

The Bible's Mysteries

Mystery of the Kingdom of God

Setting the Stage

Satan Thrown Down to Earth Revelation 12:7-9



And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he

was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 12:7-9

The attempts of the dragon proved unsuccessful against the church, and fatal to his own interests. The seat of this war was in heaven; in the church of Christ, the kingdom of heaven on earth. The parties were Christ, the great Angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and his instruments. The strength of the church is in having the Lord Jesus for the Captain of their salvation. Pagan idolatry, which was the worship of devils, was cast out of the empire by the spreading of Christianity. The

salvation and strength of the church, are only to be ascribed to the King and Head of the church. The conquered enemy hates the presence of God, yet he is willing to appear there, to accuse the people of God. Let us take heed that we give him no cause to accuse us; and that, when we have sinned, we go before the Lord, condemn ourselves, and commit our cause to Christ as our Advocate. The servants of God overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, as the cause. By the word of their testimony: the powerful preaching of the gospel is mighty, through God, to pull down strong holds. By their courage and patience in sufferings: they loved not their lives so well but they could lay them down in Christ's cause. These were the warriors and the weapons by which Christianity overthrew the power of pagan idolatry; and if Christians had continued to fight with these weapons, and such as these, their victories would have been more numerous and glorious, and the effects more lasting.

The attempts of the dragon not only proved unsuccessful against the church, but fatal to his own interests; for, upon his endeavour to devour the man-child, he engaged all the powers of heaven against him (**And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Revelation 12:7**): *There was war in heaven. Heaven will espouse the quarrel of the church.*

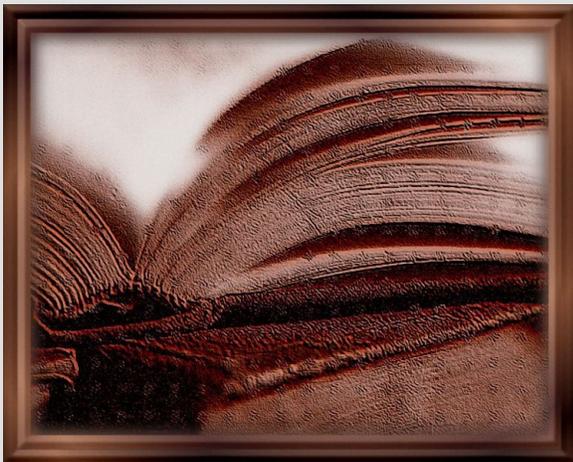
Here observe, The seat of this war - *in heaven*, in the church, which is *the kingdom of heaven* on earth, under the care of heaven and in the same interest.

The parties - *Michael and his angels* on one side, and *the dragon and his angels* on the other: Christ, the great Angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and all his instruments. This latter party would be much superior in number and outward strength to the other; but the strength of the church lies in having the Lord Jesus for the captain of their salvation.

The success of the battle: *And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Revelation 12:8-9; The dragon and his angels fought and prevailed not; there was a great struggle on both sides, but the victory fell to Christ and his church, and the dragon and his angels were not only conquered, but cast out; the pagan idolatry, which was a worshipping of devils, was extirpated out of the empire in the time of Constantine.*

The Bible Interprets Itself

Isaiah 28:9-13



Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Isaiah 28:9-13

It is only in Christ Jesus that the holy God communicates with sinful man. And whether those that teach are drunk with wine, or intoxicated with false doctrines and notions concerning the kingdom and salvation of the Messiah, they not only err themselves, but lead multitudes astray. All places where such persons have taught are filled with errors.

For our instruction in the things of God, it is needful that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated to us, that we may the better understand them. God, by his word, calls us to what is really for our advantage; the service of God is the only true rest for those weary of the service of sin, and there is no refreshment but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

All this had little effect upon the people. Those who will not understand what is plain, but scorn and despise it as mean and trifling, are justly punished. If we are at peace with God, we have, in effect, made a covenant with death; whenever it comes, it cannot do us any real damage, if we are Christ's. But to think of making death our friend, while by sin we are making God our enemy, is absurd. And do not they make lies their refuge who trust in their own righteousness, or to a death-bed repentance? which is a resolution to sin no more, when it is no longer in their power to do so.

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: Isaiah 28:9-10*

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable and made no improvement of the means of grace which they possessed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed,

nor their lives reformed.

Observe, What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at. It was to *teach* them *knowledge*, the knowledge of God and his will, and to *make them understand doctrine*, **Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.** *Isaiah 28:9*. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and the robber climb up another way.

What method they took, in pursuance of this design. They left no means untried to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book (**Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.** *Isaiah 28:9*), for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them even when they are but newly weaned from the milk.

The prophets taught them as children are taught; for, They were constant and industrious in teaching them. They took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it and were able to bear it (**For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:** *Isaiah 28:10*): *Precept upon precept. It must be so, or (as some read) it has been so.* They have been taught, as children are taught to read, by *precept upon precept*, and taught to write by *line upon line, a little here and a little there,*

a little of one thing and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting, - a little at one time and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged, - a little from one prophet and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend and him whom he admired.

For our instruction in the things of God it is requisite that we have precept upon precept and line upon line, that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced by another; the precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated and inculcated upon us, that we may the better understand them and the more easily recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need and can best bear, and a little at a time, **And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.**

They courted and persuaded them to learn, **To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. Isaiah 28:12.** God, by his prophets, said to them, “*This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, is the rest, the only rest, wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed.*”

God by his word calls us to nothing but what is really for our advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin and there is no refreshing but

under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

What little effect all this had upon the people. They were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was as impossible to fasten any thing upon them (*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. Isaiah 28:9*): nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them; for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have *need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Hebrews 5:12.*

They *would not hear* (*To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. Isaiah 28:12*), no, not that which would be rest and refreshing to them. They had no mind to hear it. The word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it, or as it came in at one ear it went out at the other.

They would not heed. It was unto them *precept upon precept, and line upon line* (*But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Isaiah 28:13*); they went on in a road of external performances; they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching and it was continually sounding in their ears, but that was all; it made no impression upon them; they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating

upon them, but it beat nothing into them.

Nay, It should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it. The word of the Lord was unto them *Tsau latsau, kau lakau*; in the original it is in rhyme; they made a song of the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine. David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things, to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

How severely God would reckon with them for this.

He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them *with stammering lips and another tongue*, **For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.** [Isaiah 28:11](#). Those that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity, but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lisped to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with stammering lips, to humor them; he changed his voice, tried first one way and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour (**In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.** [1 Corinthians 14:21](#)), applying it to the gift of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

He would bring utter ruin upon them. By their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and

ripening themselves for it; it is *that they may go and fall backward*, may grow worse and worse, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite *broken, and snared, and taken*, and ruined, **But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.** **Isaiah 28:13.** They have here a little and there a little of the word of God; they think it too much, and *say to the seers, See not;* but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

Man is Driven Out from Paradise

Genesis 3:22-24



And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. **Genesis 3:22-24**

Sentence being passed upon the offenders, we have here execution, in part, done upon them immediately.

Observe here, How they were justly disgraced and shamed before God and the holy angels, by the ironical upbraiding of them with the issue of their enterprise: **And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Genesis 3:22, "Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil! A goodly god he makes! Does he not? See what he has got, what preferments, what advantages, by eating forbidden fruit!"** This was said to awaken and humble them, and to bring them to a sense of their sin and folly, and to repentance for it, that, seeing themselves thus wretchedly deceived by following the devil's counsel, they might henceforth pursue the happiness God should offer in the way he should prescribe. God thus *fills their faces with shame, that they may seek his name, Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Psalms 83:16.* He puts them to this confusion, in order to their conversion. True penitents will thus upbraid themselves: "What fruit have I now by sin? **What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. Romans 6:21.** Have I gained what I foolishly promised myself in a sinful way? No, no, it never proved what it pretended to, but the contrary."

How they were justly discarded, and shut out of paradise, which was a part of the sentence implied in that, *Thou shalt eat the herb of the field.*

Here we have, The reason God gave why he shut man out of paradise; not only because he had put forth his hand, and taken of the tree of knowledge, which was his sin, but lest he should again put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life (now forbidden him by the divine sentence, as before the tree of knowledge was forbidden by the law), and should dare to eat of that tree, and so profane a divine sacrament and defy a divine sentence, and yet flatter himself with a conceit that thereby he

should live forever.

Observe, There is a foolish proneness in those that have rendered themselves unworthy of the substance of Christian privileges to catch at the signs and shadows of them. Many that like not the terms of the covenant, yet, for their reputation's sake, are fond of the seals of it.

It is not only justice, but kindness, to such, to be denied them; for, by usurping that to which they have no title, they affront God and make their sin the more heinous, and by building their hopes upon a wrong foundation they render their conversion the more difficult and their ruin the more deplorable.

The method God took, in giving him this bill of divorce, and expelling and excluding him from this garden of pleasure. He turned him out, and kept him out.

He turned him out, from the garden to the common. This is twice mentioned: *He sent him forth* (Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. Genesis 3:23), and then *he drove him out*, So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Genesis 3:24. God bade him go out, told him that that was no place for him, he should no longer occupy and enjoy that garden; but he liked the place too well to be willing to part with it, and therefore God *drove him out*, made him go out, whether he would or no. This signified the exclusion of him, and all his guilty race, from that communion with God which was the bliss and glory of paradise. The tokens of God's favour to him and his delight in the sons of men, which he had in his innocent estate, were now suspended; the communications of his grace were withheld, and Adam became weak, and like other men, as Samson when the *Spirit of the Lord had departed from*

him. His acquaintance with God was lessened and lost, and that correspondence which had been settled between man and his Maker was interrupted and broken off. He was driven out, as one unworthy of this honour and incapable of this service. Thus he and all mankind, by the fall, forfeited and lost communion with God. But whither did he send him when he turned him out of Eden? He might justly have chased him out of the world (**He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. Job 18:18**), but he only chased him out of the garden. He might justly have cast him down to hell, as he did the angels that sinned when he shut them out from the heavenly paradise, **For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 2 Peter 2:4**. But man was only sent to till the ground out of which he was taken. He was sent to a place of toil, not to a place of torment. He was sent to the ground, not to the grave, - to the work-house, not to the dungeon, not to the prison-house, - to hold the plough, not to drag the chain. His tilling the ground would be recompensed by his eating of its fruits; and his converse with the earth whence he was taken was improvable to good purposes, to keep him humble, and to remind him of his latter end. Observe, then, that though our first parents were excluded from the privileges of their state of innocency, yet they were not abandoned to despair, God's thoughts of love designing them for a second state of probation upon new terms.

He kept him out, and forbade him all hopes of a re-entry; for he *placed at the east of the garden of Eden* a detachment of *cherubim*, God's hosts, armed with a dreadful and irresistible power, represented by flaming swords which turned every way, on that side the garden which lay next to the place whither Adam was sent, to keep the way that led to the tree of life, so that he could neither steal nor force an entry; for who can make a pass against an angel on his guard or gain a pass made good by such force?

Now this intimated to Adam, That God was displeased with him. Though he had mercy in store for him, yet at present he was angry with him, was turned to be his enemy and fought against him, for here was a sword drawn (And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. Numbers 22:23); and he was to him a consuming fire, for it was a flaming sword.

That the angels were at war with him; no peace with the heavenly hosts, while he was in rebellion against their Lord and ours.

That the way to the tree of life was shut up, namely, that way which, at first, he was put into, the way of spotless innocency. It is not said that the cherubim were set to keep him and his for ever from the tree of life (thanks be to God, there is a paradise set before us, and a tree of life in the midst of it, which we rejoice in the hopes of); but they were set to keep that way of the tree of life which hitherto they had been in; that is, it was henceforward in vain for him and his to expect righteousness, life, and happiness, by virtue of the first covenant, for it was irreparably broken, and could never be pleaded, nor any benefit taken by it. The command of that covenant being broken, the curse of it is in full force; it leaves no room for repentance, but we are all undone if we be judged by that covenant. God revealed this to Adam, not to drive him to despair, but to oblige and quicken him to look for life and happiness in the promised seed, by whom the flaming sword is removed. God and his angels are reconciled to us, and a new and living way into the holiest is consecrated and laid open for us.

