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THE BINDING OF SATAN

"He laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up and sealed it over him that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be finished; and after that he must be loosed for a time."--Rev. 20:2,3.

The unscriptural views we once held respecting hell naturally led us into unscriptural views respecting Satan. When we held the thought that hell was a vast furnace of fire--we knew not where, "beyond the bounds of space and time"--we were deluded into believing that Satan was in that far-off place, master of ceremonies, and chief over a host of fire-proof demons employed chiefly in causing indescribable pain and anguish to thousands of millions of the human family who passed into his control by Divine foreknowledge and intention, the number of new arrivals approximating ninety thousand per day. But with Satan afar off and more than busy, we could not think of him as giving any particular time and attention to the comparatively small number of humanity still living.

But when we get the Scriptural idea of hell, that Sheol and Hades are the names for the state of death and unconsciousness into which all mankind, good and bad, go at death and from which both the just and the unjust are to be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ, it throws a different light on the whole subject. As for the term Gehenna fire, symbolically used to represent the Second Death--the utter destruction of the incorrigible--we find that rightly understood its flames are no more literal than those of the "fiery trials" which the Lord promised should come upon all of His faithful to consume

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their dross and under Divine supervision; to prepare them for the Heavenly Kingdom. Since then we see clearly that Satan and the fallen angels, his associates

and servants, are not engaged in furnace stoking, it prepares us to note what the Scriptures have to say respecting them and their present occupation and their relationship to mankind and their future. We do well, too, to remember that we have no personal knowledge on this subject--that we are confined to the Scriptures for every whit of the information on this subject.

"A COVERING CHERUB"

Most distinctly do the Scriptures teach the personality of Satan and his malevolent character. Moreover, they show clearly that he is not another god who has existed from eternity, but a creature subject to Jehovah. Since the Scriptural declaration is that "God's work is perfect" (**Deut. 32:4**), it follows that He could not have created Satan in the condition in which he now is, an adversary to God and to righteousness. In harmony with this thought the Scriptures assure us that he was created an angel of a very high order--a cherub; that he was beautiful, high in authority and wise, but that he allowed ambition, pride, to enter into his heart and to seduce him from loyalty to his Creator. The time when his ambitious designs began to take shape undoubtedly was when he beheld our first parents in Eden and set about to capture them as his subjects. He is represented as saying in his heart, "I will ascend above the stars [be higher than the other angels--captain and leader]. I will be like the Most High" [similar to the Most High in the sense of being an independent ruler not subject to him].--**Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:16.**

When Satan beheld our first parents possessed of the quality of procreation, the power of developing a race like themselves, he discerned that this was something that neither he nor the angels of the spirit plane possessed, and that by capturing the hearts of

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the first human pair he could become the ruler of the world. The success of his deception need not be told. The disobedience of our first parents and the fulfilment upon them of the Divine sentence, "Dying thou shalt die," has involved a race whose numbers now approximate

probably twenty thousand millions, a groaning creation, suffering under the sentence of death through its effects upon their minds, their morals, their physical systems. Thus our Lord Jesus declares of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the Truth." (**John 8:44.**) He lied to our first parents, and through that deception he brought them under the Divine death sentence. Thus Satan is the murderer of the entire race.

It is not necessary for us to determine that Satan's original lie was of full determination to misrepresent. He told our first parents that he would be their real friend and guide them to greater knowledge; that God, their Creator, was selfish and that the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a deliberate attempt on God's part to keep them from useful and profitable knowledge because He did not want them to so closely approximate His own wisdom. It is possible that as the human mind, getting out of accord with the Lord, might deceive itself, so Satan's mind, poisoned by pride and ambition, may have reached the false conclusion that God was really working against the best interests of our first parents and their race. It matters not which view we take, in either event Satan was a liar and deceiver and thereby was our murderer, as our Lord pointed out.

"THE ANGELS THAT SINNED"

Satan risked everything when he took the course that he did, which not only alienated him from God as an adversary, but separated him also from all who were loyal to the Creator. Thenceforth his entire time and energy were devoted to the building up of the human empire which he had designed. He had no authority from God

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to rule mankind; but by involving humanity in sin, by alienating them from their Creator, he was able more and more to gain control; for no sentence of death had been passed upon him and no impairment of his personal powers and vitality had been experienced. Mankind, on the contrary, under the death sentence, rapidly lost mental, moral and physical ability to cope with him.

During the 1656 years from Adam's creation to the Flood, a certain amount of intercourse was permitted between humanity and the angels. God's design in permitting this was to teach a great lesson, and to test the loyalty of the angels. The lesson taught was that sin is very contaminating. So far from the intercourse between angels and men tending to uplift mankind, the course was downward. The influence of evil taking hold upon many of the angels, of whom the Scriptures say that they left their own habitation--that is to say, permitted to materialize and to associate with mankind--some of them through lustful temptation preferred the human plane, thus sinning and transgressing the Divine arrangement of their angelic nature.

The account in Genesis very briefly tells us that these angelic sons of God, beholding the fair daughters of men, were enamored of them and took them for wives, with the result that a new race began to spring up in the world--"giants," "men of renown." The lesson having been taught and the angels having been tested as to their loyalty to God, that dispensation ended, the Flood of Noah's day wiping out the hybrid race and all of the human family except Noah and his family. Of Noah we read that "he was perfect in his generation." (**Gen. 6:9.**) He and his family were of pure Adamic stock, not contaminated.

It was at this time, according to St. Peter (**2 Peter 2:4**) and St. **Jude (6)**, that God placed a ban upon the disloyal angels, consigning them to Tartarus, the atmosphere of this earth, mistranslated hell in our common

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version. The Divine sentence against these angels which kept not their first estate was not, however, a death sentence, as in the case of man; it was that they should "be confined in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great Day." Thus the Apostle indicates that in due time there is to be a future judgment or decision rendered of God respecting those angels--in connection with the inauguration of the Millennial Day, the seventh thousand-year epoch of man's history. Meantime, isolated from fellowship with God and the holy angels and hindered from materializing and thus having no intercourse with mankind as previously, these fallen angels--called in the

Scriptures demons (mistranslated devils)--have undoubtedly had an unhappy time of it for now more than four thousand years. Satan is spoken of as their prince or leader, though nowhere are they mentioned as being of as high rank or order as is he, nor as responsible as is he.

It is fair to suppose that some of these fallen angels are of repentant mind and sorry for their sins, and that they no longer strive against the Divine regulations. Hence they have special opposition from Satan and the others. The Apostle distinctly shows us that the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus became a great sermon to these fallen angels, instructing them respecting the love and compassion of God for His human creatures and of His Power even to raise the dead and His willingness to reward our Lord Jesus with high exaltation because of obedience. This lesson respecting the true Divine character became to some of these fallen angels a lesson of hope, and gave them room to anticipate that if they would turn from sin and manifest their loyalty to God He might in their judgment day grant the blessing of forgiveness. The Apostle Peter speaks of these in his Epistle, saying that Christ preached to the spirits in prison who once were disobedient in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing. (**1 Peter 3:19,20.**) The sermon was not one of audible words but a pantomime

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discourse. As we sometimes say, "Actions speak louder than words." So the facts in our Lord's case--His death as a sacrifice and His resurrection by Divine Power on the third day--constituted a great lesson, a great sermon for those who hitherto had been without much foundation for hope of deliverance.

"DOCTRINES OF DEMONS"

However, without knowing the proportions of those favorably inclined, we do know of the fact that there are legions of these fallen angels who, under the leadership of Satan, are the direct enemies of the human race, tempting, misleading, deceiving, putting light for darkness and darkness for light. Seemingly they enter fully into Satan's spirit and work as his associates. Not permitted

to materialize in the past they have sought intercourse with mankind, have preyed upon humanity. Realizing that they would be dreaded if their real character was recognized they have personated the human dead, thus helping to further and corroborate Satan's original falsehood--"Ye shall not surely die."

By various delusions humanity has been taught that its members, instead of dying when they appear to die, really become more alive than ever. This view was successfully propagated amongst the heathen nations. But to the Israelites God gave special instructions, that the dead were dead, that they must not be worshipped or prayed to; and the Israelites were commanded not to allow a witch or wizard or necromancer to live in their midst. They were told that their dead were really dead, and that the hope for their living again lay in the resurrection, which the promised Messiah would accomplish. They were distinctly told that the "dead know not anything," that their sons come to honor and they know it not, they come to dishonor and they perceive it not of them. (**Eccl. 9:5; Job 14:21.**) They were told to do with their might what their hands found to do, because there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in

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Sheol, the grave, the state of death, Hades.--**Eccl. 9:10.**

JESUS CAST OUT DEMONS

Notwithstanding the protection of the Lord's Word, the fallen angels, demons, succeeded in gaining considerable influence over the Israelites, so that in our Lord's time that form of insanity which results from obsession--from these evil spirits getting possession of the mind, the brain--was common. Many of our Lord's miracles and those of His disciples consisted in the casting out of such demons, in one instance a legion possessing one poor man and making him crazy. The teachings of our Lord and the Apostles in the New Testament respecting the dead are in full harmony with those of the Jewish Ages in the Old Testament. Our Lord tells us that at His Second Coming all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth. The approved of God

will come forth perfect by a life resurrection; but the disapproved will come forth imperfect, that they may have a resurrection by judgments, chastenings and stripes for assisting them up, up, up to full perfection if they will. There is no intimation here that the dead are alive, but that they are in their graves, that they are dead. Similarly when our Lord awakened Lazarus He told the sisters first that in Him were the resurrection and the life power; and He did not call Lazarus from Heaven or from Purgatory or elsewhere, but merely from the tomb.

It was our Lord Himself who declared that no man has ascended into Heaven. (**John 3:13.**) It was the Apostle Peter who when pointing out our Lord's resurrection and how it had been foretold by the Prophet David saying, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell [Sheol, Hades, the grave]," incidentally mentioned that "David had not ascended to the heavens" but was still in his sepulchre. (**Acts 2:34.**) It was the Apostle Paul who declared that if there be no resurrection of the dead all mankind are perished--even those who have fallen asleep in Christ. (**1 Cor. 15:17,18.**) Thus the united voice of

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the Scriptures is in harmony with the facts as we see them, that God's sentence upon our race was a death sentence, which has affected all, and that the hope is that as a result of our dear Redeemer's Sacrifice there shall yet be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. A resurrection of the dead implies that they are dead, and not alive.--**Acts 24:15.**

Satan and the demons have worked against this truth of the Scriptures, deceiving mankind and thus fostering doctrines of Purgatory and of masses for the dead, in this way leading us to blaspheme God's holy name by believing that the dead are in torment somewhere, and thus blinding the minds and hearts of the vast majority, even in civilized lands. Even the civilized fear God, and because of the misrepresentations cannot love him. Thus has the work of Satan and his demon hosts progressed; and the wonder is that demonism has not accomplished more than even the dreadful things that we perceive. It has fostered sin of every kind; and of the immense numbers in insane asylums it is not unreasonable to believe that fully half are there because of obsession by

evil spirits, the other half suffering from softening or decay of the brain and physical derangements which affect the mind.

A REIGN OF SIN AND DEATH

Looking over the heathen world and noting their benighted condition of mind--the belief of some of them in numerous hells, the belief of others in the transmigration of souls, etc.--and then looking over Christendom with its multitudinous errors, indicating the effort of mankind to get free from the ignorance and superstition of the Dark Ages, we may well be appalled. What a power Satan has exercised! How weak man has been in his hands! Only in proportion as the Word and Spirit of God have given enlightenment and strength has a measure of freedom from the Adversary's toils been acquired. The Apostle reminds us of our Adversary's

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cunning, saying, "We are not ignorant of his devices" and of his cunningly devised fables. (**2 Cor. 2:11.**) He declares Satan to be the god or ruler of this world by virtue of the deception which he has accomplished in the blinding of the minds of men as respects the light of truth. He assures us that as Christians we are not merely contending with flesh and blood, with human beings, but that beyond the adversaries of the true Church are the wisdom and cunning of the Adversary himself and his many agents. He says we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits in high positions.--

Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 4:4.

Ever since the Lord began to lift the veil of ignorance and to grant enlightenment, bringing forth the invention of printing and later steam and electricity, our Adversary has been kept more busy than formerly. As he is the Prince of Darkness and all of his work of deception upon the human family is favored by ignorance, by darkness and benighted conditions, so everything that has tended to lift the pall of the Dark Ages has tended to liberate mankind from the snares of Satan's ignorance, superstition and deception. We may well believe then that our Adversary is extremely active and increasingly so in

civilized lands and that even amongst the heathen he is necessarily more active, more vigilant.

"BINDING THE STRONG MAN"

In one of His parables our Lord represents Satan as being the householder at the present time; that the whole world is his household, or dominion, over which he has control. This is a similar picture to that used by the Apostle when he describes Satan as the prince of this world, and the god or ruler of this world. Our Lord, referring to His Second Coming and the gathering of the Church and the breaking up of present institutions in the end of this Age, says that if the householder (Satan) knew in what hour the thief would come he would be on the alert and take means to prevent the despoiling of his

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household and goods. Hence many things connected with the Second Coming of our Lord have been kept secret until the due time of their fulfilment.

Our Lord, however, does show that at the time appointed of the Father He will come and will first of all bind the strong man, Satan, and then He will spoil his goods, overthrow his arrangements and institutions that are in so many respects deceptive, so that in the overturning our Lord, as the new King, the Prince of Light, may bring to all the slaves of sin, superstition and darkness the light and the blessings so long foretold in the Word of God and hoped for and prayed for by all the saints--"Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven."--**Matt. 6:10.**

It is our opinion, dear friends, that we are living in this particular juncture at the present time; that the Prince of Light has already begun the work of binding the Prince of Darkness. We are not to expect that Satan will meekly submit. Instead, we should understand that while this name Satan applies to our personal Adversary, the Devil, it covers in a general sense all the influences for evil and unrighteousness in the world, however ignorant some of his dupes. Hence when we read of the binding of Satan, that old Serpent, the Devil, we should have in mind properly all the evil influences, all the sinful

tendencies, all the injustices and untruths whereby mankind have been enslaved for centuries.

Whatever sets free the light of Truth incidentally binds in similar proportions the darkness. Hence we might say that to some extent this loosing of the light and binding of the darkness has been in process for three centuries, but only in our day is the matter reaching a climax. That climax has not yet been reached by any means, but we believe will be attained in a very few years. The whole world is waking up to the evils which have oppressed it. As, for instance, opposition to intoxication is spreading not only in this land but abroad. A wave

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of opposition to all injustice is also spreading, favoring the interests of all the people as in opposition to those of the few disposed to exploit the many for their own personal advantage.

In Russia, for instance, one of the darkest of the so-called civilized lands, a Jubilee Trumpet is heard, and the masses are awakening and grasping for their human rights and liberties. We do not mean to say that all that is said in favor of total abstinence is true, that all that is said and done in favor of the people and against wealthy magnates, aristocrats, bureaucrats is true. We do not mean to dispute that many liberties are sought and desired to be grasped for which many people are not yet prepared. But we call attention to these things as indicating that the power of darkness is losing its hold, its shackles are breaking from the human minds. We do not say that this means eventually what the Scriptures describe as a Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation. (**Dan. 12:1.**) We do say that the strong man, the Adversary, and his numerous allies entrenched in power and privilege, will hold on like grim death; and that this will mean much suffering to all concerned. Thankful we are, too, that we can see beyond that awful time of anarchy which the Scriptures so clearly outline, the Golden Age, the Millennial Kingdom, the Reign of righteousness, peace and love--the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Not only might we expect that the Adversary and his various agents would be exceedingly active in this present time, but the Scriptures particularly admonish us that

this will be the case; and that the Lord, who could crush the Adversary otherwise, will permit his activity for a special purpose, partly for the testing and sifting of the Church for the selection of the Very Elect, and partly for lessons of discipline to the world in general. As, for instance, the Apostle, speaking of the present time, says, "God will send them strong delusions that they may

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believe a lie: that they all might be condemned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness [untruth]."--**2 Thess. 2:11.**

As we near this time we realize that no one is secure from the Adversary's power, from the influence of the demons, except as he is on the Lord's side, consecrated to Him and under His promised protection. We realize that His protection will be in large measure through the impartation of knowledge, light, which will guard from the darkness. Thus those who know that the dead are dead and will remain dead until the resurrection, and who know that those who represent the dead through spirit mediums, etc., are the demons--these are specially protected by their knowledge from many of the deceptions which are ensnaring thousands and which ultimately will cause thousands to fall into hurtful errors. Moreover, the Scriptural intimation is that in some manner in this present time the Lord will permit the fallen angels to find a manner by which they may circumvent and avoid His prohibition to materialization. So, then, we may expect that materializations will occur on the part of many of these demons, and that these will be an active agency, a pernicious influence. It is consoling to know that the Lord guarantees that in the end of the struggle Satan will be fully bound, shut up, sealed, that he can deceive the nations no more--

"UNTIL THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE FINISHED"

The blessedness of the Millennial Day, so graphically portrayed through the prophecies and the New Testament, could not be imagined except as we grasp the thought that Satan, the deceiver, will be restrained, will not be permitted further to deceive humanity. Instead

the glorious light of the Millennial Day, the Sun of Righteousness, Christ and His elect Church in glory, will shine forth for the scattering of all darkness and superstition, and that the light of Divine Truth will illuminate the whole world and cause the knowledge of the Lord to

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fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.--**Isa. 11:9.**

How blessed! How glorious! Shall not we who have been called to this High Calling of joint-heirship with Christ as His elect Church, His Bride, His joint-heirs in the Kingdom--shall not we rightly value the things of darkness and the things of light and cast all of the weight of our influence and time on the Lord's side, the side of the Truth? May we not thus to some extent be used of the Lord in the shining forth of the light which will bind the Adversary, restrain the evil? Let us, as the Apostle suggests, lay aside every weight and every besetting sin and run with patience the race for this prize of our High Calling in Christ Jesus.--**Heb. 12:1.**

The clear declaration of the Scriptures is that at the close of the Millennial Age the Lord will permit a brief period of liberty to Satan for the purpose of testing those who will have received knowledge and uplift to perfection throughout the Millennial Age, to the intent that none of the human family or others shall go beyond that time or have eternal life except as they shall be in heart obedience to the Lord and His righteous requirements. The **verses following our text** tell not only of the First Resurrection of the Church and of their reign with Christ for the thousand years, but also tell us how the world during the thousand years may come up to perfection of life and live in the true sense of the word at the close of the Millennium. Then will come the testing time already referred to, and such as will be found disloyal to the Lord will be counted as the messengers and co-laborers with Satan and with him will be destroyed in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death--utter destruction.

Haste ye along, ages of glory;
Haste the glad time when Christ appears.
Oh, that I may be one found worthy
To reign with Him a thousand years!