

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life for week ending 10/20/02.
The Angelic Conflict. Part 2.

We have been noting the characteristics and traits of Satan, his identity and purpose as found throughout the Word of God, and also how the *angelic conflict* relates to current events.

Even though the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the body, there are many individuals even in the church who are under the control of satanic viewpoint. Paul says this about them in **2Co 11:13-15**, “*For such men are **false apostles**, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as **servants of righteousness**; whose end shall be according to their deeds.*” This is totally foreign to the human concept of Satan; his ministers teach people how to be “righteous.” These are the agents of the great deceiver, Satan, who is himself transformed into an angel of light. The purpose of this deception is to imitate the real ministers of Christ and to blind the people from the true righteousness, which is imputed at the moment of salvation as a gift from God’s grace and cannot be earned or deserved by man.

These false ministers cannot appear as ministers of Christ unless they gather into their message every available “form of godliness” and cover their lies with the most subtle hypocrisy, **2Ti 3:5**, “ *Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.*” Evil will not appear on the outside of these systems but always on the *inside*. The closer it gets to the real thing, the more effective the counterfeit becomes. These false ministers will be very well respected in society, and their lives will be undoubtedly free from the great scrutiny and temptations that come from the kingdom of darkness. They are usually sincere, preaching the best things the “angel of light” motivates them to preach. However, their gospel and teaching is based on *human* viewpoint and appeals to *human* resources. There can be no appreciation of divine revelation in them because they are not filled with the Spirit, **1Co 2:14**, “*A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” They are ministers of human righteousness, whose message should never be confused with the message of grace. Their message is directed only toward the reformation of the *natural* man, while the Lord’s message aims at regeneration through the power of God.

False teachers are also usually sincere and full of humanitarian zeal. They are always talking about helping others and doing good, and they get involved with altruistic humanitarianism, philanthropy, socialism, political internationalism, government interference, public welfare, etc. These false teachers and false ministers promote these things in the name of God, and all they are really doing is helping the devil clean up his world. However, any counterfeit system of doctrine that omits the power of God and the

grace of God is used by the strategy of Satan to blind the believer from the real truth. Satan can quote the Bible, but he distorts the Bible, as we saw from our study of **Gen 3:1**. Satan is a master of twisting, distorting, and misinterpreting the scriptures.

In his endeavor to be like God and control God's people, Satan will *allow* and even *promote* some of the great scriptural subjects, but he will always distort them (for example, the subjects of tongues, physical health, life after death, morality, unfulfilled prophecy, the baptism of the Spirit, etc). While those doctrines are all taught in their proper setting and importance in God's Word, the strategy of Satan deceives people by misquoting and misapplying them. This is how many are easily led to fix their attention on secondary things (whether true or untrue) and to neglect the essential principles of the Christian faith.

Isa 14:12-14 *“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”*

Here are some important principles to note concerning Satan:

1. Satan's major purpose behind these five “I will”s is to be like the Most High as far as taking the title “possessor of heaven and earth.”
2. As a part of his strategy, those under his influence teach others how to improve *human nature* while ignoring the *new creature* created by God. Most believers are too busy cleaning up the old man to make him presentable to the Lord, which is an impossibility.
3. The presence of gross evil in the world is not due to Satan's intention to have it so, but rather indicates Satan's *inability* to be like the Most High. Therefore, Satan promotes any programs, Christian or otherwise, that are designed to “improve the world.”
4. Satan's ambition to be like God has led him to take on more than he can handle; he can not control planet earth, let alone the universe.
5. Satan deceives the world and even Christian churches to believe that he is totally opposite of God (which is true *inwardly*); however, what makes his deceptions so great are the *overt* similarities that he has with God.
6. The one thing Satan is after is worship from man, so much so that during the Tribulation period he will demand the worship of the people of the earth, or they will pay the penalty of death, **Rev 13:15**.
7. Any plans to clean up the world and make it “a better place to live” *complements* Satan's evil policies and his goal to be like God. Therefore, when believers get involved with improving the world, they will find little opposition, as they are contributing to promoting Satan. In fact, improving the devil's world will be rewarded by Satan.
8. All the counterfeit systems Satan has simply reveal his desire to be like the Most High. In other words, Satan watches what God does and then tries to counterfeit it as best as he can.
9. Religion is Satan's great counterfeit, and therefore he has:

- a. A counterfeit Gospel, **2Co 11:3-4**.
- b. Counterfeit ministers, **2Co 11:13-15**.
- c. Counterfeit doctrine, **1Ti 4:1**.
- d. A counterfeit Communion table, **1Co 10:19-21**.
- e. Counterfeit spirituality, **Gal 3:2-3**.
- f. Counterfeit righteousness, **Mat 19:16-28**. The Mosaic Law is distorted into self-righteousness, which rejects faith in Christ for relationship with God. This self-righteousness is based on morality in the cosmic system.
- g. Counterfeit righteousness (self-righteousness), **Mat 23:13-36**.
- h. Counterfeit power and dynamics (miracles, healing, tongues, etc.) **2Th 2:8-10**.
- j. A counterfeit system of gods, **2Th 2:3-4**.

Isa 14:15-17 *“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, ‘Is this the one who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’”*

Being “thrust down to Sheol” is the third fall of Satan, which will be fulfilled at the end of the Millennium, **Rev 20:10**. Satan will spend eternity in the lake of fire, **Mat 25:41, Rev 20:10**, and he will be there with all members of the human race who rejected Christ as Savior, **Rev 20:12-15**. His prisoners are his fallen angels, whom he could never release from Tartarus. Before his fall, he was the prime minister for God here on this earth. Therefore, this earth became the theater of the invisible war. Here, where the fall took place, the Lord Jesus Christ glorified the Father, **Joh 17:4**.

It is true that Satan is still the god of this world, however, we will see this office taken from him when the Lord comes back to reign as the King of this earth. Earth will be the scene of the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ and Satan’s final defeat. Before Satan’s original fall, there was *one will* in the universe, the perfect will of God. There was no previous example of sin; this was the beginning of rebellion against the Most High God. Satan’s sin is especially monstrous because he was created beautiful and perfect; he lacked nothing as the greatest of all creatures. However, like many humans, he was ungrateful and therefore devised his conspiracy.

There are many adverse results of Satan’s rebellion, including the corruption of his character and the perversion of his power. In **Isa 14:12**, he will also be banished from heaven. Although he still retains some dignity from his original position (only God has the authority to rebuke him, **Jud 1:9**), he is destined to the “pit” of **Isa 14:15** and **Rev 20:3,10**.

Some may ask the question, “Why did a holy and righteous God who is all-powerful and all-knowing allow the fall of Satan and his angels to occur?” It introduced sin into the universe, affecting angels, all mankind, and even God Himself in the sense of His policies toward His creatures; as we know, nothing can ever change who and what He is. From the Bible we may presume the following reasons:

- God is perfect, therefore His plan is perfect, and He allowed evil to come into being. Therefore, we have to trust in the character and nature of God and believe that He knows exactly what He is doing and what is best for His creation.

- Perhaps He allowed angels to rebel in order that He might give an explicit example of the wretchedness and degeneration of sin.
- He used the test to gain a group of angels to serve Him from their own free will and personal love.
- It may have been necessary to allow the fall of angels to finally show the grace of God in the preserving of some angels and in the redemption of unworthy, sinful man who fell because of Satan. In man, God will magnify His grace forever before the angels.

There are two categories of fallen angels under the command of Satan—those who are actively involved in the invisible war surrounding planet earth, and the incapacitated (non-operational) fallen angels imprisoned under the earth. We will first study the non-operational demons. These include two groups of angels who are in prison at this time and will be released in the future. The angels of **Gen 6**, who were involved in the angelic attack designed to infiltrate the human race, are now incarcerated underneath the ground in a compartment of Hades called Tartarus. These are the angels who cohabited with human women and conceived super-creatures who were half angel and half human, **Gen 6:4**, “*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God [angels] had sex with the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*”

The second category of incapacitated angels is the first *demon assault army* currently incarcerated in the abyss. They are not permitted to come out of the abyss until the middle of the Tribulation period. The abyss holds “criminal” demons who violated the boundaries of the angelic conflict, and is the location of Satan’s second-in-command, called Abaddon in the Hebrew (Apollyon in the Greek), who will play a major role in the tribulation; he is mentioned once in the New Testament and six times in the Old Testament. In **Rev 9**, Abaddon is allowed to leave this prison when Satan is cast out of heaven with the key to the abyss, never to return to heaven again. In **Mat 8:32**, the demons who indwelt the man called “Legion” begged our Lord not to send them to this place called the abyss when He cast them out. The abyss is the fourth compartment of Hades and is the prison for demons who have disobeyed the rules for the angelic conflict in human history. It is translated the “bottomless pit” and the “abyss” in the book of *Revelation*. The Church today is the focal point of *invisible* warfare, and therefore we are required to become *invisible* heroes. What comes out of the abyss will result in *visible* warfare during the Tribulation.

This first demon assault army will invade the earth during the Tribulation period, **Rev 9:1-12**. They are released from their prison to become part of the administration of discipline to cosmic believers and punishment to unbelievers. At that time, the invisible angelic conflict will become visible. There will once again be visible heroes among believers, e.g., Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. These events indicate a tremendous change in God’s plan after the Rapture of the Church occurs. When Satan is cast down to the earth, he will be permitted to release his three “hard-core” demon armies, and they will physically attack human beings. These demons will torture members of the human race to the point that they will want to die but will not be permitted to die. The attack will be made over a period of five months against man with only two restrictions, (1) only those in the cosmic (world) system can be attacked (believers in the plan of God are protected by the “wall of fire”), and (2) they cannot be

killed. What we are about to study, according to the Bible, could happen three and a half years from today. There will come a time on this earth called the Great Tribulation when **Rev 9** will become a reality. It will be:

- A time of wrath, **1Th 5:9; Rev 6:16-17, 11:18, 14:19.**
- A time of judgment, **Rev 14:7, 15:4, 16:5-17.**
- A time of indignation, **Isa 26:20-21, 34:1-3.**
- A time of punishment, **Isa 24:20-21.**
- A time of trial, **Rev 3:10.**
- A time of trouble, **Jer 30:7.**
- A time of destruction, **Joe 1:15.**
- A time of darkness, **Joe 2:2, Zep 1:14-18.**

It is a very difficult time to be alive. However, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today, you will not be here during this period.

Rev 9:1-2a *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven [Satan] which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. And he opened the bottomless pit [the abyss].*

The fifth angel is one of the elect angles who have privileges and authority for glorifying our Lord during the first angelic rebellion. The word translated “bottomless” is “*abussos*,” where we get the word “abyss.” The word “pit” is the noun “*phrear*,” which means a well and refers to the pit of the abyss. Before God the Father throws Satan to the earth, he gives him the power and authority to release the first demon army. Satan will actually torture his own servants because he is an ungrateful master. Once he can no longer use those in the cosmic system, he tries to destroy them in his satanic frustration. The tragedy is that today there are also born-again believers who serve the will of Satan.

Satan seeks to defeat God in the angelic conflict, and when he is cast to the earth and given the key to the abyss, he immediately uses what God has given him to destroy those that have served him against God, both carnal believers and unbelievers.

Rev 9:2b *And he [Satan] opened the abyss; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air became darkened by the smoke of the pit.*

This “smoke” explains several verses related to the demon prisons in Hades. There are two areas where demons are in prison, Tartarus, which contains smoke, and the abyss. They are chained in clouds of darkness.

Rev 9:3 *And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

The Bible must be interpreted in the time that it was written, and these are not literal locusts or scorpions. The destructive behavior of the locust and the deadly venom of the scorpion were the best ways in which the first demon assault army could be described in the ancient world. The locust plague is used as an analogy for an army of destruction several times in the Bible. A swarm of locusts can destroy everything in its path, and

even darken the sky. Nothing can stop the invasion of this demon army.

This passage is a manifestation of the grace of God—it is warning before judgment. Grace always precedes judgment. This is God’s last appeal to the believer to get out of the cosmic system and to the unbeliever to become born again and saved. There is never a judgment that destroys even a fragment of the human race until after all those involved have an opportunity to repent. For the unbeliever, repentance simply means salvation: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.*” For the believer, repentance means a change of mind toward Bible doctrine and returning to the plan of God.

For a more detailed study, order last week’s tapes, IA11-224 to IA11-227.