

# **The Cleansing of the Heavens**

The Accuser Cast Down

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Take note that the name satan and related names are not capitalized. We choose not to acknowledge him, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

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“For where your treasure is,  
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**Behold, He putteth no trust in His saints;  
yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight**

**(Job 15:15).**

**It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things  
in the heavens should be purified with these;  
but the heavenly things themselves  
with better sacrifices than these**

**(Hebrews 9:23).**

# **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my father, Clarence E. Roser, who served the Lord with me for 11 years in Uttermost Missions and now resides in a Heaven cleansed of the accuser. He died one week after the book's completion.

This book is dedicated also to all those who love the Word of God and who seek to know the truth regarding the cleansing of the heavens.

# **Acknowledgments**

With deep appreciation to my wife, Patricia, who allowed me many hours of writing and has always encouraged me to give God my best.

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# Contents

	Foreword	xiii
	Introduction	xv
<b>Part One</b>	<b>The Cleansing of the Heavens Explained</b>	<b>1</b>
Chapter One	The Accuser in Heaven Exposed	3
Chapter Two	The Accuser and the Law	19
Chapter Three	The Accuser's Origin	33
Chapter Four	The Accuser's Judgment Foretold	49
Chapter Five	The Accuser and the Advent of Christ	67
Chapter Six	The Accuser and the Cross	79
Chapter Seven	The Accuser and Christ's Descent Into Hell	89
Chapter Eight	The Accuser and the Cleansing of Heaven	103
Chapter Nine	The Accuser Cast Down	115
Chapter Ten	The Accuser Under Our Feet	127
<b>Part Two</b>	<b>The Cleansing of the Heavens Applied</b>	<b>141</b>
Chapter Eleven	The Accuser and Spiritual Warfare	143
Chapter Twelve	The Accuser and the Cleansing of the Heavenlies	153
Chapter Thirteen	The Accuser and the Last Days	165
Chapter Fourteen	The Accuser's Ultimate End	183
Chapter Fifteen	The Accuser Overcome By the Blood	191
Chapter Sixteen	The Accuser Overcome By the Word of Our Testimony	207
Chapter Seventeen	The Accuser and Freedom From Guilt and Fear	221
Bibliography		239

# Foreword

As the months go by, I am increasingly amazed at the rapidity with which God seems to be providing to the Body of Christ new (to many of us) weapons of spiritual warfare, while sharpening the ones we already have. Why would He be doing such a thing? My judgment is that God is mobilizing His people as a massive spiritual army commissioned to move the Kingdom of God into the remaining territories of the earth where satan and his forces have been the most deeply entrenched and where they still enjoy almost free reign. God is still in the business of bringing people out of darkness into light and from satan's power into His saving power.

I have had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with some of the most anointed leaders of this extraordinary move of God on all six continents. My role as Coordinator of the International Spiritual Warfare network allows me to interact constantly with top-level intercessors, prophets, prayer leaders, teachers, apostles, prophetic intercessors, pastors, and other anointed leaders of the formidable army that God is assembling in our days. As such, I have at times been among the first to know what the Holy Spirit has been saying about such things as strategic-level spiritual warfare, spiritual mapping, identificational repentance, prayer walking, commitment to the land, prayer expeditions, and the like.

I mention this as background for relating my initial reaction on reading Dr. Mark Roser's *The Cleansing of the Heavens*. I was barely into the earliest chapters when I began saying to myself, *Wait a minute! I am reading things that I have never heard before!* If you are like me, your first reaction to such a thing is suspicion—where is this man coming from? As I continued to read, I began running down in my mind the roster of the outstanding leaders I had helped bring together in the Spiritual Warfare Network, quickly reviewing the discussions in the several meetings we had convened. Then, after looking over at the five shelves of current literature on spiritual warfare that I had collected in my library, I concluded that the issues that Mark was dealing with were issues that have largely been bypassed.

All this would have little significance if those issues were unimportant, but questions such as what immediate influence the cross of Christ might have had on the *modus operandi* of satan in the invisible world can hardly be considered insignificant. Reading further and paying special attention to the Scripture references and their application, I became more and more convinced that Roser's thesis was correct. At that point, I approached Dr. Colin Brown, who is considered by many to be Fuller Seminary's top theologian, and checked out Roser's ideas with him. When I asked him what he thought about the suggestion that satan was cast out of Heaven by Jesus' death, Dr. Brown replied that he believed the same thing and taught it in his classes. He admitted, however, that it was a

subject that he usually passed over quite rapidly.

What all this means is that although not many people know about or have thought through the implications of the accuser being cast down from Heaven, Mark Roser has, and he has done the Body of Christ a tremendous service by collating the results of his research into the pages of this book. All of us who have been dealing with spiritual warfare in recent years are well aware that Paul says, "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11 NKJ). Speaking for myself, I must confess that I have previously been ignorant of some of the devices of satan that Mark Roser exposes so convincingly in this book.

Understanding *The Cleansing of the Heavens* will put all of us as believers in a place where satan will have less and less possibility of taking advantage of us, and therefore, we will be better equipped to serve in the great spiritual army to which God is calling us in these exciting days.

C. Peter Wagner  
Fuller Theological Seminary

# Introduction

Although *The Cleansing of the Heavens* may seem like an unusual title, it is a fully biblical designation for a completely scriptural subject. According to Job 15:15, "...the heavens are not clean in His [God's] sight." In the New Testament the writer of Hebrews says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23). But why would the heavens not be clean in God's sight and how could they be purified? The answer involves a thorough examination and exposé of satan's career from start to finish, Genesis to Revelation.

*The Cleansing of the Heavens* does not magnify the devil, but instead exposes his background, explains his defeat, and clarifies the position that he has occupied ever since. This is a vast subject, and the available books are incomplete. Even textbooks on systematic theology fail to provide a convincing biographical sketch of satan's origin, the timing of his fall, and his present position. Many claim that the biblical data itself is inconclusive. Percy Shelley goes so far as to say:

"Who or what he is, his origin, his habitation, his destiny, and his power are subjects which puzzle the most acute theologians and on which no orthodox person can be induced to give a decisive opinion. He is the weak place of the popular religion, the vulnerable belly of the Crocodile."<sup>1</sup>

Others deny the devil's very existence, considering him a scapegoat and the creation of man. Professor Leslek Kolakowski, author of *Conversations With the Devil*, said in an interview, "The devil serves to identify what evil is and became an entity who was responsible for evil that let God and ourselves off the hook. That has been the function of the devil in history."<sup>2</sup>

There are 243 direct references to satan in Scripture without counting the verses that refer to his legions.<sup>3</sup> I believe that the devil not only exists but, considering the many names that depict his nature and activity, his place in creation and history is foundational to our knowledge of God and man. I am utterly convinced that without this knowledge we are ill equipped to deal with the difficult questions of life. However, understanding the theology and chronology of satan's cleansing from Heaven gives new appreciation for the warfare dimension of the gospel and its absolute necessity in man's redemption. Moreover, I believe that satan's place and movements are revealed consistently throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that this information is essential to understanding the nature of spiritual conflict.

Herbert Lockyer has written that "it is necessary for every believer who would wage a successful spiritual warfare against his avowed and diabolic enemy, to ascertain a knowledge of his history and

might so as to victoriously withstand him.”<sup>4</sup> Although the earliest known book on the topic of the devil, written by Bishop Melito of Sardis in Asia, appeared as early as A.D. 150, J.B. Russell has pointed out that “serious historical studies of the devil have been very few, considering the importance of the topic.”<sup>5</sup>

*The Cleansing of the Heavens* uniquely addresses central issues related to intelligent spiritual warfare. For example, can satan still bring an accusation against us in Heaven as he did against Job? I don’t know of a more important spiritual warfare question. If he can, the implications are far-reaching. If not, why not? Where is satan now? Is he in hell, or is he confined to the earth somewhere?

In most circles, the popular view is that lucifer was cast out of Heaven before man’s creation. The great difficulty with this view is that if satan was then violently cast out of Heaven, why would he still have access to Heaven in the days of Job? Some claim that even today satan can accuse us before God in Heaven. One author writes, “Strange as it may sound, satan still has access to God’s throne. Although cast out of heaven, he is still permitted by God to appear back in heaven.” This author quotes another author who envisions satan presently “sauntering about among the angels, hands in pockets, picking his teeth, disdain for all the angels, looking for the opportunity to accuse.”<sup>6</sup> This view has been around for a long time. An eighteenth-century author wrote that “the greatest event in Heaven before the creation of the visible universe...is the fall of satan and his host from heaven.” Like many others, this writer believed that “satan is allowed to come before the throne of God... For example, he tells Jehovah that tomorrow at 10 o’clock a.m., John Smith Christian will meet a certain temptation and fall. If the prediction comes true, the evil stands and grins in the face of the Almighty.”<sup>7</sup>

Satan’s access to Heaven after his forced removal would be strange indeed. What landlord would forcibly evict someone from his house and still permit that person to come and go as he pleased? Could the evicted one enter in the morning for breakfast, at midday for lunch, and again in the evening for dinner? Such theology is foreign to Scripture. Nowhere does the Bible teach a pre-Adamic eviction of lucifer, and allowing him access after violently evicting him is unthinkable.

*The Cleansing of the Heavens* provides convincing proof from an abundance of Scripture, explaining when, how, and why satan was removed from Heaven. This is a crucial point for Christians overcoming the devil, and a main aspect of Christ’s redemptive work. Instead of a pre-Adamic eviction, satan, the accuser before God’s throne, was cast out at the ascension of Christ. As a result, he can no longer bring a charge against us in Heaven. Christ’s substitutionary death and triumphant resurrection broke satan’s Old Testament position of authority in Heaven, causing his dethronement and downfall. The ramifications are earth-shaking and revolutionary for our faith.

Recognizing the devil’s former habitation and authority in Heaven will enhance understanding of Scripture. For example, since satan’s abode was Heaven, the Book of Job becomes clearer, as well as such difficult Old Testament passages as “an evil spirit from God troubled Saul,” and “God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem,” or how a lying spirit could come from Heaven.<sup>8</sup> Such verses often are avoided and left unexplained because of a lack of biblical insight on lucifer’s rise and fall. Most important are the understanding that the cross of Christ is the place to rightly divide the Word of Truth and that the timing of satan’s removal from Heaven is critical to understanding the Bible as a whole. The proper approach to Bible study can be compared to a systematic method of assembling jigsaw puzzles. As a boy, my brother loved working huge 5,000-piece puzzles. He would first gather all the border pieces, then separate the other pieces by color. When he put the puzzles together, he was very careful not to lose any pieces or force any to fit in the wrong place. It is important to approach Bible study in a similar manner. We should never

disregard passages just because they do not fit our doctrinal tradition, nor should we try to force verses to fit a pre-conceived doctrinal or theological framework.

In keeping with the approach that biblical doctrine must be supported by the full counsel of God's Word, I will, in the chapters that follow, present line upon line everything that the Scriptures teach on the subject of lucifer's fall. My desire is to let the Word of God speak for itself on this vital subject, so the discussion will be carefully referenced throughout. At the conclusion, since Scripture cannot be broken,<sup>9</sup> everything should fit into place, and it should become clear how Heaven was forever cleansed of satan.

The book is built around the organizing theme of satan as the accuser, because that describes his work in Heaven. The combined meaning of the names *satan* and *devil* is "to accuse as an adversary." It will be clearly shown that accusation was the basis for satan's heavenly authority.

Satan's accusatory work was unique when compared to his other works since it was performed in Heaven, not on earth. His authorization to do other works came as a result of the accusations he brought before God. Christ terminated this business of satan in Heaven and delivered us from bondage to demonic powers on earth: "...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). Many Christians are at a loss, however, to explain how the cross disarmed the accuser because they do not understand his past activity in Heaven or his place in the Old Testament. Another problem relates to the question of how satan could be judged and defeated yet still be active today.

Part One of this book, "The Cleansing of the Heavens Explained," discusses how Scripture exposes satan's activity in the Old Testament, reveals his origin, foretells his judgment, explains his defeat through the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and describes his current position under our feet. Part Two, "The Cleansing of the Heavens Applied," reveals the cleansing of the heavenlies and satan's ultimate end, explains how we overcome satan by the blood of Jesus and the word of our testimony, and describes how man's original relationship with God is restored and how we can live without guilt and fear. (See the chart following.)

Since most Christians are more familiar with the "overcoming" topics of Part Two, the primary focus of this book is on the theological and biblical framework of the casting down of the accuser as it is established in Part One. The application in Part Two is more on an individual rather than corporate level because that is where spiritual warfare must begin. Although this is not primarily a "how to" book on spiritual warfare, there are extensive applications to "war a good warfare" and to "fight the good fight of faith."<sup>10</sup>

The Scriptures presented, connected, and explained in *The Cleansing of the Heavens* have answered for me the most important questions related to engaging the enemy as we advance the Kingdom of Christ into the entire world. As a missionary in Africa for the past 12 years, I have worked out the truths I share in this book in the crucible of the mission field. Although theological in nature, this book is more than mere theory, for it addresses the vital issues of our position and authority in Christ in relation to satan.

Understanding the casting out of satan from Heaven is instrumental to aggressively advancing the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, many Christians lack this comprehensive understanding of the devil's defeat, and so fail to take possession of their inheritance. As with David and Goliath, God's people have heard the sound of satan's fall and even participated in moves against the enemy host. Many, however, have not seen their giant enemy beheaded and stripped of his armor. We need to see how the strongman has been bound and his evil principalities disarmed.<sup>11</sup> May the Holy Spirit enlighten our eyes to the full understanding of how "the prince of this world" has already been judged!<sup>12</sup>

## Endnotes

1. Cited in Peter Stanford, *The Devil, A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996), 93.
2. *Ibid.*, 14.
3. Morton Kelsy, *Encounter With God* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1972), 242-245, note 568. References to demons and the devil in the New Testament compared to 340 references to the Holy Spirit. Although others identify beelzebub, abaddon, wormwood, etc. as proper names of ruling spirits under satan, our use is in the generic sense: satan, 153 times; devil, 116 times; serpent, 27 times; belial, 17 times; dragon, 16 times; beelzebub, 7 times; adversary, 3 times, leviathan, 5 times.
4. Herbert Lockyer, *Satan: His Person and Power* (Waco, TX: Word Books), 1946, 7.
5. *Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, ed., Volume 3 (Oxford: The Christian Literature Co., 1891). See also Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1977), 36.
6. S.J. Lawson, *When All Hell Breaks Loose, You May Be Doing Something Right* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993).
7. B.W. McClung, *The History of the Devil* (printed T. Warner at the Black Bay in Patemoster, 1726), 8,11.
8. See 1 Samuel 16:14-16,23; Judges 9:23; 1 Kings 22:19-23.
9. See John 10:35.
10. 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12.
11. See Mark 3:27; Colossians 2:15.
12. See John 16:11.

### Part One

./ The Cleansing of the  
Heavens Explained

## The Accuser in Heaven Exposed

One night while in deep prayer, my wife Pat encountered what she described as a spirit of death in the room. Frightened, she awakened me from a dream in which I was in the intensive care unit of the hospital standing watch over my son's incubator. There was an eerie quality to my dream, with dim lights and alarms all around. It was as though I expected an intruder at any moment.

Johnathan, our eldest child, had been born a full two months premature and was barely clinging to life. Due to the immature development of his lungs at birth, he had been unable to breathe on his own. I had watched with sinking heart as he gasped for air with his first cry and the medical staff forced a breathing tube down his throat. He had been placed on a lung machine and rushed off to intensive care. It was so touch-and-go that I was given papers to sign relieving the hospital of any liability in the event of blindness or mental retardation due to the oxygen treatment.

Pat and I thought, What have we done wrong? This trial of faith seemed completely foreign to what we knew of our position in Christ and the promises of God's Word. Before Pat went into labor, we had often prayed for our baby. The Scripture, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,"<sup>1</sup> had ministered deeply to me since the only name we had chosen was Johnathan, which means "beloved gift." When Pat went into early labor we prayed, "Let him come now only if he will be all right!" Christian friends encouraged us with scriptural promises, and I was convinced the baby would be fine.<sup>2</sup>

Now all we could do was pray and sing to him as we stroked his little head. Weighing only three pounds, three ounces, he had needles for an IV stuck into his tiny body and experienced other regular needle pricks for blood samples. He was hooked up to an alarm that went off frequently. Whenever he stopped breathing, a nurse would come and shake him to restart his breathing.

Outside the intensive care unit were hundreds of ceramic tiles painted with words from parents either grieving over defeat in death or rejoicing in victory over the grave. One of these contained a Scripture that greatly encouraged us:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

After Pat sensed the spirit of death and woke me from my strange dream, we spent much of the rest of that night in prayer before we fell asleep again. The next morning we learned that two other infants in the unit, one of which was a larger baby that had been lying alongside our Johnathan, had died that very night! God showed us then that we were engaged in a great life and death struggle with the devil. A hurtful spirit had come to snuff out the life of our child, but, warned by God in a dream, we escaped this messenger of death.<sup>3</sup>

After seven weeks, with Johnathan weighing five pounds and breathing on his own, we took our son home, rejoicing in the victory. Many battles still lay ahead: three and a half years of horrendous febrile seizures, as well as almost losing him again on the mission field in an incident when he required mouth to mouth resuscitation. He has since matured, outgrown these seizures, and today is a robust, healthy teenager who is already taller than his dad!

There are probably many answers to the question "Why do people suffer?" but they are seldom simple. It is not enough to say "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taketh away,"<sup>4</sup> regardless of the context, nor to ask as Jesus' disciples did, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents?"<sup>5</sup> We may not discern why people go through what they do, and unless God clearly shows us, we must be careful not to judge them. Rather, we must pray for them. Because suffering is deeply personal, God normally reveals the reason only to those who seek Him with a vested interest.

At any rate, any explanation of suffering that fails to include satan's malice is as incomplete as if God's sovereignty or man's responsibility were left out. Nowhere is satan's malicious role in human affairs revealed with greater clarity than in the Old Testament Book of Job.

#### The Accuser and Job

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also to present himself before the Lord (Job 2:1).

Satan's activity in the Old Testament is hidden for the most part. He can be seen operating behind the scenes, however. Yet in the Book of Job (and occasionally elsewhere in the Old Testament), God draws back the curtain from the hidden counsel of Heaven to reveal satan standing before God's throne as the accuser of men. This influential, heavenly position was of great consequence, causing significant results on earth. Recognizing satan's place in Heaven in Old Testament times is crucial to a proper understanding of the Bible. Lucifer was a lofty figure in the courts of Heaven and possessed an exalted place of influence. Without this understanding, certain portions of the Old Testament are almost incomprehensible.

The first two chapters of Job, totaling only 35 verses, picture satan in Heaven twice. The angels appear before the throne of God to report on their administrative duties on earth, and satan is among them. When God singles out Job as an example of righteousness, satan accuses Job of serving God for his own ends and challenges God to test Job's righteousness. The devil claims that, if tested, Job will curse God to His face. God allows satan to try and prove his accusation against Job.<sup>6</sup> The accuser is unable to induce Job to curse God, even after Job has lost his children and his wealth. In chapter 2 satan seeks further grounds to prove his charge, claiming that when Job is touched in his own body, his true colors will show and he will curse God. Though afflicted severely in his body, Job still refused to speak evil of God.<sup>7</sup>

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause (Job 2:3).

This verse makes it clear that Job was blameless.<sup>8</sup> His suffering was not due to any sin or unbelief in his life. Instead, satan was directly responsible for afflicting Job, permitted on the basis of his accusation, yet limited by God's sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> Satan's activity, though evident in Heaven, was hidden from men on earth. Job did not understand why he was suffering. It is no surprise then that Job cried out in his affliction for an advocate with God, and challenged his adversary to fully state his case against him.<sup>10</sup> No other book in the Bible reveals as clearly as Job the activity of satan as the accuser of the brethren in Heaven and the trials he creates on earth as he seeks man's condemnation.

#### The Accuser in Heaven Day and Night

The Bible teaches that in Old Testament times satan dwelled day and night in Heaven. Revelation 12:10 says that "the accuser of our brethren...accused them before our God day and night." The phrase day and night appears three other times in the Book of Revelation, and always refers to a continual action:<sup>11</sup>

- The damned have no rest day nor night (see Rev. 14:11).
- The devil "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).
- The redeemed are "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev. 7:15).<sup>12</sup>

It seems clear from these examples in Job and Revelation that at least in Old Testament times satan had continual access to Heaven and the throne of God and acted as the accuser of men. This raises two immediate questions. First, how can satan remain in the presence of a holy and righteous God?

And second, can he still accuse us before God?

Many have argued that satan could not have remained in Heaven for a single moment after he sinned because God cannot tolerate evil in His presence. One of the verses used to support this idea is Habakkuk 1:13, which says, in part, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity....” This is a misconception concerning the holiness of God.<sup>13</sup> Even though it is certainly true that God cannot be enticed by looking at evil and His purity is beyond acts of iniquity, at the same time Proverbs 15:3 says, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” Also, the writer of Hebrews says, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). God’s presence is everywhere, and He sees everything.

If God could neither look on evil in Heaven nor tolerate lucifer for a moment in His presence after he sinned, how then could He allow the devil to stand before His throne and accuse the brethren “day and night”?<sup>14</sup> If God cannot endure evil, why didn’t He destroy the devil altogether as soon as he sinned? God is sovereign and long-suffering, and He does everything in His own timing and order. In due course, He removed satan from Heaven. First, though, it was necessary for God’s Son, the perfect representative of the Father, to come and endure much evil to deliver mankind from satan’s domain. In like manner, the Holy Spirit deals with us and dwells in us as believers in spite of our sin and iniquity. God’s long-suffering nature is our salvation (see 2 Pet. 3:15); otherwise, both the devil and mankind would have been destroyed long ago. The nature of both Jesus and the Spirit reveals that the Father was well able to endure the accuser before His throne day and night before casting him down. The apostle Paul knew this to be true:

What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (Romans 9:22).

God justly managed the evil in His presence, enduring satan for a season until Christ came, making known in the process His sovereign power and His anger against sin.<sup>15</sup> This is proof of His incorruptible holiness and justice. Unlimited in wisdom, greatness, and power, the God of the Bible is able to work all things together for good, even acts of rebellion. The Bible declares that in this way He alone is holy.

Can satan still accuse us before God? The answer is no. Further evidence will bear this out. Satan can no longer appear before God to accuse us because he was defeated when Jesus died on Calvary.<sup>16</sup> With the victory of Christ our Advocate, the accuser has been cast down, and the scene in Heaven has dramatically changed.<sup>17</sup> Our open access to God is secure, and we have a tremendous position of strength, a far better covenant than Job had for dealing with the devil. Satan’s accusatory authority against us has been overthrown, and we have been raised up in Christ to a privileged position. We must differentiate, therefore, between the extent of satan’s authority in the Old Testament as compared to the New.<sup>18</sup>

When we read the Old Testament, let’s be aware of satan’s place as the accuser in Heaven. We can be discerning like David was when a woman of Tekoah came to him in mourning. She claimed to be a widow who sought to protect her son from the death sentence. Touched by her sad story, David graciously promised her son a pardon. But the real agenda emerged when she applied her fabricated case to David’s son Absalom. “Why should the king not bring back to Jerusalem his son Absalom?”

David responded immediately, “Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?”<sup>19</sup> He quickly discerned that Joab was the one behind the scene seeking permission for Absalom’s return to Jerusalem. Like Joab in David’s kingdom, we discover that satan was a lofty figure in the courts of Heaven and possessed an exalted place of influence. Without understanding this, portions of the Old Testament are incomprehensible. On the other hand, realizing his Old Testament role exposes satan’s

hand in many places.<sup>20</sup> For example, when the Old Testament speaks of God bringing evil upon people, we realize that they reaped evil at the hand of satan because of their sin.<sup>21</sup>

Several additional examples will clarify further satan's position and influence in Heaven during Old Testament times.

#### An Evil Spirit From the Lord

But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him (1 Samuel 16:14).<sup>22</sup>

Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren (Judges 9:23-24).

These are troubling verses. How could there be an evil spirit from a good, righteous, and holy God? The New Testament never mentions an evil spirit coming from God. Some scholars explain this as primitive Hebrew thought that attributed all things to God, even evil spirits. Other scholars reason that the spirit was not evil in its nature, but only hurtful in its effect. These interpretations are neither necessary nor consistent with a proper view of Scripture. The biblical record is inspired in its very words, so the adjective "evil" describes the nature of the spirit, not merely its effect, and the word "from" denotes its prior location. God sent an evil spirit from His presence.

These verses reveal satan exercising his authority from Heaven. Saul was the God-chosen and anointed king of Israel, but he had backslidden into disobedience and rebellion. His sin enabled satan to accuse him before God and to obtain the right to oppress him. Abimelech had murdered his 70 brothers with the help of the men of Shechem in order to secure his position on the throne. Their sin and treachery opened them up for satan's accusations before God, resulting in their judgment and death. Job 1:12b says, "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." Likewise, in the cases of Saul and Abimelech and the men of Shechem, an evil spirit went forth "from the presence of the Lord." The phrase the presence of is the key to understanding these passages. Unlike Job, to whom God restored double, Saul, Abimelech, and the men of Shechem lost everything because they brought suffering upon themselves and opened themselves to deadly attack from the heavenly adversary.

If there is demonic oppression in our lives, we need to ask ourselves, "Where am I giving place to the devil? Am I practicing a particular sin? Am I unforgiving toward anyone?"<sup>23</sup> Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking to afflict us in our minds, wills, and emotions so that he can devour our souls.<sup>24</sup> He overcame Saul because he could accuse him in Heaven and gain quick, strong access to Saul's soul. We too may be tormented and devoured if we do not avail ourselves of our God-given rights and responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Saul, however, we have a sure, steadfast anchor for our souls: Christ our High Priest who intercedes for us within the veil of God's Most Holy Place.<sup>26</sup> The advocacy of Christ in Heaven and the Holy Spirit on earth can now support us even when we fail because our accuser is now barred from Heaven.<sup>27</sup>

Satan was a strongman unbound in the Old Testament because he exercised an authority from Heaven that he does not possess today. In Luke 11:21-22, where Jesus speaks of an armed strongman, protecting his goods, being overcome by a stronger man who binds him and spoils his goods, He is referring to the devil as the strongman and Himself as the stronger one! The devil's guarded treasures are the souls of men. Satan has been bound by Christ so that the souls of men can be released. (This binding of the devil by Christ is discussed in detail in Chapters Five and Six.)<sup>28</sup>

Before I gave my life to Christ, evil spirits tormented me and sought to destroy me. I would come home from a night on the town, full of alcohol and high on marijuana, and my mind would race as I lay in my bed hearing voices. One night, while drinking in the park with a friend, a police officer

confronted us. Being under the legal drinking age, I ran into the woods and hid in the darkness among the trees. Later, walking out into a housing subdivision, I was greeted by a large, growling dog who followed me step for step, eyeball to eyeball. As I made my way up the dead-end street, a second dog joined the first, and then a third, all growling, snarling, and threatening every moment to tear me apart. "Get your dogs," I cried out, but no one answered. What moments of torment! I dared not make a wrong move. Although satan had access to my soul, he was unable to devour me. I thank God that I was born on the New Testament side of the cross where satan has no audience with God; otherwise, today I might be in the belly of some dog! My mother, however, through her intercessory prayers to Jesus, our great High Priest, found mercy for me before God's throne of grace.

#### A Lying Spirit in Heaven

First Kings 22:19-23 reveals satan's strong heavenly position in the Old Testament through a "lying spirit" in the presence of God. An evil spirit from God is commissioned to administer sin's deception to a wicked king. If this were not in the Bible, it would be hard to believe:

And [Micaiah] said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning thee (1 Kings 22:19-23).<sup>29</sup>

Micaiah pulls the curtain back to reveal the realm of the spirit: "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne." The prophet takes us behind the veil of the flesh into the hidden chambers of Heaven where a lying spirit is authorized to go and fill the mouths of all the prophets. Heaven thus divulges the hidden motives of men and the unseen influences that shape their words and actions, disclosing a struggle that does not originate with flesh and blood.<sup>30</sup> By rejecting the truth, Ahab opened himself to the deadly influence of a lying spirit. Just like the prince of demons himself, this spirit was by nature a liar, and not merely a liar in his effect upon the prophets.

Micaiah's vision of God on his throne with "all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left" is noteworthy. Here the angels in Heaven, separated on God's right and left hands, portray a future judgment of all creation. "And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ... Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:33,41).<sup>31</sup> These verses and other related Old Testament Scriptures suggest that satan and his fallen angels were on God's left hand, and Michael and the other elect angels were on God's right hand. (Further evidence for this will be presented shortly.) Therefore, the lying spirit that stood before the Lord came from the left side of God's throne. Ephraim Syrus in the ancient Nisibene Hymns may have had this in mind when he wrote:

"The Voice made proclamation...for they saw that Jesus had triumphed to the grief of all them on the left hand. Woe He has doubled to them that are of the left hand; to evil spirits and demons...Joy to them that are of the right hand has come to-day."<sup>32</sup>

The angels in the prophet's vision of Heaven present themselves before God as in the Book of Job. Each of them had their own measure of rule as they administered the affairs of men.<sup>33</sup> In Job's case, the heavenly assembly considered his righteousness; in wicked Ahab's case they discussed his impending judgment.<sup>34</sup> Since Ahab gave place for a spirit of deception to dominate his life and kingdom, a lying spirit had the right to speak about his fall and was afforded the dubious honor of

leading Ahab into his final battle at Ramothgilead. When Ahab appealed to Micaiah in the name of Jehovah to speak the truth, however, Jehovah gave him the truth. Nonetheless, Ahab still went out to battle and died. Ahab demonstrated how totally deceived one can be. His death also fulfilled a prophecy pronounced by Elijah.

It is sad to see someone who is deceived; sadder still when the truth is so evident. Today, the gospel of Christ is proclaimed worldwide on television and radio. Often, family members and friends give personal witness to the truth of God. Like wicked Ahab, though, men still reject the truth of God in exchange for a lie that leads to death. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..." because they refuse to receive a love for the truth.<sup>35</sup> Is there nothing we can do?

Thanks to Jesus, lying spirits no longer have access to the throne of God. We can now not only try the spirits to see whether they are from God, but also intercede for those whom satan has blinded.<sup>36</sup> Through the Word of God and the Spirit of Truth, we can walk free of deception and set others free. Prayer is our chief weapon. It quickens the logos of God into the sword of the Spirit and cuts through the rulers of the darkness of this world.<sup>37</sup> If Micaiah could expose the deception of the prophets of Baal and Elijah could move a deceived nation back to God, should we expect and attempt less now that the true Light has come and the end of the age approaches? God forbid.<sup>38</sup> The Church is the light of the world, but she has yet to fully harness the power that flows from Heaven.

#### The Egyptians and the Angel of Death

Did you ever wonder why Moses' rod turned into a serpent? This symbolized the fact that God had given Moses power over the plagues in which satan and his angels would be the active agents. Moses had power to cast the rod of the serpent down upon the land and to take it up. When the serpent came down upon Egypt, it resulted in the death of their firstborn. The Book of Psalms could not be clearer in this respect:

He gave up their cattle also to hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. ... And smote all the firstborn in Egypt (Psalm 78:48-49,51a).

Satan is a messenger of destruction. In Job's case, when the fire fell and burned up the sheep, satan did the destroying.<sup>39</sup> It was his hand also that brought a great wind from the wilderness, destroying the house with Job's children in it.<sup>40</sup> Although Job's servants called it "the fire of God" and perhaps "the wind of God," it was a demonic fire and wind that came from Heaven. Remember that all Job's possessions were in satan's power.<sup>41</sup> Likewise in Egypt, satan demonstrated his destructive powers: polluted water, frogs, lice, flies, boils, hail, locusts, disease, and death. By casting the serpent upon the Egyptians, God expressed His fierce wrath against them in ten plagues and gave the world a sample of the seven last plagues, which fully express His anger upon a Christ-rejecting world. In the Book of Revelation, satan's name is apollyon and abaddon; both names, the Greek and the Hebrew, mean "destroyer."<sup>42</sup> The world experiences final devastation with the pouring out of these bowls of wrath, which coincide with the coming down of an angry devil as he realizes that he has but a short time remaining.<sup>43</sup>

When the children of Israel in the wilderness rebelled and complained, fiery serpents bit them, and many died. Others were saved when they looked upon a brazen serpent that Moses raised up on a pole. Jesus likened Himself to that brazen serpent because when He died on the cross He bore the curse of man's rebellion against God.<sup>44</sup> Jesus entered satan's realm of sin and death to save us from the wrath to come.

Although it should be clear by now that in Old Testament days satan had access to the throne of God as the accuser of men, further evidence is found in the Law and religious practice of the nation

of Israel. The tabernacle and other physical elements, as well as the worship rituals themselves, were designed to be earthly representations of heavenly realities. It should come as no surprise, therefore, to find satan's role and activity in Heaven represented in them also, as we shall see in the next chapter.

#### Endnotes

1. James 1:17a.
2. God does not promise us an easy, trouble-free life. There are tests, trials, and even martyrdom for some, but this is inherently different in nature from God's chastisement and judgment. Although we are not free from demonic attacks, when we walk uprightly in Christ "we keep ourselves and the evil one cannot touch us" (see 1 Jn. 5:18). We can resist the devil by standing steadfast in faith, and he must flee, leaving his evil schemes unfulfilled.
3. During this ordeal, God spoke strength and encouragement to us through the Scriptures, particularly Matthew 2:13,16; First Peter 5:7-10; and Philippians 1:19.
4. Job 1:21.
5. John 9:2.
6. See Job 1:9-12.
7. See Job 2:4-10.
8. There is no need for us to seek in Job himself a cause for his suffering. Some think that if they do not teach that Job opened the door to the devil through fear and unbelief, Job-like suffering could happen to them also. Job says, "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid. ...cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (Job 6:21b,24b). A study of Job reveals that his "fear" was the wholesome reverence of God that is the beginning of wisdom, not fear that is related to unbelief. Job suffered not because he erred or gave place to the devil, but because satan was able to accuse him before God in Heaven.
9. If not limited, satan would have gone too far and killed Job. God said, "Spare his life." Although satan tried to contradict God with his own imprudent assessment of Job, he was yet responsible to and under God's direct authority.
10. Job cried out for a mediator and for his adversary to write out the charges against him (see Job 9:33; 31:35). Answering him out of the whirlwind with a series of questions that Job is unable to answer, God reveals to Job his lack of knowledge and power in dealing with his adversary (see Job 38:1ff). Job could not explain even one thing out of a thousand that God does in nature, let alone in a world of free moral agents influenced by a malicious devil.
11. It is always day or night (see Deut. 28:66; Josh. 1:8; 1 Kings 8:59; 1 Chron. 9:33). Therefore, this phrase allows for no artificial distinction, as some claim, between satan's access and residence. How can Old Testament references to satan in Heaven be reconciled to the doctrine of a pre-historic eviction of satan?
12. In the New Testament, the phrase day and night is transposed as night and day, but it still refers to a continual order (see Ps. 32:4; 55:10; Is. 60:11; 62:6; Jer. 9:1; Lam. 2:18; Mk. 5:5; Acts 9:24; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3).
13. Habakkuk is appealing to God because the wicked Babylonians are to take Israel captive, which seems contrary to divine justice.
14. If a day and night, why not 1,000 years since 1,000 years are as a day in God's sight (see 2 Pet. 3:8)?
15. See Habakkuk 1:1-5,9,12. This Old Testament pattern, often found in the prophets, reveals

how God used one nation to judge another, then judged the nation He used.

16. See Job 42:12; Ephesians 6:10ff; James 5:11; 1 John 5:18.

17. See Job 9:33.

18. We live in Christ on the New Covenant side of the cross, which is the place to rightly divide the Word of Truth (see 2 Tim. 2:15). Our understanding and application of the Old Testament are crucial at this point. When Christ came, He brought God's Kingdom, delivering men from satan's domain. The united testimony of the apostles and prophets is that Jesus the Messiah disarmed, bound, defeated, judged, and cast down the evil one. At the very least, this translates to a restriction on satan's authority and power in the gospel era and our own empowerment.

19. See 2 Samuel 14:1-20.

20. See Job 1:12; 2:6: "thine hand" and "behold, he is in thine hand."

21. There are less obvious examples of satan's Old Testament position, such as the puzzling attempt to destroy Moses immediately after his call, the death of men at Bethshemesh who looked into the Ark of the Covenant, and Uzzah who illegally touched it (see Ex. 4:24-26; 1 Sam. 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:7; 2 Kings 1:1-3,6; Jer. 19:3,15; 21:10; 23:2,12; 25:29; Ezek. 5:16; 6:10; 14:22-23).

22. The inspired writer of First Samuel states several times that the evil spirit was from God (see 1 Sam. 16:14-23; 18:10; 19:9).

23. Oppression from within due to sin is different than appointed difficulties that press upon us from the outside. We cannot abide in Christ if we continue in sin or act as accusers in Heaven against our brothers. Forgiveness is connected to forgiving others, or else we will be tormented (see Mt. 5:23-26; 18:21-35).

24. See 1 Peter 5:8.

25. See 1 John 5:18.

26. See Hebrews 6:19-20.

27. The application of this truth, discussed in Part Two, relates to living a victorious Christian life (see 1 Jn. 2:1ff).

28. Dr. C. Peter Wagner, writing in *Warfare Prayer*, says, "Jesus' coming was such a radical event...if we think satan has formidable power these days, we must realize that he had even more power before Jesus came" (*Warfare Prayer*, [Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992], 52).

29. See the full account in First Kings 22:1-40. Ahab, king of Israel, a hater of truth, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, a seeker of truth, were in a strange alliance against Syria. The 400 prophets of Baal on Ahab's royal payroll had prophesied success in the upcoming battle. Jehoshaphat, however, desired to hear from a "prophet of the Lord." Micaiah, whom Ahab had imprisoned, was brought before them. Encouraged to conform his message to that of the others, Micaiah replied that he would speak only what Jehovah bid him to say. Then, when he prophesied success like the others, Ahab adjured him in the name of Jehovah to speak only the truth. At that point, Micaiah's prophecy suddenly changed; he exhorted everyone to return home and prophesied Ahab's death.

30. Books such as Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986) and C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: New American Library, 1988) are appealing because they dramatize this unseen realm.

31. See also Ecclesiastes 10:2.

32. Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff, ed., Volume 13, Part 5, "Concerning Satan" (Oxford: The Christian Literature Co., 1891).

33. See Deuteronomy 32:8; 2 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 2:5.

34. In the several Old Testament passages that record the celestial council, satan is there and appears to exercise a greater voice and independence of movement than the others. The angels of God enter the world only as God bids them to; satan, however, intently roams the earth with the purpose of uncovering the sins and iniquities of men. Although God initiates the conversations regarding Job and Ahab, satan has much to say, as well as a malicious desire to see men harmed. Psalm 82 is another example of God presiding over the divine assembly. In this case, He accuses the gods (i.e., angels) of failing to exercise their duties with regard to the protection of the poor and powerless. H.T. Page points out that “The text is silent about the circumstances of their fall from innocence, but obviously these are fallen beings whose sin had a devastating impact on human society. The angels stand accused of aiding and abetting the wicked in their exploitation of the poor and powerless. So great was their influence that verse 5 says, ‘[A]ll the foundations of the earth are shaken....’ So great is the evil of social injustice that it can only be accounted for by the activity of cosmic forces opposed to God.” Page also cites Psalm 29:1; 89:6; and Isaiah 24:21-22 as examples of these “powers in the heavens above.” It is likely that they are among angels who were given administrative duties over the nations (see Deut. 32:8; Dan. 10:13,20-21; 12:1). (Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], 27, 54–61.). In the fragment of Papias, we read, “He assigned some of them [angels] to preside over the regulation of the earth but...their administration came to no good end.” Papias and Polycarp were regarded as companions of one another and hearers of John the Apostle, A.D. 100.

35. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:9ff.

36. See 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Jude 22; 1 John 4:1; 5:16-17.

37. See Isaiah 60:1ff; 2 Timothy 3:13; Ephesians 6:12,17-20.

38. Chapters Ten through Fourteen will discuss at length the Church’s position and authority in this world. The main objective at this point is to prove that satan had a place in Heaven prior to the ascension of Christ, for that is the starting place for understanding the nature of our conflict with the devil. Thank God for the current prayer movement, which is embracing spiritual warfare and strategic level intercession.

39. See Job 1:15-17.

40. The wildernesses and desolate places from where the wind came are associated with the devil and his demons. (See Leviticus 16:10,21-22; Isaiah 13:21; 34:14; Matthew 4:1; Luke 8:29.) The angels, whether of God or of satan, are likened unto fire and wind. Under certain conditions they can influence the weather and the elements of creation (See Rev. 7:1-3; 9:14-15). Dr. C. Peter Wagner points out that in May, 1991, a cyclone again struck Bangladesh, leaving 200,000 dead, and that although meteorologists cannot explain why seven of the ten deadliest storms of the twentieth century struck Bangladesh, a Bengali poet attributes it to the Rudra, the storm god, who is fearfully worshiped.

41. See Job 1:12.

42. See Revelation 9:11. See also Exodus 12:23; 1 Corinthians 10:10.

43. Like the Assyrians through whom Jehovah chastened Israel, satan was the rod of God’s wrath. Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis, speaks of satan as “God’s executioner,” “a minister of God’s wrath,” and that “God executes his judgments by reprobate angels.” It is a historical fact that Luther, Zwingli, and all the other leading Protestant theologians stood with Calvin on the sovereignty of God. We can learn from their perspective of God’s sovereign relationship to satan: “Whatever, then, Satan and the wicked attempt to do...though they rage against God, He yet holds them in by His

bridle...and their purposes to answer His own ends.” (John Calvin, Commentary on the Minor Prophets, [Banner of Truth, 1991]).

44. See John 3:14; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 12:2-3.