

This Age and the Satanic System

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon explores the nature of the Satanic system, Satan's authority, and the impotency and limitations of the world order, emphasizing the need for believers to understand and resist the Satanic system.

Topics: "Satanic Influence", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer discusses the ongoing battle between God and Satan, emphasizing that God allows Satan's claims to be tested through history to reveal the folly of man's self-sufficiency and rebellion. The preacher highlights the limitations of Satan's authority, the role of the Holy Spirit in restraining evil, and the ultimate judgment upon sin. Chafer explains the evil nature of the Satanic system, its control over the unregenerate world, and the contrasting principles of the redeemed. He also delves into Satan's influence on physical well-being, the world's hatred towards believers, and the impotency and temporal nature of the world order.

Transcript

It may also be concluded from the study of the ages that God has not been pleased to meet the presumptuous claims of Satan or of man by a simple denial of those claims; He has chosen, rather, to bring everything to an experimental test. One advantage of this method is obvious: every mouth will be stopped, and the entire universe of beings will see clearly the utter folly of that which might have been arbitrarily denied. Man can no longer claim that his conscience is sufficient to guide him to his highest destiny; since the whole race, when standing on that basis before God, so utterly failed that their destruction, by a flood, was necessary: in like manner, by the history of a most favored people in the age preceding the first advent of Christ, man has demonstrated his own inability to do right or to keep the law. In the present age, man proves his separation from his Creator by his spirit of self-sufficiency and positive rejection of God. The present issue between God and man is one of whether man will accept God's estimate of him, abandon his hopeless self-struggle, and cast himself only on God who alone is sufficient to accomplish his needed transformation. All Divine love, wisdom, and power have wrought to make these conditions open to man; and when this last and supreme effort of God has been rejected, the final pleading with man must be forever past, and the long delayed judgment upon sin be executed in righteousness.

It has already been pointed out that Satan purposed in his heart to attempt all the functions of God; and, according to Scripture, that which he purposed is being permitted, to the extent of his ability, throughout

the course of this age. Though his failure and defeat have been predicted from the beginning, yet it has pleased God to permit the Satanic ambition to come to its own destruction, and to demonstrate its own weakness and wicked folly. No other solution is given of the present power of Satan and the terrible manifestations of his increasing authority yet to be experienced in the closing scenes of this age.

His present authority is by no means complete. In II Thes. 2:7 it is stated: "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." This is a description of the work of the Holy Spirit as He restrains and hinders the development of the power of evil. Nor can Satan direct the affairs of that part of humanity who have been delivered from the power of darkness and are now united to Christ (unless they yield to his wishes); though they are in the world and their earth lives are mingled in much of its history. These saved ones are the antiseptic salt, hindering, like the Spirit who indwells them, the untimely dissolution of humanity. Again, Satan's dominion is limited in that "there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). In this Scripture it is revealed that Satan, though in authority, is not wholly free from his Creator, and that any direction of the governments of the world which he exercises is by permission from God. Therefore, the efforts of Satan and man are not supreme, but must come to their predicted end when the eternal purpose of God has had its realization in the gathering out from the Gentiles of the heavenly people for His own name.

A few tremble in the face of the social and industrial problems of the day; while the vast majority are confident that the sagacity of man is not only controlling iniquity, but is gradually developing an improved social order. Thus, man, in his vanity, assigns to himself that which is of God alone, for all the elements of corruption and tribulation are latent in the world to-day, and the mighty effort of God is required to stay its bursting into flame until the appointed time. Tribulation will, therefore, instantly begin when the hand of God is removed from the unregenerate and Satan-ruled humanity.

Though under the restraining hand of God, Satan, according to Scripture, is now in authority over the unregenerate world, and the unsaved are unconsciously organized and federated under his leading. The fact that there is such a federation, although stated in Scripture, is obscured in translation. In at least thirty important passages the English word "world" is again used without qualification. In these passages reference is made to a great evil system or order over which Satan is in authority, the word "world" referring to the world of men, their evil undertakings, ideals and federation. This federation includes all of the unsaved and fallen humanity; it has the co-operation of the fallen spirits, and is but the union of all who are living and acting in independence of God. This Satanic system has its own ideals and principles which are in sharp contrast to the ideals and principles given the redeemed: yet these two classes must mingle together as closely as the ties of human life can come.

The whole truth concerning this federation is contained in those passages wherein the Satanic system is mentioned.

First, Satan is its governing head. Three times Jesus referred to Satan as the prince of the Satanic system: "Now is the judgment of this world: Now shall the prince of this world (Satanic system) be cast out" (Jno. 12:31). "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world (Satanic system) cometh, and hath nothing in me" (Jno. 14:30). "Of judgment, because the prince of this world (Satanic system) is judged" (Jno. 16:11). Paul also refers to Satan as the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and again as the "god of this age" (II Cor. 4:4). In the latter passage, mention is made of the age or period of time only, as in Eph. 6:12: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities,

against the powers, against the age rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (R.V.).

From these Scriptures it must be conceded that the offer, which Satan made to Christ, of the then inhabited earth, was very real. The Scripture is as follows: "And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed Him the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine" (Lu. 4:5-7). It has sometimes been held that the claim of possession of the earth was a lie, this being asserted on the ground that Satan is exposed in Scripture as a liar. Such a conclusion is impossible for at least two reasons. It would have been no temptation had he not possessed the kingdoms he offered; and any such false claim would have been immediately branded as a lie by the Son of God. He is still further revealed as the recognized head of this world system in two additional passages: "Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world (Satanic system)" (I Jno. 4:4). "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world (Satanic system) lieth in the wicked one" (I Jno. 5:19).

Returning to Isaiah 14:12-19, wherein Satan is described as "Lucifer, the son of the morning," and where the prophet in vision sees the whole career of Satan in retrospect, it will be seen that Satan holds a mighty grip upon the world. Here it is said of him that he was the one who "didst weaken the nations" and who "made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners." Every phrase in this remarkable passage is a revelation. Undoubtedly there is reference here both to the fall of man and to the authority of Satan in the earth, as well as to his attitude of resistance toward salvation which is by the grace of God, since it is said of Satan that he "made the world as a wilderness; he opened not the house of his, prisoners."

Second, the Satanic system, according to Scripture, is wholly evil. This is a hard saying; and is usually denied by those who do not realize that all Scripture estimates are made from the standard of the holiness of God; and that the Satanic system, of itself and apart from the influence of God and His people, has never improved their own moral condition, but that they are individually under condemnation before God (Jno. 3:18); their borrowed interest in morality and charity being a poor commendation, in view of their fallen and Christ-rejecting attitude before God.

They are also incapable of comprehending the standards of God, whose thoughts and ways are above their thoughts and ways as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8,9). The quality and incapacity of the fallen race is accurately described in Rom. 3:10-18; this description of them being as they appear before the holiness of God, stripped of all externals: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." So, fallen humanity, federated under Satan, will appear and act when the restraining hand of God is removed.

Though the unsaved are moral, educated, refined, or religious, they are not righteous in God's sight; for the charge here brought against them is that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" and "all have sinned

and come short of the glory of God." The following Scriptures which directly refer to the character of the Satanic system are, therefore, the estimate of God upon those conditions which the world holds to be ideal: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world (Satanic system)" (II Pet.

1:4). "For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world (Satanic system) through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (II Pet. 2:20). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (Satanic system)" (Jas. 1:27). "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world (Satanic system) is enmity with God?

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world (Satanic system) is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world (Satanic system)" (I Jno. 5:4). "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world (Satanic system) cometh, and hath nothing in me" (Jno. 14:30). "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (Satanic system)" (I Jno. 4:3).

In like manner the believer is said to have been "delivered from the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) and "delivered from the power of darkness" (Col. 1:13) and is not to be conformed to this age (Rom. 12:2).

These judgments are made from the view-point of the purity and holiness of God. In His sight the highest moral, educational, and religious ideals that the unregenerate world can comprehend are but a part of the confusion and darkness of this age when coupled with a rejection of His testimony in regard to His Son as their atoning Saviour.

Thus, it is presented from the Scripture that the present age and its great federation is, in God's sight, most unholy.

Third, Satan is also set forth as having direct control of the physical well-being of his subjects, and at the same time as being able, by special permission, to gain access to the people of God: "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Christ) also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2: 14). "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all them that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Lu. 13: 16). "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job. 1:9-12). "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Lu. 22:31, 32 R.V.). "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (II Cor. 12:7).

By these passages, the emphasis of Scripture on the power and authority of Satan in this age may be seen. And though the exact limits of his power under the restraining hand of God are not revealed, it would be unreasonable to deny that he is the god of this age, the head of the great world system; and, though all unknown to them, the director of the affairs of unregenerate men.

Fourth, The works of the Satanic order are clearly outlined in several descriptive passages which also present that which is highest in ideal, and deepest in motive in the Satan energized mass of humanity. One passage, alone, contains the entire revelation: "For all that is in the world (Satanic system), the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (Satanic system)" (I Jno. 2:16). The satisfaction of these same cravings was the temptation placed before Eve in the Garden: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did give also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6). The real nature of these cravings is easily recognized as wholly self-centered and without thought of God or of any true character.

All "wars and fightings" among men are only a natural result of the evil qualities of this great federation. Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world (Satanic system): if my kingdom were of this world (Satanic system), then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (Jno. 18:36). It is a noticeable fact that the governments of the world depend upon physical power and a display of armament to maintain their position and authority, and the superior law of love does not seem to be adapted to, or understood by, the elements that make up the Satanic order.

Fifth, All earthly property is of the Satanic order, which property the believer may use, but must not abuse: "But whoso hath this world's good (Satanic system), and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I Jno. 3:17). "And the cares of this age, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world (Satanic system), as not abusing it" (I Cor. 7:29-31).

Sixth, The same world that crucified the Christ will also hate the saved one in whom He dwells: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world (Satanic system) hate you" (I Jno. 3:13).

Seventh, The impotency and limitations of the world order are most evident. Its leader, though mighty, is inferior to Christ: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (Satanic system)" (I Jno. 4:4). Its knowledge and understanding are limited: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world (Satanic system) knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (I Jno. 3:1 R.V.). "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and He Himself is judged of no man" (I Cor. 2:14, 15, R.V.).

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn

upon them" (II Cor. 4:3, 4, R.V.). "They are of this world (Satanic system): therefore speak they as of the world, and the world (Satanic system) heareth them" (I Jno. 4:5, R.V.). All the sorrow of this order is without hope: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: But the sorrow of the world (Satanic system) worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10, R.V.). And, finally, the whole order is temporal and passing: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). "And the world (Satanic system) passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I Jno. 2:17).

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