

## Christ and Antichrist

Antichrist means opposed to Christ. The spirit of antichrist is, therefore, the spirit that is opposed to the Spirit of Christ. The apostle John says, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." 1 John 4:3. There are many forms of it, for the same apostle says, "Even now there are many antichrists." 1 John 2:18. But no matter what the form or the disguise, the spirit of antichrist is primarily the spirit of Satan, for his is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Ephesians 2:2

The great opponent of Christ does not always carry on his work of opposition openly. He "is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), and "deceives the whole world." Revelation 12:9. Now no one can deceive unless he appears to tell the truth; therefore it must be expected that Satan will in his work counterfeit the truth as nearly as he can. Christ warns us that "there shall arise false christs, and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24. This being the case, no one need be surprised to find that Satan has carried and does still carry on his work under the guise of Christianity. It is only when people are quite fully given to his service, and there are few to challenge it, that he throws off his disguise.

If it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. And why is it not possible to deceive them? Christ gives the answer. He said of the shepherd of the sheep, "When He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." John 10:4, 5. And then He said, "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." Verse 14. In becoming acquainted with Christ, therefore, and in that way only, can we escape the deceptions of the enemy. It is therefore necessary that we first study briefly

### THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

so that we may know by contrast the spirit of antichrist. This is very clearly set forth by the apostle Paul, in his exhortation to us to have the same Spirit. He says: —

"If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being

found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." Philippians 2:1-8, R.V.

The characteristic of Christ is here seen to be humility. He says of Himself, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. Note well that when He came to earth He took upon Himself only the *form* of a servant. That does not mean that He did not serve, for He also said that He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28. To His disciples He said on another occasion, "I am among you as He that serves." Luke 22:27. What is meant is that He had only to take the *form* of a servant, because He had the *mind* to serve before He came to the earth to give His life on the cross.

He was in the beginning with God, and He was God (John 1:1), yet He had the spirit of service. The mind that was in Christ was the same when He was in heaven that it was when He came to earth. The mind that was shown in His service on earth, when He went about doing good, and which found its most natural expression in washing His disciples' feet, was the same mind that led Him to divest Himself of the glory and riches He had in heaven. He is the same "yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and so He was the same before He came to earth, that He was on earth, and that He is now in heaven, and that He will be when the saints are all gathered with Him in glory; and of that time He says that He will make His followers sit down to meat, and will gird Himself, and will come forth and serve them. Luke 12:37. This is the mind and character of Christ.

### **SEEKING NOT HIS OWN**

But this does not show it all. When He was in the form of God, He "emptied Himself," because He did not count it a prize—a thing to be grasped—to be on equality with God. "By inheritance" He had a more excellent name than the angels. He was the Son of God by birth, and so was by birth "heir of all things." Everything was His by right. "All things were created by Him, and for Him." His possession of them worked no injustice to any. And yet the mind that was in Him did not lead Him to grasp them and hold them fast. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Romans 8:9. Therefore since Christ did not seize upon and hold fast to that which was His by right, it is evident that those who are His must not be characterized by the spirit of self-seeking. Love, which is the bond of perfectness, "seeks not her own."

This is a far different spirit from what prevails among men. The highest virtue known among men is for a man not to seek that which is not his own. The common form of self-justification is, "I want nothing but what is due me; I simply want my rights." But that desire was not in Christ. He gave up His own. He committed everything into the care of the Father, who "highly exalted Him," because of the mind that was in Him. To be sure it looked very dark for the Son of God for a while. It seemed as though He were forgotten even by the Father. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our grief's, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Isaiah 53:3, 4. But He trusted God, and God did not forsake Him. Therefore we are exhorted, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Romans 12:19

The mind that was in Christ was the mind of God, for "God was in Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:19. When Christ emptied Himself, it was that God might appear; "for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The love that seeks not her own is the love of God, which is manifested toward us. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Psalm 103:10. If men who stand so firmly on their rights, demanding that they shall be accorded everything that is due them, were consistent, and claimed the same thing from God, it would fare hard with them. God treats us better than we deserve, in order that we may learn how we ought to treat others. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Colossians 3:12, 13

### **THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST**

We have not more than begun to study of the Spirit of Christ, for that is an inexhaustible subject; but we have sufficient outline of it before us to form a sharp contrast with the spirit of antichrist. Christ declared that His kingdom was not of this world, whereas Satan claims the whole world as his own. See Luke 4:5, 6. Therefore he is called "the God of this world," and the "prince of this world." 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 14:30. It is for this reason that in the 28th chapter of Ezekiel Satan is represented as the king of Tyre, while the nominal king is called the prince of Tyre. When wicked men ruled they are simply instruments in the hands of Satan, who is the real ruler. He is king, while they are only princes. The Scripture referred to is this: —

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and 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. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy

brightness; I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee." Ezekiel 28:12-17

The reading of this is sufficient to show that it does not apply to man. None but Satan, who "abode not in the truth," can here be described. He lost his first estate because his heart was lifted up on account of his beauty. This is the first indication of the spirit of antichrist, —thinking of self. Now we will learn to what extent Satan's heart was lifted up, and what was the mind that was in him. Under the figure of the king of Babylon, he is thus addressed: —

"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, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." Isaiah 14:12-14

Note that Satan's thought was all of self. The pronoun "I" is most on his tongue. He was going to be like the Most High. He would place his throne by the side of the throne of God. He was not content with being first among the angels; he must be God. He was sure that his talents and beauty deserved a far higher place than was granted him. Ambition caused his fall.

Mark the contrast between Christ and Satan. Christ had everything by right, being God by nature, yet He resigned all. He would not look out for His own interests, and let others look out for themselves; He emptied Himself, and thought only of others. Satan had nothing of his own, but only that which was given him, yet he designed to seize everything. He was a created being, yet he thought that he ought to be God, and that he could be. He would seize what his ambition craved, no matter what the consequences of others. This is the spirit of antichrist.

Remember that selfish ambition is never satisfied. The man who covets ten thousand pounds craves ten thousand more when he has that. The man who thinks that his happiness depends upon his getting the farm that joins his, still wants the land that joins his after he has obtained the first lot; and he keeps on wanting the land that joins his, as long as he lives. Alexander and Napoleon were never satisfied with conquest. And so it would have been with Satan, if it had been possible for him to carry his mad ambition into effect, and become like God. He thought that that would satisfy him; but if he had got that, he would not have been content. Nothing would have done then but to put God out of the way, so that he could reign alone. This is evident from what he really tried to do. When Christ was here on earth, representing God to men, Satan constantly tried to kill Him. It was at his instigation that the men of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus headlong down the precipice, and the Jews often took up stones to stone Him. It was he that put it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord, and he it was that stirred up the rulers of the Jews to crucify Him. What Satan tried to do on earth was just what he would have proceeded to do in heaven, and if he had been allowed to place his throne by the side of

that of God. Indeed, he did not hesitate to lift up his hand against the Most High in heaven itself, for we read, —

“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 deceives the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:7-9

### **THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE**

Satan is called “the prince of this world,” “the God of this world,” the ruler of the darkness of this world, and “the prince of the power of the air.” The “course of this world” is according to the guidance of Satan, and therefore he is called “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Ephesians 2:2. As soon as he was cast out of heaven, he set to work to deceive men, as he had deceived many of the angels of heaven. From the account of the way in which he deceived our first parents, we may learn how he deceived the angels, and how he still works. The record runs thus: —

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Genesis 3:1-6

The fifth verse is better rendered in the Revised Version, where we have “God,” instead of “gods.” Satan made the definite statement to Eve, that if they should eat from the forbidden tree, they should be like God. In this we see the same spirit working that caused his fall. He said, “I will be like the Most High;” and when he fell he set about compassing the fall of man by instilling the same desire into him.

Let no one get the idea that it is wrong to desire to be like God. That is right, provided we wish to be like Him in His own way. To wish to be as wise and as powerful as God, is wrong, because that is virtually to wish to be God. The desire to be like God even in goodness becomes a source of evil, if the thought is to make ourselves like Him; for that implies a disposition to assume the power of God. The evil lies in thinking of self, and seeking self. If we allow God to work in us, that which is good, in His own way, He will make us like Himself in holiness; but this is far different from the motive that actuated Satan, and which he has put into mankind. That was a selfish ambition to make self equal with God.

Notice how Satan proceeded to work Eve up to this unlawful desire. Instead of the words, "Yea, hath God said," etc., the first verse is better rendered, as by Young, "Is it true that God hath said," etc. Even this does not fully convey the sense of the Hebrew, which implies a sneer. Satan would first induce them to believe that God was unjust in His requirements. This is what was involved in his question: "Can it be possible that God would do so unjust a thing as to forbid you to eat of all the trees of the garden? I have heard so, but it is so monstrous, so tyrannical a requirement, that I can scarcely believe it." Thus with feigned words, under the cover of pretended interest in the good name of God, he sowed the seeds of distrust.

Then when Eve replied that they were allowed to eat of every tree but the one, he said, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be like God." He had instilled so much of his own spirit into her, that he could now openly charge God with gross injustice. He made her believe that they were really equal with God, but that God did not want them to know it, because He wanted to exalt Himself at their expense; that the forbidden fruit would open their eyes to their high estate, of which God was unjustly depriving them; that instead of being subject to God, they were entitled to rule equally with Him. He flattered her till, like himself before his fall, her heart was lifted up because of her beauty, and she thought herself worthy of the highest dignity. In short, Satan led her to think of herself instead of God.

## **THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD**

We are now giving a simple outline of the subject, and cannot at this time follow out the details, that will be done later, but now we wish to go on to show how the spirit that was in Lucifer, which caused him to become the destroyer, and which, being instilled into the minds of our first parents, caused their fall, has been perpetuated through their descendants, so that the course of this world is according to the mind of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

In the first chapter of Romans we have a picture of the heathen world, and of the process by which they fell from the knowledge of God to their low estate. At present we care only for the story of their fall. Here it is: —

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between

themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Romans 1:18-25

Satan fell because his heart was lifted up on account of his beauty. He thought that nothing in the universe was above his merits, or beyond his capacity. Having fallen, he put the same spirit into the hearts of our first parents, inducing them to think that they were in themselves as good as God, and worthy of as high a place as He had. They reached out for everything, and lost everything. The same spirit has continued in men until the present day, except where men have allowed the Spirit of Christ to expel it. The heathen reached their low position because they professed themselves to be wise, and thus cut themselves off from God, the only source of wisdom.

In looking over these typical cases, it will not be difficult to see that love of self is the cause of all the trouble. Lucifer was perfect in heaven until iniquity was found in him, and that iniquity was all wrapped up in the first thought of self. It was his thinking of and admiring self, and his consequent seeking for the advancement of self, that made him the dragon, “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.” Therefore we are justified in saying that the spirit of antichrist is simply the spirit of *self*.

Wherever self predominates, there Satan rules. The Spirit that works in the children of disobedience is the spirit of self. It cannot be too fully learned that *self is Satan*. Every manifestation of self is nothing but the manifestation of the working of Satan in man. Every sin among men has sprung from selfishness; and the perilous times of the last days will be due to the fact that “men shall be lovers of their own selves.” 2 Timothy 3.1, 2

On the other hand, “Christ pleased not Himself.” Romans 15.3. Whoever will be His disciple must deny Himself. As Christ emptied Himself, and allowed God to appear in His fullness, so the disciples of Christ must allow Him to come into their hearts, driving away self by the same power by which He emptied Himself, that they may be “filled with all the fullness of God.”

We have now before us in outline the two spirits, —that of Christ, and that of antichrist. In the next paper, if the Lord will, we shall begin to consider some of the special lines in which the spirit of antichrist—self—has developed, in opposition to the Spirit of Christ.