

# The Satanic Purpose

One of the big problems in the church today is that many Christians do not understand the purpose and plan of God in salvation. This hinders understanding almost all Biblical doctrines, since they are founded in that overall purpose. It is also difficult to develop in one's walk with God if one fails to understand the sovereignty of God's election of saints in eternity. However, once one has understood the eternal purpose of God a different problem arises; that is a failure to understand Satan's earthly purpose. This failure causes problems with waging warfare against the enemy of the saints and often prompts Christians to concentrate in completely wrong areas,<sup>1</sup> failing to see that the accuser of the brethren has completely distracted them from following God's purpose.<sup>2</sup> Such believers are ineffectual in serving God.

Jesus said that we must be wise as serpents (an ancient image of cunning) and innocent as doves (Matt 10:16). This means we must be wise about Satan's strategies so that we are not fooled by them. Paul was one who understood this and thus was supremely effectual; 'lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices,' (2 Cor 2:11). This paper seeks to give an overall view of what Satan is actually doing and why – what is the basis of the devil's purpose. For more information on the specific effects of Satan's work in the world today see my paper, *'The Reality of the Satanic Agenda'*.

## The great reversal

### **The reversal of God's eternal plan**

The key to understanding the work of Satan is to be clear on what he is doing. His chief motivation is to bring about the complete reversal of God's plan in salvation. To understand the devil's strategy you must first understand God's eternal purpose.

The basis of God purpose is to create a spiritual / material reflection of his glory and attributes in the universe. God's glory inhabits the cosmos but God himself, being spiritual, is invisible and his true glory is only seen in heaven by angels, seraphim and cherubim. His purpose is to create a material reflection of his actual moral glory in a physical universe that is perfectly good and that is openly viewed everywhere. Thus God's glory fills both the heavens and the physical creation.

The creation of the world as a perfect garden of God, populated by man, a perfect reflection of God's holiness, was the start of this purpose. Everything in creation spoke of God's attributes in some way but man supremely reflected the moral holiness of God and his spiritual wisdom, thus man named the animals.

The devil sought to ruin this by making man subservient to him and changing his moral holiness to depravity. Thus began the work of salvation from God's part and the work of rebellion on Satan's part. The great reversal had begun.

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<sup>1</sup> For example decades ago, as 10 nations joined the European Union, pamphlet after pamphlet was written by Christians claiming that end-time prophecy was about to be fulfilled and the end of the world was close upon us.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, many of the Charismatic strategies for spiritual warfare today are satanic in origin. We can be sure of this because they have absolutely no Biblical foundation at all. Thus Satan distracts such believers into concentrating on a false area so that he can fulfil his plans in another, which is being ignored.

The key to understanding what Satan is doing in every temptation is to understand that he is trying to reverse the work of God and create the opposite.

### **Not just obvious sin**

When Christians think about the enemy's attacks they primarily consider the temptation to sin; indeed this is a part of the devil's strategy but it is not the whole of it. Indeed, many of the devil's most successful temptations are to get believers to do seemingly good things that are completely ineffectual. If Satan can get a person to concentrate on this he can make a person's entire Christian life a waste of time for decades.

The temptation to get Christians to sin is a reversal of God's attribute of holiness. To get a Christian to do wrong things is a reversal of God's attribute of righteousness. However, God has many more attributes and Satan wants man to be the epitome of the reverse of all these attributes of God. As God is building a church where the whole body is a testimony to him in multifarious ways, so the devil is seeking to get all men under his power to be the very reverse of that testimony, and sadly this often includes Christians along with unbelievers.

This is the explanation of the number 666 in Revelation, which is imprinted on men's foreheads. The forehead symbolises the mind and the number means this: six represents man (created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day) and the triple reference symbolises the Trinity. In other words it is a figurative mention of the great lie of the devil, and the original lie in Eden, that man can be like God. 666 is merely man making a god of himself and thus falling completely under the spell of the original rebel who wanted to be God – Satan.

What Satan is seeking to do is to get all men in the world to be so under his sway that their thinking is devilish instead of godly. He wants the world to manifest his twisted character rather than the attributes of God who made it. The end will be a time when most men and all nations will represent the devil in every characteristic because all men's thinking is satanic. Thus nations will legislate for wickedness and condemn righteousness; Christianity will be especially outlawed and persecuted. Thus when governments today legislate iniquitous policies (such as Gay marriage) they are instituting the beginning of what will become the end-time satanic kingdom that is Antichrist.

The key issue to remember is that Satan wants to dominate men's minds; his plan is to overcome the thinking processes of human beings so that they think wrongly. Instead of thinking in a godly and wise manner, they think wickedly and deceitfully.

So, it is not just a question of obvious sin; Satan is seeking to twist men's rationale to become fully evil in every respect. Christians can fall into this trap when they do something apparently good in a wrong way or from a false or hypocritical motivation.

## **The example of Israel**

Israel was called to be God's son; alone of the nations Israel was given God's law in written form and directed in it by priests and corrected in behaviour by prophets. This meant that Israelites were not only to do good but also to think in a godly manner.

**And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and**

they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deut 6:6-9

God's words were to occupy the daily life of the Israelite and even be as bound on his forehead; in others words to dominate his thinking. They were also to be a sign on the hand – i.e. to dominate man's practical work. Thus children were to be taught God's law from an early age; indeed every aspect of daily life was to be centred around knowing God's word.

The fight for truth begins in the mind; it begins with what you fill your mind with. There are only two characteristics to everything in life – is it of God or is it of the devil? Truth or lies are behind every work in the world and the only thing that determines a walk in truth is a mind that is set upon the truth of God's word. Thus Scripture is filled with exhortations for truth to be held in the heart and mind and for it to be the basis of life:

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart. Ps 15:1-2

You desire truth in the inward parts. Ps 51:6

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Prov 3:3

Therefore, the key area that the devil seeks to corrupt is the inner man, the root, the motivation of character – the heart and mind. The devil seeks to twist the way that man thinks so that he does wrong because he thinks that it is right. Getting a good man to sin occasionally is no way to win the battle; but if the devil can get a man to think completely wrongly, then everything that man does is going to be corrupt. This is why false doctrines are so commonly used by the enemy; error does more long-term harm than many sins.

Thus the central battle in the spiritual world is for the mind; Satan seeks to get people to think wrongly.

Now this is exemplified by the history of Israel.

This central feature of committing great sin (usually idolatry) is not motivated by deliberately sinning against God's law to spite him, but by being convinced that idolatrous worship and commitment were acceptable ways of serving God.

The first great apostasy of Israel occurred right at the time of the giving of God's law at Sinai and was a model for all future falling away; this was the sin of using a moulded golden calf in worship. It was not so much that Israel worshipped the actual idol but that they used it as a focus of the eyes to worship God – this is your god (Ex 32:4). They wanted gods that they could see (Ex 32:1); they wanted to walk by sight and not by faith.

This was a great reversal of the Exodus.

God had delivered his people out of a land that was filled, possibly more than most nations, with a variety of idols based upon animals. God's salvation was to take a people out of a land filled with idolatry and bring it to be centred upon the true God, having no idols at all. Almost immediately, Israel reversed this to make its own animal god even while in the wilderness, thus nullifying God's salvation. The devil tempted the people to do what they had been used to seeing in Egypt – worshipping idols, thus corrupting what was to have been a pure nation. Thus the devil reversed the work of God, creating the opposite of what he desired.

Now this is written for our example (1 Cor 10:6) and God allowed this to happen to teach the church important lessons. However, in Israel's case this became a precedent that affected the nation from the beginning until its end in God's purposes (Matt 21:43). The history of Israel is one long story of idolatry, disobedience and rebellion with the occasional revival of truth under a righteous leader.

God's purpose was to make Israel different from the nations – worshipping the true God in holiness and the people walking in obedience to God's law. However, Israel continually apostatised and followed the practices of the Gentile nations in their religious corruption and even in their political alliances. God's purpose was for Israel to stand as a beacon of truth, an example of pure religion and a manifestation of righteous social / political life. Instead the devil turned Israel into being exactly like her neighbours – idol worshippers, social oppressors and worldly politicians.

In the case of the Northern Kingdom, warnings and judgment failed to make any changes and the ten tribes were scattered amongst Assyria. Regarding Judah, she too failed to heed the warnings and was exiled in Babylon, save only a remnant that returned of about 300,000. But even this remnant was corrupt and a mere remnant of that remnant was saved so that only a handful of Jews welcomed the appearance of her Messiah (Lk 2:15-18, 25-32, 36-38). Indeed the only men to give the infant Messiah gifts were Gentiles (Matt 2:11).

The example of Israel is that the devil succeeded in reversing God's purposes for the nation and getting Jews to be the very opposite of what God intended. The apostles warn us not to be like Israel that fell away (1 Cor 10:5-12; Heb 3:10, 15-19; Acts 7:39-43, 51-53) and Jesus tells us that Jews were a stiff-necked (proud and rebellious) people. Moses saw all this before Israel reached Canaan:

For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. //today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death? Deut 31:27

Thus Israel became the very reverse of what God called them to be. This is the great Biblical example of what not to do. Their key lesson in Israel's failure was refusing to concentrate upon the word of God and so it became easily manipulated by the enemy in every generation.

If you fail to guard your mind and heart you will certainly end up being the reverse of what God intends.

## Specific examples in the OT

### Corrupt mimicking

#### *Holy oil*

This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make *any other* like it, according to its composition. It *is* holy, *and* it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds *any* like it, or whoever puts *any* of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people. Ex 30:31-33

#### *Holy incense*

Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It

shall be most holy to you. But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD. Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people. Ex 30:34-38

God commanded the making of every detail of divine worship in the tabernacle services according to the pattern that he described through Moses. Nothing could be used in worship that was not according to the pattern. [This is a clear injunctive principle for modern worshippers not to deviate from the pattern of NT worship described by the apostles (the regulatory principle). This completely destroys the argument that ‘anything goes’ (normative principle) operated by almost every church today.<sup>3</sup>]

Thus only the correct components, made in the correct way, by the correct people, could be used in divine services. The oil used had to be the holy oil; the incense used had to be holy incense – made in the correct formulation according to the divine pattern.

Two misuses of these would result in death: 1) using the holy oil on something outside the tabernacle; 2) making a similar oil for use in the tabernacle.

Modern satanic deceptions equate to the latter: using a false means to achieve God’s will.

### *Unholy fire*

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Lev 10:1-2

Nadab and Abihu had died before the LORD when they offered profane fire before the Lord. Num 3:4

And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which *is* for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring *it* inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die. Lev 16:11-13

The command of God was that only Levites could take coals from the bronze altar to be used in censers to burn incense. The symbolism of this is very clear – prayers arising to God as a sweet smelling aroma only come from someone who is sanctified by the offering of Christ on the cross. To alter the Levitical directions ruins the important symbolism.

Nadab and Abihu, being sons of Aaron, were Levites but they acted rebelliously and put false fire in their censers. When they offered the incense burning on the unholy fire they were immediately killed by supernatural fire. Such is the importance of following the divine commands to the letter.

We can extrapolate this lesson to many forms of ‘false fire’ being used in divine worship today. Whenever the flesh is used to lead or promote ideas in worship it is false fire. When mere dry intellectualism leads churches it is false fire. When pagan mysticism features in worship it is false fire. When false Charismatic gifts are used in worship they are forms of a false fire.

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<sup>3</sup> The normative principle (historically associated with Lutheran and Arminian churches) is usually defended as, ‘anything is acceptable in worship unless it is specifically forbidden by Scripture’. This is so obviously false that it defies common sense, let alone God’s word. For instance, it would enable churches to endorse smoking cigarettes in meetings or taking cocaine to get high. In the past it has led to people worshipping naked.

Again, the devil is not stopping people from worshipping God, but he corrupts their thinking to believe that they can worship him how they want – the result is always death; spiritual death in the first instance but if there is no repentance guilty parties will suffer the second death (i.e. hell: Rev 2:11, 20:6, 14, 21:8).

### **False prophecy**

And the LORD said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, "Sword and famine shall not be in this land" -- By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them -- them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters -- for I will pour their wickedness on them.' Jer 14:14-16

Over and over again Israel was guilty of accepting false prophecies from various false prophets. These people, in the main, did not seek to make Israelites worship Satan in an obvious, objective form, rather they claimed to be from Yahweh and leading the people to do what God said. However, by corrupting the thinking of the people, and getting them to stray from God's directions in the law, they actually served Satan.

Moses established three rules regarding false prophecy that ought to be considered today.

*First rule – failed predictions means false prophecy from a false prophet.*

When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. Deut 18:22

Predictions that fail to occur mean that God is not speaking through that prophet; he is false; his words are presumptuous (i.e. of the flesh and not the Spirit). The Lord's people must not be afraid of such people and should confront them openly.

This needs to be applied today where Charismatic prophets have failed in their predictions over and over again. Famous names, such as Paul Cain, Gerald Coates and many others, have uttered false predictions. They should have been confronted but nothing was done.

*Second rule – when prophecies lead people to idolatry they are false.*

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' -- which you have not known -- 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. Deut 13:1-5

There are false prophets who are so involved with Satan that they can have some predictive power. This is not true prophecy but information based on what has been collated by

demons, which is not known to men at that time.<sup>4</sup> However, the content of their exhortation is to lead God's people into idolatry.

Such people are false prophets even though their predictions came true and they were able to work miracles. Miracles mean nothing without divine revelation. Pagans can work miracles, just as Pharaoh's magicians could (Ex 7:11-12).

In a time when Charismatics are focused upon Signs and Wonders, we need to establish that such things have no value in themselves whatsoever – even if they were true miracles, which they are not. It is safe to say that oriental pagans are able to achieve far more miraculous feats than western Charismatics. There are even documented stories from old missionaries of Indian and Chinese gurus walking on water to cross a river. Even the illusionist Dynamo managed to walk across the Thames recently.<sup>5</sup> I haven't seen any Charismatics do this.

Miracles mean nothing. The Antichrist will work them to establish his power; that does not mean that his power comes from God. Focusing on mere miracles is foolish. True miracles only come with associated glory to God and a testimony of Christ.

We should consider that much of what has happened in the last thirty years, which has claimed to be based on Signs and Wonders, has led church people into adopting pagan teachings and practices. These would include visualisation; inner / emotional healing; impartation of spirits by laying on of hands; falling backwards as a result of a leader's suggestion; gaining wealth through selfish prayers; temporary 'healing' based upon hypnotism; territorial spirits; exorcism; false tongue speaking;<sup>6</sup> and so on.

The modern Charismatic prophetic movement has done nothing but bring paganism into the church; exactly what the devil intended.

### *Rule three – the punishment*

**The prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. Deut 18:20**

God's word for those under the Old Covenant was that false prophecy resulted in death. Every false prophet was to be executed by God's people; so serious is this matter. I am not advocating capital punishment; but under the New Covenant, false prophecy should result in discrediting the false prophet and terminating his ministry. If this had occurred with Paul Cain, his ministry would have been discredited by 1990 at the latest and he would not have gone on to damage so many people, such as pastoring Westminster Chapel with RT Kendal. His many supporters were taken aback when it turned out that he been in gross sin while masquerading as the greatest Charismatic prophet.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For example, information regarding something happening very far away in the world, known to demons through their network, but unknown to the locals – such as an advancing army still hundreds of miles away.

<sup>5</sup> Though clearly this was a trick, an illusion, not real magic.

<sup>6</sup> Tongues speaking has been part of mystical pagan groups for centuries and is usually gibberish sounds not known languages. The modern revival of this in Pentecostalism around 1901 (and earlier in Mormonism and the Holiness Mvt.) is a revival of pagan tongues which are gibberish, and not the evidence of Biblical tongues, which were unlearned but known languages spoken to glorify God and were interpreted as such. These genuine tongues only lasted for a short time to help establish and authenticate the early church. They are not mentioned after Acts and 1 Corinthians in the later NT books.

<sup>7</sup> Many of the supposed great Charismatic prophets turned out to be committing gross sin during their ministry: such as Bob Jones or Todd Bentley. What does that say about the discernment of thousands of people and almost all Charismatic leaders who supported them?

This sanction needs to be taken seriously since not only Charismatics fail in this matter, but many New Calvinists in America<sup>8</sup> are making the case that modern prophecy can be wrong most of the time and yet the prophet is still to be considered a true prophet. This was a doctrine that appeared in the late 1980s Signs and Wonders Movement, particularly amongst the discredited Kansas City Prophets when associated with The Vineyard Churches. It is a false doctrine that contradicts the Scriptures shown here.

### *False comfort*

**Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.**

Lam 2:14

Prophets are uncomfortable, stringent people to be around. One of their jobs is to open up the sins of an erring people, expose them and demand repentance. God's people cannot pursue holiness if they are going in the wrong direction – this requires harsh words to change direction.

One aspect of false prophecy is to issue comforting words to an erring people. The church today is filled with such words. People who speak positively and who advocate tolerance and openness and ecumenism are openly accepted while people who speak about division, separateness, and discriminating truth are castigated. Modern folk would have trouble with Jesus himself.<sup>9</sup>

The prophetic ministry of exposing sin and heresy is universally hated but without it God's people fall astray, and always have done. Prophetic ministry is in great need today.

In a time when Charismatic so-called prophecy is everywhere there has never been a time when true prophecy was more urgent. The first thing a true prophet would do would be to 'uncover the iniquity' in the church. Without sin being exposed, it cannot be rooted out.

The devil loves false prophets, with their false comfort, and has always used them. It is a strategy of Satan to get the church to accept false prophets that boost self-love and then fill that church with errors through directly inspiring false prophecies in that false prophet. False prophets are a mouthpiece of Satan.

**Her prophets plastered them with untempered *mortar*, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD had not spoken. The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. Ezek 22:28-29**

**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Matt 7:15**

**Many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 Jn 4:1**

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<sup>8</sup> A recent movement of corrupted Calvinism (Free Offer Amyraldism) linked to moderate Charismatic practices. It is mainly associated with leaders such as John Piper and Mark Driscoll, yet many academics, such as Don Carson have also been associated with this movement.

<sup>9</sup> Lk 12:51-53, 'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'

### *Interim conclusion*

It is a satanic purpose to fill the church with false prophecy. Instead of destroying a church in persecution, a church given over to the devil's purpose by following false prophecy is more useful to him. It becomes the reverse of God's word; the reverse of the truth.

### **Idolatry**

Idolatry is one of the worst sins imaginable and is hated by God. It forms the first forbidden item in the 10 Commandments (Ex 20:3-4). Because God hates it so much, the devil sought to make it the chief sin of Israel. The ruin of Israel, both in the Ten tribes and later in Judah, was chiefly the sin of idolatry, combined with social oppression.

In idolatry, as we have seen in Israel, the devil twisted the thinking of God's people; not into overtly worshipping Satan, but worshipping God in a corrupt way by means of idols. In doing so the people were actually worshipping demons even though most of them did not mean to.

The devil did not one day tempt a person to overtly worship an Assyrian or Canaanite god or goddess (that did come later), instead he preyed on a dissatisfaction (e.g. being distant from the rituals in the temple in Jerusalem), and adding to God's commands. Thus a person was tempted to manufacture an idol and worship it at home or carve a tree stump on a nearby hill and worship there (the 'high places'). Idolatry began with Jews worshipping an idol with a view to serving Yahweh, just as they did with the golden calf.

As soon as this occurred, the Jew was worshipping a demon and not God. Once the rot had set in, the temptation was then to develop this idolatry to be more and more iniquitous and demonic. The end result was overtly worshipping Baal and Asherah (Astarte) and sacrificing their children to Molech.

The origin of the idolatry was getting a Jew to accept corrupted thinking that he was serving God by worshipping an idol.

This is absolutely commonplace today. Christians can fellowship with demons by rejecting the truth.

What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 1 Cor 10:19-21

When Paul expresses the view that he does not want believers to fellowship with demons, it means that there is the possibility that they can. Idolatry is where this danger is most likely.

When a Charismatic strives to worship God in a meeting that is dominated by a false prophet, that uses methods that are demonic and not Biblical, that issues teaching that is ungodly, and where that Charismatic submits willingly to these things and becomes passive – then that person is in an idolatrous situation. He is not worshipping God since his worship is not according to God's word; he cannot worship God in a state of contradicting God. Thus fellowship in this situation (and this prevailed during the Toronto Blessing for example) can only be fellowshiping with demons. Thus the behaviour was characteristic of demonic, pagan ritual rather than Biblical truth (screaming, falling over, laughing uncontrollably etc.).

Anytime that something occupies the place that is rightfully God, then idolatry has occurred. Sadly, idolatry is rampant amongst Christians today, just as it was amongst Israel in the OT.

## **The effect of the satanic purpose today**

A full examination of this would require a library of books; it would involve the complete cataloguing of all that is going wrong today in every denomination – a massive list of practices.

However, it behoves us to look at one or two examples in modern churches where there is an ongoing reversal of the divine revelation; where God's truth is negated and human / demonic ideas replace them.

These are part of a continuing strategy to gradually replace all the main constituents of Biblical Christianity, in practice and doctrine, with corrupt institutions.

I also point you to my paper '*The Expression of the man of sin*', which examines the characteristics of the end-time antichristian kingdom; this being the culmination of man's adoption of satanic principles in the world.

## **The strategy of using satanic ideas in 'Christian' spiritual warfare**

Remember that the key motivation and plan of the enemy is to dominate the mind, to control the thoughts of men. Satan cares nothing about minor details that appear to confront him as long as he can control men's thinking overall.

His greatest trick, often used in church history, is to arrange a concerted attack, supposedly on him, but twist the thinking so that completely unrighteous and ungodly methods are used in that attack. Examples of this are easy to find.

### **Example: The Inquisition**

An obvious case is the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition was an ecclesiastical tribunal established by Pope Gregory IX in around 1232 for the suppression of heresy but in 1542 it was re-instituted specifically to combat Protestantism.

The motivation for the Inquisition was supposedly the glory of God. The problem was that God's authority was, for them, enshrined in papal authority, which was not of God at all. The perpetrators of the Inquisition sought to uphold what they believed was God's truth but which was really the dictates of the papacy pretending to be God's truth. Remember that virtually nobody had access to any form of the word of God in those days, a book forbidden by the Inquisition itself, especially in any vernacular translation.

So, in the name of God and for the glory of Jesus, the Jesuits<sup>10</sup> tortured and killed genuine saints. In some countries, such as Spain, southern France and northern Italy, tens of thousands of people were killed by the Inquisition.

Did the members of the Inquisition deliberately try to serve Satan? No!<sup>11</sup> They specifically sought to glorify Jesus, but their methods are clearly satanic. By using demonic tactics they convinced themselves that they were doing God's work.

### **Example: Protestant executions**

Before Protestants harangue Jesuits, it should be stated that Puritan witch-finders acted in much the same way in burning supposed witches, though on a massively smaller scale than the Inquisition. Also, I have grave doubts that witch-finders were true believers at all. The worst case was the Salem (NE Massachusetts) Witch Trials in 1692. Despite godly Reformed leaders calling for clemency, the local magistrates went ahead and killed 19 people on little evidence.<sup>12</sup>

Also we cannot ignore the fact that true believers, and particularly magistrates in Protestant countries, repeatedly executed heretics for the common good during the Reformation. This was a normal part of the age that they lived in, where heresy had always been a capital crime.

Such methods and sanctions are not New Testament Christianity. Sadly, well-meaning believers have also been led to use satanic methods in dealing with supposed satanic crimes (e.g. heresy).

### **Asceticism**

This is the practice of severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of 'indulgence' to achieve sanctification. In the worst cases believers would wear hair shirts that caused terrible itching; flagellate themselves; crawl up stone steps on their bare knees, pray on hard, dried peas or live atop pillars for years. Several Celtic saints stood in freezing cold pools for hours on end in winter. Clearly such behaviour is not only pointless but also sinful in that it is mistreating the body that God intended we should care for.

This mistake is confusing the old nature with the physical flesh. We mortify the old nature but not the body, which is a neutral vessel. Again Satan has caused people to attack the wrong thing in the wrong way to pursue a godly objective. Ascetics think that they are serving God but in reality they have been fooled by the devil.<sup>13</sup>

These are clear examples of how Satan tricks believers (and others) into doing evil or pointless things because their thinking has been diverted from God's truth. Such folk do demonic things thinking that they are serving God.

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<sup>10</sup> A member of the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic order of priests founded by St Ignatius Loyola, St Francis Xavier, and others in 1534, originally to do missionary work. However it was zealous in opposing the Reformation.

<sup>11</sup> An argument can be made that the Jesuits were largely crypto-Jews (as Loyola) pretending to be Roman Catholics and took this opportunity to attack genuine Christians as commanded by the Talmud. In this they were serving Satan in the guise of Lucifer. [Many Jewish sects openly worship Lucifer or the Serpent.]

<sup>12</sup> The latest explanation is that the 'demonised' victims suffered from ergot poisoning, resulting from eating stale rice, which gave them visions and delusions.

<sup>13</sup> Before we ridicule these ascetics, who were actually striving to be holy, many modern teachers (such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones) have mistakenly placed sin in the physical body.

### **Modern spiritual warfare as physical confrontation of demons**

The essence of true spiritual warfare is to understand that the battle is for the mind. The devil intends to corrupt the thinking of Christians so that they do the wrong things and serve him. Whether they do this sinfully, or in a sincere but misguided attempt to serve God, matters little if the effect is wrong. The fight is for the mind; the fight is about what is truth. This is why the absolute foundation for all successful spiritual warfare is the word of God, and knowing what it teaches.

What the devil has done in these ignorant times has been to divert the attention of believers from the fight for the mind onto external (and often physical) pantomime strategies that purport to be spiritual warfare but are actually ploys of Satan. Indeed many of them are merely copies of pagan ideas as performed by witchdoctors. The methods of Charismatics are legion; we will offer a few examples.

The most extreme forms of this externalisation of warfare are seen in the supposed Charismatic prophets and deliverance ministers (an unbiblical function, never seen in Scripture). This was often found in Classic Pentecostals. For example, when Smith Wigglesworth punched a man hard in the stomach to dispel a demon (the man died a few days later as a result) or when Welsh Pentecostals would wrestle people to rid the demon. A friend of mine witnessed a Welsh preacher rolling down a hill wrestling a man to fight a demon. Modern versions include Todd Bentley kicking an old woman in the face or punching a Chinese man so hard in the chest that his front teeth fell out.

It is often claimed that spirits leave a person in a their vomit; thus Charismatic deliverance ministers would require sick bowls before exorcism took place! This is no better than the medieval superstition that sneezing was evidence of a demon leaving the body (thus saying, 'God bless you').

If a person cannot see that this is demonic and unchristian, then I have little faith that that person is a true believer. The mistake is to confuse the person and the demon; it is externalising spiritual warfare. A greater mistake is to believe that a genuine believer can be possessed and controlled by a demon in the first place. God gives liberty in salvation, delivers us from the devil's power, translates us from the devil's kingdom and then looks after us (Col 1:13; Jn 10:28). Genuine Christians do not get possessed by demons.<sup>14</sup>

But the forms of Charismatic deluded exorcism are many and various, all focused on externalisation. Often, they become outright abuse. Examples of this have been documented in physical, psychological and sexual abuse of both men and women. One man was subjected to being stripped and held down by people while a famous deliverance leader poured communion wine over his genitals to get rid of spirits of fornication. In several other cases a London leader and his wife engaged in 'internal ministries' whereby women were physically assaulted in their genitals to remove unclean spirits. In some famous cases, children were actually killed by Pentecostals in London because they were possessed by spirits of witchcraft. In Africa there have been many recent cases where people were burned alive because others thought that they were witches.

These are all examples of Charismatics assuming that the demonic problem is physical within people. This has been encouraged by Hollywood movies that show ghosts and demons having physical properties. Think about it; spirit beings are immaterial and have no physical properties.

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<sup>14</sup> Whether possessed means domination or just controlled in some way. Wimber's preference to use the term 'demonised' is just sophistry; in effect he means controlled by demons. The Bible word means 'to have a demon'. It is impossible that the Holy Spirit would share his domain in the heart of a Christian with a demon.

But Charismatics also believe that demons haunt actual places and dominate areas. In fact they believe that until the demonic possession of a thing or a place is removed, by various means (how can they know it is successful?) they aver that no spiritual work can be done there.

I have debated a Charismatic missionary who strongly maintained that no missionary work could be done in Yunan until Christians rid the place of territorial spirits first. This is completely contrary to the earlier work of great missionaries who just evangelised and gave no consideration to exorcisms. The facts show that the earlier missionaries produced many converts and changed nations while the modern Charismatics have little to show for their efforts.

For many years Pentecostals, and some Charismatics, legalistically insisted that every church meeting first needs to pray to remove or bind evil spirits from the meeting before anything can occur. This is giving the devil the pre-eminence instead of Christ. Graham Kendrick founded the 'March For Jesus' ministry specifically to remove demons from towns by the proclamation of Jesus. The historical fact is that the towns where this occurred have shown a great worsening of social behaviour and a decline of church attendance.

Sometimes the strategy is just plain laughable, such as when Gerald Coates' churches stated that pointed signs in Westminster were sites of demonic control and sought for the signs to be changed. This was in line with other statements that sounded more like Feng Shui than Christianity.

C Peter Wagner has built up a whole ministry, that has global influence, based on the principle of territorial spirits and the need for a concerted strategy to overcome them. Different ranks of spirit beings<sup>15</sup> are first discerned by supposed prophets and then the right kind of attack is directed against them ('spiritual mapping'). Cell groups can attack local areas in towns; churches can attack spirits controlling towns and cities but apostolic teams are necessary to defeat nations (the exact strategy differs in different authors).

But enough of this nonsense! Not a word of this can be found in the Bible – not a single word. It continues the Charismatic idea of externalising demonic warfare. Never did any apostle try to resolve a disciple's problems with lust by removing a spirit of fornication. The apostles always emphasised personal responsibility, fleeing lust and putting off the old nature. God's word must determine all our strategies, and none of these Charismatic methods are found in Scripture.

In fact, what Charismatic warfare does is to ignore the matter of sin. All the attention is placed on demons, whether in a person or a town, and the fact of sin is completely ignored. The devil controls people through sin and it is sin that needs to be overcome. Real Biblical prophets called upon cities to repent of their sin;<sup>16</sup> modern Charismatic prophets do not do this at all but concentrate on demons and over-exaggerate their powers.

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<sup>15</sup> The Bible does not even give clear evidence of the ranking claimed by Charismatics. This is just supposition.

<sup>16</sup> Jer 25:4-6, 'And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, "Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands". Ezek 14:16, 'Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations"'. Jon 1:1-2, 'Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me"'.

God's word emphasises that our warfare is not earthly or carnal; it is spiritual. The work of demons is to tempt us to sin and to corrupt our thinking. For Charismatics the work of demons is external and requires doing something material and physical – such as confronting a demon in a person or a place and then removing it by this or that methodology.

Of course, since no one can ever see a demon, Charismatics, in truth, have no way of knowing if their method is successful, other than the word of their leader. But experience has shown that their leaders have been dead wrong.<sup>17</sup> All of this is a smokescreen that serves the devil's purpose to distract people from Christ and God's word. Charismatic spiritual warfare is no better than the superstitions of medieval Roman Catholics. What is worse is that the methods used are often tactics derived from heathen religions.<sup>18</sup> Again, the Charismatic Movement has been a vehicle for importing paganism into the church.

## Modern forms of worship

The modern church is actually filled with examples of this. In fact, there is almost nothing in modern churches that are not deviations from Scripture. A catalogue of examples of this would fill many books and not serve our purpose here, but a couple of examples will suffice.

### Worship as fleshly entertainment

Biblical worship is the submission of the soul to God; a humbling that leads to recognition of a higher power that must be revered. It is the bowing down of the soul in total acceptance of the sovereignty of God that leads to prostration (either physically or figuratively) as an act of submission.

This is clearly demonstrated in the chief NT word for 'worship', *proskuneo* (Strong's 4352). This means: to kiss the hand to (towards) one in token of reverence. The root word it is based on (Strong's 2965) means to kiss like a dog licking his master's hand. It has the implication of falling upon the knees and touching the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence. In essence it means kneeling or prostration to do homage, to make obeisance, used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank.

The NT word is influenced by the Hebrew word used (*shachah*) which also means to bow down to the ground in the presence of a superior person or being. If a single word defines worship it is 'prostration' (of mind and/or body). The focus of the word is not on the worshipper but on the one worshipped.

It is important to note that the main effect of the superior being to be worshipped upon the inferior being who worships is an act of will. The worshipper recognises the need for worship and chooses to prostrate himself. It is the impact of truth on the soul resulting in an act of volition to worship. It is not an act of mere emotion (though emotions may be peripherally involved).

Now this is not what modern Christians mean by worship in practical terms in corporate meetings. If asked to define it, they may accept that it means submission and adoration (especially individual worship), but in practice they usually use it to mean something else.

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<sup>17</sup> In fact many people that submitted to a first exorcism often found themselves being repeatedly delivered from demons time after time.

<sup>18</sup> Exorcisms and fighting evil spirits is a major constituent of all heathen shamanism.

The essence of modern worship is a focus upon the worshipper's emotional felt needs – a reversal of what Biblical worship is.

### *Conservative worship*

Non-Charismatic worship is not much better than Charismatic worship. Depending upon the denomination, corporate worship is all about what is felt. Many require an imposing building, like a cathedral, with light emanating through stained glass windows. Added to this is the emotional singing of a large choir ringing through the impressive tall architecture. All of this is especially designed to create an imposing atmosphere; just as the architecture of a court is designed to rack up tension and authority.

Some denominations add troops of ministers in brightly coloured garments designed to advertise authority. Then there may be the bells and smells, which are added to increase a sense of drama. All of this serves to deliberately impact the emotions of the participant.

Dissenting churches are not much better but have less graphic drama. In these the attention is chiefly upon the leader, who single-handedly dominates all the proceedings to the virtual exclusion of everybody else. In older churches this leader is raised up in a pulpit, in modern churches he stands on a raised dais; in both cases he is separated from the laity with the implication that he is more important. The laity in this situation are submitted to a man.

Furthermore, many in this stream are naturally attracted to intellectualism rather than emotionalism. Indeed, their hatred of Charismaticism is less about the truth than about their own personal preferences in meetings. For such, the church meeting is a form of entertainment based upon the intellect – listening to a specific sort of sermon that tickles the mind. In the Middle Ages public debates were a form of social entertainment. In these types of churches the sermon is their entertainment. Yet the modern form of the sermon has no provenance in the NT for the edification of the church; sermons were only used in evangelism to outsiders. Indeed, wiser theologians (such as Dabney) admitted that they are a poor form of educating people who retain very little of what is preached.

In such churches, the drama is racked up by emotional hymns and songs, usually to instrumental accompaniment with rising cadences to stimulate emotions. Again the participant is reacting to an emotional experience in a drama, but in a more sombre manner.

### *Charismatic worship*

Where does one begin here?

It is important to understand that the essential characteristic of the Charismatic Movement (a demonically inspired strategy) is very simple; it can be likened to the Trojan Horse. The Charismatic Movement has been the strategy to import paganism into the church. I have proved this in various other papers, which can be consulted, and I am not alone in stating this.<sup>19</sup>

Over fifty years the Charismatic Movement has been, essentially, the institutional acceptance of the worst radical aspects of historic Pentecostalism in the churches. For 60 years the evangelical church condemned Pentecostalism as a dangerous, heretical cult, warning members to avoid it. One prominent and beloved evangelical leader called it, *'The*

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<sup>19</sup> E.g. *The Origins of Pentecostalism; Charismatic Catastrophe, A Summary of Occult Inroads into the Charismatic Movement.*

*last vomit of Satan*.<sup>20</sup> The Charismatic Movement was the means and vessel whereby Pentecostalism (and indeed the worst aspects of it in Latter Rain heresies) were brought into the evangelical churches and made welcome. Practices are now accepted in the churches that fifty years ago would have been condemned out of hand. The problem is that we have a generation of young Christians who have no knowledge or experience of this and have been brought up seeing these things as the norm.

So, the most important matter for the church – the proper worship of God according to his commands – was corrupted along with everything else. Indeed, the satanic strategy was to corrupt worship in the most extreme way so that it became something absolutely abhorrent to God; something that no previous generation in church history could have imagined would ever occur.

This is what happened in Israel. The worship of God was based upon saving lives; bulls, lambs and goats were sacrificed in order to provide the symbolic atonement of sins to stimulate faith in God, resting in the sacrifice of Christ. As worship was corrupted and became more idolatrous, it ended with Israelites sacrificing their own children in fire as an offering to Molech. Instead of the worship system saving lives to serve God, it became a means of killing children as an offering to the devil. A worse reversal I cannot imagine.

So also the Charismatic corruption of worship has taken the church from quiet submission and self-prostration to God all the way to the most flagrant capitulation to idolatry, self-expression, hedonism, entertainment and grotesque behaviour.

Again, to list the examples of this would take another book; we can only examine a few symptomatic illustrations.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

For most Charismatics the Sunday worship time is the equivalent of an entertainment. It is the one thing that holds people to such churches and is such a shot in the arm that they cannot leave this, even when they are otherwise dissatisfied with the church they are in. Indeed, the worship time was the thing that attracted members from perfectly sound existing churches in the first place.

Young Charismatics treat worship times like rock concerts. Unable to justify being involved in rock concerts, they bring the constituents of them into the church. In the days when things were less extreme than today, I once attended an Evangelical Alliance meeting where Graham Kendrick was 'leading worship'. He led a power-trio of guitar, bass and drums. The venue was a place I had heard many rock concerts previously and it is safe to say that his trio was louder than anything I had heard up to that time. It was as if the band was trying to mimic the rock band Cream.<sup>21</sup> The musicians had no concern for the 'worshipping' audience but were concentrating on maxing-out on their playing to satisfy themselves (I speak as a musician who knows). It was the most unsympathetic travesty of worship I had ever seen. It was truly terrible and left me feeling sick.

Now I am reliably told that members of Charismatic churches regularly take ear-plugs to dampen the rock band noise or just walk out. But volume is just one small part of the things wrong with this.

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<sup>20</sup> G. Campbell Morgan, predecessor of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel.

<sup>21</sup> Eric Clapton's influential group in the second half of the 60s, comprising guitar, bass (Jack Bruce) and drums (Ginger Baker). They were noted for their seriously high volume at the time.

Other churches have dimmed ambient lights in addition to spotlights on loud bands (which may not be rock inspired but various other styles) and appear to be more like a nightclub than a church. Mimicking a club DJ, worship leaders shout, '*God is in da house*'. Then there is the dancing (of various sorts) which often accompanies the music. Sometimes this dancing is frenzied like heathen witchdoctors. Indeed, I have seen a church leader in a prominent stream dance like a crazy dervish swinging a pole ('prayer-stick') adorned with feathers and decorations. To the passing observer there would be no discernible difference between him and a Native American medicine man.

But even where the instrumental music is less extreme there are still a host of problems (to say nothing of the fact that the Bible does not countenance any musical instruments at all in church). These people have grown accustomed to identifying worship with music. Indeed, even at home such people require 'worship albums' in order to feel able to worship in private. Worse still they play such things and claim to 'worship' while doing menial chores.

The Sunday worship meeting has thus become a performance based upon music that dominates the mood – first strident, resulting in praise, and then more subdued, stimulating worshipful feelings. I doubt that young Charismatics equate worship with anything other than music. Everything about the worship time is based upon the emotions and personal pleasure and the various feelings are stimulated by instrumental music.

#### UNCONTROLLED GROTESQUE BEHAVIOUR

I do not need to dwell on this unseemly subject since any genuine believer ought to be able to see for himself that such behaviour is demonic (as previously stated). There is no sane apologetic for the Charismatic characteristics of screaming, laughing uncontrollably, rolling around on the floor, falling over in droves, jumping on the spot for long periods, making animal noises and so on. Without a long discussion, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of self-control in true Christians. Christ-like people are able to contain themselves and restrain the old nature so that they manifest peace. These wild characteristics are the opposite and only occur when a person has withdrawn all self-control and is given over to extremism tempted by the enemy.

People doing these things, and church leaders who let them, have made the church a mockery of what it should be. Even the world sees this and ridicules it, avoiding any contact with it. Such extremism does not only ruin God's testimony but it ruins evangelism.

In this behaviour, the devil has managed to so corrupt the thinking of Charismatics that they tolerate the opposite of what God commands. God commands peace (Gal 5:22; 2 Tim 2:22; Heb 12:14); they allow chaos. God commands order (1 Cor 14:40; Col 2:5); they manifest disorder. God commands that we walk worthy (Eph 4:11); this behaviour is unworthy. God commands self-control (Gal 5:23); this behaviour is out of control. God commands unity (1 Cor 1:10) but this behaviour engenders division.<sup>22</sup> God commands things that edify (Rm 14:19; 1 Thess 5:11); this behaviour is the opposite of edification. God commands that we comfort each other (1 Thess 5:11) but this behaviour scares people; especially children.

Such grotesque behaviour is downright satanic, plain and simple. It is a reversing of what God wants in the church.

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<sup>22</sup> The effect of the Toronto Blessing in the UK was to split many, many churches right down the middle. It even split up families.

### Interim conclusion

Two of the key things examined here have been the sermon and the rock band. All churches accept the place of the sermon and most churches either have rock bands or are in the process of getting them. These two things summarise modern church meetings.

But, as I have alluded, neither has any basis in the genuine NT church. Now I have expounded this in many papers on church life and this is not the place for an apologetic; however, I will say this.

First, try to find any teaching, or even mention, of instrumental music in the NT church. You will fail because there is none; none whatsoever. Instruments were part and parcel of the shadow of the OT, intertwined with sacrifices, and were cancelled at the cross with the rest of the Mosaic Covenant. They have no place in churches at all. The Reformers knew this; the Puritans knew this and most of the Reformed churches accepted this until the late 1800s. Modern Christians do not know this.

Second, the early church did not use the elevated sermonic form to instruct believers in house churches. Instruction was based upon didactic and encouraging teaching; first by a multitude of individuals gifted to do it (not just one man); secondly in an informal manner that included questions, discussion and debate. Jesus modelled this with his disciples and Paul modelled this in the churches. Sadly, Bible versions have confused people by translating certain words as 'preaching' when they mean something quite different in the Greek. For example: the KJV in Acts 20:7 says, 'Paul preached unto them'. However the word is *dialegomai* [**diale,gomai**; Strong's 1256] which means: to argue, dialogue, discuss, think different things, mingle thought with thought etc. Even the KJV itself translates this elsewhere as: 'dispute' 6 times, 'reason with' twice, 'reason' twice, but preach only twice. Clearly the KJV translation is wrong in this verse. In this house meeting Paul was not speaking for hours in an authoritative, distant, elevated manner, but was discussing, teaching and answering questions.

A full study shows that the apostles used sermonic preaching to proclaim the Gospel (a common form of passing on information in those times), standing in public places and giving a homily. However, in churches, teaching was informal involving discussion; indeed, this is known to produce much better results. Thus Paul called himself a preacher and a teacher - they are different.

So, the devil has managed to so twist the thinking of modern Christians that their whole experience of church is based upon lies. Nothing in the structure of the modern church meeting is right. Some of the constituents are right (prayer, singing, teaching) but the structure is completely wrong and the effect is to diminish fellowship instead of facilitate it. This is why churches must meet in houses; another lie of the devil is that we need dedicated buildings and large memberships.

## Conclusion

The vital thing to remember is that in satanic warfare, the devil's chief strategy is to get you to be so corrupted in your thinking that you do demonically inspired things in thinking that you are serving God. As long as Christians simply believe that only overtly wicked things are satanic, they will be susceptible to being tempted to achieve God's will by corrupt methods, whether by human strength, human will, worldly tactics, mystical emotionalism, fleshly lusts or a demonically inspired method.

Satan does not just tempt us to sin; he also tempts us to corrupt methods to achieve a sincere target.

A clear example of this is the case of Ananias and Sapphira. There is no reason to doubt that these were genuine Christians, well-known to Peter and prepared to sacrifice most of their possessions for the kingdom. When censured by Peter he does not say that they were false believers but that they lied (Acts 5:3).

What did they do? To meet the needs of the poor many in the early church sold land and possessions and gave it to the apostles to distribute as necessary. This was not demanded but arose from free-will offerings. [Thus no modern leader should demand this action of his followers – a mistake made frequently in history.]

Satan filled their hearts to lie to the apostles (and thus to God) that the value was less than they said, keeping the remainder for themselves; not a huge sin by today's standards. They were doing a sincere good deed (giving away money) but their thinking was corrupted by Satan to lie, claiming that it was all the value and not a part. As a result they were judged and died immediately, putting fear into the churches (Acts 5:1-11).

Satan did not tempt them to some great sin, such as murder or adultery, but twisted their thinking in the way they did a good deed. In God's eyes this totally corrupted them requiring their removal from the church. If this level of temporal judgment were applied to the modern church, there would be few people left in it.

The chief problem in Satan's strategy is to corrupt the thinking of men so that they achieve his will and not God's, or do 'Christian' things in a corrupt manner. He wants to reverse Christianity to be the opposite of what God intended.

*That they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Tim 2:26*

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