

IS DEATH A PENALTY OR A CONSEQUENCE?

WE are requested to harmonize the statement of 1 Cor. 15:56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," with the statement of Heb. 2:14, "Him that hath the power of death, that is the devil." And the further question is asked, – "Are we to consider death a *penalty* for the infraction of the divine law, or as a natural *result* of disease contracted by disobedience to the divine commands?"

We will answer the question first, and then consider the harmony of the Scriptures cited.

We may properly consider *death* from both of these standpoints: it does not come *now* as an individual sentence from God, a penalty for personal disobedience; for not only do criminals and malicious persons die, but also saints and prattling babes: it is *now* a result of disease inherited and transmitted from one generation to another, under generally prevailing conditions. But, looking back to Eden, we can see that matters were different there: disease was unknown until, as an element of death, it was incurred, not from the eating of some poisonous substance in the fruit of the forbidden tree (for all the trees of the garden were trees of life), but as the curse or penalty for transgressing the divine law. That the penalty did not come as the result of a poison from the tree is evident, and that God specially forced Adam and Eve into conditions productive of disease and death is also evident from the record, – that God drove them out of the garden and away from the trees (literally, *grove* or *orchard*) of life into the unfit wilderness, outside the prepared garden, where, lacking suitable sustenance, gradually dying, they died.

The proper view of the question then is this. Adam, created in God's moral likeness and surrounded by his favors, transgressed his Creator's law *knowingly*, and without any just provocation, and suffered the penalty of his transgression – death. But, as he died slowly, he begat

children who, although not put on trial as he had been, and hence not sentenced by God as Adam was, died nevertheless, because they had inherited from Adam a diseased or dying organism. And thus it has been ever since, and is now. As the Apostle declares, it was "by one man's disobedience [that] sin entered the world, and death as a result of sin. As all inherit sinful weaknesses and tendencies through Adam, so they also inherit death, the penalty of sin, through him. A father can bequeath to his children no rights, privileges or conditions that he does not possess at the time of their conception.

Coming now to the Scriptures cited, we remark that, so far from being in conflict, these passages corroborate and expound each other. Sin is the poisonous sting which has blighted and killed our race. Not that the sin committed (the fruit eaten) would of itself have had this effect: the strength or power to kill lay not in the fruit, – "the strength [or power] of sin was the *law*," whose vengeance or penalty the sin brought upon the sinner. And Satan, the tempter, by starting sin amongst men, brought all under the sentence of divine law, – under the power of death. And since he is the **[R1683 : page 244]** father of sin, and thus of sinners, the power or strength or weight of sin may be said to be his power or influence. And Satan's power of death continues steadily; for, by reason of man's weakness, through the fall, Satan can the more easily delude and beguile into deeper degradation; and thus by the increase of the disease of sin the power of death increases, swallowing up the human family more and more rapidly.

But in a still more particular way Satan has the power of death. When God had created man in his own image, with the divine law interwoven as a part of his being and nature, he made him ruler or king over earth, as his representative, and left matters in that way to take their course: as the Scriptures express it, God "*rested* from all his work." He did not interfere, even when man by reason of sin, disease and death became incapable of properly ruling the empire committed to his care. God had foreseen that man, in the abuse of his liberty, would become a servant of sin and Satan, and that in consequence not only man himself,

and the lower animals, would suffer from lack of proper discipline and direction, but that the entire course of nature would become deranged; – **and God arranged his plans accordingly**; – to let men and angels see to the full the result of disobedience, and then, in due time, still "resting" so far as personal influence is concerned, to raise up Christ, who, first as **Redeemer** of "that which was **lost**," and during the Millennial reign as Restorer of all the willingly obedient, should bring order out of the chaos of sin and death which Satan's power would effect.

What powers of mind and body the first man enjoyed, at the time God created him in his own image and pronounced him "very good," we cannot well judge by looking at the generally degraded race, – whose fall to such depths of ignorance, misery and depravity St. Paul explains in Rom. 1:18,21-29. Even the most intelligent of the human species give but a slight conception of what human perfection would be, – in the image and likeness of God and "very good" in his estimation; – for we know that even the best at present are accounted of God acceptable only through the **atonement** made by the death of his Son as our ransom-price.

Even the prodigies of manhood sometimes encountered, – musical prodigies, poetic prodigies, mathematical prodigies, oratorical prodigies, memorizing prodigies, mind-reading and mesmeric prodigies, who can exercise a mental power over the brute creation as well as amongst men; – none of these, nor even all of these brilliant powers if imagined as belonging to **one** person, can give us a correct concept of the **perfect** man, as he was before sin marred the likeness of God in him, and as he will be after all the traces of sin have been blotted out by the Great Physician, who, during the "times of **restitution**" (Acts 3:19-21), will restore all that "**was lost**" (Luke 19:10), to all who will receive it upon God's terms, – the New Covenant.

We think it reasonable to conclude that as the length of human life was greatly shortened, evidently by the changed physical conditions of the earth, after the Deluge, so his mentality suffered correspondingly at

the same time, and from the same causes. And all that we know of man, aside from the meager records of Genesis, belongs to this period of his degradation [R1684 : page 244] since that flood. The great down-pour of waters from the North pole, with its glaciers which cut great valleys, which can still be traced in the hills, evidently swept into the ocean, and into oblivion, all that would have been to us evidences of the wisdom and skill of our race as exercised before the flood of Noah's day – not only noted in Genesis, but confirmed by our Lord and the apostles, as well as by the most ancient histories of various ancient peoples. Yet even the ruins of Syria and Egypt impress us with the ability and knowledge and skill of the race, a thousand years after the deluge. We fain would know the secret of some of their "lost arts," even in this boasted nineteenth century.

SATAN'S USURPATION OF MAN'S EMPIRE.

But what has all this to do with Satan and his power of death? Very much. It is the period since the deluge that in Scripture is termed, "this present *evil* world [– or the present epoch of disaster and trouble]." (See Gal. 1:4; compare 2 Pet. 3:6,7.) And it is of "this present evil world," or this disastrous epoch and condition, that Satan is declared to [R1684 : page 245] be the prince or ruler. He is the ruler or "prince of this world," as Christ is to be the ruler and prince of peace and blessings in "the world to come."

As Christ, the Prince of Peace, will bring in everlasting righteousness and blessing, by restoring all things to proper order, and subjection to the divine will and arrangement, it is but reasonable to suppose that Satan has had much to do with bringing about the disorder, evils and calamities of "this present evil world;" – by the misuse of knowledge and powers, in a spirit of devilishness.

Satan, the prince of this present evil world, or epoch of trouble, is also "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), both the literal and the symbolic *air*. He is *the* prince of earth's religious systems, sometimes in symbol represented by the "heavens" or the "air" powers.

They all, from fetish and devil worship, up through the various heathen philosophies or religions, show signs of his supervision in their formation. He recognizes man's native religious tendencies, and by partially satisfying them prevents, as far as possible, escape from his slavery into the liberty of sons of God, wherewith the gospel of Christ would make all free from his bondage under ignorance, superstition, sin and death. The Apostle refers to this policy on Satan's part, saying, – "The God of this world hath *blinded* the minds of them that believe not [by supplying them with false religions], lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ ...should shine unto them." – 2 Cor. 4:4.

Not only does Satan rule thus in false, heathen religions, but amongst Christian believers also he is a prince or ruler to a far greater extent than is supposed; for in proportion as the minds of men become enlightened, by glimpses of the divine character and plan revealed in the gospel of Christ, Satan is on the alert to mislead them with vain philosophies and sciences falsely so called; and equally ready to give visions of heaven and hell and mixed interpretations of Scripture, to a Swedenborg, or to lead the new school of thought in the theory of evolution, to the discarding of the Bible as a relic of barbarism and ignorance – or to speak through Spiritualist mediums, and personate the dead and mislead the living, – or to lead the Mormons to a peculiar interpretation of Scripture to their own blinding, – or to open schools of Christian Science and Theosophy, and do wonderful works in the name of *a* Christ of their own theory, but not in the name of Jesus, the Christ of God and the Redeemer of men, – or to mislead others, who have gotten their eyes wide open, into the belief that *all men* will be saved everlastingly, and that they did not fall, and therefore needed no *ransom*, and that Christ was merely a good example, and that men are blest and brought nigh to God *not* "by the blood of the cross," but by the figurative blood of the sinner's sins, killed or destroyed by himself.

Thus, as an "angel of light," clothed in light, Satan shows himself to those who have caught glimpses of the great Light, the true Light, the

Light of Life, that yet shall enlighten "every man that cometh into the world." What wonder that many are fearful of the light, and love rather the fancied security of the dark past, and of unreason. But to thus frighten some away from the light of present truth serves Satan's purposes just as well as to ensnare and mislead by his glaring, false lights. Truly, the only safe condition for any who would be true "sheep" is to be intimately acquainted with the true Shepherd – his spirit and his word. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. A stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers."

Thus seen, Satan is indeed the prince of the air, the present heavens – ecclesiasticism, both heathen and nominal Christian – and only the Lord's "little flock" are kept, so that the "wicked one toucheth them not." – 1 John 5:18.

But in another sense Satan is prince of the air power, – literally. When Job was given into his hand to be tried, he manifested his power of death. He caused fire to fall from heaven (probably a bolt of lightning), and destroyed several of Job's servants and his sheep. He caused a great wind (a cyclone or tornado) to come upon Job's house, and thus killed Job's sons and daughters.

Satan's object evidently was, to make Job suppose that God caused those calamities, and to thus cause Job to feel bitter and resentful [R1684 : page 246] against God, and to "curse God and die;" or to shake his faith in there being any God. Indeed, that such was Satan's object is implied in the narrative; and Job's friends, although God-fearing men, were deceived into this view, and tried for days to convince Job that his afflictions were the work of the Lord. But of Job it is written, "In all this Job sinned not, *nor charged God* foolishly [with being the author of his calamities.]" – Job 1:22.

Again, notice that when our Lord and his disciples were in the little boat on the Sea of Galilee, and our Lord asleep, a storm suddenly arose, which palled the hearts of those old and expert fishermen accustomed to storms, until they awakened the Master, saying, Lord, save us; we

perish! We cannot presume that, if the Heavenly Father had willed or caused that storm, our Lord Jesus would have commanded it to subside, or that it would have obeyed him. On the contrary, rather, we may suppose that the same Satan who used his power against Job's household sought to destroy the Lord and the infant Church. But that Satan had no power over the life of Christ, *until* "his hour was come," is evident from our Lord's words upon this occasion – "O ye of little faith, why are ye fearful?"

We would not be understood to question God's *ability* to cause storms, cyclones, etc.; but from our Lord's teachings we know that such would not be his spirit: for when the disciples were incensed against the Samaritans who did not welcome the Redeemer and asked, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" our Lord's answer was, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of [– your spirit is not mine, nor the Father's]."

Remembering the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom, we can only understand, in the light of the account in Job, that God may at times use storms and fires as his servants to execute his decrees against the wicked; or that Satan is ever ready as an executioner, taking pleasure in evil, to destroy life whenever *permitted* to do so.

In thinking of how Satan has the power of death, let us not forget that in healing the diseases of the people, at his first advent, our Lord expressly stated that they were "afflicted of [or by] the devil." If God had directly caused the diseases, our Redeemer in healing the sick would have been opposing the Father, and not doing his will. Since disease is death at work, devouring the sick, to have the power of disease is to have *the power of death*.

Satan is permitted to have such a power of disease and death because of sin; – because men are under the divine and just sentence of death, as culprits. The Scriptures represent that mankind has sold itself under Sin and death, and to him that has this power, Satan. The Church – all truly consecrated and faithful believers – are reckoned as

having *escaped* from the condemnation of the world and from the power and dominion of its prince, so that he toucheth them not, or has no power over them, – so long as they abide in Christ. Such, the Redeemer makes free from the law of sin and death and from the power of Satan. And although they die, their death is in no sense under Satan's power; – as Job's was not and as our Lord's was not. Their death is separate from that of the world, and is not even counted as being a share in the Adamic death, but, as though having been lifted out of that condemnation, and out of that death, over which Satan has power, theirs is reckoned to be a sacrificial death; – a part and share of Christ's death; "dead with him," and not with Adam.

But "the whole world lieth *under* [control of] *the Wicked One*," Satan (1 John 5:19), and over *them* he has "the power of death" – including disease – subject no doubt to some divine regulations; but just what his limitations are we may not clearly distinguish. But he can have no power over God's people, except by special divine permission; and in such cases the Lord stands pledged to his own, that *all things* which he permits will work for their ultimate advantage, if they abide faithful to their covenant with him in Christ.

These can, therefore, rejoice always, and in every thing give thanks; for the Lord is their Shepherd.

"Our times are in thy hand;
Our God we wish them there;

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Our life, our friends, our soul, we leave
Entirely to thy care.

"Our times are in thy hand,
Whatever they may be;

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Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to thee.

"Our times are in thy hand;
Why have we doubts or fears?
Our Father's hand will never cause
His children needless tears."

SATAN'S KNOWLEDGE AND POWER INCREASING.

The foregoing being true, it seems more than possible, yes, probable, that Satan's power for evil and death finds exercise in the development of new diseases which for a time successfully baffle the skill of all except Satan's own physicians, – Christian Scientists, etc. Medical science has within recent years reached the conclusion that the majority of infectious diseases are the result of poisoning communicated sometimes through the air, and sometimes through the food, in the form of animal life, so small as to be indistinguishable except with powerful microscopes; – long-shaped, it would require nine thousand laid lengthwise to equal an inch. These disease-producing little animals breed by the millions in a few hours, carrying disease wherever they go, and are known as *Bacteria*.

The same principles apply to the numerous insects, worms and beetles which plague the farmers: new ones are continually appearing.

Knowing that God is *resting* from his creative work, since the creation of man, we are bound to attribute these new creations to some other source. Satan is wise, and no doubt merely takes advantage of natural laws in the propagation of the evils mentioned; and no doubt if mankind possessed the powers with which his Creator endowed him, when he gave him dominion over *every creature*, he would have equal knowledge of the laws governing the start and propagation of *bacteria*, and could use his knowledge and powers to prevent such formations or to destroy them. But man is fallen, and has "lost" (Luke 19:10) much that he once possessed: Satan is now his master and prince; he "now worketh in the children of disobedience;" under his misrule "the whole

creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." Eph. 2:2; Rom. 8:19-23; 1 John 5:19, *Diaglott*.

Illustrations of this power to create, or rather to take advantage of laws of nature to cause rapid propagation amongst, lower forms of life, are found in the course of Moses and Aaron, and Jannes and Jambres their opponents, before the court of Egypt. Under divine direction God's servants produced myriads of frogs, lice, flies, etc., turned the river of Egypt to corruption, caused disease amongst the cattle and a severe hail and lightning storm, which did great damage. These we are told were judgments; but the point we now make is that these were evidently brought about under some natural laws, because God has been *resting* from creative work and will continue so to do until the close of the Millennium; – leaving all the restitution work for Christ to do. "The Father worketh hitherto, and [now] I work." – Compare John 5:17; Heb. 4:4,5,10.

Not only so, but Jannes and Jambres, as Satan's representatives, were able to duplicate many of the plagues; certainly not by special divine power, – evidently under Satan's knowledge of natural laws. – Exod. 7:11,12,22; 8:7.

We may safely assume that Satan's object in using his "power of death" over his subjects is not merely to gratify a fiendish delight in their sufferings; quite probably his special object is to oppose the true light, which is now more and more breaking over the world as the Sun of Righteousness rises into place and influence. He is still striving to prevent the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God from shining into men's hearts and chasing away the dark shadows of doubt and fear which he has deeply engraved thereon for centuries by "doctrines of devils," – by which he has made God to appear as mercilessly cruel, unjust and unkind, and the author of evil, – calamities, diseases, plagues, storms, etc.

Satan may think that he is unrestrainable, but we know that "all power in heaven and in earth" was given unto Christ, when, having

finished his course, he was raised from death by the Father's power, and highly exalted.

God's foreknowledge saw that if opportunity were granted to the dead and dying members of Adam's sinful race, to return to righteousness and to harmony with God as his *children*, some would accept it; and for this foreseen class the great work of atonement was undertaken; [R1685 : page 248] – in order to deliver these prophetically seen "*children*" from the power of sin and Satan and death. But willing to prove to his creatures that he is no respecter of persons, and that his dealings are equitable, God adopted a plan of atonement which would open the door to his favor, not to his foreseen "children" only, but to all who died in Adam – "to every creature under heaven." Hence, the sacrifice of Christ, while it will benefit only those who become "children" of God, was not for our sins only, but also for the whole world. Accordingly we read,

"Forasmuch as the *children* are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death [as their substitute or ransom-price before God's law] he might [legally] destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." – Heb. 2:14,15.

By that ransom which he gave, by which God's sentence against the sinner-race was legally met and paid, once for all, our Lord became the owner of the race which had by sin sold itself to Satan and came under his control, – but without any divine sanction of the transaction. Christ, the *legal* purchaser, now holds the destinies of all men. His purpose, as he explains it, is the very reverse of Satan's policy. He will set men *free* to act for themselves, by increasing their *knowledge*, – opening the sin-blinded eyes of all, to see the goodness and love and justice of God. Those who then choose righteousness he will bless and help and heal, – restoring them to the perfection lost through Adam. Those who will not hear, obey, after the knowledge of the Lord fills the

whole earth, will he cut off from among the people – in the second death. Then Satan, too, he that for six thousand years has had the power of death and exercised it so relentlessly, shall be destroyed. – Acts 3:22,23.

The permission of Satan's policy and power as "prince of this world," since the ransom-price was paid, and since all power over men passed legally into the hands of Christ, is not from lack of power to destroy Satan and release his blinded slaves, nor from lack of loving sympathy and interest in them, but because God's due time for this world (age) to end, and for the world (age) to come to begin, has not arrived; and all of God's dealings are upon lines of strictest order. God's plan provided a work for Christ to do before the setting up of his Kingdom, and the taking to himself of his great power and beginning his reign. (Rev. 11:17.) That work was the selection of a faithful "little flock" of joint-heirs – "the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Acts 15:14-17.) The Gospel age was needful for the call, selection and discipline of this class; and its work will very shortly be completed.

At the close of this Gospel age, and the introduction of the Millennial age, our Lord in wisdom has purposed a great time of trouble, which shall not only be a just recompense upon the world for sins against light and opportunity, but also a time of breaking up present imperfect institutions preparatory to the better ones of Christ's Kingdom; and the breaking of the hard hearts of the ungodly – plowing and harrowing them, and getting ready many (we trust) for the good seed of righteousness, which the glorified Church will sow unsparingly during the Millennium.

As a part of that coming trouble, "such as was not since there was a nation," in addition to its financial and social and political and religious features, we believe that Satan's "power of death" will be permitted to a remarkable degree – increasingly and along the lines already indicated – storms, hail, drouths, pests, disease-germs and diseases. Building upon the false doctrines he has already inculcated, he

will be zealous in the exercise of his power of death, that thus to some he may represent God as a being of devilish disposition, while to others the effect may be to destroy all faith in a divine power. For none, except as instructed out of the Scriptures respecting the *cause* and *object* of the permission of evil, – calamities, etc., – could suppose any reason why God should either inflict such calamities or permit them to come upon men from other causes.

And Satan's power of death makes quite possible his relief from sickness, etc., through agencies of his choice, – for the purpose of enforcing their false teachings. This deception will, we believe, be employed by him more and **[R1685 : page 249]** more in the future, and constitute part of the "strong delusion" which would, "if it were possible, deceive the very elect." But their deception will not be possible; because the true "sheep" know their Shepherd's voice, and flee from other teachers. This is another sign of Satan's desperation, and indicates the near approach of the dissolution of his kingdom and power of death. So says our Lord, in Matt. 12:25,26.

Satan, no doubt is permitted to gain increasing knowledge since 1799 just as with men: and no doubt like them he takes the credit to himself, and supposes that he is daily growing wiser; and that through his wisdom he has a greater "power of death." Christ, the new King, according **[R1686 : page 249]** to the Scriptures will permit Satan to use his knowledge and powers increasingly, and thus cause the wrath of Satan to praise him, and to work out features of his plan; as he so often has done with the wrath of man.

All who have "escaped" from under this prince of evil should be earnest in helping others out of his bondage – fully, completely – and into the service of the prince of life and peace and joy everlasting. Oh! what a comfort to know that, although we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits of exalted influence and power (Eph. 6:12), yet one is on our side, the Prince of Light, against whom the Prince of Darkness cannot prevail. How restful to realize that *all*

things are ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's; and that ***all things*** shall work together for good to us, because we ***love*** God and are called and have responded, according to his promise.
