

# THE DEITY OF GOD

PART SIX

## GOD AND SATAN

IN THIS SERIES of studies upon the deity of God, we have endeavored to show that we have a God Who is Supreme at all times, never for one moment giving up the glory of His supremacy to another. Our God is a God Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His own will, progressing in stately and unfaltering steps towards the consummation of a purpose conceived in the depths of His own heart and mind before the eons began.

### GOD MAY DELEGATE SOVEREIGNTY BUT NOT HIS SUPREMACY

In the course of the out-working of this purpose, God has at times allowed some to exercise a certain amount of sovereignty and control over others, but never to the extent of undermining, even to the slightest degree, His own supremacy.

This is shown most forcefully in His dealings with Satan, for in the book of Job, God drew clear lines of demarcation over which the Adversary might not trespass. In Job 1:12, Satan was permitted to touch all that Job had but not the man himself; later, in 2:6, he was permitted to afflict Job himself but not to take his life. The fact that God could erect such barriers over which His chief opponent might not pass is a clear demonstration of the deity of God.

This is the whole meaning and purpose of the book of Job. It is the oldest lesson in the world. It is not primarily about Job, or about his friends, or even about Satan, *but about God*. God is revealing Himself in this book as the Supreme One, to Whom all others must be subject, and this includes Satan, who is seen to be an instrument through whom God is operating to bring Job to a realization of Himself. And let us concede, as we contemplate Job's experiences, that his friends could furnish no satisfactory answer to his problems. They are only brought into the drama to emphasize the inadequacy of human wisdom and the futility of human counsel. Job must learn from God alone, and the result of it all is shown in chapter 42, verses 5 and 6, "Verily with the ear I heard Thee, yet now my eyes see Thee. Therefore I am rejecting myself, and I regret on soil and ashes."

Evil is brought into God's purpose that creation might be drawn nearer to God Himself—that instead of just hearing Him, it might truly see Him for what He is—a loving Father Who always has the welfare of His creatures close to His heart. But evil can only be introduced if God is always able to control it and use it to His glory. The story of Job demonstrates this completely.

### THE POWER OF SATAN

It is comforting to realize that the Adversary does not have unlimited power. Only God has this. Yet the power of Satan should not be minimized. It is recorded that even Michael, the chief messenger, when doubting the Adversary concerning the body of Moses, dared not bring a calumniating judging, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you" (Jude 9). Michael was high in the hierarchy of heaven (see Dan.12:1; Rev.12:7), but the Adversary was evidently higher.

It is, in fact, necessary for the Adversary to be greater and more powerful than any other created being in God's universe with the exception of the Son of God's love. No lesser being could hope to challenge the headship of the Lord Jesus, for any such would inevitably be challenged in turn by others; no lesser being could hope to deceive hosts of messengers and draw them away from God; no lesser being could recruit the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials among his subjects (Eph.6:12); no lesser being could sustain an unremitting opposition to God throughout the period covered by the eons; against no lesser being could God demonstrate so fully His absolute supremacy.

For it is in the control and subjection of Satan that the deity of God is most surely manifested. All down the Scriptures, we have moments when the Adversary seems to come close to achieving his designs, yet he never quite succeeds. Let us note a few of these and see how, in every case, the circumstances are overruled by God to further His own purpose. Yet in saying that circumstances are overruled by God, we must make it clear that we do not mean that God improvises. He makes no fresh alignments to suit the turns of events since He Himself controls every turn. It is God Who determines how His purpose is to be worked out, not the Adversary. God does not adjust matters to counteract Satan's machinations; He defines them beforehand.

### THE DISRUPTION OF THE WORLD (KOSMOS)

An apparent triumph of Satan is seen in the chaos and darkness to which the original order of things is reduced by the disruption of the world (kosmos). God created the heavens and the earth in light, for He is light, and all is out of Him. Yet a disruption is brought about, and darkness ensues. Can we imagine a more desolate and impossible scene? The land in chaos, submerged by water, and the whole covered by darkness! Was God's purpose thwarted?

When the foundations of the earth had been laid there had been great jubilation among some of the leading figures of the celestial realms (Job 38:7). Did they perceive the earth as a stage upon which God's purpose was to be enacted? We are not told, but it is evident that they saw in it a cause for great rejoicing. In actuality it was to be the platform for the enactment of the greatest drama of all time, which would eventuate in the bringing of great blessings to all of God's creation including themselves. What must have been their impressions when they saw the work laid desolate? Yet God was not appalled, for even this desolation lay within the concept of His purpose.

Subsequently we find the Spirit of God vibrating over the surface of the water which had submerged the chaos, and it is becoming light again. This action of God is used by Paul as an illustration of the way He shines in our hearts, replacing the innate darkness by "an illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor.3:6). But let us note that, though the darkness of the disruption was evidently a consequence of a rebellion against God (otherwise why should darkness appear at all?) nevertheless in the final analysis, it is God Who is the Creator of darkness, just as He is also the Creator of evil (Isa.45:7). Notice particularly the force of all the words used in this verse, and how emphatic the concept of Creator is in reference to those things (darkness and evil) which are in opposition to the inherent nature of God. This emphasis should completely dispel any idea that opposition to God finds its origin in the upsurge of a malignant being entirely independent of Him.

### THE DECEIVING OF HUMANITY

With the removal from the earth of many of the adverse effects of the disruption, man was brought on to the scene. Humanity was, as we have seen in earlier studies, God's special creation, made in His image, with the ultimate objective of providing a form in which His own Son could offer Himself for all His creation, and thus eventually reconcile all to God, both that in the earth and that in the heavens also (Col.1:20). If humanity were to miss the mark, surely that would thwart God's intentions! Satan may have thought so. But no! Again God had, provided for this—nay more, He had intended this, for in creating humanity He had placed within it those very tendencies which would be unable to resist outside adverse pressures, and thus man would sin

(miss the mark) when these pressures were applied. Satan's attack upon Eve was directed against those senses which are incorporated in the term "soulish," yet clever and cunning though he was, Satan in this episode, as in all others, was nevertheless another instrument in God's hands, unwittingly carrying out God's designs to the letter. If man had not sinned there would have been none to crucify the Lord of Glory! Nor would there have been any to whom God could later have shown His mercy; still less would there have been any in which He could have displayed His grace. Yet His purpose is to display in the oncoming eons, "the transcendent riches of His grace" among the celestials, and He does this by showing them "His kindness to us in Christ Jesus." How could He do this if we had not once all behaved ourselves "in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the comprehension, and were, in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest" (Eph.2:1-8).

### **FURTHER ATTACKS BY THE ADVERSARY**

As we proceed through the Scriptures we come across many more attempts by Satan to obstruct God's will. In fact, whenever and wherever God's intentions are revealed, the Adversary is always on hand to oppose. That was what he was created to do—to oppose God at every turn of His purpose, for he must carry out the functions of his office. We can only refer briefly to a few instances.

Once it had been made known to the Adversary, masquerading in the guise of a serpent, that his head would be hurt by the seed of the woman, Satan has attacked the line of the seed at every conceivable opportunity.

He attacked through Sarai (Sarah), by preying on Abram's (Abraham's) fears, so that he announced her as his sister, thereby causing first Pharaoh, and then Abimelech, to want her to be his wife. The intervention of God prevented this in each case (Gen.12: 11-20; 20:1-18).

He attacked through Rebecca by inducing her to deceive Isaac regarding Jacob, and so get the birthright and its accompanying blessing transferred away from the firstborn, Esau. He was obviously oblivious of the fact that God had already decided that "not as yet being born, nor yet putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that 'The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,' according as it is written, 'Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate'" (Rom.9:11-13; Gen.25:23).

He attacked through Pharaoh by putting it into his mind to issue commands which condemned to death all the male children of the Israelites as soon as they were born. Although the line of Judah through which the promised seed should come does not appear to have been in immediate peril, the infant Moses who was to be the future deliverer of Israel most certainly was. But he was saved by being taken into Pharaoh's own household where he grew up and was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This was an infiltration into the Adversary's territory if ever there was one.

Later when the Israelites came to be a nation in their own land and desired a king, God gave them Saul, a man head and shoulders taller than any of his subjects. Yet the Adversary brought a blaspheming giant against him in an effort to make the newly formed kingdom subject to the Philistines. Saul quailed before Goliath, but God provided David, a mere lad, to dispose of him. The encounter between David and Goliath was in fact the most decisive one in Israel's history up to that point, for all God's promises concerning that nation were centered in David and would have been nullified had he been destroyed.

### **THE MEETING BETWEEN JESUS AND SATAN**

The most decisive battle in the world's history was that between the Adversary and Jesus. To this battle Satan came in person; he appointed no intermediary. Having failed to slay the Lord at birth through Herod,

he now mounted a frontal attack at a moment when the Lord was weak through fasting. But Jesus successfully resisted all the testings of His opponent, and in doing so He took the opportunity to proclaim a great truth concerning His Father. For He told Satan, "The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service" (Matt.4:10).

This was a quotation from the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20). In fact, all the quotations which Jesus used with such telling effect against Satan are from the same book. David had taken five stones from the brook, and presumably slew Goliath with the fifth, else why did he need five? The last one in the scrip was probably the first to be taken out. Jesus selected five stones from the running water of the Word of God—the five books of Moses, and defeated Satan with apt quotations from the last one.

Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would only worship him. In this, the Adversary was doing what many despots and dictators have done, who have sought divine worship in addition to allegiance as sovereign. Nebuchadnezzar did this when he built his image, but he came to see the error of his ways before he died (Dan.3:4-6; 4:37). Though God might offer the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar, He retained to Himself the right to be worshipped. And though the kingdoms of this world may (for the time being) be under the jurisdiction of Satan (and it was no imaginary offer that he made to Jesus), God has never conceded to him or to anybody else the right of worship as the One Who is the Supreme.

For God is God, and His glory He will not give to another, least of all to Satan. His deity is absolute.

It is not without significance that Jesus told Satan, "The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service." If the instruction to "Go away" is meant for Satan personally, then so may be the rest of the verse. "The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service." This utterance from the Word of God, handled authoritatively by Jesus, spells the final doom of Satan as an Adversary, but retains him as a creature who will ultimately worship God. Thus will the Deity be glorified.

### **THE GREATEST ORDEAL OF ALL**

This command to Satan to "Go away" was immediately obeyed, and then we read that "Lo! messengers approached and waited on Him."

This seems to support our previous contention regarding the eminence of Satan. Messengers could not approach and wait upon Jesus while he was there, but as soon as he was gone they came and ministered to Jesus. Only Jesus Himself could command Satan, and the latter did not approach Jesus again, nor did he do Him any harm, either directly or through intermediaries, until the appointed "hour and the jurisdiction of darkness" was declared (Luke 22:53).

From this moment everything seemed to be going right for Satan. He claimed Peter, the chief of the apostles, and Jesus did not dispute his claim, but merely prayed that his faith might not be defaulting (Luke 22:31,32). From another of His disciples Jesus was betrayed by a kiss; the rest left Him and fled (Matt.26:56). Jesus was given up to be crucified; to be numbered among the transgressors; to be forsaken on that dreadful cross even by God Himself. Was this not Satan's greatest triumph? Yet in all this Satan was only carrying out God's intention, and the word of the cross becomes both the power of God and the wisdom of God. Such is the supremacy of the Deity that He can turn even the Adversary's fury into praise for Him. In the experience of the cross, above all else in Scripture, we can see once again that Satan can only be an instrument in God's hands. His greatest act of opposition only furthers God's purpose.

## THE LURE OF SATAN TODAY

The ecclesia is Satan's target today. He is continually trying to lure us away from our loyalty and devotion to God, and to turn us away from a clear understanding of His purpose, and especially from a realization of God Himself and of the greatness of the calling with which He has called us. We do indeed need the whole panoply of God to enable us to stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary. It is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh (so let us not waste our energies in disputes among ourselves) but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the worldmights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. Therefore let us then take up the panoply of God that we may be able to withstand in the wicked day, and having effected all, to stand. We are not entreated to charge or be aggressive, but just to stand firm. All our armor is defensive; even the sword of the spirit is not to be used aggressively, but rather to parry the blows of our opponents. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God.

We cannot use this sword effectively unless we are familiar with it. Let us remember that all Scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act (2 Tim.3:16,17).

Paul struggled to present every man mature in Christ Jesus. He prayed that we might walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the realization of God.

So we pray that these articles on the deity of God may help us toward a deeper realization of Him.

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