

INVINCIBLE CONQUEROR

“To which of the angels said He at any time, “Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Hebrews 1:13).

We are surrounded by the enemy—the enemy of God; the enemy of His people. He is a formidable foe. He has turned the “garden of God” into a wasteland of desolation and death; of corruption and misery; tumult, oppression, and terror. But why did God allow it? Could He not have easily overcome Satan? Was Satan actually beyond the control of God, Himself? Did God’s creation get out of hand? Was it not therefore imperfect, if not a failure, and unworthy of God? Or was God, on the other hand, limited and not omnipotent, as the Bible seems to declare?

This is a vital issue. We have an enemy. God has an enemy. Who is he? Whence did he come? Why is he here? What is his ultimate end? How do we cope with him on the earth?

Who Is This Enemy? He is a spirit being, created with great gifts—beauty, innate musical capacities (like a great organ), extensive power, not equal to, but very like God. So magnificent was he that he was called “Lucifer—light-bearer.” He is also called the “Prince” of this world (not prince as heir to a throne, but archon, the chief ruler). He seeks ultimately to overthrow God. Meanwhile, he seeks to deceive the people of God—to turn them away from Him. In this respect he is called the Devil (Diabolos), “the deceiver.” He deceived the original pair, and is the constant deceiver today. He is also Satan—“the accuser.” He seeks to keep the believers on a continuous guilt-trip—to discourage and dishearten and cause to back away from God. He is also Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek)—“the exterminator.” It all adds up to a figure whose whole existence is given to the destruction of God and His people. Will he succeed? In no way. Then why does he try? He does not know that he cannot succeed. He is blind to truth, for he is the “father of lies” and knows not the way of truth.

Whence Did He Come? According to the description in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, Satan was a created being, in existence before Adam and Eve. Did God then make an evil being? No, but He made a free being—one with the power of choice. Satan chose to be evil—to rise up in pride and seek to usurp God’s place. (He would have to have been a magnificent creature to even imagine that he could do so). As a result of his attempted coup, he was cast out of heaven, and began his crusade on earth to exterminate God’s people and multiply his own. He ceased to be Lucifer—light-bearer—and became Satan—accuser; Diabolos—deceiver; and Apollyon—exterminator. He gathered around him a large host of angelic beings who joined his revolt, and assisted Him in his perfidious plans.

Why Is He Here? Why did God allow him to exist in the first place? Surely He knew, did He not, that such a revolt would take place? Surely the Omniscient One was aware of the unspeakable consequences of Satan’s earthly reign? Would that not make God the true author of evil, and therefore culpable for the world’s catastrophes? We humans did not ask God to make the world, nor ourselves as its inhabitants. We are the hapless victims of its turbulence and terrors. It is

true that we have a choice—to follow Satan, or God. But had we never been created in the first place, we would not have been confronted with the temptation. Those who choose to follow Satan must suffer the tragic consequences, but as Jesus observed, “it would have been good for that one if he had not been born.”

So what is the answer to the dilemma? Either God knew what was coming and could not stop it, or would not; or, He did not know what was coming and could not then be considered as omniscient. The answer lies in the issue of Spirit versus flesh. God had to know what Satan was going to do, and what was coming on earth. But further, He had to have a purpose high enough that nothing of Satan or the flesh could affect that purpose. And so He did. The ultimate destiny of God’s human creatures is to be with Him forever in a realm that is essentially spiritual and not fleshly. *“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (I Corinthians 15:50). Standing before Pilate, accused by the Jews as an impostor, because He would not deliver them from Roman tyranny, Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is My kingdom not from hence”* (John 18:36).

Jesus clearly stated God’s ultimate intention for His creatures. In His celebrated prayer, just prior to His crucifixion, He seems to be bringing into focus the deepest implications of His life and work. He was sent from God to manifest glory on earth and to gather together those who would accept it, into His grand, universal design—a spirit realm as far beyond the flesh as the whole human society is beyond a backyard sandbox. The child at play in the sandbox lives in a world of sandcastles. But the child has life far beyond the fantasy edifice of sand. The child is *in* the sandbox, but not *of* it.

In this great intercessory prayer, Christ makes clear God’s ultimate purpose. He has glorified God. His work is finished. He has established His family on earth. He has conveyed to them the same Spirit that He has. They are one with Him and the Father. They belong to the Spirit realm. But, He has left them on earth for a time. He commits them to the care of the Father, because He is now leaving the earth. In time He will bring them all to be with Him where He is. They will join with Him and the Father in a mutual abode for eternity. Hear the words of Jesus Himself—*“I ask not concerning these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us . . . And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them, in order that they may be one, even as We are one, I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be consummated in one . . . Father, those whom Thou hast given me, I will that they be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which Thou gavest me, because Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world . . . And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known, in order that the love with which Thou has loved me, may be in them and I in them”* (John 17:20-26).

The purpose of God for His creatures was indeed far beyond the material world. So much so that the earth is like the sandbox—transient and illusory; and without reality, like the sandcastles. And we, the children, imperfect and

childish as we are, nevertheless have life. The cosmic sandbox is totally without life and reality. Satan presides over this kingdom of lifeless illusion with the inane assumption that it is real, and that by knocking down the sandcastles, and kicking sand in the faces of the children, he is somehow attacking the Citadel of God. The citadel of God, where His children dwell, is in the spirit realm and totally impervious to Satan. Let Satan devastate the playpen. Let him stir up the sandpile in fury. He has never touched the spirit realm and never will.

Why did God make us humans? As an extension of His glory. What is our destiny? To join with Christ in glorifying God. What of the desolate earth? It is only a sandbox. What of the misery of its people? It is only for a moment. Why does God allow Satan to rule over the earth? He has only given him the sandbox, and his fury can only make a tempest in the sand. And the children? They are indeed victims of physical harassment, but Satan's sandstorms can never touch their spirits—they are in the sandbox but not of the sandbox. So glorious is the reality of our spiritual destiny and the spirit realm of which we are a part, that the sandbox catastrophes are of as little consequence to us as the sandbox tempests are to the children at play. Paul says it—*“For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is about to be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18).

What is Satan's Ultimate End? He shall be utterly vanquished by Christ. According to Revelation 21:10, Satan will finally be cast, unrepentant, into the lake of fire, prepared for himself and his agents, there to suffer eternal death. But is that not terribly cruel? Not for Satan, who has voluntarily chosen to set himself against God, and to be the tormentor and ravager of all the earth. The references to such eternal torment are to be identified specifically with Satan and his agents. (Probably not with the non-Christian victims of the fall, who, though sinners, are surely not in the same category as Satan. We shall have to leave the measure of their penalty to God).

How Do We Cope With The Enemy On The Earth? First, we must understand the strength of the enemy. He is too formidable for us to handle alone. We need the strength of Christ within (not just His help). Secondly, we must realize the limits of the enemy's strength. He can only attack our flesh; he cannot penetrate our spirits, once Christ takes up His abode there. Satan is no match for Christ. Remember that all the discouragement's and emotional upheavals; all the doubts and disappointments are of the mind and not the spirit. Within the spirit, Christ reigns and all is peace. Don't be confused by human feelings of doubt and despair. There is within the spirit, a deep river of God's love and peace and faith, continuously flowing and maintaining, in the midst of human weakness and struggle, the vitality of God's eternal power. Commit each day to Christ. He will see to it that the enemy will not succeed in unseating you. He may allow some trials and afflictions in your flesh, but Satan will never penetrate your spirit, where Christ dwells. It must be realized that many things that Satan intends for our harm are used by God for blessing. The storms may buffet our tiny craft, but as long as Christ is in the boat it cannot sink. There is nothing Satan can do to separate us from God. Let Paul tell it—*“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor rules nor things present nor things to come*

nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38,39).

Conclusion. So who is the enemy? Satan, the accuser; the Devil, the deceiver; Apollyon, the exterminator. Where did he come from? Created by God with a free will, he chose to rebel and set himself against God. Banished to earth, he has sought to destroy the people of God, and ravage the creation of God. And why then is he allowed to do this? God has permitted him only to ravage the cosmic sandbox. Ultimately, his attacks upon the believers only serve to strengthen them and turn their focus to the spirit, which is their rightful realm. By the same token, God seeks to teach the non-Christian to turn to Him and enter His kingdom.

But why did God make such a world, knowing its terrible future? His purpose goes far beyond the fleshly, material world. He has made a creature to be like Himself and to occupy the eternal spiritual kingdom with Himself—to spend eternity as part of His great glory.

And how do we cope with Satan on the earth—by putting our lives in the hand of Christ, day by day, and trusting Him to handle Satan, and work out all things to His glory. When we have committed our lives to Christ, whatever is, is what He wants. The enemy can never prevail over us, for he is nothing but a footstool of Christ.

David Morsey
October 1985
www.harvestermission.org