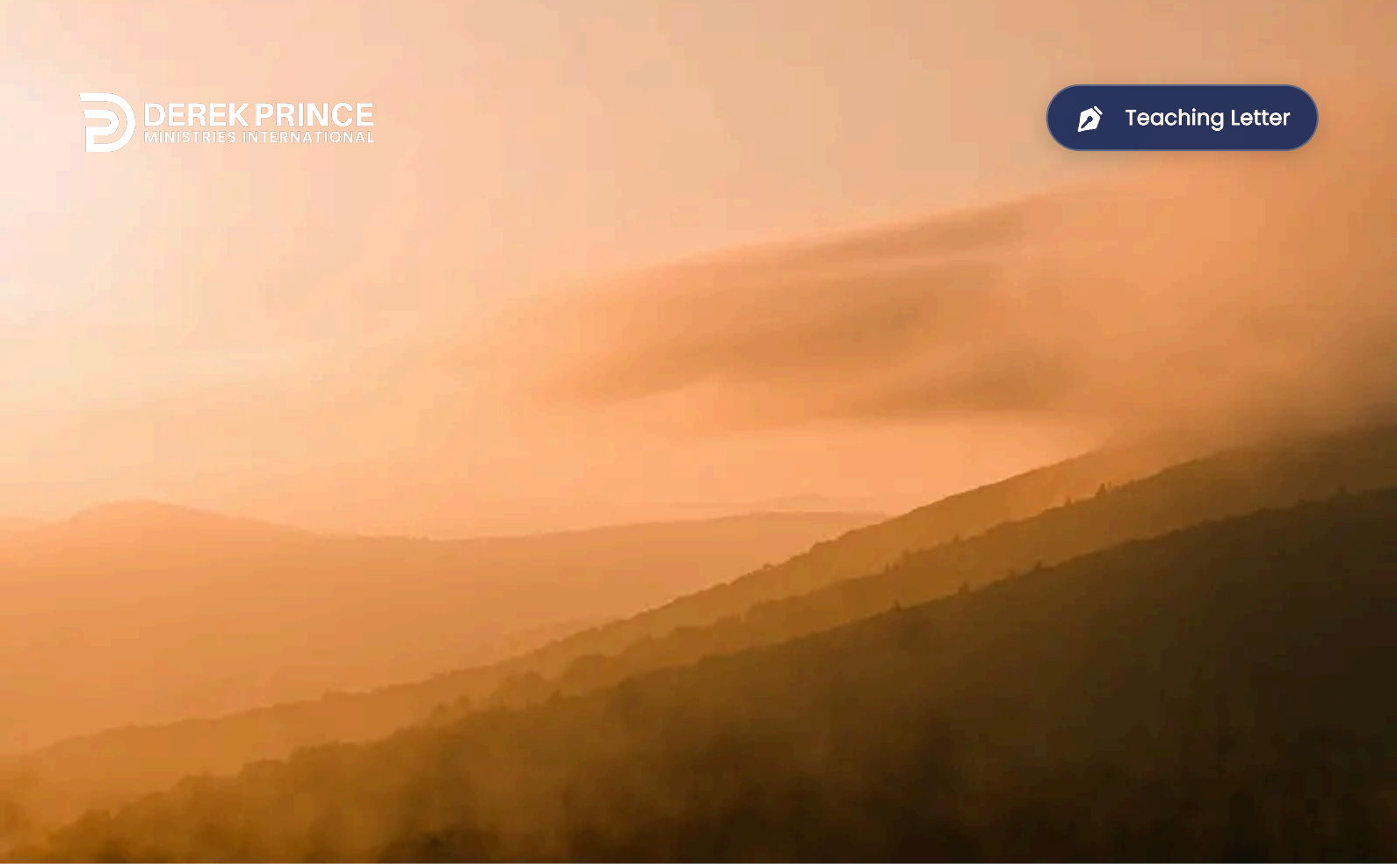


The Climax of the Conflict



Part 5/5

Because of the Angels
By Derek Prince

Confronted by the scriptural revelation of the rebellion of Satan and his angels against God, we might be tempted to exclaim: "Well, couldn't God have crushed that rebellion on the spot and sent Satan and all his angels to the lake of fire, where they belong?"

Certainly God could have done that, but He chose not to. In His inscrutable wisdom God chose to make Satan in his rebellion an instrument that God could use for purposes of His own. It was C.T. Studd, the English cricketer turned missionary, who remarked: "God has used Satan almost more than any other created being."

As this series, *Because of the Angels*, draws to a close, we will see how the spiritual conflict of which we are inextricably a part reaches its climax, and discover that believers play a crucial role in Satan's final downfall.

It is a principle of God's dealings with us that our relationships with Him are not secure until we have passed through certain tests which He has appointed. This applies to both angels and human beings. Untested relationships are like unrefined gold. They are not acceptable in heaven.

For this reason Jesus said to the Christians in Laodicea: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire" (Revelation 3:18). In other words, "Your claim to be My people is not valid until you have passed the test." Gold of that quality is not cheap. We have to *buy* it. There is a price to pay!

Satan the Tester

One main instrument that God uses to test us is Satan. Twice in Scripture he is called *the tempter* (Matthew 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 3:5). This could more literally be translated *the tester.*

In the first instance God used Satan as His tester among the angels in heaven. Only those angels who refused to join Satan in his rebellion passed the test. Three times in reference to the return of Christ in glory and the judgments He will carry out, the Scripture states that He will be accompanied by the *holy* angels (Matthew 25:31, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). These angels are distinguished from those who had joined Satan in his rebellion and had thus lost their holiness.

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God also uses Satan to test humanity. This began with the first human beings—Adam and Eve. God placed them in the garden with one simple negative command: *not* to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then Satan made his way into the garden and tempted them to do the one thing which God had forbidden. When they yielded to this temptation, God pronounced judgment on all three of them. Satan had played his allotted role as the *tester,* but Adam and Eve had failed in their test. For this they alone were responsible.

Even in the life of Jesus Himself, Satan was permitted to play the role of tester.

After Jesus had fasted forty days in the wilderness, the tempter (tester) came to Him and subjected Him to three successive temptations (tests) (Matthew 4:1–11). But where the first Adam had failed, the last Adam prevailed. He passed all three tests victoriously and Satan had to retreat.

Three and a half years later the tester was again released against Jesus. First of all, Satan entered into Judas Iscariot and used him to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3). Then Satan stirred up a multitude of ungodly men to demand the crucifixion of Jesus. Once again, Jesus passed the test. He willingly laid down His life as a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity.

But it was here that the unsearchable wisdom of God reached its climax. The atoning death of Jesus on the cross had in fact canceled all Satan's claims on fallen humanity. Satan's apparent victory became the cause of his irrevocable defeat.

From Slaves to Conquerors

Yet God still had one more way in which to use Satan as a demonstration of His own unfathomable wisdom. Satan had tempted humanity into rebellion against God and had thus made them his slaves. But through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross God not merely saves us from our sins and makes us heirs of His kingdom. He actually makes us instruments through which He inflicts defeat on Satan. Satan's slaves are transformed into his conquerors. Only God could have planned that!

In Revelation 12:7–11 John describes a war—still in the future—that finally puts an end to Satan's kingdom of rebellious angels in the heavenly places:

> And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

This account brings out some extremely important facts:

1. Up to the time of the events here described, Satan and his angels have continued to maintain their kingdom in the heavenly places.
2. When the voice in heaven speaks of "our brethren," it is referring to the believers on earth.
3. Satan and his angels are not driven out until they have been defeated by a combined force of God's angels in the heavenly places and the believers on earth.

This points to an amazing climax to the conflict: "*they* [the believers on earth] *overcame him* [Satan]." It is the redeemed believers on earth who are responsible for the final eviction of Satan from the heavenly places where he has maintained his kingdom. Satan's victims have finally become his conquerors.

The battle is fought out with spiritual weapons. Satan's main weapon is *guilt.* That is why *he accuses us before God day and night* (Revelation 12:10). He reminds God of all the sins we have committed. His purpose is to continually emphasize our guilt. If we are indeed guilty, then we have no power against him and no right to take his place in heaven.

Our victory will only come as we avail ourselves of the most powerful of all the weapons that God has put at our disposal: *the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.* The blood of the Lamb affirms the all-sufficient sacrifice that Jesus offered on the cross on our behalf. "For

by one offering [sacrifice] *He has perfected forever* [us] who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). The sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf is forever sufficient. Nothing need ever be added to it and nothing can ever be taken from it. The last utterance of Jesus on the cross was "It is finished!" (John 19:30). It is completely complete and perfectly perfect.

The Pattern of the Passover

The provision that God has made for us in this end-time conflict with Satan was prophetically foreshadowed in the ordinances of the Passover through which God delivered Israel from their slavery in Egypt. The lamb to be sacrificed in the ceremony foreshadows Jesus "the Lamb of God."

It was the responsibility of the head of every Israelite family to select and to slay the lamb and then to catch its blood in a basin. But his task was not yet complete. The blood in the basin did not protect any Israelite. Catching the blood in the basin was only the first requirement for God's protection. God's promise was: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," (Exodus 12:13) that is, "My judgment will not come upon you." The blood had to be transferred from the basin and smeared on the lintel and the two doorposts of every Israelite home.

To fulfill God's requirements there was, therefore, one further essential element in the Passover ceremony: a plant called hyssop, which grows profusely over most of the Middle East. The head of every family had to pluck a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood in the basin and then sprinkle it on the lintel and the two doorposts of his home. Only then was that home protected: God could *see* the blood.

How does this apply to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross when He poured out His lifeblood on our behalf? To borrow a picture from the Passover ceremony, the blood is now in the basin. But the blood in the basin protects no one. It has to be transferred from the basin to the place where each of us lives.

In the Passover ceremony it was the hyssop that applied the blood where it was needed. What is there in our lives that corresponds to the hyssop? How can we apply the blood of Jesus where we need it?

The answer is provided in Revelation 12:11: "they [the believers on earth] overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and *by the word of their testimony.*" It is our testimony that does for us what the hyssop did for the Israelites. It is when we testify personally to what the blood of Jesus does for us that we can claim all the benefits that God has provided for us through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Our bold, continuing personal testimony becomes the hyssop that applies the blood of Jesus to our lives.

We need to remember, however, that Satan has access to the Bible. He is familiar with the purposes of God revealed in Scripture. He knows that God purposes to make the believers on earth one main instrument on his final defeat. His strategy, therefore, is to paralyze us with a sense of our guilt, to make us feel totally unworthy and inadequate. For this purpose he accuses us "before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

We may ask: Why does God not silence Satan's accusations? The answer is that God will not do for us what He has given us the means to do for ourselves. He has provided for us spiritual weapons by which we can overcome every charge that Satan may bring against us. To every accusation of Satan we can respond that the blood of Jesus shed on the cross has provided a full and perfect propitiation. Therefore we are *not guilty!*

A Manual for End-time Soldiers

In an earthly army a soldier who is enlisted is provided with appropriate weapons and then he receives training to make him proficient in their use. It is imperative for us as soldiers in the Lord's end-time army that we, too, become proficient in the use of the weapons that God has provided: the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. We must learn how to testify appropriately concerning each provision made for us through the blood of Jesus.

I outline below a "training manual" on how to appropriate the various provisions made for us through the blood of Jesus. If you will familiarize yourself with the passages of Scripture quoted—or better still commit them to memory—you will be prepared to take part in the vast spiritual conflict with which the present age will close.

> We overcome Satan when we testify personally to what the Word of God says the Blood of Jesus does for us. (Revelation 12:11)
>
> Through the blood of Jesus, I am redeemed out of the hand of the devil. (Ephesians 1:7)
>
> Through the blood of Jesus, all my sins are forgiven. (1 John 1:9)

Through the blood of Jesus, I am continually being cleansed from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Through the blood of Jesus I am justified, made righteous, just-as-if-I'd never sinned. (Romans 5:9)

Through the blood of Jesus, I am sanctified, made holy, set apart to God. (Hebrews 13:12)

Through the blood of Jesus, I have boldness to enter into the presence of God. (Hebrews 10:19)

The blood of Jesus cries out continually to God in heaven on my behalf. (Hebrews 12:24)

One Final Requirement

Revelation 12:11 closes with one distinguishing characteristic of all those who emerge victorious from this conflict:

> ... they did not love their lives to the death.

How shall we apply this to ourselves? It means that for us it is more important to do the will of God than to stay alive. If we should ever find ourselves in a situation where to obey God will cost us our lives, then we will obey God.

Probably not all of us will actually have to make this clear-cut choice. But the decisive issue is our *commitment.* This imparts a quality to our testimony which makes it a weapon against which Satan has no defense. We each need therefore to confront ourselves with this question: *Can I truthfully say of myself that I do not love my life to the death?*



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