

THE ETERNAL KINGDOMS OF GOD AND SATAN

THE REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Most people in the world, even to those in the Church, have little knowledge or understanding of the spiritual realm that surrounds us. Paul tells us that it is this realm that is ultimate reality, and eternal, compared with the physical realm we see with our eyes, for it is temporary and ever changing, and condemned to disappear at the end of this age.

“...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. [spiritual things] For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor 4:18.

“These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor 2:13-14.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

In the spiritual realm there are two kingdoms - the kingdom of God, who is the source of all goodness, and the kingdom of Satan, the source of all evil. Many people blame God for the state of the world and all the evil in it, rather than attributing it to the working of Satan, and man's free will, that allows him to choose to do evil rather than good.

In the spiritual realm God and Satan contend with each other for the souls of every person on earth, to bring them into their own kingdom,

Right now we are in the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Satan

When Adam, who represented mankind, chose to obey Satan rather than God, mankind became part of Satan's kingdom. Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world.” Speaking prophetically, He said, **“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world [Satan] will be cast out.”** John 12:31-32.

All those who have not availed themselves of the salvation that God has provided, are in Satan's kingdom, and their eternal destiny is united with that of Satan, who faces the torments of hell.

The Nature of the Kingdom of God Compared with the Kingdom of Satan.

The nature of the kingdom of God is reflected by the perfection of His untarnished creation, by His attributes that are outlined in the Scriptures, like loving kindness, mercy and grace, justice and righteousness, and forbearance, and portrayed by Jesus Christ on earth. These qualities will have their fulfilment and perfection in heaven, where the destructive works of Satan will be replaced by peace, harmony, goodwill, love, joy, and wellbeing. Man will retain a free will in heaven, and praise and worship will flow forth naturally, for all creation will be permeated with the glory of God.

The nature of the kingdom of Satan is reflected by the nature of the things emanating from it, illustrated by this passage from Romans.

“God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” Rom 1:28-32.

The kingdom of Satan as it will exist in hell is a matter of conjecture, and so the following is not a teaching, but a considered opinion.

Hell as a lake of fire is a figurative description highlighting its main aspects. Fire is a symbol of judgment, and a lake of fire speaks of eternal never ceasing judgment. That is why Jesus said of those in hell, '*Their worm* [signifying gnawing torment] *does not die and the fire is not quenched.*' Mark 9:48.

There will be no free will in hell, but servitude and enforced worship to Satan, who has always envied the worship directed to God, to that effect saying,

**“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.” Isa 14:13-14.**

Satan has a limited power of creation, shown by the magicians who confronted Moses.

“So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.” Ex 8:6-7.

“Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” Ex 8:17-19.

Whereas heaven will display the glory of God, I imagine hell to be a sub-standard creation of disease and decay, the features Satan caused to come on God’s creation at the Fall.

A brief summation of the nature of hell is portrayed in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, a beggar. When both died, Lazarus went to heaven, whilst the rich man found himself in hell.

“Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" Luke 16:24-31.

This parable also highlights the indifference of the worldly man to the spiritual reality of life after death, and his preoccupation with money and success in this life now. It reveals how hard it is to change the heart of a person whose mental outlook is so bound to his worldly existence. This complacency and indifference to spiritual reality opens the doorway to an eternal existence in hell.

God has Provided Deliverance from the Kingdom of Satan Through Jesus Christ

Many people believe that after they die there is nothing - an eternal sleep. They are deceived, for there is no escaping our final eternal destiny being in heaven or hell. Those who ignore the gospel message that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to bear the punishment for our sins on the cross, remain in Satan's kingdom, destined to spend eternity in hell.

In other religions people are said to be saved by their good works, but salvation through Christ demands that people accept the righteousness that God has provided, through belief and faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross to bear the punishment due to us because of our sins.

- Those who state their belief that Jesus is the Son of God,
- he was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit,
- as a man he revealed God to us,
- as a man He identified with us and He bore the punishment for our sins on the cross,
- he was raised from the dead and is now with God in heaven,
- and that because of His atoning sacrifice for us we are righteous before God and are eternally saved.

“He [God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Col 1:13-14.

Christ's divinity is authenticated by over forty fulfilled Old Testament prophecies foretelling His virgin birth, His life, rejection by the Scribes and Pharisees, His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, His crucifixion, casting lots for His clothing, His burial in a rich man's tomb, and His resurrection on the third day. Added to this, after His resurrection He was seen by over five hundred people.

The responsibility of presenting the gospel message to mankind has been entrusted to the Church, but in many ways it has fallen short, even to accepting idolatries and apostasies inspired by Satan.

SATAN'S KINGDOM HAS CONTAMINATED THE CHURCH

As a prelude to His judgment, God, whose throne is founded on justice and righteousness, has given leave to Antichrist to make war against the saints to test them before His judgment falls. It should be noted that Antichrist is not a human figure that will appear at the end of the age, but a major spirit being, a satanic archangel aligned with Satan in his war against the Church, and the truth of the gospel.

“It was granted to him [the beast or Antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev 13:7-8.

This is not a war of physical violence, but of truth verses deception - Antichrist's deceit and deception attempting to undermine Christ' gospel of truth.

Antichrist uses people he has deceived and brought under his control as his agents. In the following reading Paul calls these people “many antichrists.”

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” 1 John. 2:18-19.

At the end of the age, Antichrist has been holding up the diversionary banners of democracy, equal rights and ‘love,’ to turn believers away from the uncompromising truth of the Scriptures, to accepting the ideologies and moral standards of the world.

THE NATURE OF IDOLATRY

In most people's minds idolatry is limited to the worship of physical objects or things created by man. But idolatry extends beyond the physical to our mental and spiritual outlooks. God has shown His mind on all things through His word, and by our consciences. We engage in idolatry when we reject the mind of God on matters like morality, and accept the mind of the world. This is brought out in the following passage where Paul shows us that an idolatrous mind contributes to the acceptance of homosexuality.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.... Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” And even as **they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness....** Rom 1:18-19, 24-29.

Where idolatry was set in people's hearts to the end that they ignored the precepts of God and followed those of man, **“God gave them up to vile passions,”** and **“gave them over to a debased mind.”** Where there is an openness to Him, God surrounds a person with a protective shield that resists attacks from spirits of Satan that would lead them astray. Where it says **“God gave them up,”** it means that He removed His protective shield, so that they were open to attack by demon spirits of lust, perversion, homosexuality, femininity, etc., the real agents that precipitate the behaviour described by Paul.

THE CHURCH IS PLAGUED WITH IDOLATRY

Unfortunately to a large degree, the Church has accepted the wisdom of the world as its guide on matters of ethics and morality, and structure and governance, rather than the Scriptures and the pattern of the early Church. It has rejected the guidance of the Holy Spirit and has taken on the appearance of other world institutions with their principles of world governance. Autonomous local church fellowships governed by a team of elders under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have been replaced by world organisations, each with their own doctrines and beliefs. Instead of ministerial heads formed by the Holy Spirit under the guidance of the Lord, we have ministers trained at seminaries to complete a course devised by men rather than the Spirit. Ordained ministers come out with a base of religious knowledge, but with limited spiritual understanding. The overall consequence is that the Church is governed by man rather than the Spirit, and Jesus Christ is no longer “head of all things to the Church.”

The end result of the Church accepting within itself the ways and morality of the world is shown in this prophetic picture by Paul of attendees in the end-time Church.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” 2 Tim 3:1-6.

SIGNS OF TRIBULATION IN THE CHURCH

Towards the end of His ministry the disciples asked Jesus to tell them the signs that would precede His coming. His reply related to what the Church would see and experience.

“Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.... Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

“Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

“Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” Matt 24:4-5, 9-14, & 23-28.

Falling Away and Desolation

Paul predicts a “falling away,” already seen in the dramatic decline in the number of Church attendees. This will be followed by the revelation of Antichrist, and his attack on the Church.

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first*, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above

all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thess 2:2-4.

JUDGMENT, REPENTANCE, RESTORATION

Before the Church can be restored, she must suffer a cleansing judgment that turns hearts to God in repentance. This will enable Him to intervene, and to pour out His Spirit on her that she may be restored.

Judgment begins at the House of God

The time has come for God to judge the world in righteousness - to expose and destroy the works of Antichrist, to cast down the kingdom he has established, and to **“destroy those who destroy the earth.”** Rev 11:18.

The apostle Peter has stated that before the world in general is judged, the Church must be judged first. **“For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”** 1 Peter 4:17-18.

Old Testament parallel prophecies concerning the judgment of Judah, representing the Church, tell us that the leaders - elders, prophets, and teachers, will be judged first. For instance Ezekiel prophesied that those faithful to God will be sealed and excluded from judgment, and the rest ‘slain,’ or suffer severe punishment, starting with the elders. **“So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple.”** Ezek 9:6-7.

Even now corruption in the Church is being exposed, with things like paedophilia, illegal financial practices, heresies, false prophecies, teachings and ministries, are being exposed, and those involved in them face disgrace and humiliation. Agreement with the world’s acceptance of things like adultery, homosexuality, gay rights, living together before marriage, and unscriptural equal rights - in short, accepting the world’s code of ethics and morality, will be condemned as idolatrous.

Repentance

When the apostasies of the Church have been exposed by the Holy Spirit, people will be faced with two choices - to heed the warning and come out from apostasy, or face the judgment of God.

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” Rev 18:4-6.

Restoration

The prophet Joel paints a picture of the desolated Church in the latter days. After the portrayal of desolation there is a call to repentance.

**“Now, therefore," says the LORD ,
Turn to Me with all your heart,
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”** Joel 2:12.

This is followed by a promise of restoration.

**“Fear not, O land;
 Be glad and rejoice,
 For the LORD has done marvellous things!...
 Be glad then, you children of Zion,
 And rejoice in the LORD your God;
 For He has given you the former rain faithfully,
 And He will cause the rain to come down for you —
 The former rain,
 And the latter rain in the first *month*...
 “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten...”** Joel 2:21, 23-25.

God’s promise of the restoration of Israel, symbolising the Church, appears throughout Old Testament prophecies that consistently declare that she will be brought out of her captivity in the world, and returned to her homeland. The Church will be delivered from her worldliness, and restored to her ‘homeland,’ or true Christian heritage, **“on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*...”** Eph 2:20-21.

It must be understood, however, that that restoration begins with repentance. When we, the Church, repent of our sins and apostasy, and in humility pray to God to forgive us, He is faithful and just to forgive and restore, so that His name and the name of our Lord will be glorified throughout the earth.