with Adam.

Eve was deceived by Satan's craftiness (2 Corinthians 11:3). Adam wasn't deceived (1 Timothy 2:14); he simply followed along and joined his wife in disobeying God's clear instructions. We see that peer pressure—which influences us to go along even when we know a course of action is wrong—has been with us for a long time.

Satan's primary goal

This account helps us see that Satan's primary goal is to thwart God's plan to build a family relationship with mankind.

From the beginning God has had a magnificent plan for humans—to give us His gift of eternal life. One of the Bible's most familiar passages makes this plain: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God's goal is to vastly expand His family. Right now that eternal family consists of two beings, God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son (Luke 10:22). God's goal for humanity—eternal life in His family—is the central focus of the entire creation: “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19, New American Standard Bible).

This close family relationship is God's fervent desire for humanity (for a deeper understanding of this truth be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*). Paul calls Jesus “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). As the firstborn Son of God, He is the first of many children of God who will ultimately be a part of God's family, and “Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebrews 2:11, NIV).

God promises us that “he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7). “I will be a Father to you,” He says, “and you shall be My sons and daughters” (2 Corinthians 6:18). God wants to give us immortality

so we can live with Him forever. He wants to begin a close family relationship with us now (John 14:23).

Satan, however, wants to thwart God's plan in any way he can. He wants to prevent us from developing a close relationship with God. He

Satan: An Angel of Light?

If you could see and meet the devil face to face, what would he look like? He is commonly depicted as a cartoon character in a red suit with a pitchfork or as a hideous-looking ghoul.

But neither of these characterizations is anywhere close to the truth. In reality, if you were to meet the devil, you would find him attractive, engaging and persuasive. Though he is really the prince of darkness, Satan successfully *presents* himself as "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Satan is a master of misrepresentation. He is the world's greatest advertiser, packaging his product so it seems attractive and appealing while in reality it is deathly poisonous. He wants his clients to see him as good, beneficent and trustworthy. He wants his product—sin and rejection of God—to appear enticing and inviting, and he is usually quite successful.

Satan never presents sin as it really is. He never presents both sides of the story, pro and con. He presents only what he wants us to see, something that appears fun and exciting. He wants us to focus on *pleasure*, on what *feels or looks good* at the moment. He wants long-term consequences to be the last thing on our minds while he entices us to sin.

The vast majority of people have

lost sight of the real connection between *cause and effect*. We rarely hear or see that concept mentioned, much less discussed. Instead we hear people clamor for quick fixes to every problem, ease for every discomfort and a pill for every ailment. We seldom stop to consider the long-term consequences of our actions. (To better understand these principles, be sure to request your free copy of *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*)

Our approach is shortsighted and foolish. "Do not be deceived," cautions Paul. "God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow" (Galatians 6:7, NRSV).

We live in a world that pays little attention to the long-term results of sin. We don't think through the consequences of our words and deeds, and we're constantly under pressure from a society that is built on Satan's standards and values rather than God's.

It's neither easy nor popular, considering the culture surrounding us, to adopt a different set of values and standards—those that God reveals. As Jesus said: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world . . . the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

wants to keep us from attaining our destiny as the very sons of God.

Satan's great deception

As we noted earlier, Satan is a powerful, intelligent being who will stop at nothing to carry out his ends. As the master manipulator of

God's way will never be popular in this day and age.

Nevertheless, most people appear supremely confident that their ways *are* pleasing to God. They defend their religious beliefs and practices as being perfectly satisfactory and acceptable in God's eyes. They *assume* that all, or mostly all, teachers and churches bearing the Christian name teach the truth. Few indeed stop to consider that Satan's great deception is not only worldwide, but *has deeply infiltrated Christianity*.

Notice the context of Paul's words when he writes that Satan appears as "an angel of light." In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Paul warns of "false apostles, deceitful workers, *transforming themselves into apostles of Christ*." We shouldn't be surprised at this, writes Paul, because "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."

Is that possible? How could people who claim to represent Christ be Satan's "ministers," his servants, used by the devil to spread deception?

Jesus Himself repeatedly warns of this very thing! He predicted that many would appropriate His name but deny Him by their actions. He said they would "call Me 'Lord, Lord,'"

but "*not do the things which I say*" (Luke 6:46).

Jesus and His true apostles spoke of *false* apostles, *false* prophets and *false* brethren. He warns: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For *many will come in My name . . . and will deceive many*" (Matthew 24:4-5, 11-12). He knew that false teachers would arise who would teach a distorted, corrupted version of Christianity. That deception began in the first century, when Paul wrote that some were already teaching a "different gospel" and "pervert[ing] the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).

To carry out his purpose, Satan uses some people to deceive other people. This is especially true when they are motivated by personal ambition to be teachers of spiritual matters but lack a proper understanding of the Scriptures. Satan simply takes advantage of that desire and seduces susceptible individuals to represent Christ falsely, though often sincerely, while advancing the devil's own deceptive, disguised agenda.

Lest you be misled by this greatest of all of Satan's deceptions, you need to be sure that your beliefs are based firmly on the Bible. (For a more thorough explanation of how pervasive Satan's deceptions are among churches that profess to be Christian, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *The Church Jesus Built*.)

mankind, he has many methods and tools at his disposal.

In a sense, his immediate goal—keeping mankind separate from God—is relatively easy. As humans we are naturally inclined to focus on our own selfish wants. As Paul puts it, “those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires” (Romans 8:5, NIV). Those whose minds are focused on themselves are, whether they realize it or not, “hostile to God” (verse 7, NIV).

Quoting from several Psalms, Paul summarizes the spiritual condition of most of humanity: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one . . . Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:10-18, NRSV).

As a master of persuasion, Satan easily deceives mankind into focusing on anything *but* God. Through the theory of evolution, for example, he has convinced millions that God doesn’t exist (for proof that God is real, be sure to request the free booklets *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*).

Through hundreds of corrupt religions he has convinced billions of people to worship the sun, moon and stars, animals, nature, deceased ancestors, imaginary gods and goddesses and a bewildering variety of other things—or nothing at all. Even among the many varieties of traditional Christianity we find people divided and bickering over who and what God is, His purpose for us, what He wants us to do and how we should live. The devil has done an effective job of confusing people as to what the Bible really says.

Satan doesn’t care which of these groups people fall into. Whether they believe in no God at all, accept and worship a false god or are deceived into a false view of the true God and His plan for us, Satan still has them where he wants them—“alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:18).

Perhaps this helps us better understand what God means when He

tells us that the devil “*deceives the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). Paul explains that “the god of this age” has blinded those “who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

In one of His parables Jesus explains that, as soon as some people hear God’s truth, “the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Satan will stop at nothing to keep people blinded to the fullness of God’s truth. The result, as Jesus explained, is that “the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are *many* who take it,” and “the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are *few* who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14, NRSV).

Causes of humanity’s problems

When we understand the magnitude of Satan’s deception, we can better grasp the roots of so many of humanity’s problems. Collectively we have had thousands of years to experiment with governments, philosophies and ways of living, so why have we been unable to solve our problems? Why do so many difficulties persist year after year, century after century?

Human governments and other efforts have not succeeded because, in the final analysis, we simply *do not know the right way to live*. Solomon, king of ancient Israel, put it bluntly: “There is a way that *seems right* to a man, but its end is *the way of death*” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God tells us that “it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). Regrettably, mankind has proved the truth of those words for generations. Under human rulership, and influenced by Satan’s attitude of getting all we can for ourselves, the world has never seen a time that was free of turmoil, war and suffering.

The world suffers from chronic, overwhelming problems *because we have rejected God*. Under God’s inspiration King David wrote: “The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:2-3).

Jeremiah also noted that people are largely blinded by the deceit of their own evil motives and intents. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, NIV).

Man separated from God

The prophet Isaiah adds: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth . . . The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked

remove evil influences from their hearts and minds: Christ “loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and *cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). *God’s Word* is the instrument Christ uses—through the power of the Holy Spirit—to wash away Satan’s influences from our thinking.

But what can we do about the devil’s attempts to influence us in the future? Here, too, God provides us with a defense: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:10-13, NRSV).

Paul then lists specific elements of the spiritual armor God makes available to us. He compares the defense

of God’s servants against Satan’s influence to a “belt of *truth* around your waist” and a “breastplate of *righteousness*” (verse 14). He describes their combat shoes as “*whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace*” (verse 15). Their shield is their *faith* in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, “with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (verse 16).

Their resolve is protected by “the helmet of *salvation*” (verse 17)—the assurance that in steadfastly serving and pleasing God they will receive eternal life. The one offensive weapon they can use to cut to ribbons Satan’s attitudes and philosophies is the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (same verse).

Finally, Paul says, “*pray* in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints” (verse 18). These are the essential keys for warding off Satan’s efforts to regain control over “the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error” (2 Peter 2:18).

The more our character becomes like God’s perfect nature, the less Satan will feel comfortable in our presence, and the more he will be inclined to flee from us.

How Can We Resist Satan?

In addition to identifying Satan’s methods of deceiving people, God gives us specific guidance to counteract the devil and his influence. God’s Word assures us: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). This promise, however, is clearly directed toward those willing to “submit to God” (same verse) and is immediately followed with the instruction, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (verse 8).

How, then, do we draw near to God? His instruction continues: “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (same verse). We must *actively seek* to eliminate Satan’s way of thinking and behaving from our lives.

Satan, however, is so clever and powerful that no human being can successfully resist his influence—without God’s help. Therefore the key to resisting the devil is to sincerely and consistently *draw near* and *remain close to God*.

Our first step is to allow God to *wash Satan’s influence from our minds*. This takes place through recognizing and acknowledging our sins and repenting of them. The Scriptures

compare this transformation from Satan’s way of thinking to coming back to life from the dead:

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

When we begin to truly repent and submit to God from the heart, we begin to take His Word seriously and to obey His instruction and commands. Then His Word, the Bible, begins cleaning up our minds, washing away our evil thoughts and motives. All who genuinely repent—who wholeheartedly surrender their will to God and are baptized so that they may receive the Holy Spirit—are placed by Jesus Christ into His Church. We strongly recommend that you find a true minister of God to discuss baptism.

Now notice Christ’s concern for them and how He works with them to

paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:1-8).

God’s ways are vastly different from man’s. He tells us: “. . . My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Satan has effectively deceived humanity throughout history by influencing human beings to cut themselves off from God’s guidance. He leads us to want to do things our own way, to rely on

God and Satan: Truth and Life vs. Lies and Murder

Jesus says of Satan—“the Spirit that is ruling the world”—that “He has nothing in common with me” (John 14:30, Twentieth Century New Testament). The Scriptures draw sharp contrasts between God and Satan that help us better understand the profound differences between their character, motivations, goals and actions.

Much of what we learn about Satan is summed up in his name, which means *adversary*. Peter calls him “your *enemy* the devil” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). Satan’s actions and motivations are those of an enemy. God’s character, in contrast, is summarized by the word *love*. “God is love,” John tells us (1 John 4:8, 16).

In John 8:43-44 Christ says Satan is a murderer and liar. Jesus says of Himself that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). As a liar and murderer, Satan is the *exact opposite* of “the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Christ is the *truth*, Satan is a *liar*. Christ is the *life*, Satan is a

murderer—one who *takes away* life.

As we can see, the Scriptures show that Satan is the exact opposite of God and Jesus Christ in his intents, motivation and character.

Emphasizing that they are opposites, in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 Paul asks a series of questions: “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?” He emphasizes that the ways of Christ and Satan are as opposite as day and night, light and darkness (compare John 3:19-21; 8:12; Ephesians 6:12).

The essence of Christ’s character is revealed in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless *not My will*, but *Yours*, be done” (Luke 22:42). Satan’s attitude is diametrically opposite. Rather than submitting to God’s perfect will, he became *self-willed* and determined to have his way at any cost. That attitude

ourselves rather than God as the ultimate authority.

Paul describes the results of rejecting God: “. . . Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.

“They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

led to his initial rebellion against his Creator as described in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Regrettably, Satan has been remarkably successful at infusing a me-first, self-willed attitude among all human beings, with the one exception of Jesus, who perfectly resisted him.

We see another stark contrast in Revelation 9:11. Here we read of a powerful force of attackers that goes forth like locusts to torment mankind. “And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” — names meaning “destruction” and “destroyer,” respectively.

We might say that *Destroyer* is his name and *destruction* is his game. These titles sum up Satan’s character, goals and purpose. They summarize the end result of everything he strives for—absolute destruction. If the devil can’t *have* it all, as he is beginning to realize at the point in history described here, his intent is to *destroy* it all.

Again we see a major contrast. Compare Satan, the *destroyer*, with God, whose greatest attribute is that He is the great *Creator*. God is the one who creates, builds, makes and gives us so many beautiful and wonderful

things. Satan, on the other hand, is the ultimate destroyer.

What does he destroy? He ruins basically everything he can get his hands on. Read Revelation 9 and Revelation 12:7-12. Everywhere he is mentioned, Satan is destroying—trying to murder God’s people, fighting Jesus Christ, lashing out in anger because he knows his time is almost up.

Even after losing the war, and being restrained for 1,000 years, has he learned his lesson? Far from it. In Revelation 20:7-10 we read that when he is released he will go out to deceive the nations again and bring them to battle against Jerusalem. But he and those who follow him are defeated. Finally he is permanently constrained and can no longer influence mankind. All his efforts are brought to nothing.

Eventually every destructive thing Satan has tried to achieve throughout history will be reversed and defeated, and all that God has set out to achieve will be accomplished. This is made clear in the Scriptures. God has complete control over His creation, and Satan can do no more than God allows. (Be sure to read “Why Does God Allow Satan to Influence Mankind?” beginning on page 16.)

they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:28-32, NIV).

Paul's words ring as true in our day as ever before. Our news and entertainment media praise and condone degenerate, sinful lifestyles and practices while condemning people who support biblical standards as narrow-minded bigots out to impose their biases on others. Such twisted values are the inevitable result of a mind-set that rejects the knowledge and commandments of God. (To better understand the results of rejecting God's teachings, be sure to request our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*)

This is not God's world

Although God is always in control, the Scriptures make it clear that He is not the reason for the world's many chronic problems. As Jesus Christ said in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world."

God is not behind the misery that plagues our planet. Satan the devil is the true "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). John tells us that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). Satan is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Although we cannot see Satan, his influence is powerful and pervasive. Paul understood this, reminding Christians that "you once walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). The result of the devil's influence is that, before conversion, our focus is on "gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts" (verse 3, NIV).

Paul calls Satan "the prince of the power of the air" for good reason. He spiritually influences humanity to reject God and God's law. Under Satan's influence, "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:7, NIV).

Separated from God, man chooses to go his own way with devastating results. Under Satan's influence humanity has rejected God's revelation and guidance and built societies and civilizations on wrong foundations. But it will not be that way forever. How things will change is described in the next two chapters of this booklet.

The Fall of Satan's Kingdom

"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

When we consider the whole picture, we can hold no doubt that this is Satan's world rather than God's. Paul even refers to our era as "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

However, Satan will not always dominate planet earth. Bible prophecy reveals that an astounding series of events will shake our world as never before and usher in a new age—a 1,000-year era under the rule of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10; Luke 21:31).

This good news of the coming Kingdom of God is at the heart of Christ's teaching: ". . . Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).

The transition from Satan's domination of the earth to Jesus Christ's rule will be neither easy nor painless. The prophet Daniel describes it as "*a time of distress* such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then" (Daniel 12:1, NIV). Christ stated that

no human being would survive if God were not to intervene in world affairs and establish His Kingdom, ousting Satan from his dominance over humanity (Matthew 24:21-22).

Signs of the end of the age

As the end of Christ's earthly ministry drew near, the disciples asked Him: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus summarized the trends and events that would characterize that time. A quick review of the list reads remarkably like today's headlines.

Jesus responded: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (verses 4-5). (To see how this part of Christ's prophecy is being fulfilled, be sure to read "Satan: An Angel of Light?" beginning on page 24.)

Jesus continued: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the *beginning* of sorrows" (verses 6-8).

He described other significant trends: persecution and hatred directed at God's true servants, increasing religious deception and the proclamation of the true gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world (verses 9-14).

The world, Christ said, would grow increasingly dangerous as His return nears. "It will be a time of great distress," He warned, "such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (verse 21-22, REB).

Religious deception will continue to increase, He said, followed by dramatic heavenly signs (verses 23-29). These will be followed by a world-transforming event: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven

with power and great glory" (verse 30). ". . . When you see all these things," He tells us, "know that it is near—at the doors!" (verse 33).

Satan's role in the end time

Jesus' prophecy is an overview of end-time events. Many other prophecies, mostly in the book of Revelation, fill in various details.

Satan will not relinquish his kingdom without a fight. As the time of Christ's return draws near, we can read this sobering warning in Revelation 12:12: "*Woe* to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, *having great wrath*, because *he knows that he has a short time*." Many prophecies go on to detail a *frenzy of destruction* directed at God's people, at humanity as a whole, and at the returning Jesus Christ.

Satan's wrath is focused on God's people, symbolically represented by a woman in Revelation 12. "And the dragon was *enraged* with the woman, and he went *to make war with the rest of her offspring*, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17).

Religious persecution will again rear its ugly head—at Satan's instigation (Revelation 2:10). "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake," warned Jesus. "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another" (Matthew 24:9-10).

Mark preserves another chilling detail from Christ's prophecy about this promised persecution: "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Mark 13:12). Revelation 6:9-11 further describes this period of martyrdom.

Great religious deception coming

We read earlier that religious deception will increase as Christ's return draws near. Satan will have a direct hand in the rise of a great leader who will play a pivotal role in a massive end-time religious deception.

Writing of events preceding Christ's return, Paul tells us that "that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and *the man of sin* is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This man

“opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (verse 4).

How could such a person claim to be God and convince others to believe him? Paul adds that “the coming of the lawless one will be in accordance *with the work of Satan* displayed in all kinds of *counterfeit miracles*, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that *deceives* those who are perishing” (verses 9-10, NIV). These powerful miracles will convince many, but in reality they are the deceptive handiwork of Satan.

Regrettably, this man’s deception will take in millions of people. In the cataclysm that will mark the end of this age, many will fall victim to a “powerful delusion” and “perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (verses 10-11, NIV).

In the end time, biblical ignorance will catch up with millions of people. When this charismatic, Christ-imitating leader emerges, millions apparently will accept him as God in the flesh. Because they will have “refused to love the truth” (verse 10, NIV), they easily will be deceived, taken in by this impostor in a satanic end-time religious revival.

This should be a sobering warning to all of us. If we do not love the truth, if our beliefs are not firmly grounded in the truth of God’s Word and we do not have the strength of character to hold fast to them, we too could easily fall prey to this or other satanic deceptions. It has happened before, and both Jesus and Paul assure us *it will happen again*.

A satanic war against humanity

Although Satan’s attitude of hatred, greed and resentment has led mankind into countless wars down through history, prophecy reveals that the devil will *personally* orchestrate one last great worldwide conflagration shortly before Christ returns.

In Revelation 9:1-12 we read about what appears to be an enormous military force symbolized by a cloud of locusts arising from a bottomless pit. Terrifying locustlike devices inflict people with pain like the stings of scorpions (verses 5, 10). The results sound strikingly similar to the effects of modern chemical and biological warfare.

Satan: The Great Counterfeiter

As a deceiver, Satan has no equal. In addition to being the world’s greatest con artist, he is also its most accomplished counterfeiter.

Notice Paul’s warning to the Christians in Corinth: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches *another Jesus* whom we have not preached, or if you receive *a different spirit* which you have not received, or *a different gospel* which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Here Paul describes three areas in which Satan employs clever *counterfeits* of the truth to deceive even Christians.

- First he presents Jesus as being quite different from the Christ revealed in the Bible—in effect creating *another Jesus*, a false Christ. This is the Jesus most people hear about today—a counterfeit of the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Regrettably, most of Christianity is built around this false Christ.

- The second of Satan’s clever deceptions is to represent the natural outpouring of *human emotion*—or, in some cases, the *direct influence of demons*—as God’s Spirit. Hundreds of thousands of people are deceived every year in this manner. They are impressed by what they see or feel rather than by *fruits* of God’s Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and by whether the accompanying teaching is indeed of God (Isaiah 8:20).

The true Holy Spirit is the *power* of God (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:7) through which “those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). It is not the mere expression of human emotions or a communication with the world of spirits (demons), nor is it a third person in the Godhead. Rather, through the power of the Holy Spirit God “works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13, NIV).

- The third deception, twisting Jesus’ gospel message, seems to be Satan’s most effective tool for maintaining his deadly grip on many people. Jesus explained that, as soon as people begin to respond to God’s Word, Satan acts quickly to snatch it away (Matthew 13:18-22). The devil’s methods are powerfully effective with many.

For example, notice Paul’s lament over what was happening to the Galatian Christians who had been converted under his ministry. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a *different gospel*, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to *pervert the gospel of Christ*. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-8).

To learn more about Satan’s counterfeits and how they have infiltrated Christianity, be sure to request your free copy of *The Church Jesus Built*.

Leading this wave of suffering as “king over them” is “the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (verse 11). These titles mean “destruction” and “destroyer,” respectively. This being appears to be none other than Satan himself, whose character and reason for being are perfectly summed up by those titles (see “Truth and Life vs. Lies and Murder” beginning on page 30).

We then read of the rise of a massive military force 200 million strong (verse 16). An unimaginable carnage begins. *A third of mankind*—literally *billions* of people at earth’s current population level—die in this great war (verses 15, 18), dwarfing all casualties in all previous wars. In this frenzy of destruction it appears that, if Satan can no longer maintain his control on humanity with the impending return of Christ, he will slaughter as many as he can. (To learn more about these prophetic events, request your free copies of the booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.)

Satan’s last stand

In Revelation 13 we find that Satan will be behind the rise of two “beasts.” One will be an end-time coalition of nations led by a powerful human ruler who will “make war with the saints and . . . overcome them” (verses 1-7). The other will be the religious leader we read about earlier called “the false prophet” (verses 11-18; Revelation 19:20).

Demons—as spiritual emissaries of the dragon (Satan), the beast and the false prophet—“go out *to the kings of the earth* and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty,” commonly but less than accurately called the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16).

Unaware of events going on behind the scenes, these kings will be mere pawns in Satan’s plan. Though their intent will be to fight each other, Satan’s objective will be to use the world’s armies to fight Christ at His return. Their armies will gather on a large plain at Megiddo about 55 miles north of Jerusalem. The final battle will take place at Jerusalem against the returning Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:1-4, 12-15).

Revelation 19 describes Christ’s triumphant return to earth: “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (verses 11-16, NIV).

These verses show conclusively that all the armies of the earth will be proven to be nothing compared with the power of earth’s coming King, Jesus the Messiah.

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse” (verses 19-21).

With his armies defeated, Satan’s kingdom is dismantled and destroyed. But Satan and his demons must be stopped from continuing to deceive and manipulate mankind. To prevent this, in his vision John sees an angel who “seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended” (Revelation 20:2-3, NIV).

Satan’s rulership over the world in “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4; 1 John 5:19) will then end for the next 1,000 years. The battle for the control of earth is over. In God’s timetable, it is time for a new age to begin.

The Good News of a World Set Free

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

When Jesus Christ returns, “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). Satan’s world, built on a foundation of lies and deception, will come crashing down, replaced by the Kingdom of truth and light.

To grasp the magnitude of the transformation that will take place at the coming and implementing of the Kingdom of God, we need to understand the magnitude of Satan’s centuries-long deception. It is difficult even to begin to see how great, how pervasive, that deception has been when we have been a part of it since our birth. After all, a deceived person *doesn’t know he is being deceived*. To him the deception is what appears normal—it’s the truth that seems odd!

We need to grasp the fact that Satan has constantly deceived and manipulated mankind on every conceivable level. The prophecies of the book of Revelation only begin to scratch the surface of what must take place for the Kingdom of God to be established. One message that comes through loud and clear is that Christ will have to

tear virtually everything down and start over. It will be the only way to root out the last vestiges of Satan’s system.

Tearing down and starting over

When you read through the book of Revelation you learn that it isn’t only the obvious areas of deception—such as Satan’s end-time political and religious systems—that must be rooted out and destroyed.

At Christ’s return *everything* will come crashing down, to be swept away. He will start over afresh. Everything that Satan had a hand in building—governments, political systems, economic systems, educational systems, entertainment, media and information systems, every form of society and civilization that we have invented and established over the course of man’s history—must be replaced with something far superior.

Why? Because everything in this present world has been built *on a wrong foundation*. It is all founded on Satan’s deceptions and outright lies. It has been built on *his* values—constructed to his specifications, you might say. Virtually without exception this world’s systems have all been constructed with no guidance or direction from God.

This is not God’s world. It is not His society. It is not His civilization. It is not built on His values, laws or way of life. Satan has deceived the world for centuries and organized it according to *his* values rather than God’s.

Satan’s deception is an active, continuing process. At every turn he has taken mankind farther and farther away from God and His instructions for us. Each generation has built on layer after layer of previously established deception. Just as Satan deceived the whole world in the past, he is deceiving it now and will continue to delude it until God puts him away at Christ’s return. Then everything he has built must be completely crushed and swept away.

It is not pleasant to contemplate, but much of the horrendous destruction and devastation poured out on earth as described in the book of Revelation is God’s judgment on mankind and civilization. As we noted earlier, Satan will embark on a frenzy of destruction as the end of his rule draws near and he wages a desperate war to thwart the returning Jesus Christ. But what is left of Satan’s empire will be annihilated by Jesus as He assumes the role of King of Kings.

Just as a new building cannot successfully be built on the rotting foundation of a destroyed structure, God must raze the remnants of Satan's edifice before He can build a new foundation.

A new kind of government

At Jesus' return those who have been God's faithful followers over the centuries—who have successfully resisted Satan's deceit and rebellion—will be resurrected to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). God's Word says of these people: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, *and shall reign with Him a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:6).

Christ, as we have seen, will return to reign on earth (Zechariah 14:4, 9). Revelation 5:10 says of those resurrected to be with Christ, "You have made them to be *a kingdom and priests* to serve our God, and *they will reign on the earth*" (NIV). God has in mind an awesome purpose for His faithful servants. They are not destined for a life of idleness and ease in heaven for eternity. God has called and is training them for a great *responsibility*—to reign with Christ as rulers and priests to build a perfect, just and godly civilization on earth!

Christ's kingdom, the Kingdom of God, will be a literal kingdom ruling over the earth. Daniel 7:27, referring to the establishment of this kingdom, tells us that "the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over *to the saints, the people of the Most High*. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him" (NIV).

Verse 14 tells us even more clearly that this will be a literal, world-ruling government. Daniel describes God the Father giving Jesus the Messiah authority and responsibility over the earth: ". . . To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that *all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him*. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

The governmental systems of mankind for centuries have proven their inherent inability to solve our many problems. Now they will be replaced by a ruler and form of government that can at last solve those problems. Jesus Christ will personally rule the peoples of the earth.

This central truth is at the heart of the gospel—the good news—that Jesus taught. The focus of His message is the announcement of a coming world government (Luke 21:31) that will not be administered by blinded people who have been duped by Satan. It will be not be ruled by selfishly motivated humans but by Jesus Christ Himself (verse 27).

Building a God-centered civilization

The Hebrew prophets give us dozens of prophecies throughout the Old Testament about this exciting time. One that perhaps best describes the differences between the world tomorrow and today's world is found in Isaiah 11:9: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

Today's world is full of hurting and destruction. It is blinded to the knowledge of God we so desperately need. Once Satan is removed, along with his attitude of vanity, jealousy, greed, selfishness and hostility, humanity can begin to learn and then experience peace. Satan will no longer be around to blind the world and enshroud it in spiritual darkness. The world will at last experience freedom from Satan's spiritual enslavement (John 8:32). People will at last learn godly values and the right way to live—the way to prevent and remove pain and misery.

The prophet Micah describes this time of unprecedented peace: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

"He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid . . ." (Micah 4:1-4).

With Satan-induced blindness removed, men, women, boys and girls everywhere will at last begin to recognize the blessings that come from following God's way. They will eagerly stream to Jerusalem, Christ's capital city, to learn His way of life.

Prophecies of Christ's rule

In one of the Bible's best-known (but least-understood) passages, the prophet Isaiah describes the kind of ruler Jesus will be: ". . . The government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever . . ." (Isaiah 9:6-7).

In contrast to the injustice, incompetence and oppression that so often characterize governments today, "judgment and justice" will be hallmarks of Christ's coming reign. A new, benign kind of epidemic will break out throughout the world, affecting marriages, families, communities and nations. It will be an epidemic of *peace*. As Isaiah prophesied, "there will be no end" to peace under Jesus Christ's reign (verse 7). The Prince of Peace will bring calm and goodwill to a world that has never known lasting peace.

Under Christ's righteous rulership, mankind will at last learn God's ways and experience a wonderful peace. Educational institutions will teach people *how to live*, not just how to make a living. Biblical principles for healthy and lasting relationships will be thoroughly explained. The multiple millions of people who have never known God's laws or ways in a world blinded by Satan for thousands of years will at last have access to that wonderful, saving knowledge. (To learn more about the promised Kingdom of God, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.)

The millennial kingdom and beyond

Christ will usher in a literal kingdom, the Kingdom of God, on earth. But this is not the end of the story. Notice Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign *forever and ever!*'"

Jesus Christ will reign over the nations in a literal kingdom for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3-7). Yet we are also told that "He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). In other words, the 1,000-year reign (commonly called the Millennium, derived from the Latin words *mille*, meaning "thousand," and *annus*, meaning "year") is just the beginning of Jesus' *eternal* reign in the Kingdom of God.

Indeed, the reign that Christ will share with the resurrected saints during this time will take place for the very purpose of offering entry into the eternal Kingdom of God to all mankind. Millions of physical human beings alive at Christ's return will live through the devastation of the prophesied end-time events into the Millennium, after which many more generations will be born and live. They will all be given an opportunity for eternal life, to be changed from their physical lives and bodies to spirit and to enter into the eternal Kingdom of God.

When He taught about the Kingdom of God, Jesus made it clear that ultimately it is an *eternal* kingdom, not one that lasts only 1,000 years. In Matthew 19:16 we read of a wealthy young man who asked Jesus a fundamental question: "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus explained to him that he must keep God's commandments and "be perfect" (verse 21). When it became clear that the young man was not willing to do all that would be required, Jesus went on to say in verse 24 that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Here, entry into the Kingdom of God is equated with eternal life.

Yes, the millennial reign of Christ will open the door for millions of human beings to be saved and enter the eternal Kingdom of God. The Millennium, a time of unparalleled peace, happiness and prosperity, will be just a foretaste of the even greater eternal Kingdom.

Unknown to most people, God established a series of festivals picturing how He will eventually reconcile humanity to Himself. In the process represented by the festivals, we learn why God allows Satan to exist until Jesus Christ's return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God. (To learn more about these days of worship, be sure to request your free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

Satan's final role

But the Bible reveals that Satan plays one final role after Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Earlier we read that Satan will be bound "so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:3). But, then, "after these things he must be released for a little while" (same verse).

During the Millennium many will be born who will not be exposed to Satan's influence. God's way will be the only way they will have ever known. Yet the Scriptures reveal that God tests people to see if their obedience is from the heart (Deuteronomy 8:2; Revelation 2:10). One way He does this is to allow them to choose between good and evil (Deuteronomy 30:19). The book of Revelation describes one such way this will happen at the end of the Millennium.

Notice how it will occur: "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:7-9, NIV).

God does not reveal whether this is the only test He will give during the Millennium to separate those who sincerely want to obey and follow Him from those who don't. But it will certainly be the final and most significant test. It will be a vital part of the judgment process, to determine once and for all where any root of the devil's attitudes and thinking remain on earth. Here, at the end of the Millennium, those who have chosen to follow Satan will be gathered together at once and destroyed. No longer will humans have the opportunity to choose satanic, evil ways.

Then comes the time for Satan's permanent constraint: "And the Devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet were. And he will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (verse 10, MKJV). He will never again be allowed to deceive anyone.

Transformed heaven and earth

In the end there will be only God and those who have chosen His

way rather than Satan's. In the book of Revelation John describes another incredible sequence of events after the 1,000-year reign of Christ: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1, NIV).

In this new world "the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (verse 3, NIV). Satan's rule as "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV) will be but a vanishing memory.

Revelation 21:4 tells us what the world will be like when Satan's influence is no more: "[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (NIV).

Is there really a devil? Yes. Absolutely. But God assures us the time is coming when Satan and his works—the physical suffering, misery, mental anguish and mourning he brings—will be no more. May you have the wisdom, strength and love for truth to resist his deception and be there to see that day!

WORLDWIDE MAILING ADDRESSES

United States:

United Church of God
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796
Fax: (513) 576-9795
Web site address: www.gnmagazine.org
E-mail: info@ucg.org

Australia:

United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 07 55 202 111
Free call: 1800 356 202
Fax: 07 55 202 122
Web site address: www.ucg.org.au
E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

Bahamas: United Church of God
P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 324-3169
Fax: (242) 364-5566

British Isles: United Church of God
P.O. Box 4052
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK13 7ZF, England
Phone: 020-8386-8467
Fax: 01257-453978
Web site address: www.goodnews.org.uk

Canada:

United Church of God—Canada
Box 144, Station D
Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779
Fax: (416) 231-8238
Web site address: www.ucg.ca

Fiji: United Church of God
P.O. Box 10577, Nadi Airport, Fiji
Phone: 723-678

French-speaking areas:

Église de Dieu Unie—France
B.P. 51254
45002 Orléans Cedex 1, France

Germany:

Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten
Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

Italy: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita
Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy
Phone and fax: 0039-035-582140
Web site address: www.labuonanotizia.org
E-mail: redazione@labuonanotizia.org

Mauritius:

P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

Netherlands: P.O. Box 93
2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

New Zealand: United Church of God
P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand
Phone: Toll free 0508-463-763

Philippines: United Church of God
P.O. Box 4774
MCPO, 1287 Makati City, Philippines
Phone: 82 241-0150
Web site address: www.ucg.org.ph

Scandinavia: Guds Forenade Kyrka
Mailbox 144, 111 73 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467
Fax: +44 1257 453978

South Africa:

United Church of God, Southern Africa
P.O. Box 2209
Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone and fax: 043 748-1694
E-mail: ucgrsa@xsinet.co.za

Spanish-speaking areas:

Iglesia de Dios Unida
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax: (513) 576-9795

Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga
P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Author: Scott Ashley *Contributing writers:* Roger Foster, John Ross Schroeder
Editorial reviewers: John Bald, Robert Dick, Bruce Gore, John Jewell, Paul Kieffer,
Graemme Marshall, Burk McNair, Mario Seiglie, Richard Thompson, David Treybig,
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