

“THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD”

(Discourse below by Donald L. Canell, given at Fort Worth convention, Spring, 1977.)

We find this expression in John’s Gospel. The first time in 12:31, the second time in 14:30 and thirdly in 16:11. The setting for 12:31 is evidently just prior to our Lord’s finishing his earthly course. Verses 23 and 24 so indicate: “And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Verse 27 also indicates the time: “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.” And then we note particularly the 31st verse: “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”

Up to this time, Satan’s evil works had received no particular rebuke or sentence from the Lord. By all outward appearances God’s law was impossible to keep; and certainly it was impossible for imperfect man to keep. But when our Lord Jesus, by his obedience and sacrifice upheld the law and made it honorable, he proved that it was within the ability of a perfect man to keep that law. His perfect obedience to that law (according to Rom. 8:3) “condemned sin in the flesh;” and incidentally condemned Satan’s entire rule.

And then, even beyond this, our Lord purchased the world of mankind with his own life as indicated in the parable of the treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13:44). He gave all that he had to purchase the field—the field is the world. (Matt. 13:38) With this, our Lord secured the legal control of the world—he secured the right to bring the world from its subjection to sin and Satan back into harmony with God.

In this sense, this world or this present order of things was sentenced to overthrow—from the time our Lord finished his work of redemption. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” Notice the positiveness of the statement—“the prince of this world IS cast out”—so far as the church is concerned. Not that he hasn’t been an adversary of the church all down through the age, the thought being that we are not to allow Satan or sin to have rule in our hearts. And once the church is completed, Satan’s house and household will be spoiled, the prince of this world will be replaced by the Prince of Peace.

The setting for John 14:30 is also just prior to our Lord’s crucifixion. The Prince of this world had, of course, been there all along—he had been plotting, scheming and manipulating the affairs of men. So the reference here seems to be to the time when Satan would come in the power of his kingdom, which would really be a counterfeit of the Kingdom of Christ. As we know, the Papal Millennium, or the Papal counterfeit,

looks back to its greatest prosperity beginning A.D. 800 and beginning its special decline 1799. It was called the “HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE.”

Let’s read the text, John 14:30: “Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The latter statement of the text—“and hath nothing in me” speaks of that counterfeit that the Adversary set up. It would have nothing in the way of doctrines of Christ, but a counterfeit of them.

We read from Volume II, page 282 of the Chapter entitled The Man of Sin, (first paragraph): “Here then, is what we should expect, and what we do find in Papacy; not an opposition to the name of Christ, but an enemy or opponent of Christ in that it falsely bears his name, counterfeits his kingdom and authority, and misrepresents his character and plans and doctrines before the world—a most baneful enemy and opponent indeed—worse far than an outspoken foe. And this is true, be it remembered even though some of those connected with that system are conscientiously astray—‘deceiving and being deceived.’”

We also quote from page 287, middle of last paragraph: “The falling away, covering a period of centuries, was so gradual as to be much less noticeable to those who then lived in its midst than to us who see it as a whole; and the more deceiving was it because every step of organization and every advance toward influence and authority in the church and over the world, was taken in the name of Christ, and professedly to glorify him and fulfill his plans recorded in Scripture. Thus was the great Antichrist developed—the most dangerous, most subtle and most persistent opponent of true Christianity and the most fiendish persecutor of the true saints.” So here we see then, that the Lord referred to the Prince of this world as coming in a special way.

And now we consider the third mention of this expression—“Prince of this world.” In the opening verses of John 16, we see that the Lord is once again preparing the disciples for the time when he would no longer be with them. V. 7 reads: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter [the Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him [or the Holy Spirit] unto you.” This Holy Spirit, when it came would, as the next verse indicates: “Reprove or convict the world [concerning] of sin and [concerning] righteousness and [concerning] of judgment.” And so in the 11th verse, he says the Holy Spirit would convict them of judgment: “Because the Prince of this world is judged.”

The spirit of the world, largely the spirit of the Prince of this world, would be especially manifested to be a wrong spirit, by contrast to the holy spirit possessed by our Lord Jesus. So as we read this expression—the Prince of this world—we see that our Lord’s reference is to the great adversary of God and a deceiver of men. He has for 6,000 years past pursued a course of systematic opposition to God. He has indeed defied the Emperor

of the Universe. The Apostle refers to him (1 Peter 5:8) as your adversary, the devil; if he is in opposition to God he is in opposition to God's people.

This word PRINCE is from the Greek word *AR-KHONE*—the first in rank or power, chief ruler or magistrate.

Another text of Scripture using this word is Eph. 2:2: “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the PRINCE of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” (Power of the air—the earth's atmosphere. The Adversary attempted to drown our Lord in the sea—Matt. 8;23-26.) In Matt. 12:24 we read of Beelzebub, the PRINCE (*AR-KHONE*) of the devils. There is no question then, to the fact that Satan does have great power at the present time.

When the Adversary, or Prince of this world, made the offer to our Lord, that he would give him certain things, it was something that he had in his possession. Matt. 4:8-10: “Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me...” Notice the Lord does not deny that—as the prince of this world, Satan did have that power. Jesus answers in verse 10: “Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

We would like to quote from the Pastor, Jan. 1, 1904 in article entitled: SPECIAL TRIALS FOLLOW CONSECRATION, Reprint page 3299, col. 2, par. 2 and 3: “Members of the body of Christ following in his footsteps have temptations from the Adversary along similar lines. Not that he offers to divide the kingdom of earth with us, for so great a proposition would not appeal to us, being incredible; but to us he does propose deviation from the close following in the Master's footsteps. He suggests continually to the Lord's followers easier ways by which as much or more good can be accomplished and without sacrifice and self-denial. These ways of avoiding sacrifice and yet of seemingly attaining good ends always imply more or less of co-partnership with the Adversary directly or indirectly, an acknowledgment of him, a bending to evil—to evil men, or evil principles.

“Under such circumstances we should note carefully the Lord's method and walk in his steps. We should refuse to have any partnership with sin or evil influences or methods in our endeavors to serve the Lord and his Truth. Satan does not approach us in human form nor in diabolic form, but generally through human agencies, through human ambitions, parties, sects, etc. If our Lord had made inquiry of Satan as to what would be the program, doubtless he would have advised him to become a Pharisee of the Pharisees at once, and through such steps gradually he would have proceeded to elevate our Lord over the Jewish people and ultimately over the world—if indeed he who was a murderer

from the beginning and abode not in the Truth could be trusted in respect to any promise.”

Not only does this being have great powers, but great intelligence and the Scriptures represent him as being an intelligent individual. We are all aware that intelligence can be directed for good or for evil. This Adversary of God is referred to as the “Anointed cherub that covereth.” (Ezek. 28:14) And the one that created him says: “I have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” (Ezek. 28:14, 15.) Think how grievous this must have been to our Heavenly Father—He takes no pleasure in the death of him that falls into sin and the consequent condemnation to death.

Previous to his fall into sin, he is spoken of as Lucifer, a morning star, brought into being evidently in the early morning of creation. Isa. 14:12, 13 and 14: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. How art thou cut down to the ground, which, didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven” (a position of power, other sons of the morning are evidently here referred to) “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north;” (we believe this represents universal dominion as the 14th verse also indicates) “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High.”

From this we see that Lucifer failed to be humble, he failed to be thankful and he failed to appreciate the favor of God which brought him into existence. Instead of returning the due reverence, the love and submission to his Creator’s will, Lucifer developed a spirit of pride and ambition, and as a result he became Satan the devil, the Adversary of God. His ambition aspired first to be a leader and chief of the other stars of God, a position already filled by the only begotten son of God. (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17.) We’ll read from Colossians, speaking of our Lord Jesus: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” The final desire of Lucifer or Satan, by this time, was to rival the most High himself, as king of the universe.

How different was the course of him who was actually above the morning stars, the only begotten son of the Father and honored agent in the creation of all things! In Phil. 2:6-11, Diag. we read of him: “Though being in a form of God [a mighty one], yet he did not meditate a usurpation, but divested himself [of his glory] taking a bondman’s form, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And as the Apostle goes on, he tells us that our Lord was highly exalted, because of his humility and

obedience. This is in accord with the principle that our Creator has laid down, as indicated in Matt. 23:12, that he would abase the proud and exalt the humble. Is it any wonder that we should heed the words of the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:21) that “Christ has left us an example that we should follow his steps;” and too, the words of Paul in Rom. 8:29: “That we should be conformed to the image of God’s dear son.” THIS IS OUR STANDARD!

As we look back to the time Lucifer took his fall and became Satan the Devil, we may reason that he evidently had no faith in God’s power to destroy him, or perhaps no faith in his willingness to destroy him. As he reasoned from the fact of his long continued existence, none of his powers impaired in any way, no evidence of any approaching destruction to himself, he evidently concluded that his existence could not be terminated. And so his schemes for power and dominion were far reaching—he supposed that he had plenty of time for their fulfillment.

Just when the “iniquity was found in him” we don’t know, that is, how long the Heavenly Father knew of his wrong heart condition, prior to its being manifest outwardly, we don’t know. His wrong course comes out in the open, immediately after the creation of man. Evidently he knew something of the procreation of man and thus he thought he saw the opportunity to gain a dominion. The God of the universe, our Heavenly Father, permitted Satan to take his course, because of his own wisdom and foreknowledge in the matter. Wouldn’t we suppose that the Adversary would reason that if God could curtail his powers to the atmosphere of the earth, that eventually he could curtail him still more, and finally destroy him? Pride has a destroying effect upon one’s reasoning ability. Just as the prophet says (Ezek. 28:17): “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom [the ability to think correctly] by reason of thy brightness.”

We doubt that it was any part of his original policy to have the human race go down in death. We remember as recorded in Gen. 3:4, that Satan contradicted the threat of Jehovah to Eve, by saying “Ye shall not surely die.” He quite probably believed that lie. Quite likely he deceived himself prior to deceiving others.

In John 8:44, the Master, speaking to the Pharisees said: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.” This text indicates how much men can be and are influenced by the Adversary, and very frequently it is those who profess to be godly men.

And even among ourselves, that is, in the truth movement, we see the Adversary working —“of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse [misleading] things, to draw

away disciples after themselves,”—wanting a following, the Satanic spirit of having a dominion or following.

Does the Heavenly Father send strong delusion as indicated in 2 Thess. 2:1? Indeed he does. Does the delusion emanate from the Heavenly Father? No it does not. He allows certain ones, who received not the truth in the love of it, to be misled, and if they be leaders among the Lord’s people, he allows them to present their wrong doctrine for the purpose of testing still others who may have a wrong heart condition.

Do we tolerate wrong doctrine so that the purpose of God might be accomplished? Oh no! As Paul in Gal. 2:5 indicates: “To whom not even for an hour did we yield by submission in order that the truth of the glad tidings might remain with you.”

There are those then who would misrepresent God and the truth of his word. Again this is the Satanic spirit, and as we look back to Satan’s experiences with the first human pair we see this. His object, seemingly was to transfer man’s allegiance from God to himself. He would represent God as a tyrant—one who wished to curtail the pleasures and powers of his creatures. And so again he says to Eve, Gen. 3:5: “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.” We see this Satanic spirit about us don’t we? The belittling of others, for the exalting of self—if we belittle others we have to be little.

At the same time that Satan would reflect against God, he would pose as a benefactor and liberator of men. His perverted mind may have reached that conclusion, that God was indeed a tyrant and he himself a true friend of liberty and progress. But when the death penalty was carried out, we believe this was a frustration of his plan—he hadn’t counted on this.

But still we see his persistence in his endeavor to outwit the Almighty God of the universe. He induces certain of the angels to leave their first estate, to assume and retain the human form, and take to themselves wives of the daughters of men. (Gen. 6) This mixture imparted a new life principle into the Adamic stock, and as the text indicates, there were these “Mighty men of renown.” (Gen. 6:4)

We should keep in mind that it also “filled the earth with violence” (V. 13). This mattered not to the instigator of this mixture, because he was interested only in the exaltation of self. We see the use of this being’s intelligence in an evil way, a desperate and masterly stroke of policy here. (Though the Lord overruled and brought this hybrid race to an end in the flood.)

Because of the promise in Gen. 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou

shalt bruise his heel.” Yes, because of this promise, what great lengths the Adversary went to, to search out that seed and destroy it. Without question the Adversary entered into the mind of Cain to rise up and slay Abel.

There was the persecution of the Seed all the way down through the ages, prior to the First Advent; and then the instigation of this mighty one, the Prince of this World, through Herod the King. We read in Matt. 2:16: “Then Herod when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.” We note that Herod was “exceeding wrath”; the same was true of Cain (Gen. 4:5): “and Cain was very wrath and his countenance fell.” This indicates the part that the Adversary had in this. (And we think of Hitler, too.) We may be sure that this Adversary of God was a part of the group mentioned in Matt. 27:1: “When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.” And too, in Matt. 27:20: “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus.” The Adversary succeeded in one sense; but he could not cope with God’s power in raising Jesus to life.

From the pages of history, we see how the Adversary’s kingdom was set up on a foundation of error. It was established on the very basest principles of wrong doing. Every device of torture was used to crush out truth and righteousness; and if not able to trap and ensnare one of God’s little ones, he did succeed in persecuting them—“all that will love godly shall suffer persecution.” The Second Volume records the terrible persecutions of Papacy.

But despite all this, when God’s time comes for the complete establishment of his kingdom, Satan’s kingdom will be brought to nothing, just as effectually as was his former purposes at the time of the flood. And then even after the Millennial age, notwithstanding the obvious lack of his past endeavors, the Prince of this World will yet have the evil ambition to try again. He will attempt to establish some measure of authority and influence among men, during the “little season” at that time.

In closing we quote from Reprint page 1687, par. 2 (in part): “Then he [Satan] will see not merely a perfect human pair with power to produce a mighty race destined to live forever, but a race restored to life and vigor. His thought will be, If I can win this mighty race to my standard, my triumph and exaltation will be speedily accomplished. Again, therefore, he will figure as a leader, though, as now, unrecognized by men. Doubtless the temptation will again rest upon his old doctrine—that they shall not surely die, even if they do disregard and oppose the will of God. And those among men in whom the goodness of God has not wrought the spirit of humility and filial submission to his acknowledged superior wisdom, but, on the contrary, in whom pride has asserted itself,

will easily be deceived and led into this error of believing that God either cannot or will not destroy them in a second death. God will permit Satan to work for a little season; and no doubt he will work with all the zeal which a hope of speedy victory would naturally inspire. But he shall not succeed beyond the point which God permits for the final testing of mankind, to prove who are worthy and who are unworthy of everlasting life. When this is accomplished, then will take place the destruction of Satan and all who follow his leading.”