



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIV
Issue 350

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

The Deity of God

Part 4 of 4

God and Satan

by — John H. Essex (1907-1991)

In this study about the Deity of God, we have endeavored to show that we have a God Who is Supreme at all times, never for one moment giving up the glory of His supremacy to another. Our God is a God Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His Own will, progressing in stately and unfaltering steps towards the consummation of a purpose conceived in the depths of His Own heart and mind before the eons began.

GOD MAY DELEGATE SOVEREIGNTY, BUT NOT SUPREMACY

In the course of the out-working of this purpose, God has at times allowed some to exercise a certain amount of sovereignty and control over others, but never to the extent of undermining, even to the slightest degree, His Own supremacy.

This is shown most forcefully in His dealings with Satan, for in the book of Job, God drew clear lines of demarcation over which the Adversary might not trespass. In Job 1:12 Satan was permitted to touch all that Job had, but not the man himself. Later, in 2:6, he was permitted to afflict Job himself, but not to take his life. The fact that God could erect such barriers over which His chief opponent might not pass is a clear demonstration of the Deity of God.

This is the whole meaning and purpose of the book of Job. It is the oldest lesson in the world. It is not primarily about Job, or about his friends, or even about Satan, *but about God*. God is revealing Himself in this book as the Supreme One to Whom all others must be

subject, and this includes Satan, who is seen to be an instrument through whom God is operating to bring Job to a realization of Himself. Let us concede, as we contemplate Job's experiences, that his friends could furnish no satisfactory answer to his problems. They are only brought into the drama to emphasize the inadequacy of human wisdom and the futility of human counsel. Job must learn from God alone, and the result of it all is shown in chapter 42:5-6.

Verily with the ear I heard Thee, yet now my eyes see Thee. Therefore I am rejecting myself, and I regret on soil and ashes.

Evil is brought into God's purpose that creation might be drawn nearer to God Himself – that instead of just hearing Him, it might truly see Him for what He is: a loving Father Who always has the welfare of His creatures close to His heart. Yet evil can be introduced only if God is always able to control it and use it to His glory. The story of Job demonstrates this completely.

THE POWER OF SATAN

It is comforting to realize that the Adversary does not have unlimited power. Only God has this. Yet the power of Satan should not be minimized. It is recorded that

(see DEITY, page 3163)

The Deity of God (Part 4): God and Satan	3161
Ministry of Readjustment.....	3166
Intersected Lives	3167
Sensitive to Father	3167



Bible Student's Notebook™

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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DEITY (continued from front page)

even Michael, the chief messenger, when doubting the Adversary concerning the body of Moses, dared not bring a calumniating judging, but said, “*May the Lord rebuke you*” (Jude 9-10). Michael was high in the hierarchy of heaven (see Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7), but the Adversary was evidently higher.

It is, in fact, necessary for the Adversary to be greater and more powerful than any other created being in God’s universe with the exception of the Son of God’s love. No lesser being could hope to challenge the headship of the Lord Jesus, for any such inevitably would be challenged in turn by others; no lesser being could hope to deceive hosts of messengers and draw them away from God; no lesser being could recruit the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials among his subjects (Ephesians 6:12); no lesser being could sustain an unremitting opposition to God throughout the period covered by the eons; against no lesser being could God demonstrate so fully His absolute supremacy – for it is in the control and subjection of Satan that the Deity of God is most surely manifested.

All through the Scriptures we have moments when the Adversary seems to come close to achieving his designs, yet he never quite succeeds. Let us note a few of these and see how, in every case, the circumstances are overruled by God to further His Own purpose. Yet in saying that circumstances are overruled by God, we must make it clear that we do not mean that God improvises. He makes no fresh alignments to suit the turns of events since He Himself controls every turn. It is God Who determines how His purpose is to be worked out, not the Adversary. God does not adjust matters to counteract Satan’s machinations; He defines them beforehand.

THE DISRUPTION OF THE WORLD

An apparent triumph of Satan is seen in the chaos and darkness to which the original order of things is reduced by the disruption of the world (*kosmos*). God created the heavens and the earth in light, for He is light, and all is out of Him. Yet a disruption is brought about, and darkness ensues. Can we imagine a more desolate and impossible scene? The land in chaos, submerged by water, and the whole covered by darkness! Was God’s purpose thwarted?

When the foundations of the earth had been laid there had been great jubilation among some of the leading

figures of the celestial realms (Job 38:7). Did they perceive the earth as a stage on which God’s purpose was to be enacted? We are not told, but it is evident that they saw in it a cause for great rejoicing. In actuality, it was to be the platform for the enactment of the greatest drama of all time which would eventuate in the bringing of great blessings to all of God’s creation, including themselves. What must have been their impressions when they saw the work laid desolate? Yet God was not appalled, for even this desolation lay within the concept of His purpose.

Subsequently we find the Spirit of God vibrating over the surface of the water which had submerged the chaos, and it is becoming light again. This action of God is used by Paul as an illustration of the way He shines in our hearts, replacing the innate darkness by “*an illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6). Yet let us note that, though the darkness of the disruption was evidently a consequence of a rebellion against God (otherwise why should darkness appear at all?), nevertheless, in the final analysis, it is God Who is the Creator of darkness, just as He is also the Creator of evil (Isaiah 45:7). Notice particularly the force of all of the words used in this verse, and how emphatic the concept of Creator is in reference to those things (darkness and evil) which are in opposition to the inherent nature of God. This emphasis should completely dispel any idea that opposition to God finds its origin in the upsurge of a malignant being entirely independent of Him.

THE DECEIVING OF HUMANITY

With the removal from the earth of many of the adverse effects of the disruption, man was brought onto the scene. Humanity was, as we have seen in earlier studies, God’s special creation, made in His image, with the ultimate objective of providing a form in which His Own Son could offer Himself for all of His creation, and thus eventually reconcile all to God, that are in the earth and in the heavens also (Colossians 1:20). If humanity was to miss the mark, surely that would thwart God’s intentions! Satan may have thought so – but no! Again, God had provided for this – no, more: He had intended this, for in creating humanity He had placed within it those very tendencies which would be unable to resist outside adverse pressures, and thus man would sin (miss the mark) when these pressures were applied. Satan’s attack on Eve was directed against those senses which are incorporated in the term “*soulish*”; yet clever and cunning though he was, Satan, in this episode, ►

as in all others, was nevertheless another instrument in God's hands, unwittingly carrying out God's designs to the letter. If man had not sinned there would have been none to crucify the Lord of Glory! Nor would there have been any to whom God could later have shown His mercy; still less would there have been any in which He could have displayed His grace. Yet His purpose is to display in the oncoming eons *"the transcendent riches of His grace"* among the celestials, and He does this by showing them *"His kindness to us in Christ Jesus."* How could He do this if we had not once all behaved ourselves *"in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the comprehension, and were, in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest"* (Ephesians 2:1-8).

FURTHER ATTACKS BY THE ADVERSARY

As we proceed through the Scriptures we come across many more attempts by Satan to obstruct God's will. In fact, whenever and wherever God's intentions are revealed, the Adversary is always on hand to oppose. That was what he was created to do: to oppose God at every turn of His purpose, for he must carry out the functions of his office. We can only refer briefly to a few instances.

Once it had been made known to the Adversary, masquerading in the guise of a serpent, that his head would be hurt by the seed of the woman, Satan has attacked the line of the seed at every conceivable opportunity.

He attacked through Sarai (Sarah) by preying on Abram's (Abraham's) fears, so that he announced her as his sister, thereby causing first Pharaoh, and then Abimelech, to want her to be his wife. The intervention of God prevented this in each case (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-18).

He attacked through Rebecca by inducing her to deceive Isaac regarding Jacob, and so get the birthright and its accompanying blessing transferred away from the firstborn, Esau. He was obviously oblivious of the fact that God had already decided that *"not as yet being born, nor yet putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that 'The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,' according as it is written, 'Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate'"* (Romans 9:11-13; Genesis 25:23).

He attacked through Pharaoh by putting it into his mind to issue commands which condemned to death

all of the male children of the Israelites as soon as they were born. Although the line of Judah through which the promised Seed should come does not appear to have been in immediate peril, the infant Moses who was to be the future deliverer of Israel most certainly was – but he was saved by being taken into Pharaoh's own household where he grew up and was trained in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This was an infiltration into the Adversary's territory if ever there was one.

Later when the Israelites came to be a nation in their own land and desired a king, God gave them Saul, a man head and shoulders taller than any of his subjects. Yet the Adversary brought a blaspheming giant against him in an effort to make the newly formed kingdom subject to the Philistines. Saul quailed before Goliath, but God provided David, a mere lad, to dispose of him. The encounter between David and Goliath was, in fact, the most decisive one in Israel's history up to that point, for all of God's promises concerning that nation were centered in David and would have been nullified had he been destroyed.

THE MEETING BETWEEN JESUS AND SATAN

The most decisive battle in the world's history was that between the Adversary and Jesus. To this battle Satan came in person; he appointed no intermediary. Having failed to slay the Lord at birth through Herod, he now mounted a frontal attack at a moment when the Lord was weak through fasting. Yet Jesus successfully resisted all of the testings of His opponent, and in doing so He took the opportunity to proclaim a great truth concerning His Father, as He told Satan, *"The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service"* (Matthew 4:10).

This was a quotation from the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy (6:13; 10:20). In fact, all of the quotations which Jesus used with such telling effect against Satan are from the same book. David had taken five stones from the brook, and presumably slew Goliath with the fifth, else why did he need five? The last one in the scrip was probably the first to be taken out. Jesus selected five stones from the running water of the Word of God – the five books of Moses, and defeated Satan with apt quotations from the last one.

Satan offered Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would only worship him. In this, the Adversary was doing what many despots and dictators

have done, who have sought divine worship in addition to allegiance as sovereign. Nebuchadnezzar did this when he built his image, but he came to see the error of his ways before he died (Daniel 3:4-6; 4:37). Though God might offer the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar, He retained to Himself the right to be worshipped. Though the kingdoms of this world may (for the time being) be under the jurisdiction of Satan (it was no imaginary offer that he made to Jesus), God has never conceded to him or to anyone else the right of worship as the One Who is the Supreme; for God is God, and His glory He will not give to another, least of all to Satan – His Deity is absolute.

It is not without significance that Jesus told Satan, “*The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service.*” If the instruction to “*Go away*” is meant for Satan personally, then so may be the rest of the verse. “*The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service.*” This utterance from the Word of God, handled authoritatively by Jesus, spells the final doom of Satan as an Adversary, but retains him as a creature who ultimately will worship God. Thus will the Deity be glorified.

THE GREATEST ORDEAL OF ALL

This command to Satan to “*Go away*” was immediately obeyed, and then we read that “*Lo! messengers approached and waited on Him*” (Matthew 4:11).

This seems to support our previous contention regarding the eminence of Satan. Messengers could not approach and wait on Jesus while he was there, but as soon as he was gone they came and ministered to Jesus. Only Jesus Himself could command Satan, and the latter did not approach Jesus again, nor did he do Him any harm, either directly or through intermediaries, until the appointed “*hour and the jurisdiction of darkness*” was declared (Luke 22:53).

From this moment everything seemed to be going right for Satan. He claimed Peter, the chief of the apostles, and Jesus did not dispute his claim, but merely prayed that his faith might not be defaulting (Luke 22:31-32). From another of His disciples Jesus was betrayed by a kiss; the rest left Him and fled (Matthew 26:56). Jesus was given up to be crucified, to be numbered among the transgressors, to be forsaken on that dreadful cross even by God Himself. Was this not Satan's greatest triumph? Yet in all of this Satan was only carrying out

God's intention, and the Word of the cross becomes both the power of God and the wisdom of God. Such is the supremacy of the Deity that He can turn even the Adversary's fury into praise for Him. In the experience of the cross, above all else in Scripture, we can see once again that Satan can only be an instrument in God's hands. His greatest act of opposition only furthers God's purpose.

THE LURE OF SATAN TODAY

The *ecclesia* is Satan's target today. He is continually trying to lure us away from our loyalty and devotion to God, and to turn us away from a clear understanding of His purpose, and especially from a realization of God Himself and of the greatness of the calling with which He has called us. We do indeed need the whole panoply of God to enable us to stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary. It is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh (so let us not waste our energies in disputes among ourselves) but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. Therefore let us then take up the panoply of God that we may be able to withstand in the wicked day, and having effected all, to stand (Ephesians 6:11-13). We are not entreated to charge or be aggressive, but just to stand firm. All of our armor is defensive; even the sword of the spirit is not to be used aggressively, but rather to parry the blows of our opponents. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God.

We cannot use this sword effectively unless we are familiar with it. Let us remember that all Scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Paul struggled to present every man mature in Christ Jesus. He prayed that we might walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the realization of God (Colossians 1:10).

So we pray that these articles on the Deity of God may help us toward a deeper realization of Him.

(Edited and abridged)

Ministry of Readjustment

by — Dan Sheridan

He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-14).

FIXING A DISLOCATION

In the passage above, the phrase “*perfecting of the saints*” is literally “*the readjusting of the saints.*” The Greek word translated “*perfecting*” is a medical term that was in use in Paul’s day. It meant “to reset a fractured limb.” It has to do with fixing a dislocation.



“Israel, God’s chosen people, the channel of blessing to the whole world has been scattered all over the earth for over 2000 years. The prophet Hosea says that they are not reckoned as God’s people. They are ‘*lo-ammi,*’ ‘*not my people,*’ and God says that He isn’t their God. Can’t you see the tremendous implications of this? Don’t you see? For that to take place changes the whole attitude of God and men.”

THE “INITIAL” GOSPEL OF LIFE

We love to announce the *initial* gospel – the gospel of life to the world. John 3:16 sums up that message. It’s very important. Man’s greatest need is life. Everyone dies; and unless God does something about it everyone will stay dead. Thankfully He did do something. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He gives age-abiding life and resurrection hope freely to all who believe that He is the Christ the Son of God. He died on a cross, was buried, and conquered death when He rose from among the dead on the third day. It’s a simple message! Just read the gospel of John. Believe it.

THE GOSPEL TO THOSE IN GOD’S FAMILY

However, the *initial* gospel isn’t the main thrust of our ministry. We have a message to those who are already in the family of God. We ask believers,

“Don’t you realize that a tremendous dislocation has taken place?”

They respond with a puzzled look and ask,

“What are you talking about? What dislocation?”

We reply,

That’s the dislocation. That’s why Paul puts the ministry of “readjusting” **first** in Ephesians 4. After that comes edifying, followed by increase and growth. You can’t build up anyone if they are on the wrong foundation.

THE MINISTRY OF READJUSTMENT

This is why we spend most of our strength and time in this ministry – the ministry of readjusting. There’s a great need to tell believers that they are living in a fool’s paradise when they take to themselves things that belong to Israel while God is now focusing His attention on the poor outsiders – those who had no covenants or fathers, no promises, no Scriptures; Gentiles like you and me. (No, Israel isn’t gone forever. God will fulfill every promise He ever made to them; but that’s not what God is doing now.)

That’s the ministry of readjustment.

THE TEST OF “SUCCESS”

The gospel of Matthew says that Peter and John were “*mending*” their nets. That’s the same Greek word used in Ephesians 4 that is translated “*readjusting.*” Why do you need to mend a net? Because if you don’t, you will fish all day and catch nothing. All of your

(see **READJUSTMENT**, last page)

Intersected Lives

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Have you ever wondered about the people who come in and out of your life, and you theirs?

At the many different stages of your life there have been acquaintances and friends – some casual and some dearly close to you – and then you both moved on with your lives, taking quite different paths. Some you hear from, or of, occasionally; others seem to be completely lost from your life.

Know this: God always knows exactly what He is doing, and He always is in charge of our lives.

The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord
(Psalm 37:23).

This includes the intersection of your life with others.



All of your days were written in His book; they were formed when there was not one of them
(Psalm 139:16).

God knows when people – in His Own development of them individually – need to cross each other's path, or even to linger in each other's lives for a while. Although it is almost always a mutual need – even if we can't detect it at the time – often one appears to be the giver and one the receiver. Sometimes we're the wind, sometimes the sail. God alone knows when people need each other most.

Either way, and whether for a brief moment or an extended time, we can give thanks to Father for the seasons He has given us in someone's path.

Sensitive to Father

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Did you ever wonder why you think of someone? Why they just come to mind, seemingly out-of-the-blue, as it were?

Those of us who know Father, and are acquainted with His nature and ways, easily should realize that it is not some mere coincidence, but that it is a divine working in our heart and mind.

When we're immature in Father's ways we easily can dismiss such *apparently* random thoughts without any further consideration. However, when we grow to know Him and His methods better from the Scriptures, we know that, when someone is brought to our heart and mind it is, indeed, for a reason.

Paul used his remembrance of the saints as an oc-

casional to pray for them. Prayer was not some religious ritual or rite to Paul – it simply was his communion with Father.

I am thanking my God at every remembrance of you. Always, in every petition of mine for you all, making the petition with joy (Philippians 1:3-4, CLNT).

We should learn to be sensitive, using the occasion of the thoughts of others on our mind as an opportunity to mention them to Father.

If they continue to be on your thoughts – drop them a note, or give them a call. We all need each other greatly, and we learn to respond to Father's use of our hearts and minds.



READJUSTMENT (continued from page 3166)

hard work will be for nothing. Similarly, you can have an untaught “minister” work hard his whole life and catch nothing. He will need to be ashamed because, although he worked hard, he was a workman who didn’t rightly divide the Word of truth. Hard work isn’t the test of success – but **correct** hard work.

It’s sad to think that a man can be sincere, work hard in “the ministry,” build a following, create a large organization – and yet, when it stands the test of God’s judgment, all will be burned up. *He* is saved, but his works meant nothing. Think about that. It’s better to have a little after the fire than a lot before.

GOOD NEWS FOR UNBELIEVERS AND BELIEVERS

Our ministry should be dedicated to the ministry of readjusting. Of course we will still announce the truth of Christ as the Savior of the world. We can’t help that, but it will be in the context of our goal to give out good news to believers – the gospel of the dispensation of the mystery as proclaimed by Paul the prisoner.

Most know that God has good news for unbelievers; but very few know that He has good news for believers, too. Just as an unbeliever doesn’t get the benefits of the gospel without believing it, so, too, the believer doesn’t get the benefits of the good news directed toward him unless he believes it.

The gospel of life is given to the world; the gospel of the dispensation of the mystery is given to the members of God’s family. That’s why we’re here: to let the family of God know about this good news.

A TENDER PHYSICIAN

The ministry of resetting a fractured limb is painful to those being tended. They have spent their whole lives sincerely believing things which no longer apply to them. It’s a painful process to be readjusted, but faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Just as a good doctor doesn’t like to inflict pain, neither do we. We should do our best to try not to bring unnecessary hurt. We should hold the broken arm and wrap it with love. We should notice the wincing and with sympathy wrap with the bandage of the rightly divided Scriptures. We’ve been there ourselves. Others have tenderly done it for us: may God use us to do it for others. We should desire growth and maturity.

Let’s all arrive together in the unity of the faith and of the recognition of the Son of God to a mature man – to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner (II Timothy 1:8).



Best of J.R. Miller, The, Vol. 1

by — James Russell Miller (1840–1912)

Miller was a prolific author, born of Irish/Scottish descent to James Alexander Miller and Eleanor Creswell, near Frankfort Springs, Beaver County, PA. He was a graduate of Westminster College (New Wilmington, PA), and Allegheny Theological Seminary (Allegheny, PA). Miller pastored churches in New Wilmington, PA, Philadelphia, PA, and Rock Island, IL, and was the author of over 60 published books, as well as countless booklets and pamphlets. He also served as supervisor of over two dozen periodicals with a combined annual circulation of over 66 million copies at the time of his death. This is the first in a collected series of his best selected articles.

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