

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD.

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."
– John 14:30.

Our Lord's reference here is to the great adversary of God and deceiver of men who for six thousand years past has pursued a course of systematic opposition to, and defiance of, the Almighty Jehovah, the great Emperor of the universe. He is elsewhere called the prince of the power of the air, and that old serpent which is the devil and Satan. He is also called Beelzebub, the prince of devils.
– Matt. 12:24.

Every reference to him represents him as an intelligent being of great power and influence, and as an ambitious leader. Yet in the beginning of his existence he was pure and perfect, an intelligent creature of God, created through the agency of his only begotten Son, without whom nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3.) Previous to his fall into sin he is spoken of as Lucifer, a morning star [a glorious being of creation's early morning].

Referring to his fall, the Lord, who declares that he has no pleasure in the death of him that falleth into sin and the condemnation to death (Ezek. 18:32), says, "How art thou fallen *from heaven*, O Lucifer, *son of the morning!*" Then he shows that undue ambition was the cause of his fall, saying, "For thou hast said in thine heart, Into heaven [the position of power] will I ascend; above the stars of God [other sons of the morning] will I exalt my throne; and I will sit also upon the mount of the assembly in the farthest end of the north [universal dominion]; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be equal to the Most High." – Isa. 14:12-14.

Thus, instead of humbly and thankfully appreciating the favor of God which brought him [R1288 : page 23] into existence and crowned him with glory and honor as a bright star of creation's early morning, and, instead of returning due filial reverence, love and submission to his righteous will, this being cultivated a spirit of pride until his rising ambition aspired first to be a leader and chief of the other stars of the morning (the position already filled by the only begotten Son of God – John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17), and finally to outrival the Most High himself, as king of the universe.

How different was the course of him who was actually above the morning stars – the only begotten Son from the bosom of the Father, and his honored and exalted agent in the creation of all things – not only of all the physical universe, but of all the intelligences as well. Of him we read that, "though being in a form of God [a mighty one], yet he did not meditate a usurpation, but [on the contrary] divested himself [of his glory], taking a bondman's form, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself [yet more] and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

"Wherefore," says the Apostle, [because of his humility] "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:6-11.) Thus, in accordance with a principle which God has laid down – that he will abase the proud and exalt the humble (Matt. 23:12; Jas. 4:6) – we see our Lord Jesus now exalted to the very position to which Satan through pride and ambition aspired and which he sought to attain, while Satan has been degraded, "cut down [or limited] to the earth" (Isa. 14:12), and sentenced to final destruction.

Satan evidently had no faith in God's power, or perhaps in his willingness, to destroy him under any circumstances. Reasoning from the facts of his long continued existence and his unimpaired powers without any evidence of approaching dissolution, he concluded that his life could not be terminated. Consequently his ambitious schemes for power and dominion were deep laid and far reaching, having, as he supposed, ample time for full development.

His ambitious policy seems to have begun to take shape immediately after the creation of man, through whose posterity, as they should multiply and attain the grand possibilities which he saw before them, he thought he saw his opportunity for the gratification of his hopes – for laying the foundation of his future dominion. And when he realized the restraint placed upon him which limited the sphere of his influence to the earth, he seems to have determined to make the most of his opportunities among men.

From the promise of deliverance to mankind through the coming deliverer, he learned that a plan was already formed, the intended outcome of which was to be the triumph of the Son of God, whom he regarded with jealous hatred as a mighty rival. It surely was no part of his original policy to prostrate the race in death; and when to Eve he contradicted the threat of Jehovah, and declared, "Ye shall not surely die," he probably believed the lie, having first deceived himself, as most deceivers do. His object, seemingly, was to transfer man's allegiance from God to himself; and the death-penalty pronounced and executed upon the race was, we believe, an unlooked-for frustration of his plans. With this thought in mind, we see a continuation of the same line of policy, and an effort to outwit the Almighty, on the part of Satan, in the introduction of a new element among men, when some of the angels, under his seductive influence, were induced to leave their first estate and to assume and retain the human form and take to themselves wives of the daughters of men (Gen. 6:1,2,4; Jude 6,7), thus imparting a new life principle to the Adamic stock, the result

of which was a race of "mighty men of renown," who, presumably, might live forever. This was a desperate and masterly stroke of policy; but again God put forth his power and frustrated the scheme, destroying with a flood the whole mongrel race, and preserving [R1288 : page 24] only Noah with his family, who was "perfect in his generation;" that is, he was of pure, unmixed Adamic stock. – Gen. 6:9.

But, nothing daunted, the defiant rebel began his work among the sons of Noah after the flood, and with varying success has pursued his policy among the kingdoms of this world. And God has not specially interfered, and will not, until the end of this present evil world, when his time will have come for the setting up of Christ's kingdom. Then, he declares, Satan shall be firmly fettered and imprisoned for a thousand years. His policy during the period termed "this present evil world" – from the flood to the dawn of the Millennium – has been on the same line of scheming for power. Ever working in the hearts of the children of disobedience, he has always kept a majority in power who were not lovers of God and righteousness, as the pages of history fully attest; and working through the ambitions and selfishness of men, he has overturned kingdoms and revolutionized society with reckless indifference to the woes and miseries of men, in establishing his own dominion as "the prince of this world."

To this our Lord referred when, just previous to his crucifixion, he said to his disciples, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." All along he had been in the world, and had been plotting and scheming and manipulating the affairs of men; but soon he was to come in the power of his kingdom, which we have seen to be the counterfeit kingdom of Christ, which was actually set up in the year 800 of the Christian era under the name of "The Holy Roman Empire." "Hereafter" – after his death and resurrection – earth's rightful prince would have little to say; he would not interfere with

the workings of the mystery of iniquity; he would permit the prince of this world to plot and scheme and develop his plans for setting up his counterfeit kingdom and do what he could to frustrate the plan of the Almighty for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom.

From the pages of history we see how his kingdom was set up on a foundation of error, and how it was established on the basest principles of unrighteousness, with fire and fagot and sword and every device of torture wherewith to crush out truth and righteousness. And on the other hand, we see with what cunning craft he has endeavored to ensnare, entrap and lead astray; or, failing in this, to persecute the embryo kingdom of God, the Christian Church, both the Head, Christ Jesus, and all the members of his body. But when God's time for the establishment of Christ's kingdom has come, Satan's kingdom will be brought to naught as suddenly and as effectually as was his former purpose at the time of the flood.

And even after the Millennial reign of Christ, notwithstanding the manifest futility of all his past endeavors, his ambition, even then, will lead to an attempt to establish some measure of authority and influence among men. When, under the reign of Christ, the resurrection of the dead is accomplished, and when Satan is loosed for a little season (Rev. 20:7), he will see a new avenue to the success of his long-cherished ambition, and be inspired with a fresh hope that his original purpose may yet be accomplished and that victory may very shortly be his. Then he will see not merely a perfect human pair with power to produce a mighty race destined to live forever, but the race completed and restored to life and vigor. His thought will be, If I can win this mighty race to my standard, my triumph and exaltation will be speedily accomplished. Again, therefore, he will figure as a leader, though, as now, unrecognized by men. Doubtless the temptation will again rest upon his old doctrine – that they shall not surely die, even if they do disregard and oppose the will of God. And those among

men in whom the goodness of God has not wrought the spirit of humility and filial submission to his acknowledged superior wisdom, but, on the contrary, in whom pride has asserted itself, will easily be deceived and led into this error of believing that God either cannot or will not destroy them in a second death. And God will let him work for a little season, and no doubt he will work with all the zeal which a hope of speedy victory would naturally inspire. But he shall not succeed beyond [R1288 : page 25] the point which God permits for the final testing of mankind to prove who are worthy and who are unworthy of everlasting life. When this is accomplished, then follows the destruction of Satan and all who follow his leading.

Thus discerning the general policy of our great adversary, we are enabled the better to understand his various devices and to discover his secret workings, and hence we should be the better guarded against his influence. In all his plottings and workings we see the evidence of an intellectuality which, though like the human, is far superior to it in power and scope, and with resources upon which to draw which are beyond the range of the human powers. Before the mind's eye, as represented in the Word of God, he stands out as a great intellectual giant, with an accumulation of at least more than six thousand years of knowledge and experience. What a mighty foe for poor fallen humanity to combat, with our present brief experience of threescore years and ten, and that in a degenerating and dying condition.

He is full of ambition for self-exaltation, puffed up with arrogant pride which so over-estimates his own greatness that he considers himself worthy of the honor, power and glory of the God who gave him being, and is moved with merciless and continuous envy and hatred of the Son of God, as well as of the Heavenly Father who exalted him; and his whole career is untiringly devoted to his own ambitions and to the frustration of the divine plans, which he vainly presumes to accomplish. In the pursuance of his

policy he is utterly reckless of its cost to humanity. Men in whose hearts he can work are so many tools in his hands whom he uses to oppose the principles of righteousness and truth. (Eph. 2:2.) For the accomplishment of his purposes there is no measure of hypocrisy which he would spurn (2 Cor. 11:14), no depth of iniquity to which he would not descend (John 13:27; 2 Thes. 2:9,10), no measure of cruelty that he would spare, and no height of folly to which he would not lead his deluded victims. He is a hypocrite, a deceiver, a tyrant and a merciless enemy of all who stand in the way of his ambitions. Look out for him! He will dog your steps; he will blind your eyes; he will stop your ears; he will fetter and handcuff and mentally chain you to his chariot-wheels, if you beware not of him. He it is who now "has the dominion of death" – whose power is manifest throughout the earth among those under condemnation to death. Here he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet. 5:8.) In the great papal system, the most complete representative of his policy, his lionlike strength has most fully appeared, and his lionlike jaws have greedily devoured every interest of his deluded victims, while with the fires of persecution he has sought to devour in another sense the faithful few, who, despite his roaring anathemas, have bravely withstood his power. But nevertheless his days are numbered and his end is sure; for it is written that God will destroy him "holding the dominion of death" [not the eternal dominion and glory and power to which he aspired, but an ignominious dominion amid sin and death over poor fallen humanity], that is, the devil. – Heb. 2:14. – Rotherham.

As children of God, therefore, in the midst of Satan's dominion and in opposition to his power, let us beware "lest Satan should get an advantage of us [through one or another of the numerous snares he has set for our feet]; for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Cor. 2:11.) "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood. [There are mighty invisible

powers under the leadership of the prince of this world plotting to accomplish the stumbling of the feet of the body of Christ, and flesh and blood are only used as tools for that purpose by the great adversary], but [we wrestle] against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" [in places of authority and power]. (Eph. 6:12.) Yet, if well armed with the whole armor which God supplies, and following our Captain's leading, we are safe; for greater is he that is for us than all that are against us.
