

The Church Militant

Introduction

Paul once said, ‘We are not unaware of Satan’s devices’. He meant we understand this one who is variously called Deceiver, Destroyer, Slanderer, Liar, Murderer and Accuser—among other names. Today some of the most scholarly theology gets along without a mention of Satan. We search book indexes in vain to find him mentioned. Developments of history are considered scientifically, the results of causes and effects. The Devil is looked upon as a myth, needed in previous generations which lacked clarity in reasoning and were long on superstition. Sadly enough some critics of this fallen angel pictured him and his cohorts as crude, ignorant and inept. They did not seem him as brilliant, and as aided by a great company of competent, celestial creatures.

We must, therefore, bring the reality of Satan to light again. We must unmask the ineptitude of some theologians and Christians in regard to the reality and power of Satan. The following are notes I have been getting together for a further book on Satan, his powers and his intentions. Two of my books published—*The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God*, and *The Clash of the Kingdoms*—spell out much concerning Satan, the world, the evil powers and their deceits, but the book that is coming will, I believe, be of further value. These notes are brief but the article can be useful to those who follow the Bible references given.

THE BATTLE FROM THE BEGINNING TO END

- (a) Satan’s plan to destroy God’s plan and set himself up on the Divine throne. The ‘two words’ of Genesis chapters 2 and 3. Satan’s word accepted, God’s rejected by Man.
- (b) The fall and the grace (Gen. 3:1–15); the proto-evangel of 3:15.
- (c) The battle of Cain and Abel. Abel’s weapons—God’s grace and love. Cain’s weapons—self-reliance and hatred. Typical of the stream of God’s people, Satan’s people.
- (d) The OT battle. Constant pre-Flood, post-Flood. Corruption, violence. Idolatry.
- (e) All the time Satan is seeking to subvert God’s plan and people. God’s covenant with Man—eternal; Noahic; Abrahamic; Davidic; New. The people lived as God’s children and thus defeated evil. Their weapons the same as in the NT, viz. faith, hope and love; righteousness; gospel of peace; truth; the word of God—the sword of the Spirit. Also the gifts—prophets, priests and kings, rightly understood, in both Testaments.
- (f) Messiah comes and defeats Satan in his Sonship of God. Acts 10:38, etc. and the Cross–Resurrection–Ascension.

- (g)The church is to go against the gates of hell and death. The church will prevail.
- (h)The eschatological victory of Christ is shown in the NT and especially in the Book of the Revelation.

THE CHURCH AND THE BATTLE

- (a)Christ established victory over Satan by his life, death, resurrection, ascension and reigning. This was deliberate. This was why he was manifested—to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8; cf. John 12:31f.; 14:30–31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 2:14–15).
- (b)The church to go out against the whole world that is under Satan (Eph. 2:1–3) by the commission of Christ (Matt. 28:18–20; etc.).
- (c)The church will suffer (John 15:18 – 16:11).
- (d)The church battles as (part of?) ‘the armies of heaven’ (Rev. 19:14; 15:2; 17:14).
- (e)The church triumphs (1 John 2:12–14; 4:4; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8f.). See the battle in Revelation chapters 12 – 14, and 18 – 20.

THE COSMIC, UNIVERSAL BATTLE

Whilst the church is part of ‘the armies of heaven’ (Rev. 19:14), there have always been the celestial powers who have fought the other traitorous angels of heaven. In the Old Testament we see Satan as a ‘son of God’ that is, an angel. In Daniel chapters 10 and 11 Daniel is visited by a glorious celestial personage—an angel of a high order—who in coming to the prophet as an answer to his prayer has fought ‘the prince of . . . Persia’ and was helped by Michael the archangel. Daniel is told that Michael is his—Daniel’s—prince, that is, the prince of Israel (Dan. 10:13, ‘one of the chief princes’; cf. Jude 9). The angel is to return and will have to fight both the princes (angels) of Persia and Greece.

Also in the Old Testament the battle against evil powers is the battle against idolatry, for demonic powers infested all idols (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17–22) and operations of the occult (cf. Deut. 18:9–22).

In Revelation chapter 12 Michael and his angels fight the dragon and his angels, and cast them out of heaven. Michael takes the initiative. Satan’s aim is ‘above the stars of God I will set my throne on high’, that is, over all the angels (Isa. 14:13; *passim*) and so be powerful against God. It is against these evil ‘principalities and powers’ that the church fights (Eph. 6:12; cf. 3:10). Christ announced his victory of the Cross (Heb. 2:14–15) to these ‘spirits in prison’ (1 Pet. 3:19; cf. Col. 2:14–15). In Revelation 19:14ff. it is difficult to define ‘the armies of heaven’, but they must be the church and the celestial powers together. Ephesians 2:6 and 6:12 make it clear that we—the church—live and operate in ‘heavenly places’. Thus as Satan seeks to win the cosmos—God’s creation—yet the creation is of God and not Satan. As ‘the stars in their courses fought against Sisera’ (Judg. 5:20–21), the earth cursed the murderer Cain (Gen. 4:11) and the earth swallowed the horrible flood of the red dragon’s mouth (Rev. 12:13–17), so we see that creation, temporarily being subjected to vanity, though in hope, is always

Godward in its activity. All the creatures of God—no matter what their categories—are part of the entire forces which reject Satanic domination and help in working all things for good’ (Rom. 8:28).

THE WEAPONS FOR FIGHTING.

Note first of all ‘Christ in us’. We do not fight on our own. So 1 John 4:4, ‘greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world’. We are in Christ’s battle with the world. Note also that 2 Corinthians 10:2, 4–6, ‘for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.’

(a) There are the weapons of God (2 Cor. 10:1ff.). ‘They are spiritual, mighty to the pulling down of many strong holds’, etc.

(b) The armour of God in Isaiah 59; Ephesians 6:10–18; 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

(c) The elements of the armour, as we collect them together.

Faith, hope and love as a triad: These constitute the way of life of the church, the people of God as seen from Acts 2:42ff. They also evinced ‘the fruit of the Spirit’. This made them a formidable army against Satanic forces, who fear them (see Phil. 1:27–28).

Faith: Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 4:4; 5:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

Hope: 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Romans 5:5; cf. 8:18–25.

Love: 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:8ff. (cf. Eph. 4:26, 27). Love casts out fear of death, that is, of judgment (see 1 John 4:18; Revelation 12:11).

Truth: Ephesians 6:14; John 18:37; 1 John 5:7. Note that witness is the great weapon and it is the truth. It is the prophetic, priestly and royal word.

Righteousness: Ephesians 6:14. See Revelation 19:11: (i) justification; and (ii) God’s active righteousness in and through us.

The gospel of peace: Power of the gospel. It is this which goes against the world and its rulers and wins men and women from it.

The sword of the Spirit: The Spirit-uttered word since creation: ‘One little word shall fell him’. Christ’s use of the sword against Satan in the temptations. So Isaiah 59; Revelation 19:15ff.

Patience: See Revelation 13:10; 14:12. Note Romans 12:14–21. This is love’s patience in action, not rendering evil for evil, and living in peace with all men.

SATAN’S WEAPONS FOR FIGHTING

These are all anti-weapons, that is, anti-love, anti-faith, anti-hope, but he makes them out to be the ontological reality when, in fact, they are the negation of all that is real and true. So see his false system—the world, his false trinity (Rev. 13), his false fatherhood (John 8:44ff.). Against faith he has unbelief; against hope he has a false hope of a

successful kingdom; against love he has hate, the tearing down of all that is beautiful. Love builds up; hate destroys.

He is stunned, disconcerted, frustrated and in explosive rage because the simple weapons of God's people thwart him. They die cheerfully enough if it is martyrdom. They take persecution with patience (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). His weapons then are seduction (2 Cor. 11:1f.); deceit—Satan is 'the deceiver of the whole world' (Rev. 12:9; cf. Gen. 3:1ff.); 'deceitfulness of sin' (Heb. 3:13); 'deceitful lusts' of the flesh (Eph. 4:22); 'deceitful wiles' (Eph. 4:14); threatening—'roaring lion' (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. Rev. 13:5–6); accusing—Revelation 12:10.

All that is done by these 'weapons' of Satan constitutes 'the works of the devil' which Jesus came to destroy (1 John 3:8). Christ took away all the power of Satan to destroy. Instead Satan is destroyed (Heb. 2:14–15).

THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNITY OF THE OVERCOMERS

Note the following passages: Revelation chapters 2 and 3 on what the Spirit says to the churches and the 'He who overcomes'. Fit this with Revelation 21:7 which speaks of the subduing, which concurs with Genesis 1:28. Sons are overcomers. So 1 John 4:4 says, 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world', and this fits with 1 John 5:4, 'this is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith'.

As we have said before (cf. Rev. 15:2; 17:14; 19:14) the church is victorious because of its gifts and weapons, and Christ's indwelling. Its life is immensely overpowering for Satan, who, far from matching it, can only produce hatred, bitterness, evil, the world of the flesh—and so on.