

Section II

The History of the Conflict Between Good and Evil

Overview

Spiritual conflict began on the supernatural level in prehistoric times when some of the heavenly created beings rebelled against God. This is when Satan became the adversary of God. This rebellion then transferred into the natural (physical) realm after the temptation and disobedience of Adam and Eve. After gaining access to the physical creation, Satan became the adversary of mankind, as well as God, and he has continually and persistently endeavored to deceive and divert people from fellowship with, and knowledge of, the Creator God. Satan especially wants to keep people from learning about the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ, and when individuals enter into a relationship with God, he (Satan) harasses and hinders the believers through enticement to sin and the exploitation of weaknesses.

The significant moment in the defeat of Satan occurred at the time of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from death. The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the sins of humanity, paid the penalty for those sins, and thus satisfied the righteous demands of the Father. His death on the cross broke the power and authority of Satan by making it possible for sinners to be reconciled with God (see Colossians 2:13-15; 1:19-22). The resurrection of Jesus broke the bondage of death which was the consequence of sin, thus freeing people from Satan's bondage and control. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus proved that there was life after physical death. Jesus' ascension brought Him back to His rightful position above all principalities, powers, and authorities. Jesus is Lord of all, including Satan.

The History of the Conflict Between Good and Evil Can Be Traced Through Six Stages.

Stage 1: Creation Genesis Chapters 1 & 2

We don't fully understand why the triune God, who is complete in Himself, decided to create outside of Himself.

The first act of the drama was the creation of the universe. There are a lot of verses which indicate that God was the sovereign Creator of the universe. For examples see the following:

Psalm 148; all the verses of this Psalm are good, but especially v1-6

Isaiah 37:16 "You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth"

Isaiah 44:24 "I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself."

Isaiah 45:12 "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched our the heavens; I marshaled (assembled and organized) their starry hosts."

John 1:3 "Through him (the Word) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

- Acts 4:24 “Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and earth and the sea, and everything in them.”
- Acts 14:15 “turn ... to the living God who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.”
- Colossians 1:16 “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”

According to Genesis 1:1 and 2:1 the creation included the heavens and the earth. This is usually interpreted to include all the things in both heaven and earth. All living creatures, including mankind, were part of the earthly creation, and it can be assumed that all angelic beings were part of the heavenly. [Note: the word “heavens” may have a greater meaning than just the physical universe. In fact, the words in 2:1 refer to the “hosts of heaven” or “the vast array of heaven,” possibly a reference to the creatures of the heavens and not just the physical universe.]

There are several important implications:

God had such power that He simply spoke, and what He spoke came to pass.

Everything that was not God derived its existence from God.

There are five statements in Genesis chapter 1 that everything was good. Nothing made by God had intrinsic evil in it. His creation was exactly like He wanted it to be.

All of creation is accountable to God and should give appropriate recognition (glory) to God. Because of who He is, God deserves the praises of everyone and everything.

Both angels and humans were created beings (See Psalm 33:6).

We will now look at these two groups of created beings (angels / supernatural beings and humans)

First, the Heavenly / Supernatural Creatures

There are 273 specific references to angels in the Bible. The Bible does not give us a complete and detailed theology of these supernatural beings. We know very little about their characteristics and power. We have a little information about their responsibilities and activities. We know that there are now good angels and bad angels.

Good Angels

There are a few references concerning the number of angels

Matthew 25:53 (12 times 6000 = 72,000. It must not be assumed that this is the total number of angels.)

Hebrews 12:22

Revelation 5:11 an indefinite but vast number

Angels are the servants of God
Hebrews 1:14

Angels have various responsibilities:

They minister to God in worship and praise
Psalm 103:20-21
Revelation 7:11

They ministered to Jesus on two occasions when He was in great need
Matthew 4:6, 11 After the temptation in the wilderness
Luke 22:43 As Jesus was praying in the Gethsemane

They minister to God people

- a. They protect (II Kings 6:17)
- b. They give guidance (Genesis 24:7; 31:3, 11-12; Daniel 8:15-16, 9:3, 20-23, 10:12-13; Matthew 1:20; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-7; Acts 1:10-11)
- c. They deliver from enemies (Genesis 19; Daniel 3:28; Acts 5:19, 12:7-11)
- d. They carry souls to paradise (Luke 16:22)
- e. They serve as personal guardians (Psalm 34:7, 91:11; Matthew 18:10)
- f. They destroy enemies (Genesis 19:13; Psalm 78:49; II Chronicles 32:1; Isaiah 37:36; Acts 12:23)
- g. They control governments (Daniel 10:1)
- h. They control the forces of nature (II Samuel 24:15-16; Matthew 28:2; Revelation 7:1-2; 16)

Satan and Bad Angels

There are two pictures in Scripture which describe the origin of bad angels. These passages have both a near view and far view. The near view concerns earthly kings; they had attitudes like Satan.

Picture One — Ezekiel 28:1-10 describes a human leader, the ruler of Tyre, a Phoenician city/state on the Mediterranean. Secular history records inform us that his name was Ittobaal II. The prophecy was just before the siege and defeat of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Verses 1-5 describe the pride of the king

Verses 6-10 describe the punishment which would fall on the king

Ezekiel used the prophecy against the human ruler of Tyre as a starting point to talk about another ruler, one who was superhuman.

28:11-19 describe the superhuman leader

Verses 12-13 describe the privilege of this leader. Note his qualities, habitation, and position.

Verse 14 describes his function. He was “anointed as a guardian cherub,” that is, one of the creatures who protected the holiness of God. His place was on the “holy mount of God,” at the center of the government of the majesty of heaven.

Verse 15 describes his perfection.

Verses 16-18 describe his sinful behavior and his expulsion from the mount of God.

Picture Two — Isaiah 14:4-11 describes the demise of the king of Babylon. Although he was the most powerful person on earth for a time, the passage informs us that he will go to the grave like all world rulers.

In Isaiah 14:12-15, the description seems to apply to another higher being

Verse 12 describes the lofty status and title once held by this creature.

Verse 13 reveals the unholy ambition of this creature; his jealousy of God, lust for power and glory; and desire to be worshiped. “I will ascend into heaven.”

Verse 13 also reveals the creature’s discontent with his created status; he seeks authority over other angels. “I will raise my throne above the stars of God.” (According to some commentators, the word “stars” is a reference to other angels. See Daniel 8:9-10.)

Verse 13 The mount of assembly was the center of God’s rule. The creature wanted the place of honor. He had a thirst for power and authority. “I will sit enthroned upon the mount of assembly.” Is it possible that the throne he wanted was that of the Son of God?

Verse 14 might describe the glory of God (cf Exodus 40:34-35). He wanted to be higher than all others. “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.”

Verse 14 This is the climax of self-assertion and defiance of God. The creature described in these verses wanted to be equal with God, to be a creature equal to the Creator. He wanted to exchange his reflected glory for God’s true glory. “I will make myself like the Most High.” (See the following verses for the position of God — Isaiah 42:8, 43:10, 44:6, 45:5-6, 21-23.)

The “I will” statements in verses 13-14 indicate that angels could make choices; they could choose whether to honor and obey God or not. Unfortunately, the creature described in the passage made wrong choices.

He had an inflated sense of self-importance and ambition;

He desired the status of God;

He acted deliberately and intentionally to obtain the authority, glory, and position of God.

Satan has Various Descriptive Names in Scripture

In regard to position, Satan is	the anointed cherub	Ezekiel 28:14
	The Prince of this World	John 12:31; 16:11
	The Prince of the Power of the Air	Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 1:13
	The God of This Age	II Corinthians 4:4
	The Prince of Demons	Matthew 12:24; Luke 11:15
	An Angel of Light	II Corinthians 11:14
	The Son of the Morning	Isaiah 14:12
In regard to character, Satan is	Lucifer (shining one)	Isaiah 14:12
	Satan (one who hates, resists)	Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:9 (note: this name appears 52 times in the New Testament)
	Devil (slanderer)	Luke 4:2, 13; Revelation 12:9 (note: this name is appears 35 times in the New Testament)
	Old Serpent (deceit, crafty)	II Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9
	Great Dragon	Revelation 12:3, 7, 9
	Evil One	John 17:15; I John 5:18
	Destroyer	Revelation 9:11
	Beelzebub (Lord of Flies)	Matthew 12:24
	Wolf	John 10:12
	Roaring Lion	I Peter 5:8
In regard to activity, Satan is	Tempter	Matthew 4:3; I Thessalonians 3:5
	Accuser	Revelation 12:10
	Deceiver	Revelation 12:9; 20:3
	Spirit that works in sons of disobedience	Ephesians 2:2
	Murderer	John 8:44
	Liar	John 8:44; II Corinthians 11:13-15
	Adversary	I Peter 5:8
	Oppressor	Isaiah 14:4

Rebellion of Spiritual Forces Against God

There is very little specific information in the Scriptures about the rebellion of spiritual forces against God. We know it happened, we know that it was caused and led by Satan, but there are mostly hints and clues about what happened.

Apparently the cosmic conflict between God and the forces of evil began somewhere/sometime before the creation of mankind. (Is Genesis 1:2 a clue?)

We do know that the result of Satan's rebellion was his loss of position and status in the angelic realm. His loss of position was the exact opposite result from what he wanted. He had said, "I will sit enthroned upon the mount of the assembly." "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds." "I will make myself like the Most High." Apparently he was able to maintain some access to the heavenly councils after he lost his position (see Job 1:6 and 2:1) but someday he will be expelled (cast out).

Scripture indicates that a large number of angels followed Satan at the time of the rebellion against God.

II Peter 2:4 "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons (chains of darkness) to be held for judgment."

Jude 6 The angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home, these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great day."

Matthew 25:41; 8:29 "fire prepared for the devil and his angels"

Revelation 12:3-4, 7, 9b v7 "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought back." [Note: This passage probably refers to a time which is still future.]

Many people assume that fallen angels are demons.

Matthew 9:34 and Mark 3:22 Satan is called the prince of demons. However, if the angels who sinned have been sent to hell and are now bound in chains, then demons must not be fallen angels, but rather a separate class of evil creatures. We do not know for sure about the nature of fallen angels and demons.

Scripture indicates that the host of supernatural beings is divided into two kingdoms.

According to God's revelation in Scripture, there has been spiritual opposition against God since the beginning of creation. This conflict has been described in various ways:

- The struggle between good and evil
- The battle between right and wrong
- The conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness
- The opposition between light and darkness
- The tension between life and death

From a Biblical perspective, the battle is revealed as a conflict between opposing kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

A word of caution:

We must not think of these two kingdoms as equals. There is no dualism.

The kingdom of God is infinitely greater. God is the Sovereign Creator of everything.

God's purposes have never been altered because of Satan's opposition.

From the perspective of God, the power of Satan was shattered by the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross.

Satan's opposition to God has always been limited. God in His mercy has withheld ultimate judgment, but the punishment for Satan and his forces has been predicted throughout human history, since Genesis 3:15. God is in control; we can rejoice about that.

Creation of Humanity

The Creation of people was unique. People were made in God's own image. When creating the heavens and earth, God had said, "Let there be ... (light, separation of waters, dry ground, etc.)". Concerning mankind He said, "Let us make mankind in our image". People were deliberately fashioned by the Creator to meet a divine intention and purpose. Everything else in creation was preparation for the arrival of mankind. This is the foundation of who we are as people.

Notice in Genesis 1:26 and 28 the significance and responsibilities given to Adam and Eve. They were to "rule over" all the other creatures on earth. They were to "subdue the earth" and "rule over ... every living creature" on the earth. Humanity was to exercise dominion over the other earthly creatures; to govern all living creatures.

In Genesis 2:8 and 15 "the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Humanity was given the responsibility to be a steward of the earth.

People were created to be the representatives of God on earth. God was willing to share His sovereign authority with them. See Genesis 2:19-20 as an example of delegated authority. Because they were created in the image and likeness of God, they had the authority and ability to govern. They had every resource they needed to fulfill their responsibilities; that is, to control and steward the earth. Adam and Eve were to care for and maintain the perfection and beauty of the earth for the glory of God.

Because people are in the image and likeness of God:

They have the ability to make choices

They have an obligation to represent God and to be the kind of people that He wants them to be.

They have been given the authority of God to govern and rule, as well as the responsibility to maintain the condition of the earth as the stewards of God. This authority and power is provided by the Holy Spirit.

They have a built-in desire to be connected with Someone who is higher and greater than themselves. People retained many of the aspects of the image of God and the desire for relationship with God after the Fall. The characteristics that God put into humanity were not completely lost in the fall; however, all the characteristics were seriously affected by sin.

Adam and Eve were placed in a carefully prepared and ideal environment. While they lived there, they had a unique fellowship with God (imagine God and man in close fellowship). The situation was so pure and holy that there was no shame, guilt, or fear. We don't know how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden in Eden, but we know that a problem developed in Genesis chapter 3.

Stage 2: The Fall Gen 3

The temptation, disobedience, and banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden in Eden is the second stage of the divine drama. The Old Testament indicates that the conflict between Satan and God reached earth shortly after the creation of mankind, at least before Adam and Eve had children. Satan did not physically coerce Adam and Eve to sin; he probably could not do this because they were the rulers on earth. Satan could only entice them to make a disobedient choice. In Genesis 2:17 Adam was told by God that he “must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

In the temptation Eve faced the offer to become more like God. See Genesis 3:5 “For God knows that when you eat of it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The fruit of the tree was so attractive to Eve that she ate of it and gave to her husband who also ate. Adam and Eve disobeyed the instructions of God and asserted their own independence. The outcome was shame and fear.

Conclusions from Genesis 3

Mankind was drawn into disobedience by an already existing evil supernatural being.

That evil being, the devil, deliberately deceived Adam and Eve.

Satan attacked mankind's understanding of truth and a direct command of God ("Did God really say that?").

Satan cast doubt on the goodness of God, implying that God was withholding something important from humanity.

Mankind's disobedience of the command of God meant that people became participants in the rebellion against God. The spiritual battleground shifted to earth.

God pronounced curses against the serpent (devil), the woman, the man, and the earth. All of the earthly creation was contaminated by sin.

Because Adam and Eve did not act in a way that was pleasing to God, just like Satan had done, they suffered serious consequences, just like Satan.

God also made a promise about the final outcome: the serpent would bite the heel of the woman's offspring, but the "seed of the woman" would crush the serpent's head. See Genesis 3:15.

One More Important Point

Mankind not only became a participant in the conflict between good and evil, but people became the center around which the conflict revolved. There are several reasons for this

Satan's overall goal was (and is) to prevent God from being glorified.

The devil understood that he could not engage in a battle against God directly, so he fights God by fighting against God's people. Satan seeks to alienate mankind from God. People are the in image of God and they were created for fellowship with God. As a result, humanity has become the enemy of God's enemy.

Ironically, Satan is dependent on the participation of people in his efforts to fight against God.

Satan works to stop people from fellowship with God and to prevent them from giving glory to God (II Corinthians 4:4)

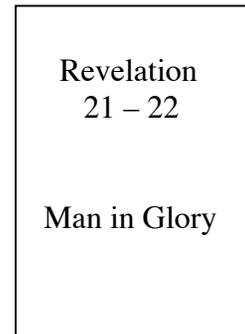
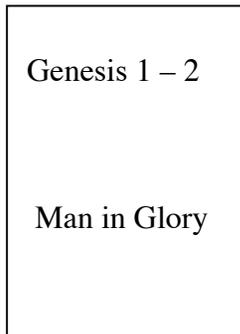
God, out of love for rebellious fallen mankind, had to provide redemption.

A Description of the Consequences of Disobedience

Chapter two of Genesis describes the ideal living conditions of Adam and Eve. They were in a perfect environment. Everything was exactly like God wanted it to be. Adam and Eve had a close personal relationship with their Creator and LORD. There was no shame or guilt because they were holy and pure. We can say that mankind was dwelling in the glory that God intended for mankind. Unfortunately humanity was expelled from their ideal circumstances after they sinned. See Genesis 3.

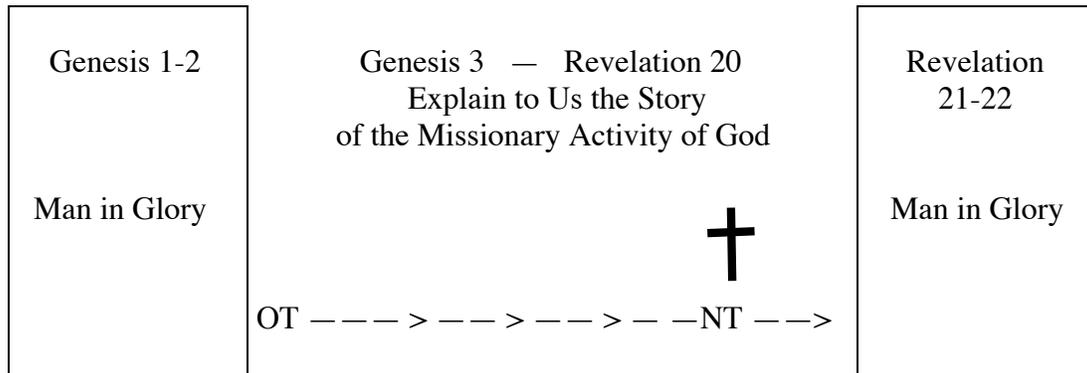
There are two other chapters in Scripture which describe people in ideal circumstances. Revelation 21-22 describe “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” The characteristics of the new heaven and earth are remarkable. There are no more tears in the eyes of the people, there is “no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” In other words, all the consequences of sin and separation from God are ended. Members of the human race are once again in close personal fellowship with the LORD God. Nothing impure and contaminated by sin exists in the presence of the holy God. Mankind is fully restored to the glory and relationship which existed in the Garden in Eden.

The two intervals of the glory of mankind can be illustrated this way:



Everything in Scripture from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 is focused on the battle between the forces of God and Satan. The story of the Bible is the conflict between the dragon and the seed of the woman. The conflict can be recognized in the Old Testament history of Israel, in the life of Jesus when He was on earth, and in the experiences of the believers in the New Testament. Obedience to God and dependence on God’s spiritual power has always determined the outcome of the conflict between God and His followers and the forces of Satan.

After Genesis 3 what did God need to do? He needed to restore fallen man to glory. God's activity in human history can be illustrated this way:



The Scriptures from Genesis 3 — Revelation 20 is a record of God's activity in restoring people to their intended glory.

In Biblical terms, spiritual conflict began with Satan's rebellion against God in prehistory. In this age of human history, spiritual conflict manifests itself in rebellious activities within the created order, and it will all end with the destruction of Satan and his forces at the end of the age. God is sovereignly and lovingly in control of His creation, and He has provided the resources by which believers can overcome the activities and influences of Satanic forces, and He has already decided the outcome. The story of Satan's rebellion and God's defense of His people is interwoven through the Scriptures as an ongoing drama played out on the stage of human history.

Stage 3: The History of Good and Evil in the Old Testament (Genesis 4 through Malachi 4)

In this section, the good work of God and God's people is contrasted with the evil work of Satan. This is not an exhaustive list; these are only examples to illustrate 1) the continuous inclination of people to turn from God and reject His ways, and 2) how God constantly responded to the rebellious attitudes and behaviors of people by making adjustments in His methods of handling evil people.

Satan's Activity	God's Response
Genesis 4 Cain and his sacrifice were unacceptable to God because Cain was self-righteous and angry. God warned him about his attitude, but Cain was controlled by sin (see Genesis 4:7) and in his anger he killed his brother. This was the first example of violence on the earth.	Abel and his sacrifice were pleasing to God (see Hebrews 11:4). God cursed Cain who lived the remainder of his life outside the Lord's presence. Cain was thus the progenitor of people who did not follow God.

<p>Genesis 6-9 Under Satan's influence the earth was filled with violence and wickedness. The earth was almost entirely under the control of evil.</p>	<p>God had to destroy all living things on earth and to make a fresh beginning. Noah was a righteous man who was qualified to be a deliverer for his family and to preserve animals and birds. After the flood God established a new covenant with Noah and repeated to Noah the same command he had given to Adam (cf Genesis 1:26 and 28 with 9:1 and 7).</p>
<p>Genesis 11-12 Once again the entire human race had become disobedient to God because of arrogance and pride. Instead of using their common language and culture to work in cooperation for good purposes, they were working together in rebellion against God.</p>	<p>God confused the language of the people so that they could not work together to accomplish evil purposes. The confusion of languages was both judgment and strategy. The people were separated and scattered over the earth. God then selected one man through whom He began to raise up a people group to be His representatives on earth (see Genesis 12:2-3).</p>
<p>Exodus 1-15 The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptians considered Pharaoh to be god, and he arrogantly refused to obey the true God of the Israelites.</p>	<p>God designated Moses as deliverer, systematically destroyed the religious system of Egypt, delivered the Israelites from their oppressors, and then destroyed the Egyptian army.</p>
<p>In spite of the Lord's displays of power and His care of the Israelites, they were easily enticed to sin. They grumbled and complained (Exodus 16-17, Numbers 14), worshiped before an idol (Exodus 32), and rebelled against Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16).</p>	<p>God had to discipline His people to show them that He was sovereign and holy, and to indicate to the people that He would not tolerate their rebellious attitude and behavior. God promised blessings if the people followed His ways, and curses if they disobeyed (see Deuteronomy 27-28).</p>
<p>Job 1-2 Satan challenged God to a contest. According to Satan, Job feared God, first, because of the material blessings he had been given, and second, because he had never experienced physical pain.</p>	<p>In spite of all his losses and pain, Job did not sin. Satan was proven wrong in his judgment. Job's knowledge of God increased enormously during his days of suffering and God blessed Job in his latter days.</p>
<p>I Kings 18 The people of the northern ten tribes were led by an evil king and queen, who had established idolatrous worship in their land. The people were uncertain about who to worship.</p>	<p>God directed Elijah to hold a contest on Mt. Carmel. The fire of the LORD fell on Elijah's altar and all the people acknowledged the LORD.</p>

I Samuel 13-15 Saul was a humble man when he was appointed king over Israel. However, he grew proud and jealous, and was disobedient to God. He was troubled by an evil spirit (I Samuel 16:14), consulted a witch (I Samuel 28), and took his own life (I Samuel 31).	God wanted to be king over Israel, but when the people demanded to have a king like all other nations, Saul was selected. Unfortunately, Saul did not have a heart to follow God, so he had to be replaced by David.
II Kings 17 The northern ten tribes rejected the ways of God shortly after the death of Solomon, and separated themselves from the tribe of Judah in the south. God sent numerous prophets to this region but the ways of the leaders and people constantly displeased God	God permitted the king of Assyria to invade the land and to deport all the Israelites. The Assyrians were God's agents of judgment and destruction.
Jeremiah 32 The wickedness and idolatry of people of Judah exceeded the behavior of other pagan nations.	Because the people turned their backs on God, he allowed the Babylonians to be His agents of judgment.
Daniel 7-12 Through the centuries there were several nations and many rulers who attempted to destroy the Jews and seize the land of promise. Satan stirred up the anger of the nations against Israel. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed two times and, through the centuries, many of the Jews were killed or taken into captivity.	God is in control of history, and He is committed to the preservation of His chosen people. Although judgment was necessary, God gave many promises about the future in order to encourage His people. God offered hope to those individuals who remained faithful to Him.

God had the cooperation of only a few of the Hebrew people throughout the Old Testament years. Satan constantly stirred up Israel and the nations. Satan was undoubtedly pleased about how many people refused to submit to God and pleased about the suffering and death which was inflicted on people as the result of the evil in the world.

In spite of the constant rebellious attitudes of His people, God kept His plans and purposes moving forward. He had to respond with discipline and judgment to those who would not follow His ways but, at the same time, God took the initiative to adjust His ways, show mercy and grace, reveal His power, display His holiness, and use curses and blessings to retain the loyalty and obedience of His people.

Stage 4 God's Plan of Redemption is Accomplished Matthew - John

God's plan of redemption was revealed in a public way when the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Jesus, the Son was the Father's gift to the world (John 3:16), the Son set aside the glories of heaven and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6-7), and the Son came to reclaim "territory" usurped by Satan by the establishment of the kingdom of God and His death on the cross. The incarnation is described in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2.

The first concern of Jesus was the Kingdom of God

Matthew 4:17, 23-25 and Matt 9:35-38 describe the consequences of sin (pain, sickness, demon activity). The miracles, casting out demons, teachings, and setting captives free were proof of Jesus' authority and identity (that He was from God and that He and the Father were one). (Note the words of Nicodemus in John 3:2)

Jesus began His description of the characteristics of the kingdom in Matthew 5-7 . This portion of Scripture is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus used parables to explain the conflict between the kingdom of God and the devil. See Matthew 13:1-9,18-23 and Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

Notice the references to opposition and corruption (for example, tares among the wheat)

Notice the contrasting words: "evil one", "his enemy", "the devil", "the sons of the evil one"; also "the Son of Man", "the sons of the kingdom", "the angels of the Son of Man."

Jesus, in preaching the good news of the kingdom, declared bad news for the enemy of the Kingdom! Christ came to destroy the work of the Satan. See I John 3:8.

Three examples of how Jesus overcame the work of Satan

Example one — Gerasene demoniac Luke 8:26-35

Example two — Epileptic boy Luke 9:37-43

Teachings of Jesus — Luke 13:10-16

The Second Concern of Jesus Was the Redemption of Fallen Humanity

Jesus overcame the power of Satan by His sinless life. Satan could successfully tempt every other person, but he discovered that Jesus was different. Passages which describe how Jesus handled the temptation of Satan are Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; and Luke 4:1-13 (note especially Luke 4:13)

Jesus overcame the power of Satan by His death. He was a voluntary substitute sacrifice, laying down His life for the sake of humanity. He died a death He did not deserve. He was sinless, the perfect sacrifice, and He satisfied the righteous demands of the Father. Passages which describe the impact that Jesus' death had on the Father include Romans 3: 25-26; 5:6-11; Colossians 2:13-15

Passages which describe the death and burial of Jesus include Matthew 26:47-27; Mark 14:43-15; Luke 22:47-23; and John 18-19.

The resurrection of Jesus was proof that death had been defeated. Death, both physical and spiritual death, was the consequence of sin. See Romans 6:9-10; Ephesians 1:19-23;

Passages which describe the resurrection of Jesus are Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20

The ascension of Jesus was His return to His customary exalted position at the Father's right hand.

Passages which describe the ascension of Jesus include Philippians 2:9-11; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:7-11; 5:30-31.

Stage 5 The Work of the Church Acts - Revelation

This is the era in which we live. The Church continues the work begun by Jesus

Significant events

Promise of the Holy Spirit (His coming and indwelling) John 14:15-27; 16:5-15;

Arrival of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) Acts 1:4-5, 8; chap 2;

Spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth

In Acts there are 45 exciting instances when the display of supernatural power enhances the spread of the Gospel. Here are some examples of supernatural power:

Peter and John with the lame beggar (3:1-4:22)
Peter with Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
The apostles heal the sick (5:12-16)
Peter with Aeneas, the paralytic (9:32-35)
Peter with Dorcas (9:36-42)
Peter's escape from prison (12:1-24)
Paul with Elymas the sorcerer (13:6-12)
Paul in Pisidian Antioch (13:46-52)
Paul in Iconium (14:1-7)
Paul and the lame man in Lystra (14:8-18)
Paul in Lystra (14:19-20)
Paul's miraculous jail escape of Paul and Silas (16: 22-40)
Paul and illnesses in Ephesus (19:11-12)
Paul's raising of Eutychus (20:7-12)
Paul and the snake bite on Malta (28:1-6)
Paul and the father of Publius (28:7-10)

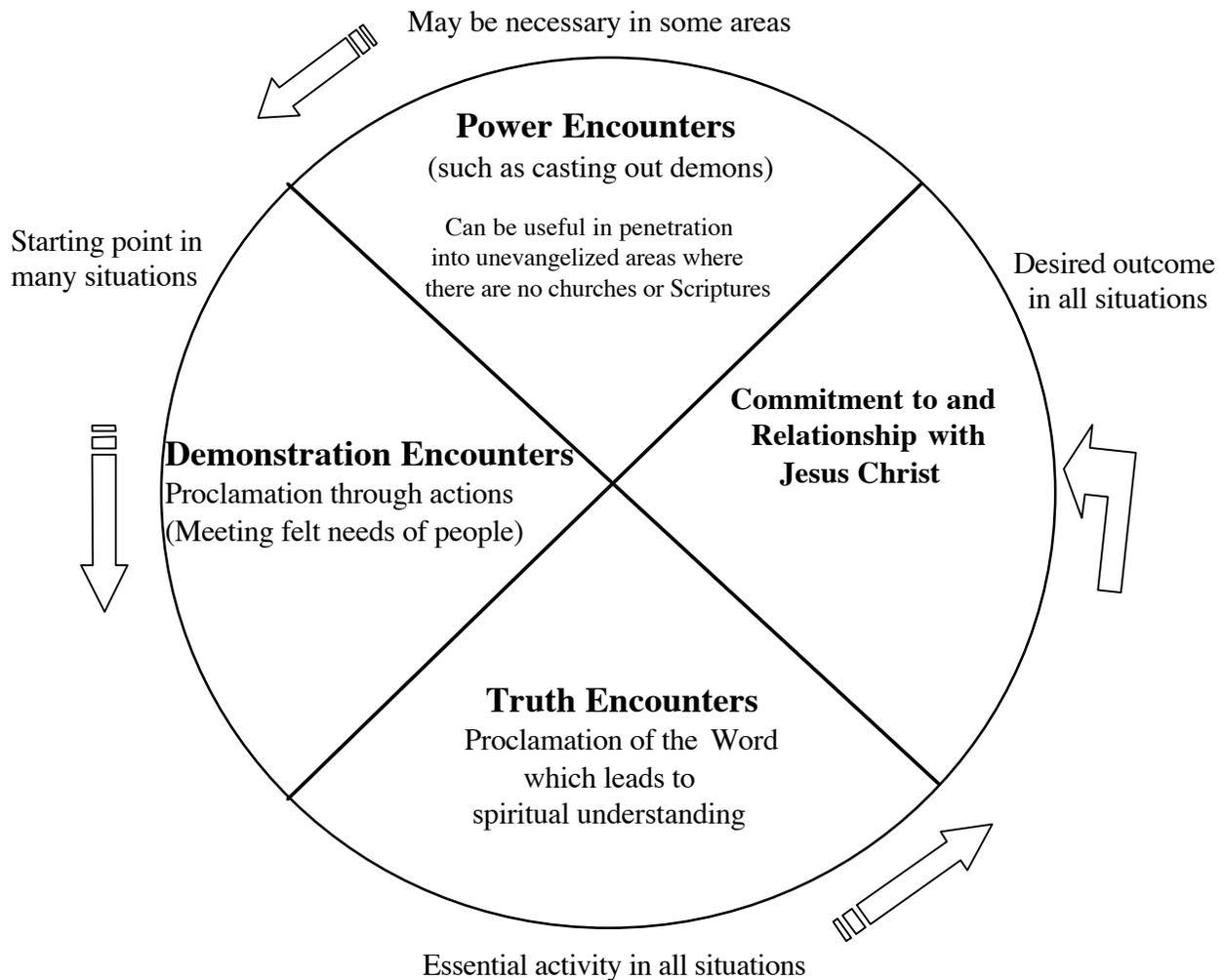
Although there were many episodes in which the power of God was displayed in the book of Acts, there were only a few instances of direct demonic confrontation:

The healing of people sick and afflicted by demons (5:15-16)
Philip casting out demons (8:6-7)
The pagan fortune teller (16:16-18)
Demons being cast out by handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul (19:11-12)
The sons of Sceva (19:13-17)

Question: why isn't there any emphasis on exorcism in the New Testament letters? There are several possible reasons:

- 1) God wants believers to focus all their attention on Him rather than to show unwarranted interest on Satan and his demon forces and on the dramatic public display of power encounters. Believers need to be aware of Satan's strategies, but it is best for them to concentrate on their relationship with Jesus.
- 2) The Holy Spirit came to indwell each believer at Pentecost. Because of the indwelling presence of Holy Spirit, the life of each believer should reflect godliness and holiness, and this should be as dramatic a testimony in society as the casting out of demons. The principle is in Matthew 5:13-16; and I Peter 2:9,11-12.
- 3) In the gospels Jesus used His encounters with demons to demonstrate His authority over evil forces. He was proving that the Kingdom of God was being established on earth.

Power encounters are still useful in dark areas of humanity which are being penetrated with the Gospel for the first time. They help unevangelized people to understand the authority of the living God over the things which hold them in bondage to evil. Ministries which help people with their physical needs are a common method to show love and compassion to unevangelized people. These demonstration ministries help build interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships. However, beginning in Acts and throughout the Epistles, the emphasis is on the communication of the truth of Scripture. It is the encounter with the truth of God's Word which draws people into a commitment to and obedience to Jesus. These activities can be illustrated this way:



Some Biblical Examples of Satan's Opposition Against the Church

II Corinthians 11:1-6, 13-15

This passage helps us to understand that Satan attacks the minds of God's people in order to draw them away from "sincere and pure devotion to Christ." The danger is not moral corruption, but intellectual deception (see verse 4) which leads to spiritual apostasy. In verse 4 Paul gives three reasons why people can be drawn away from Christ: 1) he uses false teachers who preach an incorrect message ("someone comes to you and preaches another Jesus"), 2) those teachers have a "different spirit from the one you received" (this would most likely be a lying demonic spirit), and 3) the false teacher would present "a different Gospel from the one the Corinthian believers accepted." Keep in mind that Paul is writing to believers in Corinth. They have previously accepted the true gospel message, been born again by God's Spirit, and heard Paul explain about Jesus. Obviously, the Corinthian believers were spiritually immature, and Paul understands how easily they can be led astray.

Jump to verses 13-15 The representatives of Satan "are false apostles" (an apostle is someone who is sent!), deceitful workmen (individuals who deliberately and methodically add false information into their teaching), and they are "masquerading as apostles of Christ" (they are covering up their true identity). Notice the information in verse 14. Satan himself "masquerades as an angel of light." This means that he changes his appearance in order to present himself as good and his words as truth. This is how he presented himself in the Garden in Eden to Eve. The followers of Satan copy the style of Satan in order to appear as "servants of righteousness."

Thus we see that Satan's goal is to get believers to think in ways which will lead them from the truth which is revealed in Scripture. Fortunately God has supplied believers with the resources which will protect them from Satan's deceptive arguments. God wants His people to be active thinkers.

There is a lot of information about mental alertness in II Corinthians:

II Corinthians 2: (9) 11 "obedient in everything" ... "in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are aware of his schemes."

II Corinthians 3:14 In speaking of the Israelites of the OT, Paul said "but their minds were made dull."

II Corinthians 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."

II Corinthians 10:5 "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

See Philippians 4:7-8 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

See also Matthew 22:37; I Peter 1:13; I Peter 4:7; Ephesians 4:22-23; Colossians 3:1-2; Romans 8:5, 6, 7; 12:2.

It is very important for believers to have the correct mental attitude concerning evil forces.

I Timothy 4:1-5

Paul explains to Timothy that some believers will cause serious problems. They “will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Verse 2 indicates that it is humans who propagate the teachings, but they are inspired by spirits and demons. The humans are called “hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.” [There are two possible meanings concerning the “hot iron.” It could mean that these people have no sensitivity or feelings or concerns about what they do because such feelings have been damaged. It could be a reference to a “branding iron” or mark of ownership, so the phrase could mean that they are owned by Satan.] Among the false teachings, these false teachers “forbid people to marry” and “give orders to abstain from certain foods.” In other words, they contradict what God said was permissible and could be “received ... by those who believe and who know the truth.”

II Thessalonians 2:7-12

Paul explains that there is, at the present time, a “secret power of lawlessness at work.” The phrase is literally “a mystery power of lawlessness.” In Scripture, a mystery is something that people cannot know by themselves, but it can be known after God has revealed it. In this case, believers know something about evil because God has revealed it.

There is a power of evil at work in our world. Non-believers cannot recognize this power. Based on this passage, believers can understand that someone is holding back (restraining) this power at the present time, but there will come a time in which the evil power will be unrestrained. At that time “the lawless one will be revealed.” It is this lawless one who will be overthrown by the Lord Jesus.

Now verse 9. “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan. The lawless one will “display all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.” Notice the reason God sends a powerful delusion (verses 10b-11). Notice the outcome for those who “do not believe the truth and delight in wickedness” (verse 12).

II Corinthians 12:1-10

The verses we want to focus on are verses 7-10, but the background is explained in verses 1-6. Paul was “caught up” (literally “raptured”) in order to receive a special revelation of truth from the Lord. He was “caught up to the third heaven” (verse 2) and “to paradise” (verse 4). These two words, “third heaven” and “paradise” were common terms to designate the dwelling place of God. While there Paul heard “inexpressible things,” things that he was not permitted to tell to others.

This experience was unique in human history. In order that Paul not become “conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations” that he received, he “was given a thorn in his flesh.” This is described as “a messenger of Satan, to torment.” Commentators have had many ideas about the nature of the “thorn.” No one knows exactly what it was.

Paul “pleaded with the Lord three times to take the thorn away,” but the Lord said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Verse 10 explains why Paul

celebrated his weaknesses — for when he was weak, then the Lord could be strong in him. [Cf Luke 10:3]

There are significant questions associated with this passage. How is it that the “thorn” in Paul’s flesh was Satanic in origin, yet permitted by God for the good of Paul’s well-being? Paul was not given victory over the “thorn,” even though he prayed for its removal. God’s purposes were greater than the physical comfort (freedom from pain) that Paul wanted. The sovereign God used Satan’s tool to ensure that Paul would remain a humble servant and would remain totally dependent on God’s power in his ministry.

I Thessalonians 2:17-18

Paul explains that he made efforts to visit the Thessalonians “again and again.” Unfortunately, Satan prevented Paul from making the journey. The word “stopped” which is used here is a military term used to describe something which has been torn up or barricaded so that the way is impassable. The method used by Satan to prevent Paul from traveling is not explained. Neither does Paul explain why Satan, who can act only with God’s permission, was allowed to hinder the spread of the Gospel. Apparently Paul’s companions, Timothy and Silas, were able to go. Notice in the following verses that Paul talks about trials and persecution. Also notice in verse 5 the reason for Paul’s anxiety about the Thessalonians.

Revelation 12

Remember, in the passages in this section we are making a quick survey of the history of good and evil as it relates to the age of the Church. This chapter of the book of Revelation occurs near the end of the age of the Church.

Chapter 12 describes one of the deeper aspects of spiritual warfare. Verses 1 and 3 state that the information are “signs,” something extraordinary which calls attention to something of great significance.

In chapter 12 there are three main figures: the woman (verses 1-2), the child (verse 5), and the dragon (verses 3-4). The Apostle John wants us to understand the power of this dragon, especially in contrast to the helpless condition of the woman.

The dragon placed himself before the woman, expecting to devour and eliminate the child. Verse 5 informs us that the child came, was snatched up to God (ascension), and was enthroned in heaven. There is no doubt about the identification of the child. John identifies the child in a reference to Psalm 2:9: “Who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” The point is that the dragon’s attempt to destroy the Messiah was unsuccessful.

Verses 7-12 describe a battle in heaven. Michael and his angels defeated the dragon and his angels, and the dragon, Satan, was hurled to the earth. The fact that there is fighting in heaven indicates that evil is cosmic, universal in dimension, and not limited merely to this world. It also indicates that events on earth are first decided in heaven.

We don’t know when Satan will be cast out of heaven. Prior to the battle with Michael, Satan had access to the heavens where he was the accuser of the saints. Verse 12 is the command for everyone in heaven to rejoice, but verse 12 also has a warning to those on the earth because the devil is angry. He has failed in his battle with the angels of God, and he does not accept defeat without a bitter struggle. The male child is in heaven; heaven is closed to him, and the non-believing inhabitants of earth are already under his control; the only action the devil can take is physical action against the people of God.

The dragon is defeated three times in chapter 12. First, he is frustrated when God snatches the child from his grasp (verse 5). Second, the dragon is defeated by Michael and loses his place in heaven (verse 7). (3) Third, he is unable to destroy the woman because she is miraculously protected (verses 15-16). His rage in 12:17 is based on these defeats.

In his anger, the dragon went off to make war against “the remainder” of the woman’s offspring. He strikes at those who “obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

Revelation 13

Chapter 13 continues the theme of persecution which began in chapter 12. Chapter 13 describes the dragon’s (Satan) strategy in his war against God’s people. The technique used by Satan involves deception because Satan wants to keep the whole world — including, if possible, the followers of Jesus — from paying attention to the true God. This chapter is included in the visions to provide important information about the strategies of Satan at the end of the Church age.

John saw a beast coming out of the sea. In Scripture the sea sometimes symbolizes the restless activity of unregenerate humanity (see Isaiah 57:20 and 17:12), especially the turbulence within wicked nations. The sea is the place where evil monsters live, creatures which seek to destroy the people of God. In the Bible, these monsters are called the dragon, the serpent, Leviathan, Rahab (Job 26:12-13; Psalms 74:13-14; 87:4; 89:10; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9; cf. also Ezekiel 32:6-8).

Notice the appearance of this beast from the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on his horns. This is the same description as Satan (see 12:3). Verse 2 also describes the beast as like a leopard, a bear, and a lion. These are the same characteristics that Daniel wrote about in Daniel 7:4-6. The beasts in Daniel represented the leaders of world empires. Verse 2 states that the dragon gave the beast his power and throne and authority. If we combine all the information we have learned about this situation, we recognize that the beast represents political power on earth, but behind this political power is a system of influence which is controlled by Satan.

The beast has a fatal wound, but the wound is healed. This results in great, world-wide influence, acceptance, and worship for both the beast and the dragon.

Verse 4 The objective of the dragon and the beast is to obtain the worship and exaltation of people. They follow and worship the beast because he is apparently invincible: “Who can make war against him?”

In verses 5-7 there are three statements that the beast “was given” something. He was given “a mouth”, “power to make war,” and “authority over all the inhabitants of the earth.” Satan has the ability to give some of his special powers and authority to his designated leader.

I said at the beginning of our discussion of this chapter that Satan had a strategy. Have you noticed that there are some similarities between the beast and Jesus? Both had horns symbolizing power (5:6; 13:1); both were slain (*sphagizo* same word used in verses 3 and 8); both had arisen to new life and authority; and both were given (by different authorities) power over every nation, tribe, people, and tongue (1:5; 7:9; with 13:7). The beast described here is the theological counterpart to all that Christ represents. The beast is a counterfeit Christ, a counterfeit “son” of the “almighty one,” and that is why this beast is called the antichrist.

In verse 11 John saw another (*allo*, “one of a similar kind”) beast rising from the earth. This second beast completes the trinity of evil. The dragon is the false father; the sea beast the false son; and the land beast a type of the Holy Spirit. The land beast serves under the beast from the sea. His objective is to promote and advance the influence and status of the beast from the sea. In later chapters, the land beast is called the “false prophet” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

See verses 13-14a. The land beast “made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.” One of the strategies the land beast uses to deceive people is the performance of great and miraculous signs (this was predicted in Matthew 24:24 and II Thessalonians 2:9). Distinguishing between the true and false prophets has always been difficult. The followers of Jesus must be constantly alert to discern the spirits (I John 4:1-3). Christ’s true servants are not to be deceived by even the spectacular miracles the false prophets may perform. Such miracles in themselves are no evidence of the Holy Spirit.

In verses 14b-15 the second beast orders the setting up of an “image” of the first beast. The beast from the earth “was given power to give breath to the image.” The image could “cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.” Loyalty to the beast from the sea was the basis of life or death. This strategy of Satan was an extreme form of deception for the people of earth. It was a way to put extreme pressure on believers (see 12:17).

The current status of the conflict

We have looked at verses that help us understand the activities of both Satan and God during this era of the Church. Here is a summary of what Scripture tells us:

The entire human race (all the descendants of Adam and Eve) is ruled by Satan. All people are born into and live within the kingdom of darkness until they confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.

God's purpose is to rescue and remove men and women from Satan's kingdom and bring them into His (God's) Kingdom.

The incarnation, perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis by which men and women are rescued, redeemed, and brought into God's kingdom.

The Church, which is part of God's kingdom, is God's primary conduit for spreading the Good News of the kingdom to all people on earth.

Satan opposes the members of the Church and their activities. The forces of the kingdom of darkness will resist believers in their efforts to make known the truth of God.

Believers must maintain their love for Jesus Christ even though they are enduring persecution and facing death. Believers must love Jesus Christ more than their own lives.

Jesus Christ won His victory over Satan, sin, and death on the cross. Individuals who have placed their faith in Jesus can also have victory over the forces of evil.

Some comments about why Satan directs his anger to the followers of Jesus Christ

Satan is unable to attack God directly, and all authority is in the hands of Jesus Christ, so Satan tries to limit the number and the spiritual strength of the followers of Jesus.

Believers are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). They have the potential for the glory that Satan wanted. Believers make Satan jealous.

Believers are loved by God. They have been redeemed at great cost to the Father and Son (II Peter 1:3-4).

Believers have the opportunity and ability to give glory to God. Satan hates this.

Believers are God's children because they have received God's life through spiritual birth (John 3:1-3).

Believers are the heirs of God, literally "joint heirs with Jesus Christ" (Romans 8:16-17; I Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 5:9-10)

Believers represent God to the world (John 20:21; II Corinthians 5:20). They are the foot-soldiers of God. They have been commissioned and equipped to reclaim territory and people from Satan (Matthew 28:18-20)

Believers are promised glorification (Romans 8:17-18, 30; II Corinthians 4:17)

Believers will be future rulers with Christ and we will be judges of angels (I Corinthians 6:3)

Stage 6 The Culmination of God's Work of Redemption (The End of the Age)

In Revelation 16:1 – 19:10 there are a series of judgments against the physical creation, against unbelievers (the inhabitants of the earth), and against the systems of evil which functioned on the earth. The only remaining judgments are against Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and their armies.

The Rider on the White Horse and the Destruction of the Beast (19:11-21)

In Revelation 19:11 John saw “heaven standing open” and a white horse with a rider.

The rider is called Faithful and True (see 3:14). He was faithful to the Father by completing His work on earth — faithful unto death! He is faithful to His followers by providing them with His indwelling Spirit. He will be faithful in defeating all His enemies and handing over the kingdom to the Father. He is also the truth of God because He made God known (see John 1:14, 17)

When He was on earth the important “wars” that Christ fought were spiritual — they were against sin, the consequences of sin, and the temptations of sin. The greatest spiritual victory won by Christ was on the cross, against the effects of evil. In this book of Revelation the battles of Christ are mostly at the physical level — against the dragon, the beast, and the armies of the rebellious nations which have gathered to fight against Him.

The rider on the white horse is accompanied by the armies of heaven who are also mounted on white horses. It is possible that these riders with Christ are the believers who are victorious overcomers. Revelation 17:14 confirms this: “The beast and the ten kings will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Verses 17-21 describe the great confrontation between the Lamb and all His enemies — the beast, the false prophet, the kings of the earth, and the armies of the nations on earth

The beast and the false prophet were captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Everyone else on the battlefield was killed with the sword which came out of the mouth of the rider on the white horse. It seems that no battle was actually fought. It was over before it began. In this scene of the overthrow of the beast and his kings and their armies, John is showing us the ultimate and swift downfall of these evil powers by the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Binding of Satan and the Millennium (20:1-6)

Chapter 19 described the destruction of the antichrist. Chapter 20 describes the conquest of Satan, and then the destruction of Satan and final judgment of unbelievers.

Chapter 20, verses 1-3 must be tightly connected to 19:20-21. After the destruction of the beast and the false prophet, action is taken against Satan (accuser), who is also known as the dragon (deceiver), the ancient serpent, and the devil. An angel seizes him, binds him, throws him into the Abyss, which will be his prison for a thousand years, and locks and seals the door. Previously, Satan was cast out of heaven (12:9) and on the earth he went about with great fury to deceive and persecute the people of God (13:14). In 20:1-3 Satan is cast out of the earth into a place where he cannot “deceive the nations.”

In verses 4-6 John saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. Verse 4 does not state who is seated on the thrones, but the Old Testament prophet Daniel indicates that it is the Father, who is known as the “Ancient of Days” (see Daniel 7:9, 21-22, 26-27). Verse 4 indicates that those who were martyred “because of their testimony for Jesus” “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Verse 5 states that this is the first resurrection.

The reference to 1000 years is mentioned only five times in Scripture, all in 20:2-7.

[Special Information Concerning the Millennium]

Let me try to describe the view which seems most Biblical in the times in which we live. This view is that the Millennium will be a historical event associated with physical life on this earth. It will be the final historical event of this age. The Millennium represents the completion of the Kingdom of God, which was the subject of a lot of Jesus’ teaching. The Gospels explained that the Kingdom of God was present on earth in the person of Jesus Christ. Only a few people in the first century recognized the kingdom in Christ (disciples, Nicodemus, etc); for the most part, the Kingdom was hidden from public view and understanding. The Kingdom of God operates on earth today through the Holy Spirit; He represents Jesus Christ in the life of every believer and in the Church. The main priority of the Church is to expand the kingdom of God on earth.

The Millennium will be the time when the Kingdom of God will be a visible historical reality. Christ will rule the Kingdom from His earthly throne. The effects of sin will be reversed — the wolf and lamb will be together, children will play with vipers, etc., (see Isaiah 11:6-9). It will be a time of universal peace. All the instruments of war will be made into farming tools, etc. (see Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3). The kingdom of God was present in the life and ministry of Jesus when He was on the earth; it is present on earth today in the Church (the Body of Christ), and it will be present in the future after Jesus returns and sets up His throne. He is the Lord, and He will have the opportunity, for 1000 years, to be Lord over the earth that He redeemed.]

The Millennial Reign of Christ

The one thousand year reign of Christ is described in several portions of the Old Testament (see, for examples, Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:3b-9; 35; Zechariah 14:6-21). In many ways the millennium will be like the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That Garden was the perfect environment for mankind, as perfect as God wanted it to be. God fellowshiped with His people there. It was a place where all parts of creation functioned in harmony under the delegated rule and authority given by God to man. Unfortunately, this harmony was lost to mankind when Satan entered the Garden and succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve into disobedience.

People in the millennium will once again live in peaceful, pleasant circumstances, with the blessings and benefits of the Lord Jesus all around them. They will be under the discipline and authority of Jesus the King and His co-regents. All parts of creation will function in harmony. Several generations of people will enjoy the peace and blessings of the 1000 year period. However, in spite of the wonderful conditions of the millennial environment, Satan will once again successfully deceive people — making them think that they will have a better situation if they would rebel against Jesus.

The Final Battle

Revelation 20:7-10 describes the release of Satan at the end of the 1000 years, his activities, and his final defeat. The question is why he must be released from his prison in the Abyss. Verse 8 states that he “will go out to deceive the nations” but doesn’t give any explanation. Satan will gather people to fight against “God’s people” (verse 9). But why will God allow this? From a human standpoint, it is not logical to bring the deceiver back after the glorious reign of Christ in 20:4-6. We don’t know why God will allow this.

Another pertinent question: If the beast and his armies will be destroyed in 19:19-21, who are these rebellious nations? It is true that there will be a lot of suffering and death poured out on the earth in the seals, trumpets, and bowls judgments, but not every person on earth will be killed. Every soldier will be killed in the battle with the beast, but not every person on earth will be in the armies. We assume that the survivors of the judgments against the earth will be those who refuse to repent, and who curse God in the final days before the appearance of Jesus Christ because of their pains. For reasons known only to God, they will be permitted to live under the lordship of Christ and to experience the benefits that He will provide.

Verses 8-9 indicates the deep, complex nature of evil which in the human heart. Even after 1000 years of blissful life, at the first opportunity, humans will again rebel against King Jesus. This proves that the source of rebellion against God does not lie in a person's environment but it springs up from deep within a person's nature. When the army surrounds the "camp of God's people," it will be the last earthly challenge to Christ and His authority. Fire will come down from heaven, and this time, all the people on earth will be destroyed. The devil will be thrown into the lake of fire, where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Many details about the end of the age cannot be explained with certainty. However, the basic facts are given, and those facts should fill believers with hope, and sustain them through whatever difficulties and persecution they will face during their years here on earth.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15 describes the final judgment of mankind. Earth and sky flee from the entity who sits on the throne (the "Ancient of Days"). All the dead, that is, all those people mentioned in verse 5, will have to stand before the throne. The books will be opened. In God's sight nothing happens that is unnoticed, and nothing is forgotten (Hebrews 4:12-13). Each person will be judged on the basis of his/her works (see Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 4:12-13). The "books" are the records of human deeds (verse 12).

Notice that there is another book, the Book of Life. Verse 15 informs us that everyone whose name is not found written in the book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Let me try to explain how these two kinds of books are used. When I was a boy my parents purchased groceries at a store near my house. This goes back to a time when stores did not use computers or electronic machines to keep financial records. It was a time when individuals did not carry a lot of cash with them. My family had an account with the owner of the store. Each time a purchase was made, the owner of the store wrote down in a large ledger the items and the cost. At the end of each month, the owner would look through his ledger, total up the cost of all the items purchased by my family, and send a bill to my house. My father would then go to the store to pay the bill.

The store owner had to have several of the large ledgers. The pages were filled up quickly because many families had accounts and many items were purchased on a daily basis. The debts of the customers were recorded in these books. However, when a person came to pay the bill, the store owner pulled out a smaller book from his desk. This was the book in which payments were recorded. Each month there was just one line written for each family. The owner would write the name of my family, the date, the amount of money which was paid, and the statement "paid in full."

I think this old-fashioned system of handling debts and payments is similar to the system God uses for His record keeping. God has many books in which are recorded all the works of every person who has ever lived (see Revelation 20:12b and 13b). The “book of life” (verse 12) is like the small book of the store owner. Individuals who have confessed their sins and acknowledged that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for their sins would have their names written in the book of life with the statement “paid in full.” Verse 15 explains that “if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The lake of fire is the second death. Matthew 25:41 states that hell was prepared for Satan and his angels. It is unfortunate that so many people throughout history will share his punishment. Jesus said that hell was a horrible place (Matthew 18:8-9). Paul’s words in I Corinthians 15:20-24 are fulfilled in these verses.

The New Heavens and New Earth

The final event which closes out the present age is the incredible change which will take place in this existing universe, including the earth on which we live. Revelation 21:1 informs us that “the first heaven and the first earth” will pass away. This present earth has been corrupted with sin. Following the disobedience and sin of Adam and Eve, God “cursed the ground” so that it “produced thorns and thistles” for Adam and his descendents. Romans 8:20-21 explains that God subjected His creation to “frustration,” but also “in hope.” “Creation will be liberated from its bondage” to the decay of sin and will someday be “brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Revelation 21:1 mentions the fulfillment of that promise.

The first heaven and the first earth will pass away. This does not mean that the existing universe will be removed and replaced with a totally new physical universe. Revelation 21:1 implies that the existing heavens and earth will be purged and cleansed of all the residue and evidences of sin. Think about what has happened just before this point in time — Satan has been removed from creation, all his angels and demons are also gone, and all the unrepentant inhabitants of earth have been judged according to their works and dispatched to hell. All the creatures which were under the influence of sin are gone. God then removes all the remaining evidence of the contamination of sin from the heavens and earth. The final result is the complete and total removal from the physical creation of everything that is unholy and unclean. This is the final necessary step before God can dwell with His people for eternity. Also see II Peter 3:7, 10-14.

Revelation 21:2-4 describes the new Jerusalem, the Holy City of God, coming from heaven. Verse 3 explains that this city represents the presence of God Himself; “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.” God is holy, and all things and creatures which are not completely pure and holy cannot abide in His presence. After all the things and creatures which were contaminated with sin have been purified and cleansed, the people and the creation of God are qualified to be in the presence of God. Verse 3 emphasizes this point. God joins His people and is willing to once again dwell among them. In some ways this is reminiscent of the fellowship that God had with Adam and Eve before their disobedience.

Notice the testimony of Jesus in Revelation 21:6-8. Verse 7 is a special encouragement to believers. The verse emphasizes the theme of this course: faithful followers of Jesus Christ can overcome all the pressures of sin and, when they do, they will inherit all the wonderful benefits that God has prepared for them. He will be our God and we will be His children.

In Revelation 21:9 through 22:5 the Apostle John wrote a description of the Holy City. The information in this passage is very brief, but it is enough to stimulate our imagination and eagerness to be part of God's eternity. I conclude this section with Revelation 22:3-5 "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."