

War Against...

The Kingdom of Satan

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Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise noted. References from the King James Version are designated KJV, from the New International Version NIV, and from the Amplified Bible AB.

Kindly edited by Grant Swart of Pretoria.

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“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

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Preface

Demonology has become a controversial and widely debated subject in the secular world as well as within various churches and Christian movements. On the one hand there is the biblical account of an evil kingdom under the leadership of Satan. Many Christians have a literal understanding of this description, and realise the importance of resisting the devil and his works. On the other hand, is a growing number of theologians and church members who interpret biblical references to Satan metaphorically, and therefore they reject the literal existence of such a kingdom. To them, there is no devil, evil spirits or hell, and they ascribe all forms of evil to human misconduct for which social, political and psychological explanations should be sought.

Among those who do believe in the biblical account of a satanic kingdom, there are diverging views on exactly how this kingdom functions. Some believe that only the spiritually unregenerate can become demon-possessed, while others are of the opinion that saved Christians who show signs of being bound by certain sins, are demon-possessed and therefore in need of exorcism. There are various “deliverance ministries” who allege that they are able to cast out demons from Christians and also break so-called “generational curses”. Claims of this nature will be examined in the light of Scripture as there are various erroneous beliefs in this regard.

The most extreme form of apostatising, darkening of people’s minds and destruction of moral values is a result of the worship and honouring of Satan as a rebellious and lawless world ruler. People who are involved with activities such as these are described as Satanists. They manifest an uncontrolled inclination towards evil, violence, extreme forms of immorality, occult activities such as the summoning of demons, as well as ritual murders and blood sacrifices to Satan.

The devil applies a broad spectrum of hard and soft methods by which he tries to achieve his purpose of gaining control over humanity. As a result of the Fall, all human beings are inclined towards the evil works of the devil. “There is no one righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). “Sin” refers to all attitudes and acts which are contrary to God’s holiness and righteousness. The devil is the origin and author of sin, and for this reason the great adversary of God. To do his works amounts to collaborating with him in his struggle against God.

All people are involved with sin, to a greater or lesser degree, which is the consequence of the direct or indirect influence which Satan’s kingdom has on all of humanity. In fact, virtually the entire world has been ensnared in the slavery of sin, and that alone renders firm and irrefutable proof of the existence of Satan’s alternative kingdom of darkness, which operates from a mysterious, spiritual sphere.

To deny the existence of this kingdom amounts to the denial the existence of all evil. That fact that in all cultures and religions there is a clear concept and explanation for evil, is ample proof that virtually all people are aware of one or other form of evil, and account for it in terms of their own views and traditions (cf. Wikipedia 2012c).

From a Christian point of view it is not hard to discern that there is an evil power in the world which is intent on destroying God’s creation, and determined to make all people slaves of depravity and followers of “the god of this age” (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). We are commanded to give no place to the devil (Eph. 4:27), and that calls for our commitment to resist, even to the point of bloodshed, in our struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4).

John says: “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” (1 John 3:8). Those who continually live in sin are under the power of Satan and manifest his evil character in their actions. The devil is intent on strengthening his grip on his victims.

In this book, the origin, strategies and objectives of Satan’s kingdom are reviewed. Sin, which emanates from this kingdom, is the very first matter of which the Holy Spirit convicts us, when we are led to Jesus Christ for salvation. The righteousness of Christ is offered to us, which comprises a completely new life which replaces our former sinful life (John 16:8).

The Lord Jesus has come to the world to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God our Father” (Gal. 1:4). How can we be delivered from the darkness of a spiritually lost state

if we do not realise the full extent of our problem, and if we are not even aware of the existence of the deceiver of the nations? (cf. Rev. 20:3).

All people are born with a sinful nature and therefore develop and mature with an innate inclination towards sinning. If this tendency is not broken, it may lead to a larger degree of dominance by sin as well as addiction to additional sinful habits. In certain cases it may also give rise to becoming obsessed with occult activities. We are warned not to proceed along the way of sin or to probe “the depths of Satan” (Rev. 2:24). The *NIV* refers to “Satan’s deep secrets” which we should avoid as far as possible and at all costs.

Apart from the more general forms of spiritual and moral depravity, there are also deep mysteries and powers of Satan which should not be explored by people in order to obtain occult powers, or to satisfy their curiosity. Satan can indeed empower his followers to perform certain supernatural acts, but after he has bound and used them he usually destroys them. His followers are gambling with death.

The command to resist the devil and give him no place (Jas. 4:7; Eph. 4:27), applies to all Christians. We are engaged in a lifelong war against him and his kingdom, and only through Jesus Christ can we emerge as victors from this battle. To be able to do so, we should be thoroughly conscious of the enemy and his plans, in order to strengthen our spiritual defences.

Paul and his companions took the necessary precautions, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). We should always expect demonically inspired opposition when we engage in the Lord’s work, as Paul also experienced: “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9).

Take note of the full extent of this battle, so that you will be able to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Jude admonishes us “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). In Christ we can be more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37) since He is the great Conqueror over the devil and his powers.

Maintaining an ignorance of this battle is a sure way for us to bow down before Baal. Unfortunately, relatively few people realise that we have an adversary, and that we have to put on the full armour of God to remain standing against his wiles. They do not fully comprehend how Satan operates and they are consequently unable to properly defend themselves – particularly when he presents himself in an innocent guise as an angel of light. It is to the glory of the Lord and also in the interest of our own souls to take note of this struggle and to not give any place to the devil and his works in our lives.

This book will help you to do exactly that.

Johan Malan

1. Satan's Fall

The kingdom of darkness is a reality which everybody should be well aware of. Satan and his demons – which are the fallen angels who were cast out of heaven because of their complicity in his rebellion – are engaged in a fierce battle against God and His kingdom. They strive to be worshipped and for power. Satan is an imitator of God who is intent on replacing God as ruler of the universe. His aim is also to be worshipped as God. In his imitation of the Triune God, Satan's kingdom is also ruled by a triumvirate – the devil, the Antichrist and the false prophet. The devil pretends to be God and his future world leader, the Antichrist, will be offered to the world as *the Christ*, while the false prophet will imitate the ministry of the Holy Spirit by doing great signs and wonders.

Lucifer was a good, wise and beautiful angel who was created by God, but he was corrupted by pride and a lust for power. He revolted against God's authority in an effort to raise his own status to be equal with God. In Ezekiel 28 are descriptions of the earthly king of Tyre, and also of Satan who was the spiritual power who instigated and controlled him. Lucifer, therefore, was the real king of Tyre. Both of them have fallen because of their pride. The Lord says of Lucifer:

"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, o covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour; I cast you to the ground" (Ezek. 28:12-17).

The following four reasons make it quite clear that these verses refer to Lucifer and not the earthly king of Tyre:

- He was in the Garden of Eden.
- He was a cherub who covers.
- He enjoyed free movement on God's holy mountain.
- He was perfect since the day of his creation, till iniquity was found in him and caused his downfall.

The angels who were deceived by Lucifer and sinned by sharing in his rebellion were cast out of heaven with him. Their iniquity transformed them into perverted and hateful creatures. After his fall, Lucifer was described as Satan, who is the adversary of God.

In Isaiah 14, the Lord uses the fall of the king of Babylon to describe Lucifer's fall from heaven. Babylon is a well-known symbol of Satan's kingdom on earth. This is evidenced by the fact that Satan took possession of Nimrod after Babylon was first established, and influenced him to become a violent person, so arrogant and great in his own eyes that he built a city and a tower with its top reaching to heaven (Gen. 11:4). In this way, it was thought that fallen man could rule over the whole earth, ascend to heaven and declare himself to be God.

During later history, the city of Babylon remained the symbol of a mighty kingdom, still violently opposed to the kingdom of God. According to Revelation 18, the city will be rebuilt in the end-time and will once again exercise dominion over the nations of the world. The demonic nature of this evil city is clearly evident from prophecies regarding its final downfall: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every fowl spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!" (Rev. 18:2).

Throughout the centuries, Lucifer was the real king of Babylon, also of mystery Babylon, the harlot mother of all the false religions. The human tyrants who ruled in Babylon were all

personifications of him who gave expression to his rebellion, violence, religious self-deification and idolatry in the most extreme forms. It is fitting that Lucifer's fall from heaven should be likened to the fall of Babylon's king, as his kingdom is also destined to destruction. From the context it is very obvious that it is Lucifer's fate which is being discussed here, as the earthly king of Babylon was never described as Lucifer, (son of the morning,) who sat on the mount of the congregation in heaven and exalted himself to be equal with God:

"How you are fallen from heaven, o Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?" (Isa. 14:12-17).

It must have been a sudden and highly dramatic event when Lucifer and his angels were cast out by God. John says that he drew a third of the angels of heaven with him (Rev. 12:4), which is an indication of his considerable power and influence. The consequences of Lucifer's expulsion from heaven were far-reaching. He swore to take vengeance on God and His kingdom by incessantly attacking and destroying His creation. This declaration of war finally transformed him into Satan – God's Enemy and Adversary. He is particularly intent on controlling and destroying human beings who were created in God's image; therefore, God describes him as a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).

Satan's fall from heaven was only the beginning of his humiliation. Following that, the opportunity was given him to reveal his true character, thereby filling up the measure of his iniquity. He did so by deceiving and destroying people. All of creation likewise suffers because of the Fall and the destructive acts of the devil and his human henchmen (Rom. 8:20). Satan will launch his most violent attack on mankind during the seven year-long reign of the Antichrist: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Rev. 12:12). Many people will die because of wars, pestilences, famines and other calamities while the earth and its resources will be devastated.

Satan's fall, as described by Ezekiel and Isaiah, occurs during different stages. It will assume a further dimension when, at the end of the great tribulation when Christ returns, he will be incarcerated in the bottomless pit for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3). Then, it will be said of him: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities?" Following his release from the pit at the end of the thousand years, Satan and all his followers will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

Satan is further revealed

It is important to notice that Satan is progressively revealed in the Bible. In the process, quite a number of descriptive names have been assigned to him. These names are further indications of his motives, strategies and evil character. Satan and his demons arise from the abyss (Luke 8:31) and operate in mystical spheres or heavenly realms, i.e. the supernatural sphere (Eph. 6:12). They prefer to hide their true identity in order to gain easy access to people's hearts and minds. Initially they assumed the identity of various idols, and even ancestral spirits, to ensure that people would unwittingly serve and worship them through prayers and sacrifices. This practice became very popular throughout human history, and Christians have clearly been warned to have no part in this (1 Cor. 10:19-21). Whether deceived humanity is aware of it or not, they are serving the devil through their false religious practices.

During Old Testament times the heathen nations served a large number of Baals (foreign gods) and Ashtoreths (goddesses) (Judg. 2:11-13; 1 Sam. 12:10). Israel was often deceived into participating in the worship of these idols. Idolatry was practised along with occult activities such as consulting the spirits, divination and soothsaying, which are all works of darkness by means

of which Satan deceives people. Israel was sternly warned against these activities:

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practises witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord... For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you” (Deut. 18:10-14).

In addition, astrology is prohibited as one of the works of darkness (Isa. 47:12-14).

Furthermore, the Old Testament contains concepts which are more directly related to the devil and his demons – among which are examples of explicit Satanism. The Hebrew word “sa-ir” means “devil” or “demon.” In Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15 it is translated as “demon.” The KJV renders it “devil.” However, “sa-ir” can also be translated as “hairy demon”. W.L. Holladay (1988) says that “sa-ir” is “a hairy demon in shape of he-goat.” This perception accounts for the fact that the devil may also be depicted as a hairy he-goat. Among Satanists, the devil is often visualised as a black goat or a human-like creature with the head of a goat. This abominable creature has human as well as animal features, but always with two goat-horns on his head.

The Hebraic Old Testament also uses the word “shed” for “devil” (cf. Deut. 32:17). In Psalm 106:37-38 an ancient form of Satanism is described, in which people sacrificed their children to the devils: “They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood... whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan.” In this case, devils are equated with idols.

As a precise and direct revelation of the Wicked One, the name “Satan” is only mentioned a couple of times in the Old Testament. This name means “Adversary” or “Enemy” and depicts Satan as the big adversary, or enemy, of God and all believers. “Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” (1 Chron. 21:1). He deceptively motivated David into doing something that was contrary to God’s will. He is also the accuser of believers: “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose [or accuse] him” (Zech. 3:1). In the following verse is another descriptive name that strongly alludes to Satan: “In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent” (Isa. 27:1).

In the New Testament, both the names “Satan” and “devil” are used. “Devil” has been derived from the Greek term “diabolos” and means “false accuser” or “slanderer.” Other descriptive names which are used for the devil in the New Testament are “the wicked one” or “the evil one” (Matt. 3:19; 1 John 5:19), Mammon, the god of money (Luke 16:13), the angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), the deceiver (Rev. 12:9), the father of lies (John 8:44), Apollyon, the destroyer (Rev. 9:3), Beelzebub, the dung-god (Matt. 12:24), Belial, the worthless one (2 Cor. 6:15), the accuser (Rev. 12:10), the murderer of people (John 8:44), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the tempter (1 Thess. 3:5), the serpent (Rev. 12:9), the great dragon (Rev. 12:9), the roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8), and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4).

Satan is head of the kingdom of darkness and has many evil spirits, or demons, under his control. Since the Fall he has controlled and manipulated all unsaved people who are spiritually in his direct sphere of influence. It is this evil power that the Lord saves us from: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).

The devil tries everything possible to gain authority over God’s creation with the specific intention of destroying it. He unceasingly endeavours to destroy the image of God in human beings by blinding them spiritually and making them slaves of sin. His final objective is to be served and worshipped by all people. Additionally, his plans are to establish the Antichrist in a position of authority on earth in the place of Christ. One of the methods he utilises to achieve these goals is to oppose the work of the Holy Spirit by subjecting people to the influence of deceiving spirits and doctrines of devils. Are you sufficiently equipped spiritually to fight this

battle? The Bible says: "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:11-12).

The spiritual position of power which Satan attained on earth is a direct consequence of the Fall. All people are born with a nature which is inclined to sinning, and therefore join the devils in their rebellion against God. All are spiritually dead and morally depraved (Rom. 3:10-18). Even after the coming of Jesus Christ, nevertheless, most continue to prefer darkness to light because their works are evil (John 3:19). This is the reason for the devil being referred to as the ruler and god of this fallen, evil world (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4). John says that the whole world lies in the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Therefore, Satan's influence is far-reaching. He uses a variety of methods to spiritually deceive mankind.

Although Satan was defeated on the cross by the Lord Jesus, he has not yet been bound up in a bottomless pit and is still actively involved in the struggle against God's kingdom. Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), and His Holy Spirit empowers us to prevail against the temptations and attacks of the evil one. We should remain vigilant at all times, putting on the full armour of God. It will only be at the second coming of Christ that Satan will be stripped of his power as the ruler of this fallen world, and incarcerated in a pit. Until then, the struggle will continue.

At the end of Christ's thousand year reign of peace, Satan will be released for a short time to test the people on earth spiritually. Those who are not truly born again will immediately be overcome by Satan's power and then they will be engaged by him to launch a renewed attack against the kingdom of God: "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:7-10).

Satan's fall and humiliation will then be complete. Satan and his deceived followers will remain in the lake of fire for ever. Resist him and give him no place in your life (Jas. 4:7; Eph. 4:27).

Strategies of Satan as an outcast

The multiple revelations of Satan regarding his fallen state render clear evidence of his continued efforts to wage war against God and His kingdom. In this way he endeavours to muster up more support for his alternative kingdom of darkness with a view to ultimately establishing himself as the sole ruler of the universe. It is expedient to conduct a closer examination of his kingdom's structures and methods since he still wields considerable power.

Right from the onset of human history the devil has made concerted efforts to promote apostasy among people by leading them into false religions in which foreign gods (demons) are worshipped. By his masterminding the Fall of man he achieved a major victory by establishing a sinful nature in all people's lives, thereby making them easy targets for further deception.

During the first coming of God's Son to the world, Satan often carried out virulent attacks against Him in an effort to kill Him, deceive Him spiritually, and also to instigate His own people and the world to reject Him. If Satan had succeeded in incorporating Jesus into his kingdom of rebels, it would have afforded him a shortcut to fulfil his ultimate objective of becoming sole ruler of the universe. The fact that Jesus came in the form of a humble servant with a frail human body, could have led the devil to believe that He was an easy target for attack and deception.

According to Luke 4:1-13, Satan's cleverly planned strategy to deceive Jesus was based upon three false arguments. Although he completely failed to achieve his purpose, he did not give up. During subsequent centuries he has been even more determined to implement new techniques of deception by which he offers these same lies to tempt the Christian church and the depraved

world. For this reason it is imperative to clearly take note of Satan's historical efforts to deceive Jesus. The three deceptive strategies which he employed are the following:

A prosperity gospel based on the fulfilling of material needs. The Lord Jesus had fasted for 40 days, and had become very hungry, thus the devil exploited his biggest physical need at the time by saying: "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" (Luke 4:3). Jesus immediately overcame this temptation by emphasising that man's life does not depend on satisfying of his material needs, but rather on spiritual fulfilment: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). If we first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33), we will never become victims of Mammon's kingdom of earthly wealth and worldly prosperity. If we are dedicated to seeking God's kingdom, these other needs will be provided for.

An unbiblical kingdom theology associated with the worship of a foreign god. Satan deliberately tried to introduce Jesus into his alternative kingdom, on condition that He would be prepared to worship Lucifer as God. The promise of great earthly power and dominion was made to Him, if He would have been willing to follow this radical advice: "Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours" (Luke. 4:5-7).

The Lord Jesus did not dispute the fact that Satan, through his deception of virtually all of humanity, has gained control over earthly kingdoms – that being the reason for Jesus referring to him as "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30). However, while He persisted against Satan's temptations, Jesus clearly stated that neither He nor any of His followers would be permitted to subject themselves to an earthly kingdom which is hostile towards the kingdom of God, nor to worship the god of such a renegade kingdom: "And Jesus answered and said to him, Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Luke 4:8).

A religion of supernatural signs and wonders. A final effort was made by the devil to convince Jesus to relinquish His role as the humble Servant who would be rejected, persecuted and eventually crucified. Rather than Him enduring these awful events, Satan suggested to Jesus that He jump off from the pinnacle of the temple and miraculously make a safe landing, so that the people would be convinced by this sensational sign and recognise Him as the Messiah sent by God (Luke 4:9-12). However, the Lord Jesus resisted the devil by stating that one should not succumb to megalomania by tempting God into giving you supernatural powers in order to exalt and glorify yourself.

In the light of these personal attacks on Christ it is obvious that Satan has a comprehensive plan of action to pursue his evil war against God and His kingdom with all the might at his disposal. Firstly, it is a battle for his survival in an effort to avert his further humiliation and eternal condemnation as prophesied in the Bible. Secondly, it is an attempt to change his fortunes by achieving victory in his battle against the kingdom of light and thus becoming ruler of the universe in God's place. With this being his ultimate goal, he continues to expand his support base through relentless efforts to gain control over more and more people.

When Christ returns to the world at the end of the great tribulation, the devil will again personally confront Him in the battle of Armageddon by waging war against Christ and His heavenly army (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:19-20). The turn of events on that day will prove to be disastrous for Satan and his myriad of supporters.

As the end of the church dispensation rapidly approaches, it becomes obvious that Satan realises that time is running out for him to execute all his plans. Conspicuously, the strategies which he used in his temptation of Christ in the wilderness, are once again being extensively applied to all people in preparation for the revelation of the Antichrist and his world empire.

Churches are deceived into proclaiming a prosperity gospel focussed on earthly wealth, thereby impoverishing themselves spiritually and making themselves victims of shallow thinking. With

these worldly values being the centre of their attention, they will be receptive to the establishment of an earthly kingdom, even before the coming of Christ as King of kings. In order to realise this kingdom they must be deceived into a compromise with all other faiths under the erroneous premise that all religions worship the same God.

However, they do not realise that the devil is the universal God of all false and unbiblical faiths, and they also disregard the fact that no compromise is possible between God and all the false gods (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Multireligious deception will progress to the extent that a Satanically driven alliance of world religions will have been formed in a humanistic world empire. Apostatised humanity, involved in the building of a modern tower of Babel, will employ cosmic powers to perform signs and wonders.

All these false religious manifestations will be typical of the Antichrist once he assumes dominion on earth during the final seven years before the second coming of Christ. He will amass earthly treasures, gain political and religious control over all people, and also perform astounding signs by means of his occult powers. His coming will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thess. 2:9-10).

Paul adds that people who are deceived by the Antichrist, wilfully turn their backs on biblical truths and the true Christ: "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

It is vitally important that all people of all ages take note of Satan's temptation and deception, because without this knowledge they are easy targets of subtle lies. The strategies which are applied by the kingdom of darkness are all aimed at harming God's kingdom by influencing people to fall away from the truth (Heb. 3:12). The more knowledge people have regarding this dark kingdom, its principles and plans of action, the better they will be able to defend themselves against it.

2. The Kingdom of Satan

It is important to acquire knowledge and an understanding of the opposing kingdom of darkness and the strategies and methods employed by Satan to deceive, harm and control people, as that will enable us to offer effective resistance: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*” (Eph. 6:12).

Beyond the world of physical phenomena is the *real* world – the unseen world – from which great and decisive influences emanate, which have an impact on the lives of all people. Since humans do not only comprise a body and a soul, but also a spirit, they are conscious of the spirit world and are receptive to communication from it. The immense importance of spiritual influence necessitates a sound knowledge of spiritual reality. Even in the instances where people choose to ignore these realities they are, nonetheless, profoundly affected by them. The two great realities in the spirit world are the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of Satan, which is the kingdom of darkness.

These two kingdoms are diametrically opposed to one another, both competing and contending for the souls of all people. Both have long been established on earth, and while neither has yet been outwardly revealed, both will be when their respective ‘kings’ emerge onto the world stage. The kingdom of Satan will finally manifest visibly when its forthcoming earthly king, the Antichrist, appears and he asserts himself to assume global control of the world for a short period. His disastrous reign will be ended by the visible appearance of Jesus, the true Christ, on earth, who will destroy the Antichrist and his Satanic kingdom and replace it with His millennial kingdom of God, as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 11:15; 19:16).

All the people of God are engaged in a continual deadly struggle against Satan, who is the great adversary of God and His people. It is of crucial importance that we understand the principles and strategies of Satan’s kingdom in order to prevail in the struggle.

1. The reality of the battle against Satan

The spiritual battle against the evil forces of Satan is a very real one, and it will intensify as we approach the end of this dispensation. This fact presents us with the responsibility of achieving a thorough understanding of the objectives and methods of the enemy. This struggle is taking place in a number of different spheres. The most important battlefield is in the arena of human lives that were created in the image of God. Satan’s attacks on the kingdom of light are aimed at dethroning God and enthroning himself as the ruler of the universe. By means of this process he intends to gain control over all people, in spirit, soul and body, and to be worshipped by them as if he were God.

There are various forms and degrees of influence and control that Satan exercises over people, and his final objective is to further expand this control. The Bible says that “the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 John 5:19). However, the kingdom of God also has established interests here and a considerable number of followers on earth, although they are a minority in a predominantly evil world.

Despite this situation, God still has undisputed sovereignty in the universe. Integral to His eternal plan was His decision to give humanity a free will as well as the authority to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). By having yielded to Satan’s temptation to disobey God in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve and subsequently all their offspring died spiritually and became subservient to another god – the devil. In this way the devil and his fallen angels became “the rulers of the darkness of this world”.

Ever since, fallen humanity has been confronted with a choice between two kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The freedom of people to decide which of these two kingdoms to follow, would be the deciding factor as to whether spiritual light or darkness would prevail on earth or in specific parts of it. The sinful inclinations and unrepentant hearts of the majority of people are the reasons why believers everywhere find themselves “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Because the vast majority of people deliberately live in darkness and sin, they are the object of God's wrath: "And this is the condemnation, that *the* light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

The majority support that the kingdom of darkness enjoys on earth is the reason for the Bible referring to "this present evil world" from which God wants to deliver us (Gal. 1:4). The great multitude who tread the broad way that leads to hell are those whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world and therefore do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4). The god of this dark world is Satan. In John 14:30 Jesus refers to him as "the ruler of this world".

However, Satan does not rule over Christians because he has been dethroned in their lives. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Even though they have been set free from the control of the Evil One, Christians are nevertheless engaged in the fierce battle that is waged by Satan against the kingdom of light. Therefore, the Bible emphatically commands us: "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Satan's attacks are not aimed primarily at those who are already under his control, as he can oppress and manipulate them at will. He is, however, careful to maintain his grasp on them. His most virulent attacks are reserved for the believers who oppose him and have committed themselves to helping other people to be set free from the powers of darkness. In so doing, Christians have also declared war against him: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

2. Satan's warfare against the kingdom of God

Satan employs different strategies in his war against the kingdom of God in an all-out effort to destroy the foundations of the Christian way of life. His purpose is to ultimately gain absolute control and to establish a fully-fledged satanic world order in all spheres of life. He obviously realises that time is running out on him as he is radically increasing the severity of his attacks. The different types of warfare that he is engaged in are the following:

Religious warfare

It is high on Satan's list of priorities to deceive people spiritually, thereby gaining control over their lives. He employs various methods to achieve this objective, all of which are aimed at eroding faith in God and replacing it with unbelief, superstition, or one or other false religion:

The Christian church: Satan attacks the church of Christ in his most well disguised and deceiving form, by infiltrating it with false prophets who pretend to be apostles and ministers of Christ. 1 John 4:1 says that "many false prophets have gone out into the world." The Bible also reveals that "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

These deceivers sow confusion, falsify and utterly distort the Word of God through their erroneous translations that alter the intended message and misrepresent the original text. A false Christian church is a powerful tool in the hands of Satan which he uses to deceive nominal Christians into believing that they are saved and destined for heaven, while in truth, that is not the case. Millions of naïve people are unwittingly exposed to damnable heresies without them having put the false teachers to the test, by themselves discerning in terms of biblical principles, the spiritual powers that are at work in the preaching during the 'religious shows' and in the literature that is presented to them.

In her classical work, *War on the Saints*, Jessie Penn-Lewis (1910) offers a very convincing expose of Satan's assault on the church. In their summary, Amazon.com say: "This book was written by Mrs. Penn-Lewis in collaboration with the Welsh revivalist Evan Roberts as a

disclosure of the deceptive strategies used by evil spirits against God’s people and as a guide to winning victory over counterfeit practices.”

False religions: More directly, humanity is deceived by the non-Christian religions into worshipping idols that are disguised demons. According to the Bible, the idols to which the heathens make sacrifices, are demons (1 Cor. 10:19-20). Anyone who participates in these sacrifices has fellowship with demons. The heathen are not aware that Satan has deceived them. Similarly, compromising, liberal, and ecumenical Christian churches do not realise these dangers, due to the fact that they subscribe to the false idea that all religions worship the same God. Multireligious deception is proliferating in this day and age which amounts to a complete denial of the unique position of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of the world. Ecumenical ‘Christians’ should endeavour to become more aware of the activities of the god of this world who blinds the minds of people rendering them unable to see the truth.

Occult powers: Occult or mystical practices provide an even more ostensible revelation of Satan. Yet, he does not openly associate his name and his kingdom with it, allowing people to be more easily deceived into becoming unfaithful to God. Satan’s power is marketed and promoted through the New Age Movement, the Human Potential Movement, and related occult and mystical practices such as spiritual channelling, shamanism, the application of magical powers, transcendental meditation, yoga, fortune-telling, the use of psychic powers, astral projection, holistic healing, extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, etc. People are influenced into opening themselves up to these powers and to cosmic wisdom, and freely draw on these resources. Eastern meditation is one of the most popular methods of bringing about an altered state of consciousness which leads to a vulnerability and openness to occult powers, cosmic wisdom, spirit guides and demons.

Satanism: Due to the inherent repulsiveness of the idea, the direct revelation of Satan can only be made to gravely deceived, morally decadent, and spiritually degenerate people. In the past, these direct revelations by Satan were restricted to a few small groups of people, but during the past two decades their numbers have greatly increased throughout the world. Satan and his demons reveal themselves in all their abominable vileness and bloodthirstiness to their worshippers. They demand animal or human sacrifices from their worshippers and also commission the murder of certain of their victimised enemies.

A war against the Bible

Due to both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible being the inspired, inerrant Word of God, it has been and remains under the most virulent and sustained attack from Satan and his agents. Its inspiration, historicity, canon and scientific accuracy have all been questioned by ‘higher criticism’, the theory of evolution and many other opposing forms of critique.

War against moral values

Satan continuously questions, challenges and breaks down the moral norms which God has established through His laws and precepts, and which the human conscience should acknowledge as right and good. Moral decline is promoted by demons. This is done with a view to replacing God’s morality in the world with the opposing values of a satanic immorality. These two sets of values can be contrasted as follows:

God’s morality	Satan’s immorality
Truth	Lies
Righteousness	Unrighteousness
Self-control	Lawlessness
Honesty	Deceitfulness and theft
Moral chastity	Moral depravity and vileness
Soberness	Drunkenness

Sincerity	Slyness
Reverence to God	Blaspheming of God
Orderliness	Disorderliness
Meekness	Arrogance
Peacefulness	Violence
Forgiveness	Revengefulness
Love	Hate
Kindness	Cruelty
Conservation	Destruction

Satan knows that by means of this war against moral values he can achieve a great victory in gaining control over and eventually destroying humankind. The Roman Empire, for instance, was never defeated by military force but destroyed itself by way of internal moral decay. Sexual orgies, drunkenness, fornication, homosexuality, materialism, corruption, theft and bribery gave rise to one scandal after another. Widespread immorality completely ruined the integrity and effectiveness of the governments in Rome and Constantinople.

The apostle James also contrasts God's standard of morality against the moral depravity of a fallen world that lies in the sway of the Evil One: "Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (Jas. 3:13-18).

Under the cloak of humanistic reforms the world is, for the most part, being drawn into a demonic immorality. When this process has sufficiently advanced, the man of sin, the Antichrist, will be revealed. He will be the leading figure in the new world order's culture of sin. He will act according to his own will (Dan. 11:36), rule by means of satanic powers (Rev. 13:2), blaspheme God (Rev. 13:5-6), together with Satan, be worshipped by a morally and religiously depraved human race (Rev. 13:4), be a tyrant and mass-murderer (Dan. 11:44) and order the execution of all people who refuse to worship him as god (Rev. 13:15).

Psychological war

A psychological war is also waged against humanity by convincing people to not limit themselves only to rational thinking based on logical facts. They are encouraged to discover and use their hidden psychological potential by switching over from their rational left brain to their creative right brain. Here they will discover a super memory, powers of self-healing, the gifts of clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. The lie that these discoveries are allegedly associated with the unexploited side of our human potential is proclaimed and this is referred to as *the deeper self* or *the higher self*. Extra-sensory techniques, which are used to effect such a switchover to the hidden side of the human psyche, include transcendental meditation, self-hypnosis, yoga, as well as mind-expanding drugs which produce a hallucinatory experience.

Various psychics, psychologists, deluded Christian counsellors and even evangelists and pastors, are guiding people into this new self-discovery that leads them to attain an altered state of consciousness. Some of them discover their deeper self; others encounter spirit guides that help them to regress to previous lives, while others discover their abilities to achieve self-healing, improved learning, etc. However, these gifts and discoveries are clearly of mystical and demonic origin. By using them, people relinquish all forms of self-control by submitting themselves to higher powers, opening themselves up to the working of unknown spiritual agents, and entering a cosmic realm in which the gifts and experiences are clearly not from God. They

abandon all the logical and rational arguments of the Bible, and thereby render proof that the god of this world has indeed blinded their minds.

Victims of Satan's psychological warfare all undergo a radical change in their thoughts and behaviour. In addition to their reliance on higher spiritual powers of unknown origin, most of them develop an entirely new world-view. Boundaries and divisions disappear and they regard everything as one (monism, or synthetic thinking), for instance, a recognition of the equality and inherent unity of all religions. They no longer subscribe to antithetic thinking in which a clear distinction is made between opposite categories of things such as the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil, the lie and the truth, etc. Satan's world government (Rev. 13:3, 7) and his alliance of world religions (Rev. 17:3-5) will be perfectly acceptable to them.

Social war

As the Creator of human beings, God also laid down rules for social identity and the formation of groups to ensure the orderly functioning of society. The most important of these is the family unit which God has ordained to be the very bed-rock of ordered, disciplined, well-adjusted, happy, stable societies and nations. Satan relentlessly attacks these institutions in an effort to sow disorder and chaos.

God created humans as male and female, with different characteristics and social roles assigned to each sex. Their appearance, conduct, dress and hairstyle should reflect and conform to these differences. In all respects, men should be truly masculine and women, truly feminine. Satan tries to eliminate these differences through unisex reforms and endeavours to establish homosexuality as an alternative and socially acceptable lifestyle. Under his influence, society is also restructured on a non-sexist basis with a view to introducing uniform roles for all individuals irrespective of gender. Due to God having appointed the man as head over his wife, resulting in a paternalistic society, Satan employs humanism and radical feminism to give impetus to his egalitarian reforms. As a result the family unit has been and remains under sustained attack from many quarters. Unfaithfulness within marriages and adultery has led to widespread divorce. The increasing breakdown of the God-given institution of marriage has consequently caused damage to children, brought about increasing delinquency, drug dependency, and crime. Cohabitation outside marriage has also become common, as have one-parent families, with similar disastrous effects upon children and society.

Cultural differences among various societies and nations are also minimised by superimposing universally acceptable trends and institutions on groups with a strong sense of identity – the aim being to erode their patriotism and transform their members into planetary citizens. These reforms, through which national and ethnic identity are discouraged, form the basis of the neo-Babylonian world society of the future. In that society, any ideology may be subscribed to, any religion may be practised, any type of marriage may be practised (e.g. same sex) or none, and no moral norms are enforced. When this stage has been reached in the demonic war against God's standards for individuals, groups, and nations, Satan will have achieved his objective of creating cultural chaos and loss of identity among human beings.

Economic warfare

In the kingdom of darkness, money and capital goods are regarded as very important means to control people's lives. With money people can be controlled, bribed and induced to do things that they otherwise might not have done. The mere desire to become rich in material terms, gives rise to a form of idolatry. The god of money is Mammon, which is one of the descriptive names of the devil.

The Webster's Dictionary defines Mammon as: "(1) the false god of riches and avarice; (2) riches regarded as an object of worship and greedy pursuit; wealth as an evil, more or less personified." The Oxford Dictionary defines Mammon as: "the god of wealth, regarded as evil or immoral; those who worship Mammon are greedy people who value money too highly."

Mammon is a term that was used to describe riches, avarice, and worldly gain in biblical literature. There are warnings against the negative influence of excessive materialism and

greed. The original Aramaic word “mamona” specifically refers to “riches” or “wealth”. However, in the New Testament this word was personified as a false god (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:9-13). In these scriptures, Christ issued stern warnings against Mammon and He said that it is impossible to serve both God and Mammon. The unrighteous Mammon is clearly equated with the devil.

Among other things, Wikipedia says the following about *Mammon*:

“During the Middle Ages, Mammon was commonly personified as the demon of avarice, richness and injustice. Thus Peter Lombard (II, dist. 6) says, ‘Riches are called by the name of a devil, namely Mammon, for Mammon is the name of a devil, by which name riches are called according to the Syrian tongue.’ Piers Plowman also regards Mammon as a deity. Nicholas de Lyra (commenting on the passage in Luke) says: ‘Mammon est nomen daemonis’ (Mammon is the name of a demon).

“The common literary identification of the name with a god of covetousness or avarice likely stems from Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, where Mammon oversees a cave of worldly wealth. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* describes a fallen angel who values earthly treasure over all other things. Later occultist writings such as De Plancy’s *Dictionnaire Infernal* describe Mammon as Hell’s ambassador to England. For Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present*, the ‘Gospel of Mammonism’ became simply a metaphoric personification for the materialist spirit of the nineteenth century.

“Mammon is somewhat similar to the Greek god Plutus, and the Roman Dis Pater, in his description, and it is likely that he was at some point based on them; especially since Plutus appears in *The Divine Comedy* as a wolf-like demon of wealth, wolves being associated with greed in the Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas metaphorically described the sin of Avarice as ‘Mammon being carried up from Hell by a wolf, coming to inflame the human heart with greed.’” (End of quote from Wikipedia).

What are Mammon’s plans for the future? Satan clearly intends to make full use of the power of money in the end-time. According to Revelation 13:16-18, the Antichrist will be in control of a cashless monetary system for the whole world, operated by a number system. Nobody will be able to buy or sell without the number of the Antichrist.

Not only individuals, but also all nations, will be economically controlled by a future world government headed by the Antichrist. Economic subservience to global economic structures, such as the IMF and the World Bank at present, will contribute towards the loss of national sovereignty. National sovereignty is under additional threat from the activities of multinational companies, the accelerating trend of supra-national company mergers and, especially, from activities conducted on the Internet which can by-pass national laws and regulation.

The present debt crisis and economic collapse threatening the developed world offers an ideal opportunity to establish a new world order and to institute centralised control over the global economy. These developments will bring about a new dimension to Satan’s economic warfare.

Political warfare

Satan is clearly also engaged in political warfare against humanity. God’s order for human communities is based on the principle of sovereign nations, each with its own government and territory. According to Acts 17:26, God determined the boundaries of their habitation. Satan’s first rebellion against the existing order of independent nations was the motivating force behind the building of the tower of Babylon and the establishment of the ancient Babylonian Empire. This effort was aimed at political, religious, economic, and linguistic unity on earth (Gen. 11:4-6). The Babylonian ideology of globalism was wrong in the eyes of the Lord; consequently He confused their plans and forced the participating nations to move away from each other and follow an independent existence without domination by a world empire.

The human idea of the form that global unity should assume is wrong because of humanity’s sinfulness and rebellion against God. God does intend to bring about global unity, but on His own terms, under His own laws and under His own global Ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. The reason for God disapproving of global unity achieved by any other method, is because it would be a unity of rebels, inspired by the chief rebel, Satan, who

will succeed in establishing a short-lived kingdom of this sort.

The devil has not relinquished his plans for an alternative order of global political domination of all the nations. Various evil world empires have been established through the ages. In every instance they oppressed and exploited the nations which were conquered, imposed a heathen religion on them, and also undermined other cultures by enforcing cultural and linguistic conformity to their own institutions. Certain efforts to establish similar world empires were unsuccessful, an example being the failed attempts of Hitler in World War II.

Whenever Satan makes an attempt of this kind, he prepares a suitably strong man who rises to such a high position of political leadership, that he becomes a military dictator who conquers and subjugates other nations. By means of this expansion of his empire he then attempts to become a world emperor or ruler. Ill-begotten power such as this has always been abused to induce or force people to rebel against God by bowing down before man-made idols or to the emperor himself who poses as God (as in the Roman Empire). Due to their inherent immorality, corruption and oppression of other nations, all these empires eventually collapsed.

According to the Bible, before the second coming Satan will use all possible means to once more overthrow God's order of independent nations. He will try to achieve this by incorporating them into a new world order of international political, religious, economic, social and linguistic unity. In the Bible, the man he has chosen to head the new world order is referred to as the Antichrist, the beast, and the man of sin. The world empire that he will establish will be a revived replica of the Babylonian Empire of Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar. For that reason, the end-time world empire is, quite aptly, called *Babylon* in Revelation 17 and 18.

Like Nimrod of old, the Antichrist will seek to deify himself. Through cunning and deceptive diplomacy he will persuade other nations to join the new world order of global unity. Therefore, initially it will be a jointly negotiated agreement. In their vision for a united world they might paraphrase Genesis 11:4 as follows: "Come, let us build ourselves a city as world capital and establish a powerful world religion which exalts and enthrones humanity; and let us make a name for ourselves as planetary citizens, lest we be divided and scattered over the face of the earth."

Diplomatic negotiations for the establishment of a new world order are already conducted under the auspices of the USA, the United Nations and other world bodies. Once the Antichrist assumes control, he will coerce these negotiations to their final conclusion. Daniel says: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week" (Dan. 9:27; the 'many' probably refers to 'many nations'). This prophetic week represents a period of seven years, and refers to the coming tribulation period.

The global acceptance of the Antichrist as world leader will be at the cost of the deceived nations with whom he has confirmed covenants. He will not act in their best interests, but rather in the interests of Satan who prepared and empowered him (Antichrist) for his position. John says: "And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2). This will lead to global political control by Satan's kingdom: "And he was given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Rev. 13:7).

We must clearly understand that, besides his attacks on individuals and groups, the devil also follows a strategy of deceiving the nations into serving him and joining his antichristian new world order of political and religious unity. In Revelation 20:3 we read that after the second coming of Jesus, Satan will be bound and confined to a bottomless pit "so that he should deceive the nations no more." After a thousand years he will be released to once more deceive the nations and mobilise them for a war against the kingdom of God (Rev. 20:7-10).

At present, the nations are deceived into sacrificing their sovereignty on the altar of regional and global unity. The current tendency to move towards achieving European unity is a good example of this dangerous trend. The process of political unification will culminate in a new world order and global governance. At that time Satan's strong man, the Antichrist, will offer his services to the deceived masses. Revelation 13 says: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. ... And he was given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Rev. 13:3, 7).

Military warfare

In keeping with his political war against independent nations – particularly those nations which strongly resist satanic ideologies – Satan actively resorts to military conquests to establish and expand evil empires. He is the “God of forces” (Dan. 11:38) who uses his power in various ways to deprive nations of their independence by subjecting them to stronger adversaries who, wittingly or unwittingly, advance the interests of the kingdom of darkness.

Many wars have been instigated by Satan against Israel in an effort to obliterate the Chosen People, from whom the Messiah came and to whom He will shortly return, to rule the world from the throne of David. These wars were often motivated by conspiracies against God:

“Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people. ... They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You: ... Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them” (Ps. 83:1-8)

Relentless wars against Israel and various Christian communities and nations were waged by the Roman Empire in New Testament times, and subsequently also by Islamic nations, the Vatican, the Nazis, various Communist countries, etc. Satan inspires these wars, and he will continue to do so. The two wars that are probably the highest on Satan’s agenda for the end-time are the Russo-Arab invasion of Israel (Ezek. 38-39) and the Third World War (the battle of Armageddon). Active demonic incitement will occur to mobilise the armies of the world:

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ... And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Rev. 16:13-16).

As we move closer to the tribulation period, the occurrence of wars, revolutions, floods, earthquakes, famines, pestilences and other troubles of which our Lord prophesied, will continue to escalate with the evil intent of bringing about total disarray among the nations. Under these circumstances they will be prepared to accept the temporary assistance, security, peace and unity that the Antichrist will offer them, and in so doing become subjects of his world empire. They will relinquish their political and economic independence and also willingly honour and worship Satan’s ‘Prince of Peace’ as their Messiah.

3. Operational Structure of Satan’s Powers

The above-mentioned types of warfare which Satan is waging against mankind and the kingdom of God are planned and co-ordinated from within the structures of his own kingdom. Although the devil operates in the spiritual realm, he controls a hierarchy of authority and typical governmental institutions for the execution of specific tasks. Paul calls him “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2; NIV). Harold Hoehner (1983:622) says the following regarding his comprehensive domination of the unsaved world:

“The unregenerate follows the ways of this world. Unbelievers follow the lifestyles of other unbelievers; they experience the world’s peer pressure. ‘This world’ (*kosmos*) is the satanically organised system that hates and opposes all that is godly (cf. John 15:18; 23). The unsaved follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air, that is, Satan. ‘The whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1 John 5:19), also called ‘the god of this Age’ (2 Cor. 4:4). ... The unsaved are now in the clutches of this ‘ruler’ and follow in his opposition to God.”

In addition to controlling the unsaved world, Satan and his kingdom are waging an active war against believers, aimed at multiple target groups. We should resist the actions of these principalities, evil spiritual forces and structures of authority (Eph. 6:12). It is evident from these diverse activities that the kingdom of Satan has, at the very least, the following seven evil

powers which are devoted to specific tasks:

Powers for nations

The Bible clearly alludes to the fact that attacks are levelled against nations from the kingdom of darkness in order to distort their vision, mislead them ideologically and to promote evil on a national level. An example of this kind of demonic intervention is found in that which took place in Persia (present day Iran) of which is written in the Book of Daniel: "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days" (Dan. 10:13). In his commentary on Daniel 10, Dwight Pentecost (1985:1366) says:

"Daniel 10:12-14. Encouraging Daniel not to be afraid (cf. v. 8), Gabriel explained the reason for the delay in God's answer to Daniel's prayer. When Daniel first began fasting and mourning in response to the vision on a great war (vv. 1-2), God had dispatched Gabriel with a message for him, but Gabriel was hindered by the prince of the Persian kingdom (cf. 'the prince of Persia', v. 20). Since men cannot fight with angels, the prince referred to here must have been a satanic adversary.

"God has arranged the angelic realm in differing ranks referred to as 'rule, authority, power, and dominion' (Eph. 1:21; NIV). Gabriel and Michael have been assigned authority over angels who administer God's affairs for the nation Israel (cf. Michael in Dan. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9). In imitation Satan has also apparently assigned high-ranking demons to positions of authority over each kingdom. The prince of the Persian kingdom was a satanic representative assigned to Persia.

"To seek to prevent Gabriel's message from getting to Daniel, the demonic prince attacked Gabriel as he embarked on his mission. This gives insight into the nature of the warfare fought in the heavenlies between God's angels and Satan's demons to which Paul referred (Eph. 6:12).

"The battle between Gabriel and the prince (demon) of Persia continued for three weeks until Michael, one of the chief princes of the angelic realm, came to Gabriel's assistance. Such angelic-demon conflict indicates something of Satan's power" (end of comments by Pentecost).

In modern times, evil, worldly and humanistic ideologies are still being offered to the nations to seduce them into collaborating with Satan. Paul warned against deceptive philosophies when he said: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, ... according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Examples of evil ideologies being embraced by nations and other opinion-formers such as educational institutions are: humanism, atheism, evolutionism, socialism, communism, liberalism, existentialism, relativism, pragmatism, globalism, New Age mysticism, and any of the non-Christian religions. If only one of these ideologies gains control over a country or an organisation, it constitutes a great victory for the kingdom of darkness. One simply needs to consider the potential for mass deception in countries that officially identify with communism or one of the non-Christian religions. In a country such as Saudi Arabia, because of their association with Islam, no Christian church may be erected in their entire territory.

Since governments have extensive powers to determine the ideological orientation and national ethos of a country, it is a high priority of Satan to deceive nations, their political leaders and governments. Many nations, even in the traditional Christian world, demonstrate that they are influenced and even controlled by the kingdom of Satan! They heed the call of the prince of darkness by abrogating Christian constitutions and laws in which the supremacy of the Triune God is recognised, by the phasing out of Christian education in state schools, by the degrading of Christianity by demoting it to the same level as the non-Christian religions, and by substantially lowering the moral standards in a country through the legalising of prostitution, homosexuality, abortion, and other immoral practices. In this way a lawless, immoral, violent, and barbaric lifestyle is promoted.

All that still remains to take place in such a pernicious world society is the revelation of the man of sin, the Antichrist, who will be Satan's ruler over a wicked and perverted generation. Through demonic deception, government leaders of the revived Roman Empire will be so enchanted by the antichristian new world order of the end-time that they will transfer their authority to the world

empire of the beast: "These [kings] are of one mind and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them" (Rev. 17:13-14).

From Revelation 16:13-16 it is evident that special demons will be assigned to deceive these rulers into joining forces with the beast in fighting against Christ at His return. That will be a bad day for them, their supreme leader, the kingdom of darkness, as well as all their deluded followers (Rev. 19:19-21).

Powers for personal attacks

In the kingdom of Satan, much attention is devoted to personal attacks. Information is gathered about all people on earth, which is used to exploit their weaknesses, to encourage their passions and evil desires, to seduce, mislead, oppose, accuse, rob and even kill them. In this regard every Christian is therefore continuously involved in spiritual warfare against such demonic attacks. In his commentary on Ephesians 6:11-13, Harold Hoehner (1983:643) says:

"The purpose of putting on God's armour is to be able to stand against the schemes or stratagems (*methodeias*) of the devil our adversary (cf. 4:27). Christians are not to attack Satan, or advance against him; they are only to 'stand' or hold the territory Christ and His body, the church, have conquered. Without God's armour believers will be defeated by the 'schemes' of the devil which have been effective for thousands of years.

"The struggle is not physical (against flesh and blood); it is a spiritual conflict against the spiritual 'Mafia'. Though the ranks of satanic forces cannot be fully categorised, the first two (rulers and authorities) have already been mentioned in 1:21 and 3:10. Paul added the powers of this dark world (cf. 2:2; 4:18; 5:8) and the spiritual forces of evil. ... Satan ... is trying to rob believers of the spiritual blessings God has given them (Eph. 1:3)".

Powers for the infiltration and deception of the Christian church

A high priority division was established in the kingdom of Satan to infiltrate and deceive the Christian church: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

The demons to which these duties have been assigned select the best possible human collaborators to do their evil work. These are then converted into false prophets who are wolves in sheepskins. These evil cohorts are usually esteemed and influential persons in society whose opinions as pastors or theologians carry a lot of weight. Their deceptive teachings are very subtle forms of disinformation that cannot be easily discerned from the truth. Their deluded supporters have blind and unconditional faith in them. Paul says:

"For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Such people cause great confusion among poorly informed believers. The following characteristics are typical of false prophets:

Misleading Pharisees

They pretend to be what they are not: "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matt. 23:28). They proclaim a dead form of outward godliness "to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matt. 23:15). We are clearly warned against these heretics: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

Stumbling-blocks in God's kingdom

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13). These preachers are esteemed spiritual leaders who are not only unsaved themselves, but act as stumbling-blocks to hinder those who are searching for the Lord, and as

“blind leaders of the blind” (Matt. 15:14). They preach a fashionable ‘social gospel’ or ‘liberation theology’ in which they tend to split hairs over trivial issues, but the important subjects of sin, condemnation and salvation are not addressed: “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matt. 23:24).

Proclaimers of a false peace

For the sake of his own popularity, a false prophet proclaims a false peace to pacify people and seduce them into continuing with their sins under the premise that a loving God will not condemn them. At the same time the false prophets who are used by Satan, keep themselves busy with corruption and self-enrichment: “For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace! when *there is no peace*” (Jer. 6:13-14; cf. Jer. 14:13-16).

Deniers of Christ

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Those who collaborate with Satan enjoy great public support. Peter says that many will follow their false teachings. They abhor and scoff at the evangelical churches who continue to preach the biblical doctrine of salvation based upon faith in the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, His deity, His atoning death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His coming again in glory. The false prophets are also campaigning against those who believe in the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. They describe such people as fundamentalists who are naïve, uninformed and outdated in their views.

Satan has a particular hatred for the books of Genesis and Revelation, as his doom is predicted in the former and the details of its execution are described in the latter. His collaborators embrace the theory of evolution and deny the literal truth of the creation account. They also try to spiritualise away the end time prophecies in their campaign to undermine the credibility and literal meaning of God’s Word.

False prophets who deny the divinity of Christ abound in most of the large theological seminaries and faculties of theology at the various universities. Their influence is most destructive, as they are responsible for the training of the following generation of “unfaithful servants” who will continue to lower the spiritual standards of various denominations.

Extra-biblical revelations

False prophets turn away from sound biblical exegesis and rely on extra-biblical revelations of a highly questionable nature. They promote their own agendas which are in accordance with their distorted understanding of Scripture, and then they attempt to lend credibility to the new revelations by asserting that God Himself imparted the information to them. Their communication with God is usually claimed to be through dreams, visions, messages received from angelic beings, and even astral travels to heaven where they allegedly talk to deceased saints. They then convey these messages to their followers, rather than preaching the Word of God to them.

What does the Bible say about extra-biblical revelations? “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18). Such false teachers will share in the judgements which have been prepared for the father of lies.

Small gods, signs and wonders

As we are now in the end-time, many false prophets are appearing on the scene and they are deceiving large crowds with sensational signs and wonders. Some of them do not hesitate to call themselves apostles, prophets, or even gods. They command powers that can put people into a trance and fall down on the floor, behave as if drunk, shake or laugh uncontrollably, shout at the top of their voices, bleat, roar, make other animal noises or behave in other bizarre ways. Biblical justification is then wrongly provided for these phenomena. The Lord Jesus warned against false prophets and their deceptive methods:

“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ... For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:11, 24).

Do not underestimate Satan’s powers which are aimed at infiltrating and deceiving the Christian church, but be fully aware of such tactics and guard against them. The Lord Jesus “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15). We should be able to identify the false prophets and expose their deceptive teachings with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. John said: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Powers for the perversion and destruction of God’s Word

Throughout history and still to the present day, incessant attacks have been made against the written Word of God by perverting and distorting it with wrong exegesis, and also by the provision and usage of new translations that deviate substantially from the most reliable manuscripts in the original languages. In this way people become doctrinally deceived and ignorant of vital promises and warnings in the Bible. There is only one way to correct these heresies and falsifications, and that is through the continued insistence on the usage of reliable translations and by proclaiming the true and unadulterated Word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Powers promoting false religions

It is obvious that Satan concentrates his efforts intently on the founding and expansion of false religions in his efforts to deceive mankind. In this way he deceives millions of people into worshipping idols, and through them he proceeds to oppose, discredit, undermine and persecute Christianity from a distance. In this instance, he and his demons hide their identity and pose as gods, spirit guides, ancestral spirits, or ascended masters of wisdom (1 Cor. 10:19-20). They even “transform themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13) in order to establish false forms of the Christian faith which are naturally inclined and sympathetic towards the non-Christian religions, and have no problem in associating and collaborating with them.

Powers in control of occult activities

From mystical, supernatural spheres, Satan and his demons are able to unleash a great variety of occult powers among people on earth. It is done in such a way that people do not realise that these powers are from the devil. Occult powers manifest in supernatural abilities such as psychic powers, extrasensory perception, signs and wonders, holistic healing, witchcraft, magic, spells, divination, fortune-telling, clairvoyance, astral projection, levitation, and the ability to walk over hot coals. Thousands of years ago, Israel was explicitly warned against engaging in practices of this nature:

“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or cast spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD (Deut. 18:10-12).

In his commentary on Deuteronomy 18, Jack Deere (1985:296) says: “People who are knowledgeable of the occult and demon possession quickly point out that the practices mentioned in verses 9 to 14 have led many into satanic bondage. Divination means to give false prophecy. ... Sorcery is the attempt to control people or circumstances through power given by evil spirits (demons). To interpret omens is to tell the future based on signs. ... Witchcraft involves practising magic by incantations. One who casts spells is literally ‘one who ties knots’, thus one who binds other people by magical mutterings. A spiritist is one who supposedly communicates with the dead but who actually communicates with demons. One who consults the dead may mean the spiritist’s attempt to contact the dead to gain advice, information on the future, or help in manipulation. Such detestable practices were one reason the Lord used Israel to destroy the Canaanites.”

Powers to promote Satanism

The seventh division in the kingdom of darkness is concerned with the unconcealed, blatant worship of Satan as the cruel, revengeful, and power-hungry god of a fallen world. Because of the gruesome and despicable nature of this practice, only people who are in the darkest depths of spiritual and moral depravity would feel inclined to go to these extremes.

As the spiritual and moral falling away in the world increases, there are more perverted human beings who take pleasure in violence, rebellion, curses, murder, liquor and drug abuse, sexual orgies, and the most grisly satanic rituals in which skeletons, skulls and blood are used. A movement which was restricted to small groups of people who met in dark dens in deserted places to worship Satan and to make sacrifices to him, has now gained millions of supporters and worshippers all over the world.

Apart from the fact that Satan is a rebel and a murderer he also wishes to be worshipped and honoured by his followers. Those who are prepared to accept and worship him in spite of his cruelty and evil characteristics become involved with Satanism. In America and other countries there are branches of the Church of Satan that was established by Anton LaVey in 1966.

In Satanism there is a hierarchy through which a member moves upwards into the higher ranks; consequently, many of the new members have only limited knowledge of who and what Satan really is. As they become more deeply involved in the movement they learn more about him and become more and more like him.

There are various reasons why people become involved with Satanism. Some are motivated by a spirit of extreme rebellion. They revolt against the social order, reject all authority and the norms of decency, and then associate with the great rebel, Lucifer. Others crave for mystical, supernatural power and approach the devil to get such powers from him. There are also people with murderous inclinations arising from a thirst for revenge, who then join forces with the great murderer and execute their plans with accomplices of an equally corrupt spirit. Common attractions to Satanism are the sexual orgies and the availability of liquor and drugs at their meetings.

Another reason for people to become involved with Satanism, is to become financially prosperous. Many of the members of rock bands in America have approached high priests or witches of satanic groups to sell their souls to Satan in exchange for fame and riches. With their own blood they sign a covenant with Satan. They are then under obligation to promote themes like witchcraft, magic, drugs, Eastern cults, or Satanism in their songs.

One of the most important activities at their meetings is to make sacrifices to Satan, which are accompanied by prayers to him. Animals are sacrificed to him, but in some cases human sacrifices are also made. There have been known instances where abducted people have been sacrificed to Satan, as well as the unregistered babies of cult members. Those participating in the ritual drink blood mixed with liquor or drugs. Demons also appear at meetings and take possession of people who are open to receiving them.

Satan's captives are on the lowest level of spiritual and moral corruption imaginable. Everyone should avoid taking even the first step in that direction. The Bible says: "Do not give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). The advice of James is: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). Do not risk the extreme danger associated with becoming acquainted with the depths of Satan by descending into the pit of Satanism (Rev. 2:24).

It is imperative that parents make an early identification of the signs which reveal that their children may have become involved with Satanism. There are various signs that indicate such a possibility, in particular the following:

- An obsession with black clothes, black walls in bedrooms, and black bedding. Dim candle-light is preferable to bright electric lights.
- Pictures of satanic figures are pasted onto the walls of rooms.
- Much time spent alone in meditation.

- Secrecy regarding the identity and whereabouts of cult members and friends, as well as secret phone calls.
- Very loud music by heavy metal, black metal, satanic metal and rave groups.
- The reading of books and viewing of DVD's on witchcraft and other occult activities.
- A strong anti-Christian disposition, accompanied by fits of anger, rebelliousness and the rejection of all authority.
- Cursing and blasphemous language.
- An interest in sharp knives and other murder weapons.
- A desire to drink blood, which is done to acquire the power of demons. Such persons may also make cuts on their bodies, especially on their left arm, and drink their own blood. The blood of animals is also drunk.
- A special fondness of skeletons. That is the reason why graves are sometimes dug open during moonlit nights. Skulls are particularly sought after. Black candles are often lit and placed in the skulls. Skulls are also used as receptacles from which liquor or blood is drunk. If a person is in possession of a skull when expressing curses, casting spells or practising astral projection, his power is allegedly increased tenfold.
- Hatred, vindictiveness, and excessive cruelty against people, plants, and animals.
- A strong inclination towards vandalism. Anything that is of value to other people is broken or damaged.
- Signs such as the inverted cross, the broken cross, the pentagram, the number 666, the lightning symbol, the anarchy symbol (A) and KISS (Kids in Satan's Service) are regularly displayed.
- Drug abuse and abnormal sexual behaviour.
- Physical and psychological signs of deterioration, accompanied by nervousness.
- Sleeplessness, nightmares and hallucinations.
- Depression and suicidal tendencies.
- A complete break with former friends, and also withdrawal from sport and other extramural activities.
- A high rate of absenteeism from school, and a conspicuous decline in educational achievements.

4. Characteristics of the Satanist Movement

From a study of the subtle methods Satan uses on people in general, as well as the more outrageous and extreme manifestations of his evil nature within the Satanist movement, the following 13 basic characteristics that mark Satan and his agents can be identified:

Rebellion



Satan is the great adversary who promotes anarchy by rejecting all authority and law. He undermines divine *and* human authority in an effort to create total chaos. This is part of the struggle that he has waged against the kingdom of light throughout the ages. Satanists are possessed by the same spirit of rebellion and anarchy. They demonstrate their rebelliousness

clearly by painting the Anarchy symbol (A) on walls or floors of public buildings. The circle around the symbol (which is also used in conjunction with other symbols) is the circle of power. The occult power of Satan must be kept inside the circle, and danger outside of it.

Destruction of the natural world

God's entire creation is a target for Satan's destructive activities. He is intent on polluting, poisoning, burning and destroying the earth, its natural resources and the environment with the aim of making it uninhabitable. The more control Satan gains over a people and their culture, the more he blinds the minds of the people, erodes their moral values and sense of responsibility, and transforms them into materialistic and covetous people who overexploit or destroy nature in a callous and unscrupulous way to benefit themselves at any cost. Trees are cut down without replacing them, the rainforests are destroyed, pastures are over-grazed and arable land is exhausted by over-production and insufficient use is made of natural fertilisers. Soil erosion is allowed to continue unchecked, land and sea animals are hunted without allowing stocks a reasonable chance to recover and the genetic modification of animals and crops threatens to have catastrophic consequences. Land, water and the atmosphere are polluted to the extent that the chance of survival for man and animals is seriously endangered.

It is clearly Satan's intention to destroy the 'very good' world which God has given to humanity to cultivate, control and maintain. During the great tribulation, Satan will come very close to causing a total ecological collapse on earth.

Destruction of God's institutions

Not only do Satan and his followers endeavour to promote the destruction of the physical creation, but also God's institutions for the orderly existence of human societies. Of these, marriage and government institutions are the most important targets for attacks. Satanists often curse Christian marriages in the hope that they will succumb to pressure and that the marriages will end in divorce. Sexual promiscuity and cohabitation is promoted in various ways.

Continuous efforts are made to bring down or destabilise governments and institutions that are committed to the maintenance of law and order. The police are abhorred because they impede the advance of anarchy and hunt down Satanists who contravene the law. The police force and other security services are consequently undermined and sometimes even infiltrated by Satanists to get covert protection through access to inside information. To protect themselves against the police, Satanists use code names for one another at meetings, and they also maintain secrecy about their addresses and places of employment. In this way, a member who is arrested and interrogated by the police will not possess valuable information that may lead to the arrest and prosecution of other members. Satan thus protects his agents who are dedicated to sowing chaos, disorder and anarchy in society.

Sabotage and underground activities

In Satan's empire there is a strong commitment to sabotage in order to break down what has been built up. That does not only involve the vandalising, burning or destruction of buildings, cars and other property, but also of the non-material possessions such as the intellectual property of a nation. This includes encouraging student unrest and walk-outs, the sabotage of educational standards and other forms of academic terrorism by which tertiary institutions are threatened. Most of these activities are planned by an underground network of secret societies. Satan's evil plans are then executed by various front organisations. Covert attacks are made in this way on a society with the intention of depriving its members of their material and spiritual goods and leaving them destitute. Christian civilisation is incessantly attacked and undermined by the forces of darkness.

Lying and the spreading of evil doctrines

The devil is the father of lies; he therefore opposes all forms of the truth and endeavours to substitute it with lies. This attitude emanates from the demonic ideology of reversed values within Satan's domain in which everything that is good is regarded as bad. Beautiful, clean, honourable and positive things are despised by the devil and his followers. In their place, ugly,

vile, dishonourable and negative things are promoted. Filthy, pornographic material is displayed in public places to promote the process of spiritual, psychological and bodily defilement, thereby putting Satan's stamp on society.

Doctrines of demons are also disseminated in the form of distorted religious, political and philosophical ideologies in an attempt to replace the Christian values. Churches, governments, political parties and universities are often contaminated by this assault from the underworld. In many theological seminaries, demonic teachings have been firmly established in which the deity and virgin birth of Jesus as well as the inerrancy of the Bible are denied. Demonic signs and wonders have also found their way into many churches and Christian movements through the mediation of false prophets. Satanists also infiltrate many churches and Christian groups to spread their evil influence there.

Cursing and blaspheming

The devil and his followers hate, ridicule, reject, and slander the Triune God, the Christians and Israel. *Devil* means *False accuser* or *Slanderer*, and that describes precisely what he is doing. An extended vocabulary of swear-words, curses, and slanderous talk is used. Curses are placed on individuals, groups, churches and even on entire countries. The Name of God is also blasphemed. This will also be a major characteristic of the Antichrist: "And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5-6). All people who participate in this evil practice are playing directly into the hands of Satan.

Opposition to the cross of Jesus and the Christian church

The kingdom of darkness is fanatically opposed to the church of Jesus Christ and tries to question, discourage, deceive, infiltrate, oppress, undermine or destroy it in every possible way. Some of the symbols that they use in this campaign are the following:

The broken cross



In this symbol, the cross of Jesus is turned upside down and the horizontal bars are broken and bent downwards to point diagonally to the bottom. It represents the rejection and destruction of Christianity – something to which every Satanist must commit him or herself. Witches use the same symbol. A number of radical peace movements also use this symbol, which they refer to as the peace sign. One of these groups campaigns against the use of nuclear weapons. Although their cause may ostensibly seem just, they are inspired by Satan in his 'angel of light' guise and are looking for a false, humanistic peace outside of Christ. In their concept of peace there is no place for peace with God based on the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. To the contrary – the cross of Jesus is broken, rejected and replaced by the efforts of fallen humanity to achieve their own peace, with the exclusion of God. This false peace, which is also promoted by the New Age Movement and the new world order, is a deceptive prelude to the great tribulation: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

The inverted cross



This cross is not broken, but turned upside down. It indicates the rejection of Jesus Christ and contempt for the gospel of salvation. Inverted symbols are typical of the reversed and opposite values pursued by Satanists. People who are sometimes sacrificed to Satan on Black Sabbath are crucified upside down in accordance with this tradition.

The cross of confusion



This is a cross of which the lower upright bar is curled to resemble a reversed question mark. It is also a satanic cross by which the genuineness and power of the cross of Jesus is questioned. The rock group *Blue Oyster Cult* uses this symbol on their record covers. The official website of *Blue Oyster Cult*, who recorded songs with titles such as “(Don’t Fear) The Reaper”, “Burnin’ for You”, “Hot Rails to Hell” and “Fallen Angel”, says the following about the symbol: “Its metaphysical, alchemical and mythological connotations, combined with its similarity to some religious symbols gave it a flair of decadence and mystery...”

The Ankh cross



This is an Egyptian symbol of life, of which the short upper bar forms a circle. It also depicts a combination of the female and male signs of Isis and Osiris. Satanists use it as a sex symbol for their sexual orgies.

Immoral behaviour

Because the Bible upholds the highest moral standards, the Adversary makes it his business to break down these standards and replace them with the most extreme forms of immorality and misconduct. Filthy habits, swearing and vile conversations, anti-social behaviour, a propensity for nakedness, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, paedophilia, corruption, fraud, violence, and theft are all part of an immoral lifestyle that is continuously promoted by Satan. He is the author of sin and seeks to establish an international culture of sin among all nations. That is the reason for his future world leader, the Antichrist, also referred to as “the man of sin” and “the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3).

During the rule of the Antichrist the decadence and immorality on earth will be comparable with the days of Noah and Lot. The Bible describes the time of Noah as follows: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually ... for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen. 6:5, 13). In the time of Lot, homosexuality and violence were rife. Because of their exceptional wickedness, immorality and rebellion, God poured out His wrath upon the people of those times.

During the coming rule of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, immorality and rebellion against God and His standards will again assume unprecedented proportions. As a result, the world will be surrendered to a great tribulation as never seen before; and if those days are not shortened no flesh will be saved (Matt. 24:21-22). Sin is the reason why God judges people. Satan makes it his job to plunge individuals, groups, and even whole nations into sin by promoting acceptance of a sinful way of life and falsely presenting sin as justifiable human

freedom. In the Satanist movement the culture of sin already reigns supreme.

The use of occult power

Satan doubtless has considerable power, which he effectively uses to promote his interests and expand his kingdom. He makes this power and knowledge available to Satanists, magicians, witches, diviners, necromancers, psychics and various other practitioners of the occult. Through these people it is channelled to the wider community. Occult powers are also offered to false prophets who infiltrate Christian churches and perform sensational signs and wonders. In the end-time, the occurrence of this phenomenon will increase considerably.

In His prophetic discourse the Lord Jesus said: "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders" (Matt. 24:24). In this way Satan and his collaborators will pave the way for the coming of the ultimate false Christ, who is the Antichrist. Paul says his coming is "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). The false prophet will have the same occult powers. John says about him: "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those that dwell in it to worship the first beast. ... He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast" (Rev. 13:12-14). In the coming new world order, the occult powers and cosmic wisdom dispensed by Satan through his agents and gurus will be much sought after by both political and spiritual leaders. Those without it will be disregarded as ignorant and powerless.

Usurping God's rights to universal rule and worship

In his kingdom, Satan insists on being referred to as the god and ruler of the universe. People must also accept him in this capacity when they conclude covenants with him. It is his great desire to have dominion over all people. He already has a considerable degree of influence and authority over the deceived nations of the world – indeed he even had the audacity to offer them all to the Lord Jesus in return for *His* worship! (Luke 4:5-8) – yet he is not content with that which he already has. His ambition is to usurp God's sole right to universal obedience and worship. As it has been so often throughout history, he aspires to institute a world government with absolute power over the inhabitants of the earth. People must be ruled with an iron fist and forced to worship Satan or his demons who pose as idols. According to the Bible, a satanic world government will indeed be instituted by the Antichrist. It will be a revival of the Babylonian and Roman world empires in which occult powers and idolatry were rife. Satan will give his power and authority to the Antichrist, to enable him to subject the people to his military and political control and he will also insist on being worshipped by all people (Rev. 13:2-4). Many of the followers of Lucifer also deify and exalt themselves, and become very arrogant and tyrannical, of which Hitler and Stalin were good examples.

Murder

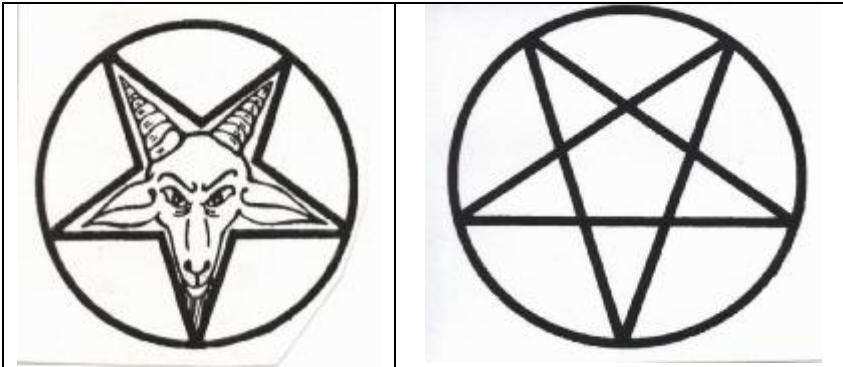
Satan "was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). He takes pleasure in killing people so that they may be plunged into hell where eternal death awaits them. His followers also have an attraction to murder, massacres, murder weapons, blood and skulls. The more gruesome a murder scene is, the more they like it. When people have completed Satan's tasks, he kicks them aside, drives them to commit suicide, or uses other people to kill them. Anton LaVey, the satanic priest who founded the First Church of Satan in America on the sixth day of the sixth month in 1966, and who also wrote the satanic bible, died in 1997 in a very mysterious way. During the last few months before his death he suffered from severe depression and according to certain reports, it seems likely that he committed suicide.

Demonic possession

A commonly used method in the kingdom of Satan is that of demonic possession. Satan and his fallen angels are spirits who are dependent on possessing people and working through them. They can also influence and deceive people without possessing them, but it remains their priority to gain full control over their victims. When a demon possesses a person, it completely changes

the personality of his host, controls his will and emotions, intimidates and commands him by way of telepathic orders, or even by talking to him or her in an audible voice. He tortures the person who refuses to execute his orders. The victim has frightening nightmares, is forced to display macabre pictures on the walls of his or her room and to wear black clothes. In the satanic cult are high priests who are possessed by a number of demons, each having its own name. These can be given certain assignments by the high priest.

The worship of Satan



Satan is the undisputed head of his kingdom and demands the loyalty and worship of all his subjects. Satanists must continually worship him and honour him with sacrifices. They most commonly use the name *Lord Satan* when they worship him, but they sometimes invert the name to become *Natas*. They also address him as *Lucifer* or *Leviathan*. In illustrations he is depicted as a human-like being with the head of a goat, or simply as a black goat. The symbol most frequently used in association with Satan is the inverted pentagram. The head of a goat is sometimes drawn inside the pentagram. At satanic meetings a large, encircled pentagram is drawn on the floor and black candles, which are lit by supernatural power, are placed on each of its five points. Demons that are ritually summoned appear in the middle of the pentagram.

Although Satan and his demons are indirectly honoured by millions of people who worship idols, it remains his final objective to be directly worshipped in his undisguised form as Lucifer. Together with the Antichrist, who will be the leader of the future luciferic world order, it is the will of the dragon, Satan, that he be worshipped by all people. Refusal to obey will be punishable by death:

“And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like the beast? ... Then I saw another beast ... and [he] caused as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Rev. 13:3-4, 11, 15). In the coming hour of darkness, millions of people will openly worship Satan.

5. Future Developments

We will now briefly investigate how the struggle between the kingdoms of light and darkness will develop in the future, according to the Bible. Due to its increased perversion and corruption, the world is heading inexorably toward a satanic take-over. At the height of the Antichrist’s reign of terror during the great tribulation, Satanism will be the only officially recognised and compulsory world religion. This darkest hour in human history will commence in the middle of the tribulation period, shortly after the outbreak of war in heaven between angels and demons which will result in Satan’s defeat. This will be followed by his expulsion from heaven and confinement to earth. He will realise that he has little time to accomplish his evil plans and will act with intensified anger and viciousness:

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels fought, but they did not prevail. ... So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short

time” (Rev. 12:7-9, 12).

Satan will know that he only has 3½ years to implement his plans for world domination and to compel all people to worship him. The Bible is very clear about the fact that Jesus Christ will return to earth with a heavenly army at the end of the great tribulation, placing His feet on the Mount of Olives outside the Old City of Jerusalem, defending its inhabitants and destroying the enemies attacking it (Zech. 12:8-9). Satan will muster all his forces to fight against Jesus in an attempt at preventing this divine intervention in his kingdom. This conflict is called the battle of Armageddon. Satan will use evil spirits to incite the kings of the world to send their armies to Israel and to join in this great battle against Jesus, His people Israel and His heavenly hosts (Rev. 16:13-16).

The battle of Armageddon will not last very long, as it will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Lord will quickly and effectively deal with Satan and all his deceived hordes (Rev. 19:19-20; 20:1-3).

Are You a Victim or a Conqueror?

In the light of this information on the kingdom of Satan, there are a few important questions which each of us need to answer. Some people may be shocked to learn about the plans and modus operandi of the kingdom of darkness, but nevertheless remain under the illusion that these things do not directly influence or have any relevance to themselves. The fact is that Satan does not overlook a single person on earth. As a result of the fall of mankind that was planned and precipitated by Satan, all people are born with a sinful nature from which they desperately need to be saved. Otherwise, they are lost sinners on their way to eternal damnation. Because of their sins they will share eternity with the devil and his fallen angels (Matt. 25:41). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “There is no one righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). “Unless one is born again [and gets a new nature from God] he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

The question is not whether you became involved with Satanism, have practised false religions, experimented with occult powers, or were deceived by false prophets. These are all very real dangers, and people who were lured into the evil practices of darkness urgently need to be redeemed. However, millions of people are not lost because of these things, but because of their own sins and rebellion against God, despite the fact they may have been reasonably good people by human standards. A definite decision must be taken *for* the Lord Jesus and His atoning sacrifice on your behalf and *against* your sins from which you must sincerely repent.

Although you may not have explicitly chosen to be evil-minded, neither are you responsible for having inherited a sinful nature because of Satan’s deception of Adam and Eve, our common ancestors, you nevertheless have the responsibility to do something about it. God has given each of us a free will to take independent decisions and thus to accept accountability for whatever we have decided to do. Because your sinful nature is part of your personality, which includes your free will, God holds you responsible for your own sins: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15).

The devil does exploit your evil passions and strengthen your sinful tendencies and desires; nevertheless, because of your inherently sinful nature, you mostly commit sins of your own volition without the direct intervention of Satan and his demons. You always have the option to make a decision to either yield to a temptation or to resist it.

Is your life characterised by continuous sins, or are you born again with a new nature that was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness? (Eph. 4:24). Do you live a sanctified life in the power of the Holy Spirit? If you live in sin you will go to hell just as certainly as will all the deceived victims of Satan, who yielded to his deception in different ways.

You need to examine yourself as to whether you are in the faith and are bearing fruit that befits repentance. A few straight questions may help you to conduct this examination: “Sir, do you practise a dead form of godliness without a clear testimony of being born again? Then you are

deceiving yourself. How is your conduct at work? Are you overcome by rage and do you often lose your temper? Are you honest and do you avoid corrupt behaviour? Do you refrain from cursing, participation in filthy conversations and the viewing of pornographic material? How is your conduct at home? Do you love your wife and are you true to her? Do you set the right example of holiness and living a godly life for your family? Do you regularly worship the Lord and read the Bible in family and private devotions? Do you study the Bible for advice, guidance and answers to your problems? Do you read good Christian literature?"

Ladies, you need to face up to similar questions about your life and conduct, as well.

These questions will help you to determine whether you belong to the Lord Jesus or to the devil. All habitual sinners are children of the devil. Jesus said to the unsaved religious leaders of the first century: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44). When a child of God commits a sin it is a disaster in his life and he must immediately confess and forsake the sin. The rule of the Christian life is that we should *not* sin (1 John 2:1). We must resist to the point of bloodshed, in our striving against sin (Heb. 12:4).

If you are a saved person belonging to the Lord, then: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). Help others who are bound by Satan, that they may be liberated by the only Saviour of the world. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

3. Different Spiritual Environments

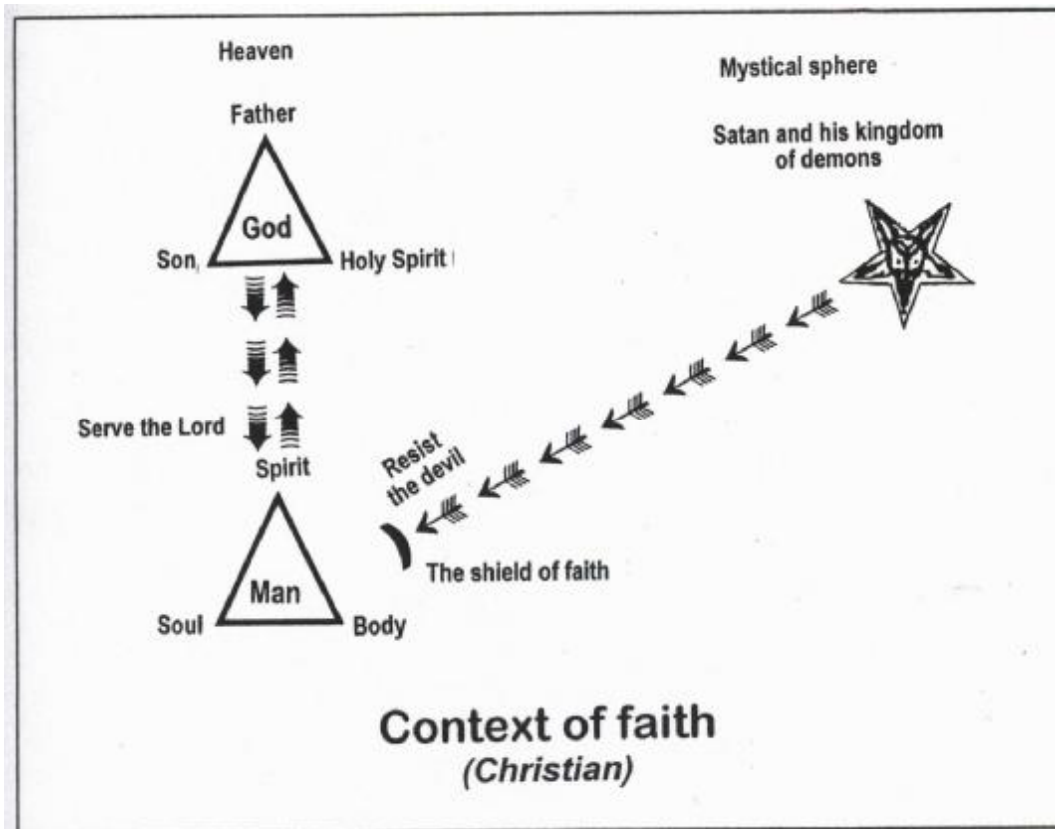
Man is a complex being comprising a spirit, a soul, and a body. Not only is he conscious of the visible and physical world but also of the invisible, spiritual world by which humanity is greatly influenced – both positively and negatively. In an effort to bring about stability in his daily life, man tries to adapt as best he can to what he regards as the positive side of the supernatural world, and to anchor his life there. Only a higher spiritual power can protect him against malicious spiritual influences.

From a biblical point of view, due to the Fall, humanity in its entirety has been spiritually blinded by the devil; consequently all people are affected by a great number of deceptive spiritual influences. Scripture offers a clear solution to this problem, however not all Christians sincerely pursue this solution to these very real dangers. As a result, the spiritual complications faced by humanity are generally greater and more serious than all their other problems, because many of these difficulties originate from the spiritual darkening of their minds.

Committed Christians live in the light of God’s presence, but ignorance results in many others being caught up in a grey area of mixed convictions. Complete spiritual blindness prevails in the deceived non-Christian world which follows a large number of idols, ancestral spirits or self-appointed spiritual leaders. Furthermore, there are a growing number of agnostics who deny the existence of the spirit world. Because of people’s diverging perceptions and experiences they determine their own context for living, with endless variations of the convictions entertained by man.

Nevertheless, there are three main existential contexts to which people adapt themselves. The first one is the biblical context of the Christian faith; the second is that of secular humanism which exalts man and denies the existence of God and Satan; and thirdly there is the context of non-Christian religions which originated from the dark world of mysticism.

The Christian context



God created humans in His own image of holiness, but also gave them a free will which would allow them to voluntarily obey and love Him or, if influenced otherwise, to disobey, disregard,

and even reject Him. Consequential to the devil's successful deception of humanity's founding father and mother, moral perversion and spiritual darkening of the mind set in and became part of the fallen, human nature which has been transmitted to all their descendants (Rom. 5:12).

It is from this fallen state that the Lord has saved us: "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1-2).

Even those who repent and come over from Satan's darkness into God's wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9), still have to overcome their old, sinful nature with its perverted lusts (Gal. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24), and have to continue to uncompromisingly contend with Satan's attacks and temptations. It is of the utmost importance that we put on the whole armour of God, so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

A Christian has a highly polarised experience of the reality of his existence, which explains his distinctly antithetic worldview from which the two opposite poles of good and evil should be clearly evident. In the Christian worldview, these two concepts are personified and related to God and Satan, who both have the capacity to influence and motivate people towards a particular end. The way in which we conduct our lives will reflect our basic spiritual disposition as well as the measure according to which we respond to these opposite influences.

A born again child of the Lord finds himself both in a spiritual as well as a secular (worldly) milieu. He has been spiritually quickened and the Lord dwells in his heart by means of the Holy Spirit (John 14:23). He lives by faith and continually strives to expand the kingdom of heaven. Because his new life is in conflict with the principles of the depraved world in which he lives, he has to put off his old nature by identifying completely with the cross of Christ on which the world has been crucified to him and him to the world (Luke 9:23; Gal. 6:14).

A Christian should actively contend against demonic influences which are unleashed against him from a mystical, supernatural sphere (Eph. 6:12). He must continuously guard against the possibility of sin regaining its influence upon him, and for this purpose there are spiritual weapons which have been placed at his disposal: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

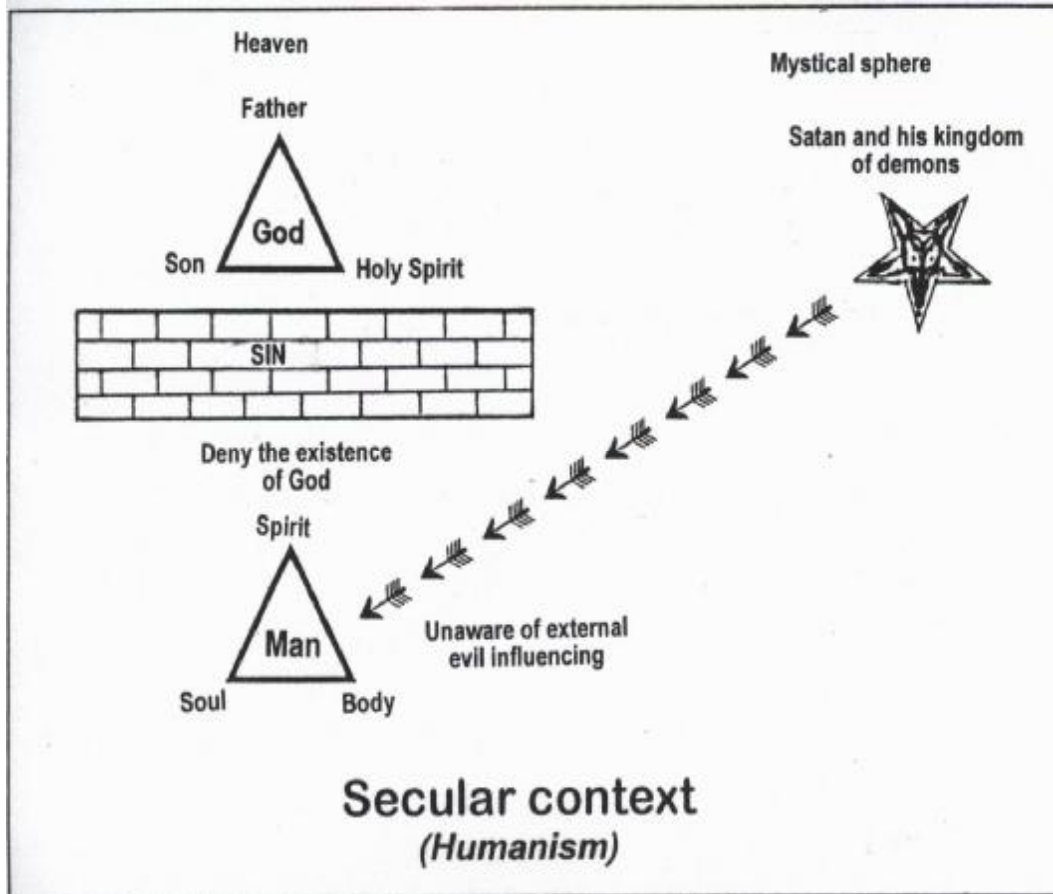
It is critically important for every believer to give priority to the spiritual dimension of his life, and to ensure that he maintains a strong bond with the Lord. He is a sojourner and a pilgrim in a depraved world, one who is *in* the world but not *of* the world. The sincerity of the commitment and dedication shown by Christians will manifest in the quality of their lives. Some of them are compromising and allow themselves extensive carnal liberties, while others pursue higher spiritual standards of holiness.

A Christian can restrict the spiritual dimension of his life by neglecting his relationship with the Lord and underestimating the struggle against the world, against sin and his old nature, and over time develop the negative symptoms of spiritual immaturity (1 Cor. 3:1-3). This disposition will render him unfit for spiritual service, cloud his perspective and dull his and discernment ability. Sin and spiritual foolishness are the consequences of this state of mind, which leads to a checkmate situation of spiritual unfruitfulness (Gal. 5:17).

However, we are challenged to avert a situation of this nature, to live pure and holy lives before the Lord and to bear fruit which is consistent with repentance. The day will come when our lives will be weighed to determine how many of our works have value for eternity (1 Cor. 3:8-15). Awards will be given solely for works of this nature.

We should determine the spiritual context and priorities in our lives in such a way that we can continue to pursue the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). Do you devote enough attention to the unseen things of God's kingdom which have eternal value? (2 Cor. 4:18).

The secular, humanistic context



The second broad context is that of the secular humanist. According to this approach, all matters, including those of religious nature – and only if he recognises its value in everyday life – should be man-centred and aimed at the liberation and development of humanity. God plays no role in his life, and sinful acts are merely regarded as issues arising from aberrant human behaviour.

In its most extreme form, secular humanism denies the existence of God, as well as the existence of a devil and hell. Man becomes his own god who determines his destiny without any intervention by a higher deity. From a biblical perspective, such a person is without God and without hope in the world (Eph. 2:12). As an existentialist who denies the supernatural dimension, he only lives for the things pertaining to this world. The context of his existence is dominated by matters which seem to be of the greatest importance to him at any given moment. Such matters may be of political, social, economic or moral nature.

Despite their agnosticism, humanists often use churches to advance their cause, provided those churches proclaim a social gospel based on human needs without emphasising supernatural things too strongly. According to them matters such as rebirth, sanctification, prayer and a personal relationship with the Lord should not be emphasised or enforced. The church should be nothing more than a moral advocate for human rights, dedicated to uplifting the oppressed and the poor. Primarily, it should be social injustice (strained relations between people) which is addressed, rather than focusing on sin (a strained relationship with God).

Theologians at the helm of such churches readily comply with this approach and they soon join ecumenical bodies which pursue visible multireligious unity, at the expense of dogmatic purity on spiritual matters. Membership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its affiliated bodies, as well as ties with the Vatican, the Eastern and African religions, are all part of the ecumenical process.

The spiritual shallowness and compromise made by these theologians and pastors is very

obvious. Soon, they no longer regard the Bible as the inspired Word of God and consequently they disregard the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, question the virgin birth and deity of the Lord Jesus and reject being born again as the requirement for entrance into the kingdom of God. The importance of religion is downplayed to the level of moral and ethical matters, while the Bible is considered to be merely a collection of mythological accounts. Ultimately, the intellect of man is regarded as his most important attribute which will enable him to secure his own salvation. That is in essence, the doctrine of humanistic self-justification.

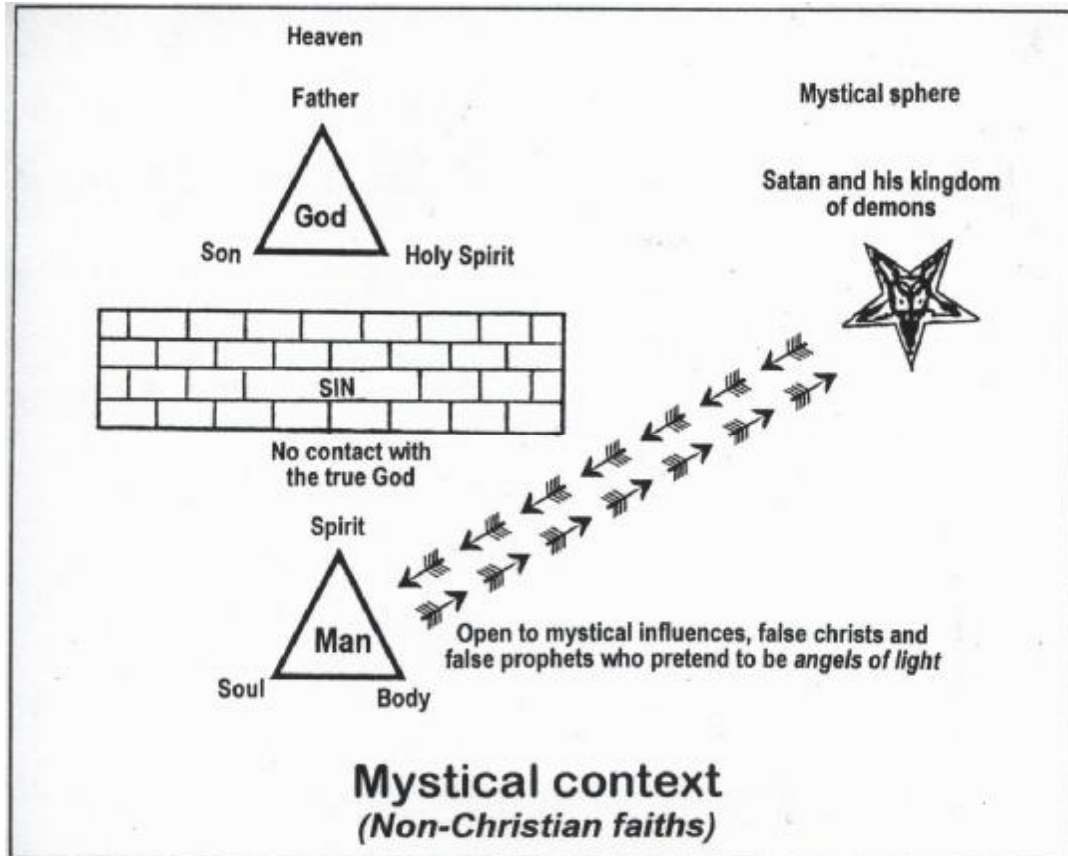
The devil is delighted with the ideology of secular humanism. He is not in the least perturbed by the fact that people deny his existence, as long as they simultaneously deny God. Effectively, this assured the devil control of fallen man's nature, allowing him to offer all sorts of secular ideas to man and to stimulate man's immoral carnal lusts. Sinful lusts for money, pride, self-conceit, liquor, and disorderly sexuality are encouraged with the intent of inducing people to enjoy unbridled liberties.

A new development occurring in the camp of secular humanists is that of cosmic humanism. Under the banners of the New Age Movement, humanistic psychology, parapsychology, the Human Potential Movement, psychic techniques such as mind over matter, transcendental meditation, alternative healing, positive thinking, visualisation, extra-sensory perception, clairvoyance, occult prophesying, and many others, cosmic powers are harnessed to solve personal problems and enhance people's quality of life. People use these techniques to render themselves little gods who are able to discover and develop their full potential and thereby escape the limitations of their past.

In this way, the secular context is merged with the mystical context, which finally prepares deceived humanity to accept and follow the *cosmic Christ* (the Antichrist) when he appears on the scene to unite all religions.

Our command is to resist the move towards the dark world of mysticism and the rise of the cosmic Christ, while observing a purely biblical worldview, thereby fulfilling our calling to be the salt of this depraved earth. People who do not turn to Christ as their refuge are walking in darkness and are in great danger. If they persist in their wrong ways they will receive strong delusion to believe Satan's lies (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

The Mystical context



The third general context is that of the false religions which all originated in the occult sphere of mysticism. Through them, Satan advances the interests of his kingdom on earth, and purposefully prepares humanity to accept, worship and follow him and the false, end-time Christ (the Antichrist).

In the non-Christian religions, people are estranged from the true God because their unpardoned sins form a wall of separation between Him and them (Isa. 59:2). They are spiritually dead and resort to false religions in an effort to appease the spiritual hunger of their souls. However, the experiences they have and the rituals they perform have nothing to do with God, having emerged from the grey world of mysticism.

Satan and his empire of demons are active in all the false religions, regardless of the form of a particular faith or the names of the idols or spirits that are worshipped. False religions should, therefore, not be viewed as illusions which should only be attributed to the free flights of people's imagination. Demonic powers are at work behind the idols that are worshipped and honoured. The overt symbols are merely the camouflage used by demons, and for that reason Christians should have nothing to do with them. Paul is very clear about this danger:

"What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons" (1 Cor. 10:19-20).

In the mystical faiths there is no clear distinction between the natural and supernatural spheres. Everything merges into a bigger whole, and most rituals or objects are regarded as imbued with mystical powers. Spiritual influences and magical powers are very much a part of everyday life. All diseases, accidents and extraordinary events, as well as success stories and natural phenomena, are viewed as manifestations of the magically and spiritually charged world in which we live. People are faced with the big challenge of manipulating these powers, to use them to their advantage, and also to safeguard themselves against the harmful influences of malevolent magic, or witchcraft, by using protective amulets and other magical means.

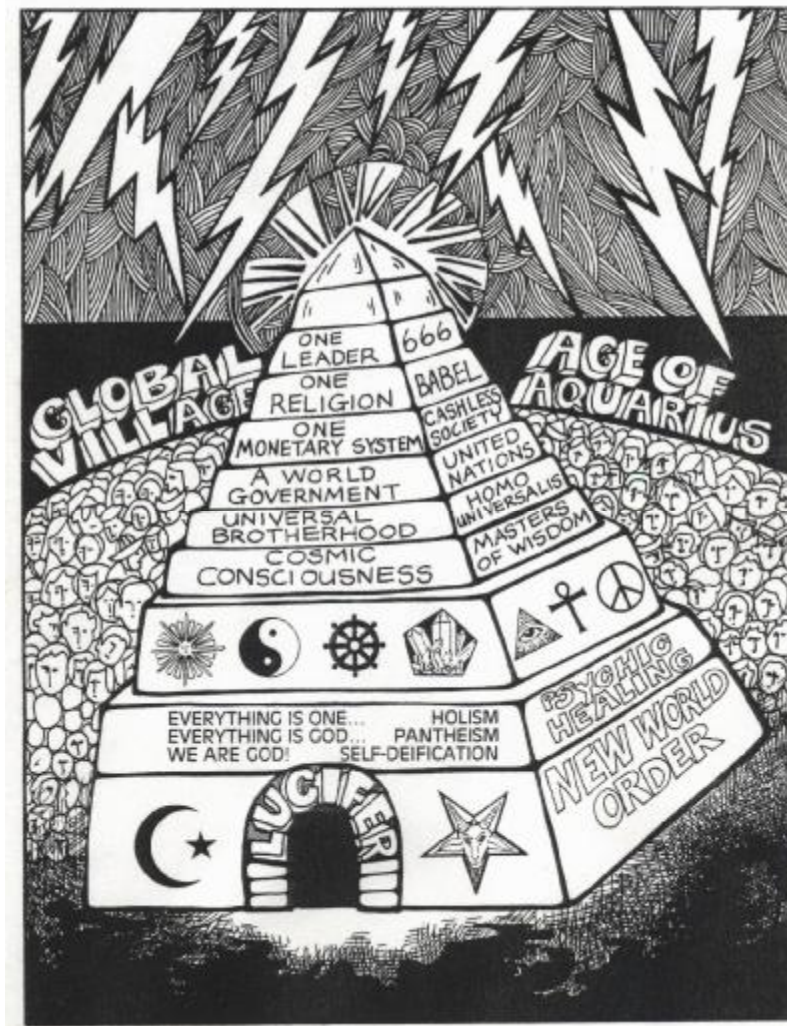
Cultures in which a mystical worldview is entertained are fatalistic and stagnant. The principle of natural cause and effect is only recognised to a very limited degree, since most events are ascribed to supernatural causes. In cases of disease, preference is given to divination by a magician or traditional healer, as well as the use of magical therapy, rather than resorting to scientific diagnoses and the use of modern medicine. Even when the latter methods are followed, they are simply regarded as supplementary to traditional methods.

A lack of interest in research and the systematic gathering and processing of empirical knowledge on a wide range of subjects accounts for the slow increase in knowledge, the absence of an effective infrastructure for education and training, the lack of technological progress, and the fact that people become even more dependant on intervention by supernatural powers. Africa is firmly in the grip of the predominantly mystical belief system which has controlled most of its inhabitants for thousands of years, thus impeding sustained development.

The Western world also passed through its Dark Middle Ages when superstition and allegiance to a mystical world of magical powers largely stifled any initiative for research and development. Plato's unbiblical and poorly defined belief in supernatural powers opened the door widely to mysticism in Europe, which resulted in many of the negative consequences mentioned above.

It was not until the Church Reformation, and particularly the great Christian revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries, that large numbers of people in Europe were delivered from their mystical superstitions. They were spiritually and intellectually liberated, became enlightened in their minds and came to understand correctly the biblical reason for them having been created as human beings. They were delivered from Satan's mystical, supernatural kingdom when they entered into the right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. From this perspective they were able to correctly understand the earth and its natural laws, and to investigate it further. They were thus enabled to assert authority over the natural creation and to have dominion over it (in keeping with the command of Genesis 1:28 to develop cultural institutions).

The millions of mystically orientated people who are still bent on supernatural signs and wonders will spontaneously accept and follow the Antichrist, since his coming will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thess. 2:9-10). Virtually all people will eventually, to their own downfall, allow themselves to be deceived by the satanic triumvirate who will make ample use of demons to mislead their victims (Rev. 16:13-14, 16).



It should be clearly stated at this point, that the mystical influences of Satan and his kingdom are not confined exclusively to the non-Christian religions. There are numerous nominally Christian churches and movements that have been deceived by the enemy in exactly the same way. Because of their deluded minds and spiritual bankruptcy, these people were not aware of the impending danger when the devil infiltrated their fellowships like an angel of light to plant his false prophets among them (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Matt. 7:21-23). In their deceived state they, in turn, are preparing the way for the coming Antichrist through the practice of false signs and wonders.

Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of all the false religions (Rev. 17:5), is grounded in the dark, mystical world of Satan, and is now engaged in establishing an ecumenical parental organisation offering a home to all apostates on earth. Among these are the apostatised, deformed "Christian" churches eager to join hands with the non-Christian world because they have become estranged from the true Christ of the Bible.

The new world order

Many people are strongly convinced that a new world order of international unity and harmony among all faiths and political ideologies will soon materialise. A precondition is that all governments need to accept the idea of a world government and place themselves under its authority. In accordance with this, the ecumenical movement must promote a mystical brotherhood among all faiths.

For this to take place, it is imperative that evangelical Christianity abandon its uncompromising biblical views and join hands with the non-Christian religions, or be willing to face the risk of persecution. The mystical worldview of the New Age Movement, referred to as cosmic holism, must be accepted as the foundation for co-operation and unification by all concerned. Secular

humanism's discovery of the human's inherent psychic (or cosmic) powers, brought about by the Human Potential Movement, is already guiding the movement in a mystical direction by reforming itself towards *cosmic humanism*.

Once the united mystical movement has firmly established itself, and has incorporated the deceived Christian churches by means of a false revival of mystical powers, the time will be ripe for the revelation of the Antichrist. He will be the messiah of the entire deceived world, and together with Satan, will be worshipped by all the subjects of his global empire (Rev. 13:4).

It is of the utmost importance that we should be mindful of Satan's alternative kingdom, as all people are involved in a battle of life and death against this evil kingdom.

4. Demonic Attacks on Believers' Faith

Due to the nature of the bond of faith which exists between God and true Christians, it will be attacked by the enemy of our souls, whose intent it is to weaken or even destroy it, and ultimately to replace it with unbelief, a false faith or superstition. Faith should, therefore, be clearly defined to enable us to successfully defend it against all threats. It is evident from the history of humanity up to the present, that the great majority of all people have completely underestimated the severity of this battle.

Biblical faith refers to the essential spiritual bond or relationship between a saved person and God: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). If we truly believe in God we should recognise and accept Him for who He is, i.e. the Almighty, Triune God who created everything and who, in His omnipotence, sustains His creation. We should also accept the fact that we are sinful beings who can only be forgiven and renewed by His grace through faith. We must have a saving faith in God, as eternal life is only imparted to those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, who atoned for our sins. Having accepted Christ as Saviour, our faith in the Lord must be strengthened daily by abiding in Him, walking in the Spirit and prayerfully studying His Word.

Simply believing, intellectually, that God exists and that His Son, Christ Jesus, is the Saviour of the world, will be of no avail if our acceptance of this fact neither affects us spiritually nor changes our lives. The devils also believe in the existence of God and they tremble (Jas. 2:19). We must have a living faith through which we accept, honour and serve Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Through our faith in Him we commit ourselves to honour and serve God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. That is true faith. All those who do not practise faith in this manner are described as unbelievers whose minds have been blinded by the false god of this age – Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). Even those who believe in idols are, from God's point of view, regarded as infidels because they do not believe in the true God and are therefore deceived.

Unbelief is depicted by the rejection of the Triune God's position as Supreme Ruler and Saviour. God's biggest adversary is Satan, who originally, as the beautiful angel Lucifer, held an illustrious position in heaven. He became arrogant and tried to exalt himself above God in order to become the ruler of the universe in God's stead. In so doing his faith in God as the Supreme Ruler was destroyed and he became God's enemy. Through his actions the faith of a third of the angels in heaven was also destroyed, thereby transforming them into blasphemers and adversaries of God. They became part of Lucifer's renegade kingdom and wilfully participated in his rebellion against God. The same happens to all people who wilfully reject God.

With all his might, Satan strives to prevent fallen humanity from restoring their broken relationship with God through repentance and faith. Wherever relationships established in faith exist between God and His people he relentlessly attacks the faith of these believers. Satan primarily makes use of spiritual deception as well as negative experiences aimed at undermining, weakening and even destroying people's faith in God. He has achieved such astounding success with these efforts that all dispensations in human history have ended in large-scale apostasy. These rebellious situations gave rise to dramatic interventions by the Lord, during which the followers of Satan were judged, while new phases were introduced in the progressive unfolding of God's plan for humanity.

According to biblical prophecies, future dispensations will also end in apostasy or unbelief among the majority of mankind, due to the actions of Satan. The seven dispensations are the following, which offer a clear dispensational framework for the understanding of God's actions towards man, as well as explanation for the periods of intensified actions by the devil:

1. The dispensation of innocence in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good and evil. They walked in the garden, had a trusting and personal relationship with God and believed what He had told them. With great cunning Satan deceived Adam and Eve into rebelling against God by disobeying Him. He disguised himself as a snake and sowed the seeds of unbelief in their hearts. God had commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil, warning them that they would surely die if they did (Gen. 2:17). Satan deceived Eve by alleging that she and Adam would not die if they ate of the fruit but instead would become all-knowing and immortal like God (Gen. 3:4-5). These are the same lies still being proclaimed today by the New Age Movement: that humans can discover their own divinity, and that through reincarnation they will become immortal and always return to the land of the living.

Satan's lies had far-reaching consequences when Adam and Eve's relationship of faith in God, who is the giver of life, was broken. They immediately died spiritually and physically they became mere mortal beings. Instead of being obedient to God they became subservient to a foreign god – the devil. By these means they acquired a fallen nature which was also inherited by all their descendants (Rom. 5:12). This original sin accounts for the fact that all people are born as sinners. If they are not regenerated by Christ they remain under the control of the god of this age, thereby heading for eternal death (Rom. 5:13-19). In their fallen condition the unregenerate remain under the judgement of God.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden because of their unbelief, and the dispensation of innocence ended in a great tragedy for all of humanity.

2. The dispensation of conscience. God enabled fallen humanity to distinguish between good and evil through their conscience. They could communicate with God through prayers and sacrifices, thereby establishing a relationship with Him. They had the ability to make moral choices between good and evil lifestyles. The Lord said to Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

However, the inclination to sin got the upper hand. All people, with the exception of Noah and his family, being the one and only exception, degenerated into a lifestyle of total infidelity and apostasy: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). People were so utterly corrupt that they became perpetual enemies of God, evoking His anger. Scoffing at prophetic warnings through Noah's preaching they hardened their evil hearts even further.

The unbelief and moral depravity with which this dispensation ended under the direct influence of Satan, gave rise to a major intervention by God in which He poured out His wrath upon the wicked and destroyed all of them: "And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark" (Gen. 6:13-14). Even at this early stage of human history it became obvious that God does not judge the righteous with the wicked, as Noah and his family escaped the judgements.

3. The dispensation of human government after the Flood. This stage of human history was characterised by the forming of peoples with independent rulers. They had the choice whether to serve God or not. By the wrong exercising of that choice they all developed into pagan nations who worshipped idols, which served as evidence that they were all deceived by Satan. By building the tower of Babel they endeavoured to establish a heathen world government under the leadership of a king who deified himself. God defeated their effort by introducing the confusion of languages. Nevertheless, after this event the different peoples (or nations) continued with their idolatry and unbelief in the true God.

The Lord revealed Himself amidst this spiritually dark situation by calling a special people out from among the heathen nations or Himself, who were to be a holy and separated people. They were called *Israel*. Unfortunately they did not live up to their spiritual calling. During a severe drought they were forced to move to Egypt where they apostatised and became the slaves of the heathen Egyptians. There remained not a single group of people anywhere on earth who still believed in God and served Him – they were all followers of the god of this world.

4. The dispensation of the law. The Lord introduced a new dispensation by delivering Israel from Egypt so that they could serve Him as a holy and independent people in the Promised Land. He gave them His law and also guided, strengthened and blessed them through the priestly service in the tabernacle. He gave clear instructions to Israel not to associate with

heathen nations considering that they would spiritually defile themselves with the idolatry of those nations.

Tragically, Israel's long history in the Old Testament was characterised mainly by apostasy, disobedience to the law, unbelief in the true God, and the worshipping of idols. God often surrendered them to their enemies, and at one stage allowed them to be taken captive by the Babylonians for 70 years. Despite all the chastising, Israel often backslid into sin and unbelief; consequently they rejected and even killed some of God's prophets. Because of their hardened hearts God sent no further prophets to them during the long period of 400 years after Malachi. The Chosen People of God had lapsed into spiritual darkness and unbelief, and together with all the inhabitants of the rest of the world they were victims of "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2).

5. The dispensation of the church. With the birth of the Messiah a great light came to shine upon a people who walked in darkness. "That was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:9-11). With the coming of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament a major revelation of God and His kingdom occurred. Many people came to faith in Christ through the preaching of the gospel and the Holy Spirit's work of convicting people of their sin. Because of Israel's unbelief in the Messiah, the great commission was given to the apostles and believers who followed them, to preach the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. In this way the worldwide church of Christ was established.

The extended revelation of God's kingdom in the New Testament coincided with increased knowledge of Satan and his kingdom. The struggle between these two kingdoms took on a new dimension as the devil strives with every effort to prevent people from having faith in Christ as their Saviour. The faith of those who have already accepted Christ is severely attacked in an effort to corrupt, weaken or even destroy it. Because of this intensified battle, active resistance against Satan and his subversive works is called for.

Many of the early believers did not guard against deception as they should have done, and paid the price for their indiscretion. Paul said to the Corinthians, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you put up with it well" (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

The Galatians also deviated from true faith by trying to combine law and grace. Besides having faith in Christ they also subjected themselves to the law by continuing to observe the Jewish Sabbath and by having themselves circumcised. Paul said, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). He strongly denounced all efforts aimed at proclaiming false gospels, declaring those who did so as being accursed (Gal. 1:8).

Believers know from their own experience that the Christian faith is relentlessly attacked by Satan. If they don't resist the devil these demonic attacks can have devastating effects on their spiritual lives. Paul admonished Timothy to have "faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:19).

Because of large-scale deception the early Christian church became unfaithful to the Lord, adhering to various false doctrines (cf. Rev. 2 & 3). The light of the gospel was extinguished and spiritual darkness set in, resulting in the thousand year period known as the Dark Ages. This period (the 6th to the 16th centuries) is often referred to as "Satan's millennium" as it was characterised by the widespread spiritual deception perpetuated by the Vatican. During this time there were only small groups of persecuted evangelical Christians, e.g. the Waldenses in Italy, who took refuge in caves high up in the mountains from the so-called 'holy armies' of the pope.

After the Church Reformation in the 16th century many of the Protestant churches continued to follow the Roman Catholic idea of a state church with powers to persecute and even execute

heretics. The true Christians (e.g. the Anabaptists) also suffered as a result of this persecution. It was only in the 18th and 19th centuries that great revivals took place in which missionaries came forward to preach the gospel throughout the world. The 20th century was once again a time of widespread falling away in the world – not only because of materialism and the human-centred ideologies of socialism and humanism, but also due to the proclaiming of false religious doctrines. The falling away gained momentum and today, early in the 21st century, it is taking on unprecedented proportions. Some of the false teachings, such as those promoted by the Word of Faith Movement, are done in the name of the Holy Spirit but are accompanied by strange manifestations falsely ascribed to the Holy Spirit. It is in view of this kind of deception that the Holy Spirit Himself warns against end-time falling away as being part of the devil's programme to gain full control over people: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

Doctrinal errors inevitably give rise to apostatising due to their giving rise to doubts about the gospel message, and the result of this phenomenon is reversion to a life of sin. Paul sternly confronted backslidden "brethren" among first century Messianic Jews concerning this problem: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today', lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13). Such people do not "hold the beginning of [their] confidence steadfast to the end" (Heb. 3:14).

When members of a congregation backslide for whatever reason, they become estranged from Jesus Christ and His love. To such congregations He says, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent" (Rev. 2:4-5). The Lord Jesus also warned His first disciples against backsliding: "Abide in Me, and I in you... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:4, 6).

In light of the widespread falling away which the Bible predicts for the last days it is obvious that the world is heading for a situation similar to those which occurred at the end of previous dispensations. The Lord Jesus warned that the time shortly before His second coming would be like the times of Noah and Lot (Luke 17:26-30). During those times the true believers were such a small minority that they could not exert any influence on the character of society and were unable to curb the proliferation of evil. The Lord then intervened and removed the believers to a place of safety before judging the wicked.

We are in a similar situation today as the dwindling number of evangelical believers can no longer ensure the observance of Christian principles by society. Christian constitutions, Christian education, Christian morality, and the biblical administration of justice with relevant penalties for criminals, are all institutions which are disappearing from our society. These are replaced by immoral, lawless, corrupt, violent and utterly depraved institutions and lifestyles which, being worse than even those in the times of Noah and Lot, are the worst in human history. In this instance the Lord will once again remove the small group of true believers, this time by way of the rapture, and then pour out His wrath upon the wicked during the ensuing tribulation period.

6. The dispensation of the Antichrist's rule. The Antichrist will be revealed directly after the rapture, when the dispensation of his seven-year long reign on earth will begin. At the onset of this period there will be no believers on earth, which accounts for the fact that the whole world will follow the Antichrist in amazement and also worship him (Rev. 13:3-4). Soon after his revelation though, 144 000 Jews will be saved, and through their testimony many other people from all nations will believe in Christ as their Saviour (Rev. 7). The Antichrist will be empowered by Satan to impose the kingdom of darkness upon all people. Halfway through the tribulation he will declare himself to be God and order the execution of all who refuse to accept his number and to worship him (Rev. 13:15; 20:4). According to Revelation 6:9-11, Christians will die as martyrs during this time. It was in reference to this situation that the Lord Jesus asked: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Not only will this dispensation end in world-wide apostasy, but also in a demonic effort to kill the

true Christ at His second coming. Satan knows that Christ will return to earth after the seven year tribulation when He will set His feet on the Mount of Olives. Demons will be sent out to mobilise all nations for this confrontation (Rev. 16:13-16). Their main objective with the mustering of these forces will be to fight against Christ and His heavenly army, but these rebels will all be destroyed (Rev. 19:19-20).

7. Dispensation of the Millennium. Jesus Christ will return to the earth to judge His enemies who will be gathered against Him under the leadership of the Antichrist and the false prophet, and also to bind Satan and throw him into a bottomless pit where he will remain for 1 000 years (Rev. 19:19–20:3). At that time He will save the remnant of Israel and the nations as they will have bitter remorse for their sins of not having believed in Him as the Saviour of the world: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29-30; cf. Zech. 12:10-11).

The Lord Jesus will rule the world from the restored throne of David in Jerusalem (Acts 15:16-17; Rev. 19:15). His saints will share in His government by ruling as kings with Him (Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4). The saved Israel will be the Lord’s special witnesses who will evangelise the world during this dispensation (Isa. 27:6). They will be highly regarded by all nations (Zech. 8:23). Although the first generation of people after Christ’s return will all be saved, their children will still be born with sinful natures and will therefore have to hear the gospel in order to be saved.

As incredible and unlikely as it may seem, in course of time a mere form of godliness will set in during the Millennium, once again giving rise to widespread unbelief. This will be the direct consequence of people not being truly born again and not having crucifying their old sinful nature. The devil as the deceiver of the world (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:3), together with all his evil spirits will not be there to actively deceive people into committing active deeds of rebellion against God. Everyone will enjoy the advantages and benefits of that special time in world history. Nevertheless they will still be potential victims of the devil when he is unbound and is given the opportunity to deceive them.

When Satan is released from the pit after 1 000 years to once more tempt humanity into revealing the hidden thoughts and desires in their hearts, the majority will immediately become victims of his deceit and wilfully participate in the last big rebellion against God and His kingdom: “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:7-10).

Only a minority: All the examples of apostatising during the different dispensations throughout the ages provide clear evidence that true believers have always been a small minority. Even today there are also many people who desire to be on the narrow way but who simply do not succeed to enter through the narrow gate. The Lord Jesus said, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24). So many people who wish to become Christians are not really prepared to repent and break with their sins. It is impossible to enter through the narrow gate with a baggage of unconfessed sins.

Confess and forsake all your sins, for then you will be able to enter through the gate of true repentance. After having done so you must also trust the Lord for a further work of grace, which is sanctification. This will enable you to persevere on the way of the Lord to the end and to be of service in His kingdom. The Lord does not only want to make us believers with a testimony of salvation, but also to be effective disciples in His kingdom. To this end you need to be built up in your most holy faith (Jude v.20). Then and then alone will you remain standing and be victorious while fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

In Jude 1:3 we are exhorted “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” The saints are those people who turn from the depraved world to God, enter into a relationship of faith with Him, accept His forgiveness and deliverance, and from then on walk in His way of righteousness. Satan fiercely attacks all believers – not only in their personal lives but also in their efforts to convince others to come over from the kingdom of darkness to the Lord’s miraculous light. These attacks have continued throughout the ages and are intensified in the end-time because the devil knows that only true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will keep people from accepting and worshipping the Antichrist as universal messiah. We must resist these attacks while earnestly contending for a biblical faith in the midst of the great falling away. Read the account of Old Testament heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, who achieved great things for God’s kingdom because they stood firm in their convictions and were also prepared to suffer for the truth. Never even consider joining the ranks of the deceived compromisers of our time by abandoning the struggle and departing from the faith.

Stand firm in the Lord in an apostate, God-rejecting world where we are called to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Do not focus on the troubled waters through which you have to navigate your way, but keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3). We should be motivated and encouraged in our faith by the sure promise of our eternal destiny.

The end-time appearance of the Antichrist as the foremost infidel and man of sin, and the total control which will be exercised by him, will make it impossible for true Christians to peacefully co-exist with him on earth during his reign. At that time we will be taken away by the Lord, only to return again later with Christ when the Antichrist and his powers will be destroyed in the battle of Armageddon. Satan will then be deprived of his position of power and authority on earth, and for the first time in the history of humanity there will be peace on earth.

5. Slaves of Sin

Physical slavery is as real today as it was in the past, and according to Wikipedia (2012b) an estimated 25 million people worldwide are involved with this practice. Most of them are poor people in Asia who render slave labour to rich people because they are not able to settle their family debt. Members of these families are forced to work a few days per week as slaves for money-lenders – often in the fields of land owners. Furthermore, forced child labour is encountered in certain poor countries, while an increasing number of children and women are abducted by crime syndicates and used as slaves in the sex trade.

However, there is another, more abstract form of slavery by serving an invisible enemy, to which most people are subjected for their entire life, and that is spiritual and moral slavery. All people are faced by this problem, since all are slaves of sin due to the fallen nature we have inherited from Adam. Sin is the consequence of alienation from God, and that accounts for the spiritual and moral depravity of mankind. The Fall has rendered humanity despicable in the eyes of God (Gen. 6:5-6). Paul says: "... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Among the natural, unsaved people there is no one on earth who is righteous: "They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one" (Ps. 14:3; Rom. 3:10).

All people are slaves of sin through heredity and also by virtue of their own sinful deeds, both of which render proof of their sinful nature. "Jesus answered them, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34; the Greek word *doulos* means 'servant' or 'slave'). Every person makes the choice whether he wishes to be a slave of sin or a slave of Christ's righteousness: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? (Rom. 6:16).

Slavery can take on many different forms. Spiritual and moral slavery is the result of a false religion or immoral habit having gained control over one's life. Slavery determines your character, personality and behaviour, and in many respects accounts for who you are – a sinner of one type or another. In short, it deprives you of your freedom to be a different person from the one you are forced to be because of your enslavement, and often causes you to sink away into a quagmire of sin and unrighteousness.

All lost people are subject to different forms of slavery to sin, and that also includes unsaved pastors. Peter refers to false prophets who promise liberty to people while they, themselves, have not yet been delivered from their sins: "They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him" (2 Pet. 2:19; NIV).

The Lord made man to be an independent being who is spiritually and morally accountable only to His Maker. Within this relationship he should use his free will to pursue exemplary standards of holiness and creativity. Any other form of control which a person allows over his life, and which is at variance with God's commands for his life, has detrimental consequences and gives rise to slavery of some sort. In this way people become religious and moral slaves of Satan, who is the big enemy and deceiver of humanity. He wants as many slaves as possible to serve him.

Religious slavery

Millions of people become the slaves of false religions, which are all products of Satan's deception. They do not realise that they are actually slaves of the devil when they bring sacrifices to their false gods and idols, but that is exactly what they do. The *Amplified Bible* offers the following exegetical translation of a statement by Paul:

"What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is [intrinsically changed by the fact and amounts to] anything *or* that an idol itself is a [living] thing? No, I am suggesting that what the pagans sacrifice they offer [in effect] to demons – to evil spiritual powers – and not to God [at all]. I do not want you to fellowship *and* be partners with diabolical spirits. ... You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the demons' table" (1 Cor. 10:19-21; AB).

By adhering to false religions, many people are unwittingly given over to the control of Satan and are consequently at his service to fulfil his evil plans and do his dirty work. In this way they become propagandists for their evil master who manipulates and incites them to spread his lies and deceive other people on his behalf.

Spiritual slavery can take on different forms and drive people to great extremes, e.g. the waging of so-called “holy wars” in which perceived “infidels” are often killed in the most gruesome way to satisfy the desires of a particular god or idol. Once the devil has fully enslaved people he often drives them to the point of self-destruction. Even if he does not turn them into extremists, his basic purpose with false religions is the spiritual blinding of his victims in order to prevent them from accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ when they encounter it: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age [Satan] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

The minds of religious slaves are blinded by Satan, and they are completely dominated by the idols which they worship. In Africa, the belief in ancestral spirits and witchcraft has such a stranglehold on certain large groups of people that they will do anything that the demons, in the guise of their ancestors, require them to do. The Lord Jesus has come to deliver people from this intimidating form of slavery.

Unfortunately, spiritual slavery is not always discontinued when people repent from pagan religions to Christianity, since many of them subsequently become the slaves of false forms of the Christian religion. They become adherents to any of a large number of sects and then set out to defend their distorted doctrines against the truth of the Word, by all means at their disposal. Many of them make great sacrifices, whether they be financial or by tolerating scorn and rejection, while they proclaim and live according to their false doctrines.

Among deceived Christians are those who do not live under the grace and liberty of Christ, but under the law. In their attempts to observe Old Testament laws, particularly those pertaining to the Sabbath, they render themselves slaves of a system which has no value for salvation. They have no spiritual freedom because they are slaves of the law. Paul says:

“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. ... For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. ... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal. 2:21; 3:10-13).

Are you the slave of a legalistic religion which cannot bring you one step closer to the kingdom of heaven? If so, then come to the cross for deliverance and stand firmly in the liberty through which Christ Jesus has set us free. Within the framework of God’s love we have the freedom to express ourselves and live our lives to the full without behaving dishonourably towards the Lord or acting to the detriment of other people. To be able to live in this way our hearts should be cleansed and filled with the love of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

Moral slavery

The spiritual slavery of fallen humanity is also accompanied by moral slavery. Human beings have five senses through which they are exposed to influences from the depraved world, and this presents them with a real problem as they have a sinful nature which is inclined to evil: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5). Human beings are inherently depraved and will, by their very nature and from the core of their innermost being, entertain evil thoughts which have the potential to contaminate and destroy their lives.

The Lord Jesus said: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:21-23). It is part of his fallen nature to consider and to do such things. “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it

gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15).

The devil encourages the process of decadence and decline towards self-destruction, and to this end he provides temptations, thereby offering people opportunities to give expression to their sinful and covetous lusts. If you do not reject these sinful thoughts and ask the Lord to give you a pure heart, they will become established in your spirit and mind. You will continuously reflect on them and they will make their presence felt by influencing your personality, values and behaviour. Sins soon become strongholds for evil in your life, reducing you to a powerless slave of sin. Your dependence gradually increases until you become conscious of the call of sin almost every moment of the day, and will have no power to resist its enticement – at least not by your own strength.

Idolatry: Once a particular sin has gained extensive control over a person, it becomes a form of idolatry to him. He bows down to that idol and serves it almost day and night. Paul says: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them” (Col. 3:5-7). In a true Christian’s life, sins like these belong to the past – they should be discontinued.

Evil dispositions and immoral acts are the characteristics of the false god of this world, Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), which is why we become implicated in idolatry when we allow sin to become established in our hearts and determine the direction of our lives: “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there” (Jas. 3:14-16). When we are saved we are delivered from slavery to sin, and therefore also from spiritual and moral idolatry.

Sexual sins: The first three sins which the Lord Jesus mentions in Mark 7:21-23 are evil thoughts, adulteries, and fornications. The minds of many people are completely filled with unclean thoughts, which are often stimulated by exposure to pornography as well as the conducting of vile conversations. Access to internet pornography is playing an increasing role, as well as pornographic images which can be instantly transmitted by cell phones. These things give rise to improper sexual relations which very soon become a way of life, and thus a form of immoral slavery to sin.

Economic sins: One of the moral sins which may lead to slavery and idolatry in the lives of many people is the love of money. This idol is known as mammon: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). The frantic pursuit of money has destructive consequences in a person’s life: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9).

Gambling is one of the activities through which mammon ensnares many people, dominates their thoughts, and eventually destroys their lives and financial assets. Many people are strongly enslaved by this practice and risk everything in the hope of gaining instant wealth. Other sins which are also associated with money are corruption, theft and bribery. To many of the thieves it becomes such an obsession to continue to steal that they eventually become kleptomaniacs. There are an increasing number of governments worldwide that are described as “kleptocracies” due to the large-scale embezzlement of state funds by politicians and officials (Malan, 1998:87). Sin becomes habit-forming and soon assumes complete control of its victims.

Addiction to liquor and other drugs: A common form of addiction to sin is the use of different forms of drugs which often leads to the repetitive and continuous use of tobacco, liquor, marijuana, and a large variety of other drugs. People who continually use substances such as these are rightfully described as drug addicts. In due course, addictions become stronger, resulting in an increased consumption of these and other stronger drugs. A person is a slave to whatever has mastered him (2 Pet. 2:19). Wrong things which assert control over a person are

called the “works of darkness” and should be resisted by Christians: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11).

Blasphemy, swearing and fits of anger: To many people it has become second nature to use foul language and to blaspheme God’s name. People who swear and blaspheme reveal the spirit of the Antichrist: “Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven” (Rev. 13:6). This addictive habit should be confessed and forsaken together with other sins: “But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth” (Col. 3:8). Swearing often coincides with an unbridled temper, fits of anger, and vindictiveness. We should, therefore, also be delivered from the dispositions and attitudes which give rise to blasphemy and cursing: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

Violence: The devil is an oppressor and murderer; therefore he induces his followers to become equally violent. James 4:1-2 proclaims: “Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.” The warfare which is referred to in this passage is offensive and just war aimed at conquering other people and their land, and laying claim to resources and possessions which do not belong to the invader. The history of unsaved mankind is pervaded by conflicts and wars in which innumerable people died unnecessarily. Christians should have no part in warfare, apart from defending and protecting their own interests, possessions and human lives (defensive warfare), as “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

Lying: All habitual sinners are also habitual liars since they are followers of Satan who is the father of lies (John 8:44). All the false religions on earth are based upon lies and are aimed at seducing people to worship idols. While Satan is the source of all lies, God is the source of all truth, His Word is the truth, and His Spirit wishes to guide us into all truth (John 14:6; 16:13; 17:17). Lies form part of the old, depraved life, and if we revert to lies, we give place to the devil: “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man” (Col. 3:9-10).

The binding power of negative emotions: The dark thoughts of negative emotions can be used by the devil to gain control over a person, drive him to despair and finally destroy his faith. One of these emotions is fear – fear of death, of difficult circumstances, of the unknown future, of people, of evil powers, and also fear of the coming judgements of God. Doubt and fear are the opposite of faith, which means that a person who fears does not have faith. Are you a slave of fear? Through His death the Lord Jesus has conquered the devil who has power of death, to “release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). He has also broken this form of slavery, and for that reason Paul could say: “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again of fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Rom. 8:15; NIV). In Christ we are not slaves of sin, but spiritually liberated people.

Fear can have numerous secondary effects which include worrying, anxiety and depression. The Lord Jesus says, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day [the day of the rapture] come on you unexpectedly” (Luke 21:34). The cares of life, together with other sins such as drunkenness, put a spiritual burden on you that will pull you down into a pit of despair if you do not overcome it. “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Generational curses

There is a popular but unbiblical theory that demons, who succeed in enslaving individuals or communities to certain sins, in so doing also obtain a degree of control over their descendants. This theory maintains that a particular sin is a curse which rests upon a family or even a nation (in the case of ‘national sins’), and that upcoming generations will inherit the curse. This belief has given rise to the concept of *family curses*, *bloodline curses* or *generational curses*. It alleges

that those who are born under a generational curse will be compelled by a power beyond their control to commit certain sins. It furthermore argues that repentance and submission to Jesus Christ is not sufficient, and that certain actions to make the breaking of curses possible, need to be taken before the victims will be delivered from its power. The teaching on generational curses, and the ministry to break these curses, is based upon this supposition. (For more information, see Reddin, 1998).

Most of those who proclaim and teach according to the concept of generational curses, also claim to be able to break curses for those who come forward in their meetings. We are living in an age of instant solutions to just about everything, and for that reason the promise of quick moral solutions to wrong behaviour is very appealing.

Most people are unwilling to take the blame for their own wrongdoing, and they find it more convenient to ascribe their problems to hereditary factors. Psychological theories have convinced many people that they are not really sinners, but rather victims of society in general and of their parents' failures in particular. The family group or bloodline to which they belong is seen as the channel through which the misfortune and evil dispositions were passed down to them. The fact that it is their own nature which inclines them to sin and to make the wrong decisions under its influence, is not taken account of.

The only bloodline that is involved with the sinful nature is that of Adam (Rom. 5:17-19) and Eve (1 Tim. 2:14). "God has made of one blood all nations" (Acts 17:26). Human blood can transmit physical disease, but it cannot carry spirits or iniquities. A blood transfusion from the vilest sinner could not spiritually defile the recipient; likewise, blood from the most Christ-like saint cannot make one holy.

Perhaps your entire lineage may be ungodly, but why are you so different? Because you chose to serve the Lord. Several righteous parents have wayward and rebellious kids. It is not their fault because those children have made their own choices. The free will of man is a mystery, but yet it is a reality. We have to accept God's sovereign wisdom in bestowing this gift on every person. We must never stop praying for unsaved loved ones, and we must never excuse wrongdoing by regarding it as a generational curse.

Children are not accountable for their parent's unrighteousness, neither is it transmitted to them by means of bloodline curses. Children are certainly influenced by their parents' example and upbringing, but that does not compel them to act in a certain way. Of much greater importance is the power of independent choice which the Lord gave to every individual. The first two children on earth, Cain and Abel, shared the same descent and hereditary factors. One of them became the first murderer, while the other became the first martyr for his faith (Gen. 4:8-16; Heb. 11:4).

The only family totally affected by sin (iniquity) is the human family. By one man sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). As a result of our first parents (Adam and Eve's) sin, all humans have been born with a nature that is inclined to sin (Eph. 2:3). The Good News of the Gospel is: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; (for it is written, 'Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree') that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:13-14). We need not and cannot add to the finished work of Calvary! There is no curse on those who are in Christ – only the blessings of the Lord!

Deliverance from slavery

Jesus Christ is our Liberator, and He delivers us from all forms of sinful dependence to which we were subjected: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). He came to the world as Saviour to break our bonds of slavery. After being set free, we should ensure that we do not again accept a yoke of slavery, because there are indeed Christians who later again relinquish their freedom. Paul says to such people: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

The liberty of the Galatians was threatened, and Paul warned them against it. They were liberated from a pagan religion by accepting Christ as Saviour, but were subsequently in danger

of becoming entangled in slavery to the Mosaic Law. The Law with its commands of circumcision and the observing of certain holy days was so important to them that they were considering to once again subject themselves to it (cf. Gal. 4:9-11; 5:3). Had they done that, it would have destroyed their Christian faith, as well as the liberty associated with it: "Indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ... You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:2, 4).

The Lord Jesus has come to set us completely free from the bonds of sin. If we are still the slaves of addictive habits, the fault can certainly not be found in the blood of Christ that can cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7), but in our unwillingness to take the decision to confess and forsake our sins (Prov. 28:13). We must wholeheartedly accept the salvation which is offered to us, even though it entails facing a difficult time while breaking a particular habit. Millions of people have received this salvation, and we should not try to live without it.

When we follow and serve the Lord Jesus we are under obligation to ensure that He is the first and greatest love in our lives, as that would preclude all forms of slavery. He said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). The person whom you love the most also influences your values and disposition in life, and for that reason you willingly follow that person's example. If that person is not Jesus Christ, you are faced with problems as only He sets a perfect example, can forgive your sins and change your character to become conformable to His holy nature. If you have not yet come to know Him in this way, then you do not know Him very well and will easily become a follower, and even a slave, of people. However, we have been warned against this tendency: "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). Our only example is Jesus Christ, and He is the One who should be formed in us (Gal. 4:19).

In biblical times there were people who did not become followers of Jesus because some of their family members had rejected the idea. Most parents were opposed to any decision by their children to leave the synagogue and turn their backs upon the traditions of their forefathers. Those who succumbed to this parental pressure and refrained from becoming followers of Christ grievously harmed themselves. Their wrong decisions resulted in them proceeding to be the slaves of a false religion, and therefore also of the devil who is the father of deception. The Lord Jesus said to unrepentant orthodox leaders who also rejected Him: "You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44).

The good news is that the Lord Jesus came to break the bonds of all forms of moral and religious slavery and to make us free in Him. He came to the world "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*" (Isa. 61:1).

Sinners should realise that they are captives of Satan as long as they still practise addictive habits which are labelled as sin in the Bible. Search yourself to determine whether you are truly in the faith – that is, a person who has a testimony of deliverance from sin. Unrepentant sinners do not go to heaven. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Members of the congregation were slaves of some of these sins before their conversion, but they were completely delivered from the bondage of sin and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. People who persist with their sin will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, even though they may be members of churches: "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5-6).

If there is still a stronghold of sin in your life, take up the weapons of the Spirit and declare war

against evil: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5). All sins start with an evil thought, but end with the establishment of a stronghold which gains control over your life. At first you merely consider the possibility of sin, but then you begin to justify the intended act for yourself. Following this, you make plans to do it and then you carry out those plans. Eventually you become a slave of sin.

Firstly, identify the strongholds of sin in your life. Are you a slave of liquor, drugs, a bad temper, a violent nature, money, gambling, dirty language, sexual atrocities, or perhaps of dark emotions such as unbelief, doubt, despair, or possibly the victim of a false religion? Then take up the weapons of light against those strongholds and do not rest until you have achieved victory over these sins. The spiritual weapons which we should use include the weapons of faith, the blood of the Lamb, the sword of the Spirit (the promises in the Lord's Word), prayer, and our Christian testimony.

Once you have accepted full deliverance in faith, immediately start witnessing about it, and give the Lord all the glory for His work of grace in your life. It will strengthen your faith daily and motivate you to stand firm in the liberty by which Christ has set you free. Other people should be able to see the radical changes in your life – that old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Immediately start reaching out to unbelievers who are still slaves of sin and are consequently heading for the eternal judgements of God. John says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). Through our testimony, many of them can be delivered from the bondage of sin, thereby being transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the marvellous light of Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9).

6. The Modus Operandi of Demons

Christians are called upon to fight the good fight of faith by resisting the devil's deception, temptations, accusations, and attacks. We should use all the spiritual weapons at our disposal – especially faith in the crucified and risen Christ, prayer, and the sword of the Spirit (1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 12:11; Jas. 5:16; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). Sadly, many believers disregard these methods of spiritual self-defence, and resort to various unbiblical forms of deliverance which include exorcism and the breaking of generation curses. They argue that compulsive bad habits in a Christian's life are caused by demons, and that these habits can only be eliminated by the binding or casting out of the demons that are allegedly at the root of sinful behaviour.

Scriptural evidence, however, clearly refutes the idea that a Christian can have a demon inside of him. It borders on blasphemy to maintain that a Christian who is born of the Spirit, and in whom Christ has come to dwell, can simultaneously have an indwelling demon. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36; NIV). Only unsaved people can become demon-possessed. Christians can certainly be deceived by demons, particularly if they are ignorant of certain biblical truths, but they cannot be possessed by demons.

Demons are often wrongly equated with sin, even to the extent of calling them by the names of certain sins. Even in instances where Scripture refers to a "lying spirit" (cf. 2 Chron. 18:22) it refers to the nature of that spirit and not its name. All demons are lying spirits because they proceed from Satan who is the father of lies (John 8:44). There is no biblical evidence which points to the existence of demons of lies, demons of seduction, demons of greed, demons of lust, or any other demon that indicates that they are the embodiment of specific sins. "Mammon" is no exception, as it is one of the descriptive names for Satan himself.

Satan and his demons operate in the extrasensory, spiritual realm from where they unleash vile thoughts and evil suggestions like fiery darts at their victims (Eph. 6:16). These thoughts or influences gain access to the person at the subconscious level, without revealing their origin. Once they surface in his conscious mind, they appear to him as his own thoughts. If the person yields to these suggestive thoughts, the victim has been successfully deceived into believing spiritual lies, or has been tempted into committing moral sins in accordance with his own lusts.

Due to this dangerous reality, every thought that occurs to a believer should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4). If the thought does not comply with Scriptural principles it should be resisted and rejected. In this way all ideas, which have their origin in the spiritual realm, should be tested (1 John 4:1). Thoughts which come from God by way of His Word and the working of the Holy Spirit, will enlighten your mind towards understanding and lead you in the way of righteousness (Eph. 1:17-19). But thoughts which are from the devil will darken your mind, blind your senses, influence you to reject Christ and His gospel and instil evil passions in you.

Paul writes that the minds of unsaved people are completely blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Satan is the ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12), and he prefers to act in spiritual darkness where people have very little or no discernment between truth and error. By making use of the access he and his demons have to people's minds, he strives to keep them in the dark concerning the truth of the gospel. He prevents them from seeing the light.

Cunningly he also tries to darken the minds of believers who are already saved and are walking in the light. The moment they start believing some of Satan's deceptive teachings, spiritual uncertainty gradually sets in. Paul warned an entire congregation against this very real danger: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the Serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Satan's fiery darts have access to the mind of a believer, and therefore also to his "heart" where he contemplates different thoughts, forms convictions, and takes decisions on how to conduct himself. Decisions which emerge from Satan's sinful suggestions inevitably give rise to sinful acts. Peter said: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5:3). Satan influenced him to tell a lie, but it was not a demon which entered him. If that were the case, Peter would have cast the demon out. Satan merely capitalised on Ananias' desire for

personal gain by placing the suggestion of lying to the Holy Spirit in his heart, to which he readily agreed. Ananias spoke his own words which stemmed from the flames of covetousness which Satan had fanned in his heart.

Even though demons cannot possess Christians, they nevertheless pose a real threat as they are actively engaged in attacking us and trying to influence us. Reg Bendixen (1974) says:

“Of course, we do not for a moment suggest that demons are not real, or that they do not attack Christians. But we must understand very clearly that the effectiveness of their assault against us lies solely in their ability to deceive us. This assault is both general and specific. Each time we read a newspaper or magazine, watch a film or listen to the radio, we are receiving a blast from the Satanic master-mind. Ephesians 2:2 gives a graphic description of this, speaking of the fashion of this world which is to follow the ‘prince of the power of the air’, or atmosphere, as the original Greek implies. The very atmosphere we move in is charged with the evil presence of Satan, and we would have to separate ourselves right out of the world to escape his influence. For example, there is at the moment an all-pervading trend towards immorality and permissiveness which urges us to believe that only old fashioned, eccentric people abide by a strict moral code, and this is pounding all of us all the time. Then there is the individual attack, when a demon, like a sniper in wartime, zeroes in on a particular target with the express purpose of deceiving or harassing him. A demon is able to control or manipulate the behaviour of an individual believer in the degree to which he can deceive him. By deception, demons can manipulate our reactions and behaviour patterns. For instance, if the devil can convince us that we are not washed in the blood of Jesus, we will be overcome by guilt feelings and react accordingly. We will become depressed and discouraged, and our relationship with Jesus will be clouded. Satan dwells in the realm of lies and deceptions, and when we believe his deceptions, he can to that extent control our behaviour. ... Scripture clearly indicates that all the problems of a believer lie only in the area of his darkness, his ignorance and his unbelief; in the area in which he has not recognized the truth of the work of Christ in him.”

Paul refers to the key role of false teachers who are exploited by deceiving spirits to spread lies and destroy people’s faith: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2). In his comment on this scripture, Duane Litfin (1983:739) says the following:

“As the repository and guardian of the truth, the church must be aware of the strategies of the truth’s enemies. It is crucial then for the church to understand what God has revealed about these enemies. ... According to this teaching the situation will degenerate as Christ’s return approaches. In latter times, which Paul viewed as still future though casting their shadow already, some people will abandon the faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19) to follow after the false teaching of deceiving spirits and demons. Spiritual error is seldom due to innocent mistakes. It is more often due to the conscious strategies of God’s spiritual enemies (cf. Eph. 6:12). The teachings of demons are false doctrines taught by errorists whose views are instigated by demons. But God’s spiritual enemies do not directly confront their victims with error. Instead they work through hypocritical liars. This is Satan’s standard operating procedure (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15). He selects likely representatives and renders their consciences beyond feeling (cf. Eph. 4:19), seared as with a hot iron. In this condition they are ready to do Satan’s bidding.”

Deliverance and victory

The Bible is richly filled with counsel to the believer for the overcoming of sin, temptation and deception. If these guidelines are followed, sin will not be committed, and consequently the devil and his followers will not have their way with us:

Crucify the flesh: The old, sinful nature of believers needs to be put off and crucified if they wish to fully put on the new man in Christ (Eph. 4:22-24; Luke 9:23; Gal. 6:14). A full surrender of this nature is also referred to as “sanctification” and is the only sure way for us to refrain from sinning: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality. ... For God did not call us to uncleanness but to holiness. Therefore he who rejects

this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 4:3, 7-8). The “old man” or “the flesh” is prone to evil thoughts and deeds, and therefore a natural ally of the devil. If the flesh is not crucified it will oppose the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (Gal. 5:17), thus rendering him spiritually powerless, unfruitful in the service of the Lord, and unable to prevail against sinful lusts. The key to a righteous and victorious walk with God is not the casting out of demons but the mortifying of the carnal nature with its lusts.

Be filled with the Spirit: The opposite to a life under the influence and domination of the flesh is a life which is filled by the Holy Spirit: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18; NIV). Being filled with the Holy Spirit is the second aspect of sanctification – the first being the crucifying of the flesh. This command was given to Christians who had already received the Holy Spirit having been regenerated by Him, but were not yet filled with the Spirit. We all need to search ourselves, wait on the Lord, and trust Him to be endued with power from on high (Luke. 24:49; Acts 1:8). People who fail to take this step of complete surrender are often wrongly inclined to attempt to have demons cast out of themselves in the futile hope of overcoming temptations, sin and wrong desires.

Walk in the Spirit: Our daily life must be conducted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If it is, we will never falter: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). To be able to do this we have to follow closely in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). Every decision that we take should first be prayerfully considered to ensure that it conforms to biblical precepts.

Test the spirits: Every idea or teaching which presents itself to us should first be tested for its authenticity. Every true statement is supported by the Spirit of truth, while every deceptive idea is driven by the spirit of error which emanates from Satan. Since we know only in part (1 Cor. 13:12) we should be very cautious not to accept anything that deviates from God’s Word, to even the slightest degree. Often, there is only a very fine line between truth and error. The more ignorant we are of biblical truths, the more easily we can be deceived. We should not believe every teaching naively, “but test the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1). All views expressed and statements made by people should first be tested by carefully comparing them with scriptural truths, and also by reading passages quoted from the scriptures in their full context. False prophets often quote Scripture but interpret it out of context to support their deceptive teachings.

Resist evil: All evil thoughts and deeds should be resisted without compromise in any way whatsoever: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11). Anything that is associated with the kingdom of Satan should be sternly rejected because evil works are the fruit of a life which is heading for perdition: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). There should be no complicity with the works of darkness, neither any justification, but rather condemnation.

Watch and pray: It is a well established fact that the devil and his evil spirits are engaged in a full-scale war against the saints. While we are still in our weak human bodies we are constantly exposed to the possibility of temptation and seduction through our senses. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). We should pray to be delivered from the evil one (Matt. 6:13), while resisting him in faith: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Abide in Christ: We have been given an explicit command to abide in Christ, which clearly indicates the possibility of believers failing to do so, either because of weak commitment, uncrucified flesh or as a result of being deceived by Satan. Christ said: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered;

and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:4, 6). Some of the deceived, carnal believers completely “depart from the faith” when they are exposed to heretical teachings (1 Tim. 4:1). Paul says that believers such as those may completely apostatise and, “concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19). Jewish believers who did not abide in Christ ended up having evil and unbelieving hearts because they had “departed from the living God” (Heb. 3:12-14). Those who fail to hold fast to their testimony of salvation, do not abide in Christ and may end up as deluded unbelievers. At that point they would again be exposed to the possibility of demon possession. But while they are still believers they should only guard against the influence and deception of demons – not against demon possession.

Walk in the light: There should be no doubtful, shameful and secret thoughts or activities which we harbour in our lives, as that would be a sure way of backsliding: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:6-7). Committed and persevering believers constantly live under the atonement and immediately repent and confess their sins if they falter. John says: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2).

Put on the full armour of God: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:10; NIV). The spiritual weapons described in the Bible are associated with the victory which is promised to us in Christ, a strong faith in Him, the power of prayer, and an unshakable trust in the promises in His Word. If we are successful in this war, we will not be driven back by the enemy and will be among the overcomers who will reign with Christ: “Hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations” (Rev. 2:25-26).

Fully trust in the grace of Christ: Paul says, “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:11-14). Conformity to the death of Jesus Christ opens the way to conformity with His victorious resurrection life. In Christ Jesus we are no longer under the law (or power) of sin which takes people captive in Satan’s kingdom of darkness – neither are we under the Old Testament law which only brings knowledge of sin but cannot save us from sin. We are called upon to live under the liberating power of Christ’s grace (1 Pet. 1:13-16; Tit. 2:11-14).

In the near future a massive confrontation will take place on earth between the soon to be revealed false christ of Satan’s kingdom, and the coming true Christ of God’s kingdom. That which is currently a spiritual war between these two kingdoms will then have dramatic physical manifestations, and result in the condemnation and destruction of millions of Satan’s deluded followers. The lake of fire is awaiting them, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

7. Thirteen-point Plan to Take Over the World

We are living at a critical time of world history, right at the end of the church dispensation and shortly before the revelation of Satan's world empire which will be headed by the Antichrist and the false prophet. Christians proclaim the second coming of Jesus Christ and the future revelation of His kingdom, while the non-Christian world is preparing for a new world order which will be in direct opposition to the kingdom of God.

The present conflict in spiritual realms between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan will culminate in a physical confrontation during the battle of Armageddon at the end of the great tribulation, directly after the second coming of Christ. It will be a short and decisive war, during which the Antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire, their followers will be destroyed and Satan will be bound in a bottomless pit for one thousand years (Rev. 19:19 to 20:3). That will be followed by the revelation of God's kingdom on earth.

Satan has been the adversary and enemy of God ever since being cast out of heaven in prehistoric times due to his self-exaltation and rebellion. He is waging an unabated battle against God and His kingdom as he aspires to replace God as the deity to be worshipped and to become the sole ruler of the universe. He has a large following of fallen angels (demons or evil spirits) as well as unsaved people who are doing his will on earth. Together they constitute the kingdom of darkness, and they occupy such a dominant position that the Bible refers to them as "the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12; cf. 1 John 5:19).

We have not been surrendered to the control of these satanic powers, since the Lord Jesus came to spiritually "deliver us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) and to establish His kingdom in our hearts. However, we still physically find ourselves in an evil and hostile world in which we have to put on the full armour of God which will enable us to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

In the end-time, with an interval of only seven years between them, both these kingdoms and their kings, Christ and the Antichrist, will be publicly revealed on earth. First, the kingdom of darkness under the leadership of the Antichrist will be revealed. During the subsequent tribulation period he will physically control the world. When the restrainer of the Antichrist – that is the true church as the temple of the Holy Spirit – has been taken out of the way at the rapture (2 Thess. 2:6-8), the Antichrist will be revealed.

During the seven years of the Antichrist's reign, the judgements of God will be poured out upon his evil kingdom, culminating in the moment when he will lose all authority on earth. The climax of these judgements will occur on the last day of the tribulation when Christ will return to earth to destroy the satanic powers and have Satan bound in a pit. Following this, Christ's kingdom will be revealed and established on earth.

Satan is fully aware of the dire future prophesied for him in the Bible, but he rejects it entirely. Since the creation of humanity, he has been waging a war in an effort to gain more control over people and also to be worshipped by them eventually. He does not want to be known as Satan, but as Lord and God. That is the reason why he appears as an angel of light and employs all his cunning powers to deceive people into worshipping and following another god, another Jesus and another spirit, which are all impostors from his kingdom (2 Cor. 11:3-15).

We are in the final phase of the church dispensation, during which evangelical Christians have good reason to expect the imminent coming of Christ. This explains Satan's intensified efforts in bringing humanity under the power of delusion to the extent that they engage in preparing the way for his false kingdom, rather than waiting for Christ. Deceived people do not realise that they are advocates for Satan's kingdom because they have lost the ability to discern between the truth and the lie. Their minds have been blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

This deception is so subtle and convincing that even many Christians, those who have a poor knowledge of the Bible, are falling for it (compare the saying that "if you stand for nothing you will fall for anything"). Consequently, they will "depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). The Lord Jesus also warned against this serious

deception: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many... For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:4-5,24).

The deception is aimed at perverting and falsifying the principles and characteristics of God's kingdom, and then applying them to Satan's kingdom. It calls for humanity to continue to expect God's kingdom and to actively promote it, but in such a way that, in effect, they are preparing the way for Satan's kingdom. The intention is that people's altered thoughts, brought about by spiritual deception, should be the driving force behind their actions to support Satan's alternate kingdom rather than the true kingdom of God.

This distorted way of thinking and believing is the fruit of deception. Some people refer to it as a paradigm shift; others see it as the emergence of a new, ecumenical belief system, while large groups justify it as postmodern reforms brought about by the demands of a new world order. Whatever the excuses for their new way of thinking may be, the fact remains that they are all victims of the master deceiver of the ages. The Bible calls him "the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). He is in the process of transforming theological thinking in a manner which will ensure that it complies with the principles of his kingdom and no longer with those of God's kingdom.

On investigation of Satan's most important strategies for the revelation of his kingdom, it becomes evident that he has a thirteen-point plan for the final deceit and takeover of the world. The implementation of the plan leads to such a distortion and misrepresentation of God's kingdom that humanity, which includes a large segment of the nominally Christian church, is becoming instrumental in the efforts to reveal the alternate kingdom of Satan. They are doing it under the self-deceiving assumption that they are still involved with God's kingdom.

Satan's major battle is against the Bible as it contains facts on the revelation of God, His plan of salvation for humanity through Jesus Christ, as well as clear prophecies on what the future holds for the world and its inhabitants. The subversive works of the kingdom of darkness are also revealed in the Bible, as well as God's judgements over Satan and his kingdom. These divine truths stand out like a beacon of light in a dark world, and refute everything that is contrary to that light. God is truth, His Word is truth, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who guides us into all truth (John 14:6; 16:13; 17:17).

Satan realises that he first has to try and do away with the Bible as the source of Christian doctrines before he will be able to institute his plans for an alternate faith. Once the pronouncements in the Bible have successfully been made questionable, been spiritualised and distorted, any possible meaning can be ascribed to them. That will give rise to a far-reaching transformation of thinking in support of a satanic new world order. This new way of thinking, propagated by false prophets, is spiritual in nature and will occur in the following 13 areas:

1. The truth of God's Word is presented as a lie

Satan will not be able to reveal his kingdom to the world without resistance while there are significant numbers of people who regard the Bible as credible. For that reason he has been launching relentless attacks against the Bible throughout the ages. He does not want people to regard the Bible as the inerrant, inspired and literal Word of God, because those who do are not open to other convictions and will not become his followers as a result.

The attacks launched against the Bible by deceived theologians are endless. They allege that the Bible is simply a compilation of books regarding religious and moral matters, conceived by human authors, and not God's word to humankind. They regard it as predominantly of a mythological nature and therefore not historically authentic. Most of the biblical accounts are belittled as myths, including the creation account and the description of Satan's kingdom in the air.

Many of the statements on the person and attributes of Jesus Christ are described as mere speculation or wishful thinking, e.g. the 'unscientific' supposition of the virgin birth of Jesus, the belief that He is God, that He was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven and will return

bodily to the earth. Biblical prophecies pertaining to the end-times and the second coming of Christ are not interpreted literally or understood in a futuristic sense, but regarded as historical (preteristic), symbolical and allegorical descriptions with minimal value.

The implication of the sustained campaign of subversion against the Bible is that the statements which fundamental Christians accept as literal and unchangeable truths are actually all lies. As far as the henchmen of Satan are concerned there is no Triune God because according to them, Jesus was no more than an ordinary prophet and therefore not God; the crucifixion of Christ was simply a political act without any spiritual significance; there is no heaven, hell or devil; there will not be an Antichrist, a great tribulation or a literal battle of Armageddon; the Lord will not physically intervene to remove believers before the time of judgement; and there will not be a thousand-year reign of peace or a final judgement.

We have reached the point at which deceived theologians are discrediting and rejecting these biblical truths on a large scale. This has provided access for the propagation of an unbiblical worldview in which Satan's false kingdom is gaining credibility. The truth of divine revelations has been replaced by the lies of Satan's kingdom which are based upon imposture. Even more so than during the time of Isaiah, we are living in a religious environment which encourages people to backslide from the Lord, eventually deny Him and abandon the truth of His Word:

"Our sins testify against us... in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter" (Isa. 59:12-14).

However, the lie is not always easy to discern because Satan is offering his alternate kingdom to people in the name of God and also in the name of Christ (cf. Matt. 24:4-5). That kingdom will be multireligious as the followers of all religions will worship the Christ of the new world order and follow him as their conqueror and prince of peace (Rev. 6:2; 13:3-4). These lies have already been so strongly established in the traditional Christian world, that the time for the planned revelation of Satan's kingdom must be very near.

2. The lies of the non-Christian religions are presented as truth

As the Bible loses credibility among apostates from the Christian faith, the doctrines and holy books of the non-Christian religions are gaining recognition and adherents. Various multireligious textbooks published in South Africa and which are also used for the training of teachers, give enthusiastic approval to the positive value of the non-Christian faiths.

It is alleged that Westerners have lost their spirituality due to the immense impact of materialism on their lives. As a solution to this problem, Christians are encouraged to adopt mystical techniques such as transcendental meditation from Eastern religions, e.g. Buddhism and Hinduism, in an effort to enrich themselves spiritually. The opinion is held that we can learn much from them on the nature of religion. For instance, the collective consciousness of the San (Bushmen) and their ecological relationship with nature can be embraced and utilised to great benefit.

In the light of these postmodern reforms, traditional Christianity is regarded as narrow-minded, judgemental and out of step with reality. Consequently, it is now presented as being composed of lies and half-truths. However, that which the Bible exposes as lies and camouflaged Satanism, e.g. idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 10:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-18), have suddenly become acceptable practices and are regarded as discoveries of new truths.

3. The true Christ becomes the Antichrist, or cosmic Christ

A very important objective in Satan's strategy for a takeover is the deconstruction of the biblical image of Jesus Christ. In the process, Jesus is rendered *another Jesus* to enable the Antichrist to come in His name. It is evident from this approach that the devil is not out to destroy religion, but to change it in such a way that he and the Antichrist can be worshipped by all people. That will indeed happen: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshipped the

dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast?" (Rev. 13:3-4).

Evangelical Christians do not participate in deconstructing the image of Jesus, as that would amount to a rejection of the Bible and the misrepresentation of Christ. They are aware of the dangers of denying or changing God's Word. However, nominal, ecumenically-minded Christians who have been deceived by the devil, fully support the transformation of the biblical Jesus into the multireligious Jesus of the new world order, who will be accepted and worshipped by the followers of all religions.

Theologians who hold this opinion, regard the biblical account of Jesus as God, the Son of God and the only Saviour of the world, as being false. They refer to Him as the cultic Jesus or the Jesus of faith. Because the biblical Jesus is unacceptable to them, they are replacing Him with the "historical Jesus", who according to their view, was simply an ordinary prophet. This approach enables them to relegate Jesus to the same level as the prophets of other faiths, e.g. Buddha, Krishna and Mohammed.

Religious leaders in the non-Christian faiths followed suit and devised theories which either allow for the close association of the historical Jesus with their own religions or even render him inherently part of their faith. Some of these leaders state explicitly that the world messiah, who is expected shortly, will fulfil multiple roles by being Christ to the Christians, Krishna to the Hindus, the fifth Buddha to the Buddhists, and the Imam Mahdi to Islam. He will therefore be the cosmic Messiah, or the Messiah of all faiths. According to the Bible he will be the Antichrist.

The important question, therefore, is not so much whether Christians in the traditional Christian world accept or reject Jesus, but rather *which* Jesus they accept and follow. It is either the Son of God who is the only Saviour of the world (Acts 4:12), or it is the interfaith messiah who will deceive all religions to accept and proclaim his false gospel (Rev. 17:3-6). The true Christ will be the King in God's revealed kingdom (Rev. 19:11-16), while the false Christ (the Antichrist) will be the king who will rule over Satan's kingdom of darkness (Rev. 13:2).

It is obvious that Satan's lies are increasingly gaining the upper hand in large segments of the Christian church, thus rendering them forerunners of his false Christ.

4. The Triune God becomes the universal God of all faiths

Satan is not only intent on making the Antichrist acceptable to the world as Christ and eventually also as God (2 Thess. 2:4), but he himself wishes to be worshipped and honoured as God. Consequently, in his strategy for taking over the world he does not only conduct a campaign against the biblical Jesus but also against the idea of a Triune God. A God who revealed Himself to the world only through His Son, thereby excluding all other faiths, is not acceptable to the devil. For that reason not only does he render Jesus the cosmic Christ of all faiths, but also presents God as the universal God of all faiths. Satan himself fulfils this role as he is the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4).

Any person who proclaims that all faiths worship the same God, has become a victim of Satan's deception and therefore also a follower of this false god. The world at large has already been deceived into rejecting the Triune God of the Bible and to bow down before the satanic triumvirate – the God of this age, the cosmic Christ and the false prophet.

5. Spiritual rebirth becomes a mystical spiritual experience

The Lord Jesus said: "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Because of this very clear statement Satan is specifically intent on keeping people from being born again and thereby becoming members of God's kingdom. If he succeeds in preventing the rebirth of people by offering them false foundations such as baptismal regeneration and salvation by means of good works, he will ensure his continued influence over them in the kingdom of darkness. Satan appears to them in the image of an angel of light so as to blind them to the truth and justify them in their unsaved condition.

Many people are intent on seeking an ecstatic spiritual experience through which they can

declare themselves as having been born again. Satan gladly obliges in satisfying this need by providing experiences such as “slaying in the spirit” in which people fall into a trance and do strange things like laughing uncontrollably and uttering animal sounds. But this experience does not lead to conviction of sin and true repentance. Nevertheless, when these people rise from the floor, they regard themselves as having been born again by the Spirit of God allegedly having fallen upon them.

Mystical experiences, or trance states, can also be induced by listening to certain kinds of music, by singing specific songs loudly and repeatedly, by practising transcendental meditation in which certain key words (mantras) are continuously repeated, and also by using mind expanding drugs. People who undergo these experiences can come under the influence of Satan's deceiving spirits (1 Tim. 4:1) and thereby become prepared for his kingdom.

6. The narrow way to heaven becomes the false road of conflict

Satan casts a dark shadow of doubt over the narrow way which leads to heaven (cf. Matt. 7:14). He does not want people to follow this road because those who do belong to the Lord. It is far more difficult for Satan to deceive such people as many of them have a good knowledge of Scripture and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit; because of that, they are outspoken adversaries of the kingdom of darkness.

True believers have strived hard to gain access through the narrow gate of rebirth to the way which leads to heaven (Luke 13:24). They believe in the biblical Jesus (not the historical Jesus who is regarded as being simply a prophet) and confess the saving power of His death on the cross. They also believe that He is the only way to heaven and that all people outside of Him are lost (John 14:6; 1 John 5:12). They are therefore fundamental believers.

Through the devil's endeavours, the narrow way of the true life of faith has increasingly been given a bad name. True believers are accused of having a negative and judgemental attitude because they supposedly give others the impression that only they are right and all the others are wrong. They are portrayed as loveless people worshipping a loveless God, who condemns the majority of people who are not Christians, to the everlasting lake of fire.

There are numerous well-known preachers who hold the view that fundamental Christians pose a great threat to the emerging church of the 21st century because these true believers strongly insist on upholding biblical principles. These Christians resist the ecumenical movement and undermine the forging of unitary ties between the various Christian churches, while they also strongly condemn any ties with the non-Christian religions.

Because of these factors the narrow way of Christian fundamentalism is rejected. Continued deception has resulted in more and more people becoming negatively inclined towards evangelicalism, which also accounts for their increasing acceptance of the false gospel of Satan's kingdom throughout the world.

7. The broad way to hell becomes the accepted way to harmony and peace

The discrediting of the narrow way to heaven opens the door which leads to the acceptance of the majority's broad way in which everything and everybody is permissible. This is the multireligious way in which people approach the universal God of all faiths through different mediators. This has resulted in various multireligious movements being established throughout the world in which members of all faiths congenially collaborate with one another.

This is the way of harmony and world peace upon which all people can become one through compromise and adaptation to their new spiritual environment. The devil is the only winner in this situation since all the spiritually lost people are falsely justified and praised. They are fellow builders of a modern tower of Babel and they will all inherit Satan's kingdom when the Antichrist is revealed after the rapture (Rev. 17:3-6).

However, these deceived people's hour of glory will be short-lived. When the Antichrist declares

himself to be God in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, all his followers will be forced to worship him unconditionally as God. All forms of religion will then be declared redundant and abolished. Those who refuse to comply with the demands of the Antichrist will be executed (Rev. 13:15; 17:16).

8. Prayers to God become meditation and the invocation of spiritual powers

Intensified efforts are made by Satan's kingdom to sever all contact between people and the true God. Not only are Christians being kept too busy to pray, but the very nature of prayer is becoming distorted. This is achieved by teaching people how to substitute prayer with transcendental meditation, which is an exercise in mystical contemplation through descending to the so-called deeper, creative levels of one's right-brain. A single word or short sentence is repeated over and over until the person enters a hypnotic or trance state which is referred to as an altered state of consciousness.

In this state of mind and spirit the person who meditates becomes aware of the god within him, he sees the world in a new light in which everything converges into a harmonious unity, he experiences peace in his heart while fully relaxing, and he also finds solutions to all his problems. In actual fact he is practising Eastern meditation in which a person empties his mind of all thoughts, and thereby opens it up to influence by occult spiritual powers. This provides precisely the type of channel which the devil needs to communicate with people and to instil a consciousness of his new world order in them.

9. The Christian faith becomes an ecumenical alliance of all faiths

The multiple religious influences which Satan imposes upon modern humanity is causing Christianity to lose its unique character and will eventually diminish itself into simply being one of many communication channels with God. Ecumenical Christians associate with other faiths in accordance with the deceptive premise that God has revealed Himself to humanity through all faiths and cultures.

When that happens, a common belief in the Triune God no longer unites people, but rather a belief in the universal God of all faiths does. That is not the God of the Bible, but the false god of this world who blinds the minds of people so that they cannot know, worship or follow the God of the Bible (2 Cor. 4:4). When that happens, the time for the revelation of Satan's kingdom has drawn nigh.

10. The temple of God in Jerusalem becomes Satan's temple of all faiths

The devil has a specific strategy for deceiving Israel as God's people. He knows that the spiritually restored Israel is destined to play an important role in the kingdom of God during the Millennium. It is consequently a highly prioritised strategy of the devil to subject the entire Israel to the authority of the false Messiah, thereby ensuring that they will be fully under his control. Almost 2000 years ago, the true Messiah issued a warning to Israel that they would conclude a covenant with the false Messiah (John 5:43).

The prophet Daniel also indicated that Israel would conclude a covenant with the Antichrist for one year-week of seven years (Dan. 9:27). As part of this covenant they will be granted the right to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. However, that temple will be specifically for the world Messiah, i.e. the common Messiah of all faiths.

To the utter amazement of many people, this antichristian and interfaith approach has already taken root in Israel. A modern Sanhedrin was established in October 2004, and they follow a multireligious approach founded on scriptures such as Isaiah 56:7: "For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." This statement is erroneously interpreted in a multireligious way with the purpose of also giving recognition to the non-Biblical faiths. There is a Jewish website which promotes the view of "God's holy mountain" for all faiths, i.e.

www.godsholymountain.org/.

Biblical prophecies indicate that the Third Temple, which will be built in Jerusalem, will be the temple of the false Messiah. In this way he will try to ensure that the Jews do not accept the once for all sacrifice of the true Messiah on the cross. Furthermore, he will use this temple to declare himself to be God in the Holy of holies (2 Thess. 2:4; Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15-21). When that happens, the temple of God will have become the temple of Satan.

Based on all these developments we know that the coming of the false Messiah is at hand. It may happen at any time.

11. Divine revelations in the Bible become extra-biblical revelations

Information regarding the future revelation of Satan's kingdom on earth is given by false prophets. They present it as if it were God's kingdom in which people of all faiths will live together in peace and prosperity. They reject all biblical warnings about an end-time tribulation under the dictatorship of the Antichrist, and for that reason all biblical prophecies are distorted, spiritualised, ignored or merely regarded as irrelevant. According to them, the only acceptable information on what the future holds for us comes from major contemporary prophets who try to create the impression that they are speaking on behalf of God. Their predictions include mighty revivals, good times, and a peaceful world empire – but rule out tribulation, judgements or suffering.

12. The futuristic kingdom of God becomes a humanistic kingdom-now

According to the Bible, Satan knows that Christ will return to the earth to destroy His enemies, save the remnant in Israel, and then establish His kingdom on earth with Jerusalem as capital. In an all-out effort to avert this turn of events he will, before the second coming of Christ, establish his own government on earth under the leadership of the Antichrist. The devil's plan of a kingdom here and now, before the coming of Christ as King, has become so firmly entrenched in theological thinking across the globe that most of the leading Christian churches are actively supporting and promoting this idea. The strong humanistic and multireligious nature of this kingdom will render proof of its unbiblical and satanic character.

Preparations for this kingdom are in such an advanced stage in current world history, that an interfaith messiah stands a very good chance of being universally accepted, followed and even worshipped (Rev. 13:3-4). When this kingdom has been well established, the Antichrist will instigate his followers to fight against the true Christ on the day of His second coming in an effort to kill Him. They will know that Christ will return to earth at the end of that particular year-week to destroy the Antichrist and his world empire, therefore they will mobilise an international force to fight against Him (Rev. 19:19).

However, it will be a day of great tragedy for this multinational force when they try to fight against the One who has all power in heaven and on earth (Rev. 19:20-21; Zech. 14:12-13; Joel 3:2; Isa. 13:9-13).

13. The rapture of believers becomes the removal of rebels

The Lord has promised to remove His bridal congregation from this world before the advent of the coming time of judgement (Luke 21:36; John 14:2-3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). The true believers are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and their presence on earth withholds the revelation of the Antichrist and the institution of his satanic world empire (2 Thess. 2:6-8).

When the evangelical Christians suddenly disappear, the Antichrist will be revealed as a false prince of peace in the name of Christ, and also in the names of the other messiahs of the world religions. He will slander and scorn the evangelical Christians who have disappeared, by alleging that they had promoted hatred and conflict through their refusal to enter into brotherly relations with members of other faiths. They will be branded as stubborn rebels, and many diverse theories will be extended to portray their disappearance as a necessary divine act, to

remove evil and to allow unity and peace to prevail on earth.

The promise of the rapture will, therefore, be changed in such a way by the enemies of God that it will not be seen as the catching away of true believers but as the supernatural removal of the fundamentalist troublemakers. They will be regarded as stumbling-blocks in the transition to a new dispensation, and that will be seen as justification for the act of removing them.

A serious warning against deception

Satan's thirteen-point plan is composed of religious lies which are used as propaganda for the revelation of his kingdom. These lies are successfully proclaimed by his large number of collaborators, since public support is vital for the implementation of his plan to take over the world.

The first half of the Antichrist's rule will be predominantly characterised by deception. During this phase he will voluntarily be recognised and worshipped by virtually all people. It will only be towards the middle of the tribulation when opposition against him will be mounting, and that will induce him to institute the most severe military dictatorship in the entire history of humanity. The Lord Jesus describes it as a great tribulation such as there has never been since the beginning of the world, and that it will bring humanity to the very edge of total annihilation (Matt. 24:21-22). Only then will Christ intervene at His second coming to save a remnant of Israel and the nations (Matt. 24:29-30).

The Lord Jesus offers good advice to those who live in a time such as this: "Take heed that no one deceives you..." (Matt. 24:4). Abide in Christ, abide in His Word, walk in the Spirit, resist the present evil world and put on the full armour of God so that you may remain standing against the wiles of the devil. The Saviour has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

8. Rise of the Antichrist

The Antichrist will be a devil inspired leader who will rule the world during the last seven years before the second coming of Christ.

The Antichrist is a key figure in the kingdom of darkness which is engaged in a full-scale war against the kingdom of light. The arena in which this war is waged is in the lives of people who have been created in the image of God. The weapons used range from the direct use of occult powers to influence people spiritually, to the indirect deceiving of millions who practise false religions under the power of deception. Every effort is made to corrupt or destroy true Christianity.

Satan's final objective in this struggle is to gain control over all people and to establish the Antichrist as king and universal messiah on earth. From God's point of view this great conflict will lead to the final defeat of Satan and his followers, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom of righteousness on earth. The power of darkness will be broken and all its supporters condemned to an eternal hell.

This war has continued unabated through the ages. It started when Lucifer and the fallen angels were cast out of heaven. When God created humans, Lucifer saw it as an opportunity to destroy God's handiwork. He deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying God and rebelling against Him. Once that had taken place, Adam and Eve died spiritually and, ultimately, brought physical death upon themselves and their descendants. Humanity became a fallen race of spiritually dead men and women with a natural propensity to sin.

The opportunities that humanity's depraved nature offered to the kingdom of darkness, resulted in large-scale cultural and spiritual degeneration. During the thousands of years before the coming of Christ, all the heathen nations on earth were spiritually blinded by Satan and deceived into worshipping idols. For extended periods, apostasy also prevailed in Israel among the chosen people of God. At times it seemed as if the entire nation of Israel would be spiritually conquered and that they would be destroyed in the fierce battle that raged against them. At one point, even the prophet Elijah despaired and almost abandoned the fight against the enemies of God:

"LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life. But what does the divine response say to him? I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom. 11:3-4).

With the coming of Christ, the command to evangelise the entire world was given to Christians. This great commission resulted in an intensification of the battle, as people from all nations were to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light. God's plan is to ultimately bring the entire world under the rule of His King, His Christ, and thereby bring about a Christian world. Once the gospel has been proclaimed to all nations, Jesus Christ will physically return to establish His literal kingdom on earth, and will rule from David's throne in Jerusalem. In the meantime, Christians are waging a spiritual battle against a spiritual enemy. However, Christ is spiritually present with us in this battle, empowering us by His Holy Spirit.

Right from the outset Satan actively resisted God's plan for world evangelisation. His plan has always been to create a rival antichristian world. At present he is pursuing his objectives by way of spiritual deception, but physical manifestations are soon to follow. As an alternative to Christ's bodily return to earth to establish His kingdom, Satan offers humanity a world empire under the leadership of a world messiah called 'the Christ'. His counterfeit christ will be the Antichrist and he will be the head of a satanic new world order.

For the duration of the church dispensation, the followers of Jesus Christ have been actively opposed by the satanic spirit of antichrist. In this struggle, the kingdom of darkness mobilises as many people as possible to persecute and try to destroy Christianity. Tyrants such as Nero, Stalin, Hitler, and many others, may rightly also be called antichrists. But they were only forerunners of the end-time Antichrist: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the

last time” (1 John 2:18).

Succession of world empires

Daniel 7 discusses four successive world empires following the Babylonian exile of Israel, which form part of the times of the Gentiles. These were all forerunners of the Antichrist’s end-time world empire as they were permeated with the same spirit of rebellion against God and His kingdom. They were the Babylonian Empire, represented by a lion, the Medo-Persian Empire (the bear), the Greek Empire (the leopard), and the Roman Empire (a vicious animal with ten horns on its head). The symbolism in Daniel 7 ties up with Daniel 2:31-45 in which the same four empires are depicted as a great image which was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. The head of the image was of gold (Babylonian Empire), its chest and arms of silver (Medo-Persian Empire), its belly and thighs of bronze (Greek Empire), its legs of iron (Roman Empire), and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (the end-time, restored Roman Empire of the Antichrist).

The fact that the Roman Empire was never conquered or subjected to another world empire, explains the fact that only four world empires are mentioned after the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and that these four will be revived as part of the end-time empire of the Antichrist. Although the Roman Empire ceased to exist as a political entity in the 5th century AD, the influence of Europe over the rest of the world continued throughout the centuries which followed, leading to the colonisation of large parts of the world by European nations. In the end-time, the ancient Roman Empire with its strong European base will be revived and once again become the major power block in the world. This is already happening.

It is also significant that the Roman Empire gained control over the territories of the preceding three empires, i.e. the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Greek Empires, and for that reason the revival of the Roman Empire will also constitute a revival of those world empires. All indications are that the Antichrist’s future world government will be controlled from the Middle East, from a region that formed part of all four of the previous world empires.

In view of these facts it is obvious why the Antichrist is depicted as a composite beast with symbols derived from all four world empires, i.e. a mouth of a lion, the feet of a bear, the body of a leopard, and a head of a ferocious animal with ten horns on its head (Rev. 13:1-2). Therefore, he will simultaneously revive the Roman Empire along with the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Greek Empires. All four of them were firmly focused on the Middle East and, furthermore, also tried to annihilate Israel. When the Antichrist and his empire are destroyed, all his predecessors who were conquered and assimilated by the Roman Empire, will also finally be destroyed. This fact ties up with Daniel 2:44-45, where the great image which represents all four of these empires, will be destroyed as one when it is struck by the Rock (Jesus Christ), who will establish His own kingdom in the place of these kingdoms.

Daniel 7:11 refers to the destruction of the Antichrist during the second coming of Christ. This verse describes the fourth beast with the ten horns on its head, and another little horn (the Antichrist) that arose among them (Dan. 7:7-8, 20-21). The ten horns refer to the Roman Empire which will be restored in the end-time during the rise of the Antichrist (the little horn), after which this empire will be destroyed by Christ, bringing an end to the times of the Gentiles. After that, Christ’s kingdom, in which Israel will play a major part, will be revealed and established on earth.

Daniel 7:12 contains an interesting reference to the first three beasts of Daniel 7 – the lion (Babylonia), the bear (Medo-Persia), and the leopard (Greece). The NKJV says that “their lives will be prolonged for a season and a time”, but the NIV rendering comes closer to the basic meaning: “The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.” This suggests that the first three had physically lost their authority, but that their spirit and nature (their anti-God and anti-Israel ideology) lived on in their conquerors. Their final destruction will be concurrent with the destruction of their ultimate representative, the Antichrist, at the end of the tribulation period.

The world empire of the last days

Once the European Union represents most of the Mediterranean countries, as well as those in the Middle East and North Africa, the Antichrist will arise from within the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire and consolidate three of the Empire's provinces (or countries) under his personal control (Dan. 7:8). Those will most likely be Arab countries to the north and northeast of Israel, among which will be Syria and Iraq. This development is clearly suggested by the fact that, from Israel's point of view, the Antichrist will also be known as the "Assyrian" and "king of the north" (Isa. 10:12-14; Dan. 11:31-45). We can anticipate the future expansion of the European Union into the Middle East in order to strengthen their economic interests by the inclusion of oil-producing states, and also by attempting to facilitate peace in one of the most politically volatile regions on earth.

Turkey has already applied for EU membership, while America's gradual withdrawal from the Middle East is necessitating other countries in this region to rely on Europe for military protection and development aid. The military involvement of EU countries in the liberation of Libya, has paved the way for strong economic and diplomatic ties between Arab countries and Europe, in the new geo-political dispensation which is presently emerging.

Various factors are prompting the revival of the ancient world empires. It is evident that elements from all four the previous world empires are awakening from the dust of an almost forgotten past. It is also evident that a serious power vacuum is prevalent in this region, as well as ominous economic problems which are largely the consequence of poor government and weak leadership. Consider the following developments in the regions of the four ancient world empires:

The Roman Empire

Europe is indeed being unified into forming the world's most important power block, but at the same time the need for strong political and economic leadership is increasing daily. The unification of Europe is a daunting task in a culturally diverse region where the different nations are like iron and clay that cannot firmly bond. Furthermore, Europe in its entirety is afflicted by a debt crisis which was mainly caused by poor governments which allowed the escalation of public debt to reach extremely high levels. Overspending continued unabated, while deficits on budget accounts were covered by loans and the issuing of more government bonds that were mainly purchased by foreign banks. Those banks wrongly concluded that these bonds were safe investments with a guaranteed yield, since Western governments had always been able to settle their debt.

However, all of a sudden there are various highly developed countries that are unable to settle their debt. Many of them are facing economic collapse, particularly Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The fears which are stirred up by these countries' threatening bankruptcy hover like a sword over the whole of Europe.

Many centuries ago, Italy was at the head of the mighty Roman Empire which controlled great wealth, but at present they are a struggling country with an annual growth rate of only 1%. The population is rapidly aging as few children are born, which means that less young people are entering the labour market. For a number of decades, Italy has had the most unstable government in Europe as they move from one shaky coalition government to the next. Scandals among the elite are the order of the day, and within an unstable society of this nature, criminal elements such as the Mafia are flourishing.

Religiously and morally speaking, "post-Christian Europe" is caught up in an even bigger crisis, and that accounts for the great falling away into immoral lifestyles as well as the rapid expansion of non-Christian religions such as Islam. For a long time now, Europe has not been having good political, economic and religious leaders with a constructive vision for the future, and they are now promoting a new world order in which all the struggling countries can pursue a common destiny. However, there are so many crippled, hanger-on countries that must be carried by their stronger partners, that any further progress has become nigh impossible. Europe is now waiting for a dynamic leader to appear on the scene and change the socio-political and economic

landscape in such a way that a new beginning and a new future can be offered to all.

According to the Bible, such a leader will indeed arise, but he will be the Antichrist. His solutions and false peace will only last for 3½ years, after which he will institute the most draconian military dictatorship of all time to prevent his own downfall (Matt. 24:15-21; Rev. 6:1-8; 13:1-18).

The Babylonian Empire

In present day Iraq, almost nothing remains of the mighty Babylonian Empire which was initially established by Nimrod and which was restored as the leading kingdom in the world, while under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. America's intervention in Iraq was a disaster, and only precipitated the chaos and bloodshed in the country. The US troop withdrawal from Iraq has now reached its final stage, and will render Iraq an easy target for invasion by its bloodthirsty neighbour, Iran. There is also no end in sight to the ongoing faction fights between Shiite and Sunni Muslims in this country.

Iraq was at the heart of the ancient Babylonian Empire and will play an important role in the end-time according to biblical prophecy. The Antichrist will unite Iraq, Syria and neighbouring countries, possibly also incorporating the oil-rich Persian Gulf states, thereby making it a strong power block within the broader context of an expanded European Union.

The Medo-Persian Empire

The beast of Revelation 13 will have the feet of a bear, which is an indication that, together with the restoration of the Roman, Greek and Babylonian Empires, he will also revive the Medo-Persian Empire. Persia is the present Iran, and this country is wholeheartedly committed to the antichristian agenda for an Islamic world order which is utterly hostile towards Israel, the West, and Christianity. It will suit the Antichrist well to actively involve Iran in his plans. On numerous occasions, President Ahmadinejad of Iran has called for genocide against Israel, while also demanding the immediate cessation of Western intervention in the affairs of Islamic countries. According to Ezekiel 38 and 39, Iran will also play a major role in a future Russo-Arab invasion of Israel.

The complexity of the Antichrist as a person associated with all four of the ancient world empires, suggests that he will arise from a region which was part of all four of the previous world empires, which can only be the Middle East. The Antichrist cannot be from Italy, France or England and also be linked to the Greek, Babylonian or Medo-Persian Empires and be known as the Assyrian or king of the North.

The mustering of political power

The end-time establishment of an antichristian world empire will occur just as literally as the six consecutive world empires that existed since the founding of the ancient Babylonian Empire of Nimrod, followed by the Assyrian Empire, the restored Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire. All of them functioned in close association with false religions, giving rise to a sinister marriage between politics and religion. Devil-inspired political and religious power was used to physically oppress people, to manipulate them and to blind them by spiritual lies.

Exactly the same alliance between politics and religion will characterise the coming world empire of the Antichrist. John describes the end-time world dictator as a "beast" with a woman riding on its back, who is the personification of all the false religions on earth (Rev. 17:3-6). It is evident that the devil and his co-rulers do not only wish to pursue power, but also to be worshipped. They will be enforced by their mustering of political and religious power on a worldwide scale, as the unification of the world has always been the strategy of Satan and his cronies.

With a view to the realisation of this objective, the political ideology of the Antichrist will be that of globalism, which will comprise a completely new world order of international unity. Nations will be denationalised by abandoning their God-given sovereignty in order to become part of the Antichrist's world empire. Only a limited measure of local autonomy will be retained by national governments. Most of their functions will comprise the implementation of the decisions and

policies of the global government.

The main justification for the Antichrist's forming of a world empire will be assurance of international unity and harmony, thereby enabling human solutions to world problems and regional conflicts which lie beyond the capabilities of individual countries to solve. Shortly after his revelation, this new leader will distinguish himself as a diplomat of exceptional stature. Virtually overnight, he will conclude agreements and find solutions to problems which have afflicted the world for a long time. Because of this, he will be widely praised and gain a huge following, thereby quickly rising to a position of world leadership. He will ride the wave of popularity, and all governments and communities will be mightily impressed with his achievements – particularly with the success he will enjoy in the implementation of his ideology of unity, peace and reconciliation: “And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. ... And he was given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev. 13:3, 7).

However, the Antichrist's new world order of global unity, based on a false, humanistic peace and the socialistic merging of all people into a single class of planetary citizens, will only last for 3½ years. Opposition will arise against his government, particularly after he has declared himself to be God in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and subsequently demanded the worship of all people (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:15). An assassination attempt will be made against him, but with the aid of satanic powers his deadly wound will be healed (Rev. 13:3, 12).

Dramatic changes will be introduced into his style of governance, as he will suddenly change from being an international prince of peace into a military dictator. After this transformation, his ideology of globalism will be enforced by military power. Pressure will most likely be brought to bear on the kings who had previously been his co-rulers, to yield their authority to him, thus allowing him to become the uncontested sole ruler of the world (Rev. 17:13). That will bring to an end the Antichrist's 3½ year-long neo-Babylonian world Empire (the seventh head of the beast), and the beginning of his satanic reign of terror during the final 3½ years, referred to as the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 17:11).

During this time the world will be ruled by a satanic triumvirate: the dragon (Satan), the beast (the Antichrist), and the second beast (the false prophet). Overtly, it will be a two-man government consisting of the Antichrist and the false prophet. But from the spiritual realm, Satan will be in full control by taking decisions and transferring his power to the Antichrist: “And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2). Spiritually speaking, this will be darkest time in the entire history of humanity.

The antichristian new world order, which had started out with tempting slogans of unity, peace and harmony, propagated by an evil “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14-15), will culminate at this point in a worldwide Luciferic state in which oppression, murder, violence and the forced worship of Satan and the Antichrist, will be the order of the day.)

Religious power

Universal religious unity, i.e. the inherent unity of all faiths on earth, will be the religious ideology of the Antichrist. The basis of this ideology is theistic universalism, which falsely proclaims that the same god, known by different names, is worshipped in different ways by all faiths. It furthermore alleges that, despite obvious differences, all religions originated from the same source of cosmic wisdom. The logical conclusion of this is that the various religions are all awaiting the same universal messiah, despite the fact that they use different names for him.

This is indeed the ideology which paves the way for the coming of the Antichrist. He will have many facets: he will be the Christ to deluded Christians who remained behind after the repature, the Messiah to the Jews, the Imam Mahdi to the Muslims, Krishna to the Hindus, and the Maitreya Buddha to the Buddhists. He will unite these religions into a close alliance under his supreme leadership. They will join hands to form the ecumenical body referred to as “the mother of harlots” in Revelation 17:5. She will be recognised, empowered, supported, and used by the beast.

The Babylonian inter-faith body (the harlot woman) will be the bride of the Antichrist, as an

imitation of the church which is the bride of the true Christ. He will give her a position of power, including the right to persecute and even execute the tribulation saints who refuse to worship the beast (Rev. 17:6). He will use her to great effect in his campaign to establish world unity. All her followers will be made conscious of their common unity, and that belief will be the foundation of an international mystical brotherhood of all people. Once this ideology has been established, the realisation of social, political and economic unity will be achieved.

In keeping with his treacherous character, the marriage of the Antichrist to his bride (the false religions) will not last very long. After 3½ years he will declare himself to be God and demand the worship of all people. By then, the different religions, their churches, temples, synagogues and mosques will become redundant and be destroyed. The Antichrist will offer his bride the option of either accepting his claim of enhanced status from universal messiah to being God and worshipping him as such, or being executed if she refuses. The world alliance of religions and their association with the Antichrist will then be terminated: "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rev. 17:16).

The final religious objective of the Antichrist will be for himself to be worshipped as God along with Satan (Rev. 13: 4, 8). Thus, Satanism will be the only official world religion during the great tribulation (the second 3½ years).

The first phase of the Antichrist's religious ideology is currently being implemented in preparation for his coming. It will move through the following stages towards its final objective:

- **Religious equality.** All religions are of equal standing and none is better or more important than another. The playing-field is levelled, and they are all encouraged to join ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches and its affiliated bodies such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the Parliament for the World's Religions, and the United Religions Initiative, and to collaborate with other faiths in various ways. These forums are used to forge closer ties between the participating parties without compromising the identity of any of them. Interfaith actions are initially focused on moral, ethical, and socio-economic issues, with a view to promoting peace and tolerance in societies, and also to eliminating poverty and inequality. These ecumenical bodies are highly critical of evangelical Christians who refuse to associate with them.
- **Religious unity.** The collaboration between different faiths in the interest of peace and non-discriminatory policies in society gradually spills over into the religious sphere in order to narrow the doctrinal gap between them. This is done with a view to establishing a larger degree of spiritual brotherhood among the various faiths. This objective is realised by propagating the idea that all faiths worship the same God, and that they only used different names for the same Creator-God. When the lie is firmly established that the same universal God is worshipped by all religions, then these religions become partners and are no longer adversaries. According to multireligious ecumenical thinking of this nature all roads lead to Rome (all of them can attain salvation in their own way); consequently, they all await the appearance of the same world messiah who will be sent by the universal God to bring peace to the world.
- **An intimate alliance of world religions.** When the Antichrist appears as the common messiah of all faiths, he will unite this ecumenical body as his bride, on condition that they all recognise and worship him. Great power and honour will be bestowed upon them, and they will function as a corporate body. They will use their power and influence to persecute evangelical Christians who refuse to join hands with them in worshipping the Antichrist. The same persecution will also be applied to other fundamentalist faiths (or factions of faiths) who refuse to join the ecumenical body and peacefully participate in their actions.
- **Compulsory worship of Satan and the Antichrist.** True to his nature as the great betrayer, deceiver and abuser of humanity, the Antichrist's "marriage" to his "bride" will last for only 3½ years. After that, they will have served their purpose of following and worshipping him as the universal Christ of all faiths. At that stage the Antichrist will enter the rebuilt temple in

Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. Paul refers to him as: “the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4; cf. Dan. 11:36). He will immediately abolish the alliance of false religions and force them to worship him as God – no longer as simply their “messiah”. That will constitute their final act of rebellion against the true God, by which they will seal their fate in the lake of fire: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9-11).

This brings a tragic end to ecumenical compromise which started with the idea of religious equality. The moment that the uniqueness of the Christian faith as the only way to the Father is denied, and Christ is deprived of His deity in order to relegate Him to a level which equated Him with the false gods of other faiths, the way will have been prepared for the revelation of Satan’s false christ of all faiths (the Antichrist). All those who follow him, will end up in perdition. Even though his ideas may initially appear to be good and acceptable, they will be nothing more than the deceptions of Satan’s “angel of light” and therefore contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Economic power

The economic ideology of the Antichrist will be based on the centralised economic control of the world. This control will be exercised by the application of electronic aids which will additionally be used as a mechanism to monitor people’s locality and actions. In this way, the world’s entire population will become his slaves by not being able to work, buy or sell outside of his system. He will thus enforce his authority upon all people on earth.

A cashless, electronically-controlled world economy will be instituted, with the result that nobody will be able to buy or sell without the number of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:16-18). It is obvious from the context in which this number is discussed, that its allocation will provide economic rights to recipients while obliging them to recognise and worship the Antichrist (Rev. 13:15; 14:9-11; 20:4). An oath of allegiance to him will have to be laid down, which effectively means that people will sell their souls to the devil.

Satan’s specially empowered king will therefore be the political and religious head of the world and will additionally attain full control over the world economy. The Lord Jesus clearly warned people against the god of money, Mammon, and emphasised that one cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time (Luke 16:13).

Final preparations

At this point, the world will be ready for the rider on the white horse as described in Revelation 6:2. That will be the Antichrist who, for a short period of time, will succeed in ending wars and uprisings around the world, which will result in the demobilisation of troops everywhere. His successful exploits as diplomat and peacemaker will soon enable him to attain a position of political, religious and economic leadership on a global scale.

However, after only a few years things will go horribly wrong for him, giving rise to strong opposition to his reign. In reaction to this, he will institute a military dictatorship and rule by means of military decrees. The rider on the white horse of peace will suddenly have changed into the rider on the red horse of war, soon to be followed by the black horse of rationing and the pale horse of death (Rev. 6:3-8).

The world is heading for a “great tribulation” such as there has never been before (Matt. 24:21). However, this period will deceptively precede the false peace and unity of an antichristian new world order. All people are now awaiting this transformation in the hope that it will deliver them from their present woes and dilemmas. However, true Christians should not fix their hopes on events of this nature but rather on the imminent return of the heavenly Bridegroom: “Watch

therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Character of the Antichrist

The Bible mentions a number of key aspects of the Antichrist’s wicked, perverted, and distorted character:

- He will be lawless. After “he who restrains” (the Holy Spirit indwelling the church) has been taken out of the way, complete spiritual darkness will set in, followed by the revelation of the lawless one (2 Thess. 2:8), a name implying utter rejection of God’s right to rule over all people.
- He will be without integrity. By way of political fraud he will attain a position of leadership, and by the use of clever diplomacy and political manipulation, he will soon become the undisputed world leader (Dan. 9:27).
- He will be the big briber. Double standards, bribery and corruption will be the order of the day in his wicked regime. Special favours will be granted to his accomplices: “...he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain” (Dan. 11:39).
- He will be a satanic reformer. “He shall ... intend to change times and law” (Dan. 7:25). He will nullify various traditions and repeal laws that impede the freedom of people. He will possibly also abrogate the institution of marriage and even change the days of the week. In the geo-political sphere, he will remove the boundaries among the nations and institute a unified Babylonian world order of planetary citizens (Isa. 10:13; Rev. 13:3).
- He will be the man of sin and the son of perdition [the son of ruin, loss and pernicious ways] (2 Thess. 2:3). Disobedience, arrogance, rebellion, moral depravity and utter selfishness are manifestations of the spirit of sin, which will pave the way for the revelation of the man of sin. There will be no limit to the conceit and evil intentions of this dictator’s perverted character. His close companion, the false prophet, will deceive the nations into embracing sinful and occult practices.
- He will be the self-declared god of this world (2 Thess. 2:4). After having been honoured as world messiah for 3½ years, he will proceed to the most extreme form of rebellion against God by declaring himself to actually be God and thereby demand the worship of all people.
- Pride and self-exaltation will motivate him to claim the position of God as ruler of the universe (Dan. 11:36).
- He will be a blasphemer of the true God and of the saints (Rev. 13:5-6; Dan. 7:25).
- He will be the greatest hater and persecutor of Jews of all time. Although he will be accepted as Messiah by the Jews during the first 3½ years of the tribulation, he will order the killing of all Jews after they have revoked their covenant with him (Matt. 24:15-22).
- He will be a notorious occult practitioner who will use great powers given to him by Satan (Rev. 13:2). His coming will be “according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9).
- He will be the great deceiver of mankind. His coming will be “with all unrighteous deception among those who perish” (2 Thess. 2:10). Blaspheming God will be encouraged: “And men ... blasphemed the name of God ... and they did not repent and gave Him glory” (Rev. 16:9).
- He will be a man of violence and a murderer. “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many” (Dan. 11:44).
- He will be a psychopath with a schizoid personality: a man with many facets as he is also seen as a beast with many heads. At times he will be exceedingly friendly and charming while he deceives people – to the extent that no one will believe that there is anything evil in him. But there will also be times when the dark side of his character gains the upper hand

and provokes him to commit the most unimaginable cruelties. During the first half of the tribulation period the innocent, “angel of light” aspect of his personality will be dominant, while in the second 3½ years his dark and vicious character will be openly manifest. Because of his lack of moral principles, he will be completely unpredictable.

Emanating from the example of the Antichrist as a violent person and a man of sin, a culture of violence and sin will be established world-wide.

Comparison between Christ and the Antichrist

CHRIST	ANTICHRIST
He descended from heaven and appeared as Man, but He is of a heavenly origin (John 3:13; 6:38).	He will ascend out of the bottomless pit and emerge as man from the sea of nations (Rev. 17:8 and 13:1).
He is the Son of God who has come to reveal His heavenly Father and His righteousness to the world (John 14:9).	He is the son of perdition, the lawless one, who reveals the evil character of his father, the devil, to the world (2 Thess. 2:3).
He is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).	He will declare himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).
He is without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).	He is the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3-10).
He came in the Name of His Father (John 5:43).	He will come in his own name (John 5:43).
He came to glorify the Father (John 17:4).	He will glorify himself and blaspheme God (Rev. 13:4-6).
He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and came to reveal the Father (John 1:18, 14:9; 1 John 5:7).	He will form a triumvirate with the dragon and the false prophet and represent Satan on earth (Rev. 13:4, 11-12).
He is the Saviour of the world who came to redeem us from the power of Satan (1 John 4:14; Heb. 2:14-15).	He will make people slaves to sin and of his satanic empire of darkness, and control their lives (Rev. 13:7, 15-18).
He came to the world as a humble Servant to offer His life as a ransom for our sins (Mark 10:45).	He will be exalted in his own eyes and be a dictator who will ruin people’s lives (Dan. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4).
He came to save sinners and give them abundant life (1 Tim. 1:15; John 10:10-11).	He will come to scatter people abroad and to destroy them (Dan. 11:44).
He came to establish God’s righteousness on earth (Matt. 6:33; Acts 17:31).	He will promote wickedness and unrighteousness on earth (2 Thess. 2:3, 9-12).
He came to establish and fulfil the law (Matt. 5:17-18).	He will change times and laws (Dan. 7:25).
He brings true peace to men’s hearts (John 14:27; Luke 1:79).	He will create a false peace on earth (1 Thess. 5:3).
He came to unmask Satan as adversary and to destroy his works (Col. 2:15; 1 John 3:8).	He will worship the God of forces [Satan] with everything he has (Dan. 11:38).
He condemns greed and the excessive accumulation of material wealth (Luke 12:15).	He will gather vast riches and use them to bribe people in his kingdom (Dan. 11:39, 43).
He came to proclaim the truth about God, sin, salvation, heaven, and hell to people (Matt. 22:16; John 1:17; 8:31-32).	He will deceive humanity into believing lies that will lead to their eternal ruin (Matt. 24:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:9; cf. John 8:44).

He only associates with the true church that confesses His name as Saviour and rejects idols (John 14:6; 2 Cor. 6:14).	He associates with the false religions whose members are prepared to accept him as their messiah (Rev. 17:3-6).
His bride, the true church, will be glorified and be with Him forever in the new Jerusalem (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Thess. 4:17).	His bride, the false world church, the Mother of Harlots, will be destroyed by fire after 3½ years (Rev. 17:16).
He convicts people through the Spirit of truth who leads them into all truth (John 16:13).	He convicts people through the spirit of deceit to mislead them (2 Thess. 2:9; 1 John 4:3).
He will come from heaven in a cloud with glory and every eye will see Him! (Rev. 1:7).	He will emerge from the desert and might be seen on television (Matt. 24:26).
His kingdom will endure forever (Rev. 11:15).	His kingdom will be short-lived (Rev. 17:9-12).
He will conquer the Antichrist and achieve the final victory (Rev. 19:19-21).	He will be cast into the lake of fire forever when Jesus Christ comes (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).
His followers will all inherit an eternal and imperishable kingdom of everlasting joy (Col. 1:13-14; 2 Pet. 1:11).	His followers will share his eternal fate with him in hell, with wailing and gnashing of teeth (Rev. 14:9-11).

9. The False Prophet

The Antichrist will rule in close association with the false prophet, and that alliance will emphasise the strong mystical nature of his leadership position. This major prophet will be instrumental in deceiving humanity, he will convince people of all faiths to accept the Antichrist as their common saviour and world messiah, ultimate force them to accept his number and to worship him as God. The Bible says the following about the revelation of the false prophet:

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (Rev. 13:11-13).

The false prophet will be *another beast* in the same kingdom from which the *first beast* comes. He will simply be another of the same type as the first. He will look like a lamb but speak like a dragon. He will have the innocent appearance of a religious leader whose sole objective will be to unite the world and lead humanity into an era of peace and harmony. But when he speaks it will become evident that he is possessed to the extreme with the supernatural power and spirit of deception which is from the dragon, the devil. One of the most astonishing miracles he will perform will be to revive the Antichrist after he has been mortally wounded in the middle of the tribulation period (Rev. 13:3, 12).

The false prophet will be totally intolerant of the kingdom of God and of true Christians and he will speak blasphemously about them. He will glorify the Antichrist at the expense of Christ and astonish the world with his signs and wonders. Through his cunning he will cause deceit to prosper. The minds of people will be blinded by the god of this world (Satan); consequently they will be unable to discern between good and evil but will believe a lie (2 Cor. 4:4).

According to Revelation 13, the false prophet will be the right-hand man of the Antichrist. Satan knows that two are better than one. The false prophet will praise and magnify the beast, causing multitudes of people to accept, follow and worship him. The mass media, such as radio, television, the press, and the Internet, will be utilised to their full potential by the false prophet, who will be the chief propagandist and public relations mastermind for the Antichrist. He will spare no effort in deceiving and influencing people. All human brainpower and knowledge, including the educational systems and the entertainment world, will be mobilised in the service of the Antichrist.

In his hands, false religions, including compromised ecumenical Christianity, will be wielded as important weapons in establishing an inclusive alliance of all faiths. The false prophet will by no means forbid religion; instead, he will use it as a powerful tool to deceive the masses. However, evangelical Christianity will be forbidden because of its exclusive and non-ecumenical nature.

The evil spirit of Satan will possess both the Antichrist and the false prophet. The false prophet will imitate and oppose the work of the Holy Spirit in the following ten ways, in a concerted effort to draw all people into his false world religion:

- In the same way that the Holy Spirit introduces us to Jesus and teaches us to worship Him, the false prophet will introduce the Antichrist to humanity and teach them to worship him.
- The Holy Spirit calls and purifies a bride for Christ, which is the only true church. Through deception and apostasy the false prophet calls together a spiritually unchaste bride (the Mother of Harlots) for the Antichrist, which will include all the false religions.
- The Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness who convicts us of sin. The false prophet has a wicked spirit through which people will be encouraged to live in sin.
- The Holy Spirit proclaims the pure words of God to us so that we may be drawn to Him with cords of love. From the mouth of the false prophet an unclean spirit will come, speaking unclean words that will seduce the nations to enter into a covenant with Satan's king.

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who guides us into all truth. The false prophet will lie to the people of the world and trick them in order to make them captives of the spirit of error.
- The Holy Spirit gives us faith in God and His Son. The false prophet will mislead people to believe in Lucifer (Satan) and in the Antichrist.
- The Holy Spirit comforts us, and also encourages and empowers Christians to act righteously. The false prophet will frighten and oppress people, and also incite and empower them to act unrighteously.
- The Holy Spirit gives divine gifts to people to enable them to better serve the Lord. The false prophet will give demonic gifts to people to enable them to perform signs and wonders to deceive others.
- The Holy Spirit teaches us to worship God and to become partakers of His eternal life. The false prophet will force people to worship the image of the beast, thereby condemning themselves to eternal death.
- The Holy Spirit seals everyone who belongs to Christ as a child of God. The false prophet will induce people to be sealed with the mark of the Antichrist, thereby selling their souls to the devil.

A new ideology

The false prophet will undertake the ideological and religious brainwashing of humanity on behalf of the Antichrist. He will either emerge from the global alliance of false religions, or possibly from outside that alliance, but will gain full control over them within a short space of time. The religions of the world will then be exploited and engaged in making their followers subservient to the Antichrist and also to worship him. Revelation 13:14-18 clearly states that the false prophet will deceive the world into worshipping the beast and receiving his mark and number on their right hands and foreheads. This will result in the world being united in the political, religious *and* economic spheres under the leadership of the Antichrist.

The prevailing mindset in the kingdoms of God and Satan should be clearly distinguished from one another in order to clearly understand the state of mind which Satan's spirit of error has created throughout the ages to induce people to believe in his lies. The false prophet will enforce this depraved mindset to bring about its global manifestation.

The way of thinking that will be fundamental to the world empire of the Antichrist is monism – everything is one. The false prophet will apply this ideology of “everything is one” to all spheres of life in order to promote the emergence of cosmic holism. That means that all faiths will be one, that there will only be one Messiah for the whole world (the Bible calls him the Antichrist) and that there will be no counter-reality of a devil and a hell. During this time, Lucifer will be portrayed as an angel of light and pretends to be God.

A Christian worldview is diametrically opposed to the monistic philosophy of the Antichrist. The Bible does not teach monism but dualism – everything is two. Humanity is confronted by two big and incompatible realities, i.e. the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These two kingdoms are completely polarised and irreconcilable as God is opposed by Satan, Christ by the Antichrist, and the Holy Spirit by Satan's spirit of error. The two poles represent opposite characteristics such as light and darkness, heaven and hell, truth and lies, the narrow way and the broad way, salvation and damnation, and also the only true religion which stands in opposition to all the false religions.

In the kingdom of God the way of thinking is antithetical, leading to the drawing of boundaries in order to make a conceptual distinction between things. Thinking in opposites enables one to clearly discern between right and wrong. In the kingdom of Satan, the way of thinking is synthetic, or integrative, leading to the removal of boundaries to the point that everything is united into an all-embracing cosmic whole. In this kingdom there is no distinction between right and wrong because everything is permissible – all lifestyles, e.g. homosexuality, as well as all religions, are acceptable. The boundary between the natural and supernatural realms is not

recognised in Satan's empire, with the result that miracles, the use of occult powers such as witchcraft, self-healing, Eastern meditation, the summoning up of spirits, as well as cosmic wisdom for divination, are encouraged and practised as everyday phenomena. This category of powers is clearly occult and satanic in nature.

Like the Antichrist, the false prophet's coming will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thess. 2:9-10). He will use his satanic powers to seduce people to worship the Antichrist as God, and also to accept his number on their right hand or forehead. John says:

"And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666" (Rev. 13:12-18).

Like never before, the world will be exposed to religious deception with a view to accepting the Antichrist's new world order and to eventually ensure that Satan and the Antichrist are worshipped as God. The forerunners of the false prophet are already actively busy with spiritual deception and brainwashing of this nature. In South Africa, there are various theologians who are completely caught up in Satan's monistic and synthetic way of thinking. They can no longer discern between concepts such as heaven and hell, and for that reason they tend to deny the existence of both. No longer do they have the ability to discern between the only true religion and all the false religions, which explains why they become involved with ecumenical and interfaith activities in which they associate with all faiths. Neither can they discern between Christ and the Antichrist; consequently, they deny prophecies on the coming of the Antichrist and will therefore accept him as Christ when he does come.

Enforcement

According to the Bible, the monistic ideology of "everything is one" will be propagated and enforced on all levels of society after the coming of the Antichrist. It will be regarded as the only basis for morally correct values and a disposition of compromise by way of social, cultural, and religious converging and unification among all nations on earth. There will be no room provided for exclusive group rights – least of all for the highly exclusive Christian faith. In the traditionally Christian world, the Christian faith is also losing its status as the only true religion in society.

Right from the start of the tribulation period, those who take a stand for the true Christ and against the Antichrist, will have to distance themselves from the merging neo-Babylonian global society, its culture, ideology, values and mystical religious practices. They should not do that only for the sake of their own survival. They should accept it as their duty to proclaim the antithetic (contrasting) biblical principles and values among the confused and deceived victims of the Antichrist, the false prophet and their new world order. Even though the risk may be high, there will be no other honourable course of action.

Like never before, human lives will be at stake, and people will have to be urgently warned against spiritual deception, the conclusion of a covenant with the devil by accepting the mark of the Antichrist, and also against eternal condemnation which follows. Satan first tries to blind people's minds through deception (2 Cor. 4:4), and subsequently uses them to do his dirty work by deceiving millions of other people. Their only reward for this work will be everlasting perdition.

Once the false prophet has seduced millions of people into becoming followers of the Antichrist

by means of spiritual deception, those who continue to stubbornly refuse to bow down before the Antichrist will be summarily executed. Biblical Christianity is absolutely exclusive and cannot associate or merge with any other religion. This exclusivity is the main reason for the false religions always having been, and still are, resentful and vindictive towards Christianity. In the tribulation period, under the guidance of the false prophet, followers of false religions will gain the right *and* the power to give full expression to their age-old campaign of hatred against evangelical Christianity.

In collaboration with the false prophet, the Antichrist will eradicate all spiritual opposition. Revelation 13:7 says: "It was granted him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." After this, unclean spirits that do signs and wonders will proceed from the dragon (Satan), the Antichrist and the false prophet to deceive the kings of the earth into mobilising their armies for a great war against Israel (Rev. 16:13-14). Although they will also be intent on destroying the remnant of Israel, their main target will be the coming Messiah – the Holy One of Israel. This futile exercise will be aimed at dethroning Jesus Christ and destroying the remnants of Christianity and Israel.

When Jesus comes from heaven, descending to place His feet on the Mount of Olives, there will not be an extended battle or any conversation with the satanic rulers. They will immediately be captured alive and cast into the lake of fire: "Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20).

The days of the satanic triumvirate are numbered, and their final destination will be the lake of fire. At the end of the great tribulation, only the Antichrist and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire, as Satan will be bound in a bottomless pit where he will be incarcerated for the full duration of Christ's thousand-year reign. According to Revelation 20:7-10, subsequent to the thousand-year period, Satan will be released for a short time to launch his final rebellion on earth. That will be a test to the people on earth, as Satan's work of deception will reveal who truly belong to Jesus Christ, and who do not.

Those who are not born again, will immediately fall under Satan's power and join him in revolting against Christ. Their eternal destiny, together with the satanic triumvirate and their great following of demons, will be in the lake of fire: "And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

The lost people of all the ages will then appear before the great white throne and, because of their unsaved state and all their evil works, they will be condemned to the same lake of fire: "And anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

The end of the way of sin and rebellion against God is death. But God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and for that reason they should be called to repentance now, before it is too late (Ezek. 33:11). Once you are before the great white throne, it will be too late to settle your case with the Lord. There the wicked will hear only the following words of condemnation: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

10. Spiritual Warfare

In the light of the extensive influence which Satan and his demons wield over human lives, it is very important how we handle this problem in order to ward off the assault on our lives and to gain victory in the battle. The Lord has given us various commands on spiritual defence in His Word, e.g. that we should give no place to the devil and his ideas (Eph. 4:27); that we should resist him, his temptations and the deceptive efforts of his collaborators (Jas. 4:7; Matt. 24:4); that we must realise that we are engaged in a spiritual battle in which we should make use of spiritual weapons (1 Pet. 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 10:3-5); that we should be soldiers who put on the full armour of God, and above all, that we should be empowered by the Holy Spirit to successfully fight the good fight of faith (Eph. 6:10-11; 1 Tim. 6:12).

Unfortunately, Christians are not unanimous in their views on how this battle should be fought, since not all of them have the correct dispensational understanding of the Bible. A large number of Christians do not realise that the kingdom dispensation, in God's plan for humanity, will only be introduced after the second coming of Christ, since He first has to return as King of kings to destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist, bind the devil and restore the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Those who do not entertain a futuristic view on the revelation of God's kingdom, wrongfully conclude that the devil is currently bound in a pit, that the church has been empowered to destroy all the vestiges of this evil kingdom in society, that Christians should display great powers and that they should rule as kings in the present time. They use unbiblical methods of strategic spiritual warfare, particularly during transformation meetings and prayer marches, to try and expel the devil and his demons from a particular city or country. Firstly, we will briefly review this deceptive practice before discussing the biblical form of spiritual warfare, which is primarily aimed at the needs of individual believers.

Strategic spiritual warfare

There is a growing movement among Christians who are committed to using prayer and strategic spiritual warfare to break down demonic strongholds over cities and even countries, thereby ousting the devil. These strongholds are associated with so-called territorial demons (Otis, 1997). Specific societal sins are linked to these strongholds, e.g. foreign religions, witchcraft, ancestor worship or crime. It is believed that when these evil strongholds have been destroyed and their power has been broken, the spiritual blinding of the people will disappear, leading to a great Christian revival in which virtually all people in a particular city or region will come to repentance. The entire community will then experience a Christian transformation, superstition and poverty will vanish and prisons will become empty, etc.

The pioneers of the transformation movement are George Otis of the Sentinel Group in America (Malan, 2000), and Peter Wagner of the World Prayer Centre in Colorado Springs (Wagner, 2000). Around the turn of the century, Peter Wagner took a prayer group to Turkey to overthrow the strongholds of Islam in that country, and then declared the country free from oppressive demonic influences. Subsequently, neither the spiritual situation nor the grip of Islam has changed in that country, and therefore the expected revival and Christian transformation have never occurred. Similar actions were undertaken without success in South Africa and many other countries around the world, which have only given rise to false expectations.

As a first step, spiritual mapping is done in which the typical sins of a community are determined and described. These sins are regarded as spiritual strongholds which must be pulled down in faith in order to liberate that society. After allegedly breaking the strongholds of evil, gatekeepers are appointed to take up position on important access routes and at airports, in an attempt to keep demons from returning to the liberated areas and again control over them again.

Strategic spiritual warfare is among the various forms of so-called kingdom now theology. These people take promises meant for the revealed kingdom of Christ after His second coming (i.e. the thousand-year reign of peace) and wrongly apply them to the church dispensation. Among these promises are that the devil will be bound and therefore unable to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:2-

3), sin, crime and warfare will vanish (Jer. 3:17; Isa. 2:4), the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9), entire cities and countries will serve the Lord (Zech. 8:20-21; Isa. 19:23-25), and Christians will rule on earth together with the Lord Jesus (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:6).

Certain church fathers and theologians have proclaimed the wrong view that the kingdom dispensation during which the devil will be bound, will not follow after the second coming of Christ, but applies to the period between His first and second coming, i.e. the church dispensation. According to them, the devil is now bound and it is the Lord's will that the world should be taken over and ruled by His church. We need therefore only to be awakened to this vision and to start driving the devil away from planet earth in order to establish a Christian world. For this purpose the Lord will call prophets and apostles to unite Christianity, and to perform great signs and miracles to demonstrate their supernatural power.

Because of their unbiblical understanding of spiritual warfare, several of this movement's leaders have been caught up in extreme charismatic thinking and practices. Their revival vision is based upon a dramatic display of extra-Biblical revelations and signs, and as a consequence, they have become primarily focussed on experiential theology. They are also expressly ecumenical as their final objective is the founding of united city churches. In this regard, Peter Wagner even refers to the post-denominational church of the 21st century, into which all churches will converge. He also refers to an "apostolic revival" in which the Lord will raise up specially anointed apostles and prophets, endowed with special powers to rule over the united city churches. To this end, there should often be mass-meetings in stadiums and other large venues where Christians can be conditioned to work together and forget about their theological differences. The entire movement is built upon compromise, in the interest of the vision that the united church of Christ should at this time take control of the world and rule over it. (For more information on the New Apostolic Reformation, see Simpson, 2012).

However, the fact remains that we are sojourners and pilgrims in a world which lies in the sway of the evil one (1 John 5:19). We will not conquer the world and rule over it, but instead be hated and persecuted by the world (John 15:19). The spiritual warfare as discussed in this chapter, has a personal relevance in that the Lord delivers individuals from sin and temptations, and gives them strength to remain standing. They will not take over the world, but will shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15). We are not kings and rulers, but soldiers for the cross. While we become more holy, the world will become more evil (Rev. 22:11).

The Battle against the Evil One

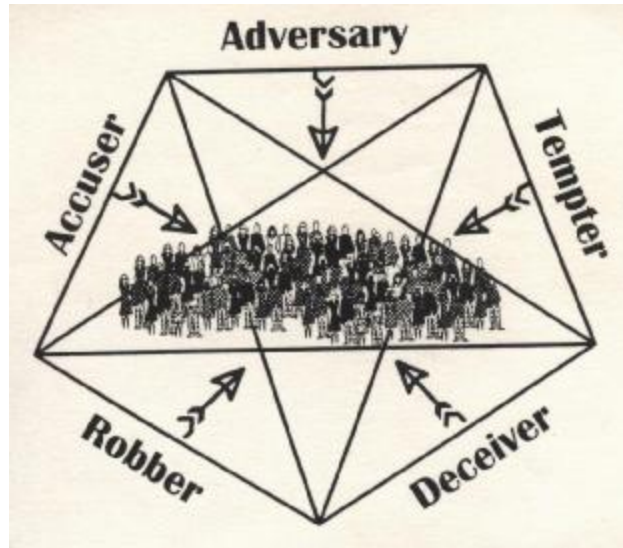
Every Christian who has been delivered from the bondage of Satan through rebirth is engaged in a spiritual battle against the power of the evil one. Not a single Christian is exempt from this battle. In order to prevail in this battle we should consciously resist evil in the power of the Lord:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:10-13).

The armour of God is a standard spiritual ability with which all true believers are equipped to enable them to fight the good fight of faith. Paul does not refer to it as a special gift which is reserved solely for those who have a deliverance ministry to deliver people from demon possession. He had in mind the usual daily battle of the believer.

Although this battle is fought on a spiritual level, it is nevertheless a very real battle against a big and formidable force of demons under the command of Satan. The comprehensive nature of the spiritual battle is evident from the fact that it is fought against believers from five fronts. In each case the enemy adopts a different guise and uses another strategy to accomplish his seduction and subversion. Satan or one of his collaborators may come as adversary, tempter, deceiver,

robber or accuser.



In each of these five areas we must be able to clearly identify the guise and strategy of the enemy in order to be able to offer effective resistance against him.

Adversary

In the first and most important instance the devil is described as the Christian's adversary who is bent on his ruin or detriment in every area of his life: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

This position of confrontation is unavoidable: the devil is our adversary who opposes us in every possible way and also places stumbling-blocks on our way. Our command is to resist him in faith and in so doing also to become his adversary. We should not shut our eyes to encounters of this nature by arguing them away. Many people ascribe problems of this nature to negative circumstances or other causes, and fail to recognise the role of the enemy of their souls. Such people do not pursue spiritual solutions to their problems. They hope for the best and accept defeat in a fatalistic way, but they remain losers in the battle.

The intensity of Satan's opposition knows no bounds, because as a murderer, he is devoted to killing people. Wars, disasters, accidents, incitement to suicide, and various other means are employed by him to give vent to his aggression and murderousness. He does not have unlimited powers over people, however, from within the boundaries of his restrictions, he relentlessly pursues his objectives. In addition to sudden, violent attacks, he also uses an array of slower methods to achieve his purpose. Many people's lives are ruined over a long period of being enslaved to liquor, tobacco, drugs, sexual perversions and various other addictions.

Countless problems, obstacles, disappointments and irritations are employed by Satan to discourage Christians, to persuade them to abandon their efforts in the service of the Lord, and to sink into a dark pit of depression. Among such problems are conflicts between family members, friends, colleagues, and others. The harsh and incessant criticism of those who hold different religious or ideological persuasions may also lead to their despondency. Often this leads them to accept defeat by burying the differences and by no longer contending for the truth, in an attempt to maintain good relations and to lessen animosity.

The devil can also launch attacks on your economic interests and material possessions in order to harm and impoverish you, and break down your morale. All the multiple ways in which he can attack you, whether they be through people or through circumstances, should be resisted in the name of the Lord and the battle against him should be continued. Never acknowledge defeat, but endure and remain steadfast in your faith. Follow the example of the Lord Jesus, who never succumbed to the pressure against Him: "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet

resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:3-4).

Tempter

The devil tempts people to commit moral sins by enticing them through their fleshly lusts. Due to the fallen nature of humanity, which is the result of our first parents having been deceived by the devil, “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9) and is inclined towards sinning. The following are examples of some of the sins which Satan may tempt our unregenerate, fallen nature to succumb to:

narcissism,	evil desires,
pride,	gluttony,
love of money,	covetousness,
stealing,	adultery,
bribery,	slander,
fornication,	anger,
lying,	wrath,
unfaithfulness,	filthy language.

A prayerful and holy life surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ is needed to overcome these and other temptations: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak” (Matt. 26:41).

Do not yield to temptations, but submit yourself to the Lord and resist the devil. The Lord Jesus will understand your problem, and is also able to help you because He Himself experienced and overcame temptations:

“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

We are also repeatedly admonished to deny ourselves and crucify the old nature, lest we be an open target for moral sins (Luke 9:23; Gal. 6:14). If we fail to surrender the old nature to be crucified, victory over temptations will continue to elude us. Paul impressed it upon the Ephesian believers:

“...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

Without a complete surrender of this nature you will continually experience an inner conflict with your old self, and will thus be unable to successfully resist the tempter.

Deceiver

Another guise in which Satan fights against believers is that of deceiver. This refers to religious deception and fraud. He exploits people’s ignorance and presents them with all sorts of religious lies in order to lead them astray. Apostatising is the inevitable consequence of this deception: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Apostatising of this nature is the order of the day in Christian churches (2 Tim. 4:1-4), while religious lies remain the basis of the non-Christian religions of the world. In the end-time, the spirit of error will be particularly active in deceiving humanity into honouring and following the Antichrist and his false prophets: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many” (Matt. 24:4-5).

Peter says: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who

bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Destructive heresies are introduced into various theological faculties of prominent universities, by which pastors are already being deceived during their student years. It is presently a common phenomenon that the virgin birth and deity of Jesus, His resurrection from the dead and the promise of His second coming, as well as the divine inspiration of the Bible, are openly and blatantly denied by a large number of theologians. Another lie which is often heard is that all religions are worshipping the same God, and are therefore awaiting the same world messiah. This lie also comes from the father of all lies, and is used to prepare the way for the coming of the Antichrist as the universal messiah of all faiths.

A lack of knowledge of what the Scriptures say is the breeding-ground for religious deception. However, it is not necessary to live in ignorance since the full truth on spiritual matters has been revealed in the Bible: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). If we would only allow Him, the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth and also proclaim to us the things to come (John 16:13).

The nominal believers of the end-time have been deceived by Satan, and because of their own negligence they have lost the battle against religious fraud and lies. They have gathered around them a great number of false teachers, turned their ears away from the truth and now believe in myths (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They are not waging a spiritual war against the spirit of error, and have already been taken captive by the enemy (1 John 4:1-6).

Robber

It is one of the most important strategies of Satan to rob Christians. He is intent on impoverishing them spiritually as well as materially. In stead of allowing people to grow and mature up in their faith and become strong in the Lord, he tries to render them embittered and disheartened, thereby inducing them to backslide: “...looking diligently lest anyone should fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up should cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (Heb. 12:15).

When the devil robs you of your spiritual peace and weakens your faith, you may become embittered against your circumstances, towards other people and even towards God. This disposition may cause you to backslide, to discontinue your spiritual ministry, and also to lose the rewards of faith which, according to 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Revelation 22:12, you could have received for a dedicated life of service to the Lord: “Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11; cf. Rev. 2:25).

John also warns that we should be on the look out for the robber who will do everything possible to rob us of our reward: “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 John v. 8).

Apart from the spiritual damage which the Robber can cause, he is also out to rob you of your money, possessions, health and many other things. He knows that when he succeeds in doing so, you will be restricted in the extent to which you can serve the Lord and provide financial support to His work on earth.

The devil is indeed a thief who is committed to breaking in and stealing in order to rob people in various ways of their possessions and heritage. The Lord Jesus said: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Are you alert against the cunning strategies and clever schemes of the Robber? Are you mindful of the damage which he can cause to us if we do not live vigilant and conscientious lives? If you follow a permissive and careless lifestyle by leaving a backdoor or window open to the Robber, he will enter in and cause havoc in your personal life, your household, your marriage and your work. This may cost you dearly, causing you to end up in a wilderness of defeat and despondency.

Accuser

One of the important activities of Satan is that he acts as accuser in the spiritual war which he wages against Christians.

In the first place he accuses them at the throne of God after he has successfully tempted or deceived them. Satan has access to the throne of God, and this situation will continue until the middle of the tribulation period when he will be finally cast down: "...the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down" (Rev. 12:10).

As far as these accusations are concerned, the Bible gives us the following assurance: "And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). But we should ensure that we walk in the light by immediately confessing all the sins which we commit (1 John 1:7). In this way, Satan is deprived of any influence that he may have gained over your life.

In the second place the devil also accuses Christians before unsaved, secular authorities to which Paul refers as "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Here, we are hated and persecuted. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). That is the consequence of Satan's accusations against the children of God. His purpose with this strategy is to bring Christians into disfavour in order that they may be deprived of privileges such as Christian education and religious freedom.

In the third place, Satan accuses one believer before the other in an effort to sow seeds of discord and disunity among the brethren by driving in wedges between them. We should not entertain grievances or yield to vindictive thoughts of this nature, as that would play into the hands of the enemy in undermining the world of the Lord. Resist all incitements of this nature and guard the peace and unity among the true brethren in Christ, "bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also must do" (Col. 3:13).

Rather assist a brother who is faltering: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). We must indeed convince, rebuke and exhort where necessary but that should be done with all long-suffering and teaching (2 Tim. 4:2). Do not allow the devil to influence you into rejecting, hating or persecuting the brethren. If you do, you will weaken Christianity by engaging in infighting. If we allow this to happen, we will only harm ourselves and never win the war to which we are committed.

In the fourth place, the devil will also accuse you personally and try to instil a guilt complex in you. Not only does he accuse you of recent sins, but also of sins which you committed long ago and for which you have already been fully forgiven. He does this in an attempt to revive old problems, grievances and sins, and to use them to condemn you and render you with a deplorable self-worth.

He will tell you how bad you are, how unpardonable your sins are, how irrevocably you have sinned against the Holy Spirit, and how miserably you have failed in your service to the Lord. In this way he intends to burden you with guilt, destroy your faith and render you completely depressed, disheartened and powerless. The suggestion is instilled in you to withdraw from all activities and keep a low profile so that more able people can do the work. When the unfortunate victim accepts this advice, the accuser of the brethren has succeeded with his purpose. The purpose will be to ensure the withdrawal of another soldier from the battlefield to isolate himself somewhere to meditate on his failures, weaknesses and deprivation in life. A root of bitterness will spring up in his heart and it will be sustained by renewed fleshliness and negative thoughts.

Stand on the promises of God in His Word, put your trust in Him, and thus shield yourself against the fiery darts of the wicked one. We must learn how to distinguish between Satan's false accusations through which he wants to undermine our faith and discourage us, and the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit who wants to lead us to greater holiness.

The Battle for the Mind

From the preceding description of the spiritual war it is quite obvious that the attacks of the enemy are comprehensive. The effects of this battle often extend into the physical realm where they manifest as adverse circumstances in our daily lives. These circumstances are always aimed at discouraging us and weakening us spiritually. The victory must, therefore, be gained in the spiritual realm if we are not to be paralysed by the enemy and surrendered to the bondage of sin. This is essentially a battle for the spiritual control of the mind and body. Paul says:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

From this description of the spiritual war it is obvious that the enemy’s strongholds in our lives are the result of vain reasoning and fleshly exaltation that arise from evil, misguided thoughts. If the strongholds of sin are to be pulled down and eliminated, every thought must be taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Should this not be done, the enemy of our souls will gain a large measure of control over us by establishing wicked and uncontrolled thoughts or desires in our hearts and minds.

Due to our fallen human nature, our contact with the world and our inability to determine the origin of all ideas, there are various ways in which we can be tempted to sin:

- Wrong ideas and evil intentions may emerge from your own fleshly nature and subconscious mind. “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15; see also Mark 7:21-23). Remember that the *old man* (your old, sinful nature) is completely corrupted by deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 6:6). It cannot be reformed, therefore it must be crucified.
- Many of the things that you see are pleasing to fleshly desires and also lead to sin: “For all that *is* in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16; see also Matt. 5:28).
- Sinful thoughts are often stimulated by immoral TV shows, pornographic videos and magazines, or the conducting of immoral discussions. Do not expose yourself to these evils: “Do not be deceived: Evil communications corrupts good habits” (1 Cor. 15:33).
- Doubts, evil thoughts and sinful desires are stimulated by spiritual agents from the kingdom of darkness. They have the ability to aim fiery darts at you (Eph. 6:16), thus defiling your mind. They can also cause your thoughts to wander and render them uncontrollable when you want to read God’s Word, pray or listen to a sermon.

Have you given the enemy the opportunity to make inroads into your mind and establish strongholds of sin in your life? Please recognise that these sins may have started with a single thought or evil suggestion that you could not resist or did not subject to the authority of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Once certain ideas are established in your mind, they often tend to dominate your thinking and actions.

From the roof of his palace King David saw a beautiful woman who was bathing, and coveted her. He devised an evil plan to get rid of her husband in order to have her as his wife. He acted on the spur of the moment and did not subject his desires and plans to the authority of the clear precepts in the Word of God. In the process he transgressed the following commandments: “You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. ... You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife” (Ex. 20:13-14, 17).

Instead of observing these statutes, David entertained all sorts of fleshly rationalisation and evil schemes to gratify his lusts. In doing so, he allowed the enemy to erect a stronghold of murder and adultery in his life. After realising his awful sin and defeat by Satan, David was a broken man under the strong conviction of sin. He unconditionally put his trust in the Lord to forgive him

for his very serious sins and to restore him to a Spirit-filled life of dedication and obedience: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ... Blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and restore a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Ps. 51:7-12).

The strongholds of sin were immediately pulled down in his heart, and the fear of the Lord restored. Always reassert the authority of God over your mind and all the thoughts and desires of your heart. Test all your thoughts and ideas before accepting them. If they are not in full agreement with the Word of God, then reject them: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if *there is any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).

Sinful thoughts must be dealt with immediately, and not be given any chance to establish themselves in your heart or mind. The fiery darts of the enemy, as well as doubts and vain arguments that exalt themselves against the truth of the Word, can be quenched by the shield of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:16).

If you do not shield yourself against evil thoughts, they will take root in you and eventually get to have their way with you. They will actively oppose and slowly begin to subdue the good thoughts. In the process they will defile your mind and undermine your motivation to serve the Lord by inducing you to say and do wrong things. Are the thoughts of your heart under control and well pleasing to the Lord, or are you wilfully and foolishly accommodating evil thoughts?

Spiritual Weapons

We are commanded to make use of the weapons that God has provided for us in the battle against Satan and all his evil devices. We need not necessarily be spiritually defeated or forced into retreat: “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

There is an arsenal of at least five weapons in the armoury of light which are available to us for the waging of spiritual warfare. Not only should we become aware of these weapons but also become skilled in their use:

Faith

Our relationship of faith with the Lord should be very strong and unshakable to ensure that we will put our trust in Him under all circumstances, to make us more than conquerors in the Lord Jesus. We must know and believe that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Without faith in the Conqueror we are defenceless in the battle against sin and unrighteousness. The following scriptures underscore the fact that we are in a spiritual battle in which faith in the Lord is a strong and victorious weapon against the evil one and all his plans:

- “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).
- “...taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6:16).
- “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12).
- “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Are you prepared to quench the fiery darts of the devil with the shield of your faith in the Lord Jesus or are you unprotected against all the confusing, deceiving, insinuating and unclean thoughts that the devil launches at you? Take refuge in Christ against all the attacks of the enemy, as you will never overcome Satan in your own power. Faith in the finished work of Christ

on the cross will make you more than a conqueror. “The name of the Lord *is* a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10). Remember that you can only achieve victory in the name of the Lord – never in your own strength.

The Blood of the Lamb

It is important that our spiritual protection and victory should be based upon the shed blood of the Lamb! He died on the cross, “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

The blood of Jesus which He shed on the cross when He laid down His life has power over all the temptations and schemes of Satan. It can cleanse us from sin by breaking all its bonds: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

During the coming great tribulation when the devil will come down to earth with great wrath knowing that he has but a short time (Rev. 12:12), the tribulation saints will all die physically as martyrs, but they will overcome the Antichrist by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11). Do you seek spiritual protection under the blood of Christ when the devil attacks you, and do you also pray for this protection over your loved ones as well as others for whom you intercede? They are all desperately in need of spiritual protection.

The blood of Christ, which is the symbol of His atoning death, gives life (John 6:53-56), it cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7), and ensures victory in the battle against the evil one (Rev. 12:11).

Christian Testimony

Identifying ourselves fully with the victory of Jesus on the cross and waiting on the Lord to fill us with His Holy Spirit, gives us confidence to openly witness to other people, to resist the devil, and the willingness to suffer for Christ: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11; cf. Heb. 10:35, 13:13; Matt. 5:14-16).

Testimony plays an extremely important role in the life of a Christian. By so doing he confirms his faith and performs a basic activity without which his faith could have been regarded as dead (Jas. 2:14-26). Paul explains the close relationship between faith and confession as follows: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10). We confess our lost state to the Lord Jesus when we receive Him as our Saviour, and afterwards we testify about our saved state to the world.

We have a clear command to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus in an agnostic and apostate world (John 20:21; Acts 1:8). In this way many victories have been achieved for the cross, leading to the powerful expansion of God’s kingdom in many parts of the world. Without Christian witness and preaching, millions of people would still have lived in spiritual darkness, with their minds being blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

Prayer

A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. Intercession according to the will of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, can really change things. It moves the mighty arm of God and brings many blessings to people: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16). Prayer operates in association with faith: “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like the wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord” (Jas. 1:6-7).

To pray prevailing prayers we should “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). We should live holy lives and pray in accordance with the will of God: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).

When we draw near to the throne of grace and subject ourselves in prayer to the grace and omnipotence of God, the devil will flee from us: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

If we ignore the attacks of the devil, simply shrug them off as an illusion, or try to ward them off by resorting to psychological or medical therapy, the problems will become more deeply entrenched, which will have even more serious consequences. If we take refuge in the Lord by taking our burdens to Him in prayer, and also ask others to intercede for us, He will certainly deliver us from evil: "...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Pet. 2:9). The devil will return again later, but then we should know where our strength is: "...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6: 10). The victory belongs to Him who is mighty to save (Ps. 34:15; 46:1; 65:2).

The Word

The Word of God is a mighty weapon in the battle against temptation, deception, unbelief, and other attacks that the enemy may launch against us. To be able to use it we must believe it and have knowledge of it: "And take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). It is a living and powerful word which penetrates deep into my heart to do its conviction there: "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

The Bible is the final authority for truth, and in terms of its precepts all thoughts can be judged as good or evil. Because the Word is like a sword that pierces the depths of my soul, it is able to fully reveal the true nature of my thoughts and intentions. It works in conjunction with my conscience to show me what is right and wrong.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a dynamic power to salvation for everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). It has the ability to deliver every unsaved sinner who truly believes in it, from the power of Satan. The Word has an authority and power which is guaranteed by God Himself by virtue of Christ's victory on the cross: "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). Make sure that you experience the liberating power of the Word every day, and that you walk in its light: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).

Are your footsteps anchored in God's Word? "Direct my steps by Your Word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me" (Ps. 119:133).

We can be more than conquerors in the battle against the powers of darkness if we do not deviate to the right or to the left of the narrow path of the Lord. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4).

Always remember that amidst the multiple ministries of the Holy Spirit there are two fundamental reasons why He wants to endow you with power from on high. The first reason is to empower you to be a witness for Christ (Acts 1:8). The second reason is to equip you for spiritual warfare, and with this end in view Paul says: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11). It is only from the position of a Spirit-filled life that we can be strong witnesses who are able to prevail over the evil one.

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About the author

In August 1978, Johan Malan was appointed professor of Anthropology at the University of the North (presently the University of Limpopo) near Polokwane in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, and in January 2006 he retired. He and his wife, Wilma, now live in Mossel Bay in the Southern Cape. They have two married sons.

As the son of a missionary, the late Rev. J.S. Malan, Johan was taught by his parents to respect the Bible in its original languages as the inerrant and literally inspired Word of God. This resulted, among others, in Johan accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour, while also interpreting the large body of biblical prophecies related to the second coming of Christ, as well as the end-time emergence of a satanically-inspired new world order, as literal truth.

During the course of his life, the author became intensely aware of the highly polarised reality in which we live, being influenced from spiritual spheres by the kingdom of God as well as the opposing kingdom of Satan. Johan soon realised the vital importance of gaining knowledge of both these kingdoms, as that will help us to not only understand the diverse influences upon all human beings, but to learn from the Bible how to be transformed spiritually so as to deal with the incessant phenomenon of evil.

In this book, the focus is on the nature of evil influencing of humanity, as well as the basic principles of spiritual warfare in which we have to engage if we earnestly want to prevail in the battle against evil.

Several of Johan's articles and books may be read and freely downloaded from his website: www.bibleguidance.co.za