



Evangelistic Apologetics

The Church Under Attack

By

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Chapters

The Church of Jesus Christ is under attack!	3
WHY?	9
Questions	16
Our Response	24
The Enemy	31
The Tension	39
The Lie	45

The Church of Jesus Christ is under attack!

While that statement shouldn't surprise any Christian, the method for responding to the attack does surprise many. We'll call it "evangelistic apologetics."

One evidence that most Christians don't know what apologetics means comes from the question I often hear from them – "why would you want to apologize for being a Christian?"

Some pastors I've talked with through the years about emphasizing apologetics in their church (especially with children, teens and young adults) either chuckle, roll their eyes or get upset with me at some point during our discussion. They tell me that apologetics should not take the place of evangelism. It's unfortunate they see apologetics that way because **biblical apologetics is evangelistic** – thus the name of this series of studies.

Another evidence that apologetics is needed in churches is that about 70-75% of church teenagers stop attending church after they graduate from high school and only a small number of them ever return to the church (Barna Group, 2007, 2011).

Think about that for a minute. Three out of every four teenagers in Christian churches stop attending church after high school. The next time you're at church, look around. Visit the youth room, the primary

school classes, the pre-school classes, the nursery. Based on statistics, most of the children you see in those classes will **not** be attending a church after they graduate from high school and most will never return. If your children are still living at home, look at them carefully. Will they attend a church or Bible study regularly after they graduate?

Where are the young adults in churches today? Where are the young families? More than 60% of today's young adults attended church as children and teens, but are no longer involved. 20% of young adults never attended church as children and have no interest in Christianity. Only 1 in 5 young adults (20%) are still involved in church (defined as attending church at least once a month, Barna Group). I find that terribly sad and unnecessary. It's obvious there's something important we're not doing to help young people understand Christianity and commit to being a permanent follower of Jesus Christ.

The Church belongs to Jesus Christ. It is His to build. Do you think He's laughing about the high number of children and teens dropping out of church? Is God rolling His eyes at the idea of Christians giving an answer (*apologia*) for the hope that is in them? (1 Peter 3:15) I don't think so. In fact, I know so. I know so based on what Jesus and His apostles and prophets (Chief Cornerstone and foundation of the Church, Ephesians 2:20) said and did.

Look at what Jesus and His apostles told us would happen to the Church.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ‘Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:10-12

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” John 15:18-20

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.” John 16:1-4

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:28-30

“To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.” 1 Corinthians 4:11-13

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:10-15

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” 1 Peter 4:12-16

An *apologia* in ancient Greece was a well-reasoned defense using evidence. That is the meaning of the word as used by writers of the New Testament. Luke records the Apostle Paul using the word as he defended himself against the accusations of Jews in Acts 22 – “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” (Acts 22:1)

Festus, the procurator of Judea, pointed out to King Agrippa Paul’s right to defend himself (*apologia*). “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’” (Acts 25:14-16)

This is important for many reasons, one being the explanation by a legal representative of the Roman government about the rights of citizens to meet their accusers face to face and present a defense (*apologia*) concerning the charges against them. What followed was a demonstration of Paul's *apologia* (Acts 26). The apostle presented his evidence with such reason and clarity that King Agrippa said to Festus – “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.” (Acts 26:32)

The purpose of this series in the new year is to focus our attention on the need for a strong defense of the Christian faith in light of attacks on **our faith**. I emphasize “our faith” because that is the battleground. Attacks on Jesus Christ have no effect on Him because He won the supreme battle on the Cross and is high and lifted up above all His enemies (Ephesians 1:20-23). The danger is to us and the people near us.

The issues before us are not about winning arguments with people. Jesus made it clear that His purpose for coming to earth was “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Before leaving earth to return to Heaven, Jesus told His disciples that it was necessary for Him to suffer and to rise from the dead, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:47). The salvation of souls is the ultimate goal of *apologetics* and should be the goal of every Christian.

WHY?

We come to the question – **Why?** Why is the Christian Church here in the United States and around the world under such severe attack today? What did we do to make so many people so angry?

Two-thousand years ago Jesus was a young man in the little town of Nazareth. He was obedient to His earthly parents and “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:51-52).

Jesus was well aware during His teen years about why He was on earth. He went to the Temple in Jerusalem when He was 12 years old to talk with the teachers who were there. Mary, Jesus’ mother, asked Him why He had gone to the Temple instead of going home with her. He said to her - “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them” (Luke 2:49-50).

That was an interesting statement for many reasons, one being that Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, was standing with Mary in the Temple. Joseph was a carpenter. So, what was the “Father’s business” Jesus mentioned?

Why?

Jesus explained His purpose years later by reading from the Book of Isaiah in his local synagogue on the Sabbath.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18-19

Jesus then closed the Book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. Everybody was watching him closely to see what He would say next. They knew Jesus well. They were members of His synagogue. It was Jesus' custom to read Scripture and share words of wisdom with them on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). They had heard what Jesus had done in other cities (Luke 4:14-15) and wanted to see what He would say to them. They may have expected Jesus to say something extra special to them since He was one of their own.

“And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ (Luke 4:21). The people marveled at the “gracious words” which Jesus spoke and said, “Is this not Joseph's son?” Instead of glorifying God as Jews in other synagogues had done, they questioned His authority. How would Jesus respond to their question?

“He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” Luke 4:20-27

Jesus knew their hearts. He told them the truth, but it was not a truth they wanted to hear. So, how did the congregation of Jesus’ own synagogue respond to what He said?

“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.” Luke 4:28-29

Jesus told the truth and hit a nerve. He had come from God with a great message of good news for the people of Israel, but in the same way the people of Israel rejected God’s message through Elijah’s

preaching – they would reject God’s’ message through Jesus the Messiah. Who then would God bless? Jesus reminded them that when Israel rejected God’s message, God sent the prophet Elijah to a widow in the region of Sidon (1 Kings 17) and the prophet Elisha to heal a Syrian soldier (2 Kings 5).

But, you say, that’s in the Hebrew Bible. Why would people in Jesus’ synagogue become violent when He simply quoted from their own Scripture? Quoting a Bible story was not the issue. Applying those truths to the people in His synagogue was the issue. **Jesus made it personal** – “You will surely say this proverb to Me ... Assuredly, I say to you ... But I tell you ...”

Jesus accused the people of His own synagogue of being just like the Jews of Elijah and Elisha’s day. They refused to listen to God’s prophets and God blessed Gentiles instead of them. The Jews of the Nazareth synagogue rejected Jesus and tried to kill Him because they knew He was accusing them of doing the same thing their ancestors had done.

If you’ve been involved in evangelism even for a short time, you know about rejection. It’s easy to take rejection personally and look at people rejecting the Gospel as the problem. I rejected the Gospel for many years before believing it to be the Truth and remember how many people were upset with me and what I said about God being a “fairy tale.” You may have done the same. But are unbelievers the problem with evangelism? Are they the ultimate source of rejecting

God?

The Bible teaches that rejection of God began with Satan. It was Satan who spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden and questioned her about God's Word.

Genesis 3:1-7 — “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’? And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

Notice carefully how Satan spoke to Eve. She knew God and what He had said, but rejected the Truth and believed a lie. She was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). [Interestingly, in that same verse, Paul

revealed that Adam was not deceived.]

God's response was a promise to defeat Satan through the "Seed" of the woman (Genesis 3:15). When the time was right, God sent His Son into the world to save humans from their rejection of Him (Galatians 4:4-5).

What did Jesus do immediately after He was baptized? The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to face Satan, the source of humanity's rejection of God. What happened there was monumental and vital for us to understand.

Luke 4:3-13 — "And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' But Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' and, 'In their hands they

shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”

Satan was familiar with Christ as the Son of God in Heaven, but Christ in the flesh on earth was a different experience. Satan tested Jesus and Jesus responded by speaking the Truth. Satan ended the testing and departed “until an opportune time.”

Questions

“Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What’s life all about?”

People have been asking these questions for thousands of years. I used to believe there was no meaning to life. We were born, we lived, we died. That was it. No more, no less. Nothing else.

The questions and people’s answers have led to a host of differing views about the meaning of life: pragmatism, existentialism, theism, logical positivism, absurdism, nihilism, humanism. I chose to live a form of secular humanism as an atheist. Theism seemed ignorant and illogical, so it didn’t interest me until someone approached me with a method of determining the truth or falsity of the Christian message. It was my introduction to evangelistic apologetics and understanding why the Church is under attack.

In the previous chapter we saw Satan ending his testing of Jesus and departing from Him “until an opportune time.” That’s an important insight into how Satan works. As you study in the Bible about the devil, you’ll see that he’s a brilliant “opportunist.” Satan took advantage of the next “opportune time” by using one of Jesus’ own disciples against Him.

“And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.” Luke 22:2-4

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.” Matthew 26:14-16

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded ... I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’ Now I tell you before it

comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.' And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.' But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, 'Buy those things we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night." John 13:1-5, 18-30

"And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'" Luke 22:47-48

“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ And they said, ‘What is that to us? You see to it!’ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.’ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.” Matthew 27:3-10

Satan carried out his plan for Jesus by using “an opportune time.” However, Satan’s plan had a fatal flaw. Jesus’ death on the Cross and resurrection from the dead was the method God used to reconcile people to Himself and give them eternal life (e.g. Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:16). It was also God’s method of responding to Satan’s own rejection of Him many years before.

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the

hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-7

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ” Ephesians 3:8-12

“... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:18-23

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:13-15

Look at what Jesus did to Satan by His crucifixion and resurrection. He “disarmed” Satan. He made a “public spectacle” of Satan. He “triumphed over” Satan. Jesus beat and humiliated Satan and the principalities and powers under Satan’s control. So, why is the Christian Church here in the United States and around the world

under severe attack today? Because God has chosen to demonstrate His manifold wisdom “by the church” to the principalities and powers in heavenly places and they are angry about it.

Satan and his forces know their end – “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) This age is the only opportunity for Satan to do something in response to his defeat. He’s a defeated foe, but not yet restrained. When God does restrain Satan in the future the devil will have no power to affect the world until God sets him free again, but then for only a short time (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10). So, while Satan’s free now he will do everything in his power to hurt the Church. The devil accuses us daily before God, but Jesus is our Advocate before the Father (e.g. Revelation 12:10; 1 John 2:1-2) He will persecute Christians through any means available to him, but God has given us the weapons to fight the spiritual battle with him and his forces effectively and efficiently (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Thinking about how Jesus defeated Satan and now uses the Church to demonstrate His triumph reminds me of the modern phrase – “in your face.” It’s an aggressive way of confronting an enemy with evidence of your dominance and their defeat. How does Satan react to Jesus putting the Church “in his face?” “... our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Satan is angry and vicious. He's out for revenge and he does it by attacking the Church. There's nothing Satan can do against Jesus since the Lord is "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named" (Ephesians 1:21), so the devil attacks us.

Jesus said of Satan – "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." (John 10:10a) In contrast, Jesus said of Himself – "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." (John 10:10b) What a difference between Jesus and Satan. Satan, the defeated, lashes out in his anger and steals, kills and destroys. Jesus, the Victor, reaches out in His Love and gives life abundantly and eternally.

No wonder the Church is under attack. So, how do we respond to Satan and his evil forces? How do we share the Gospel with people who reject Christ?

Our Response

“Nearly 1,000 Christians have been killed and over 450,000 of them displaced in Syria due to the crisis plaguing the country.” (News Headline)

“Pakistan church bomb: Christians mourn 85 killed in Peshawar suicide attack. Pakistan’s worst-ever attack on beleaguered Christians prompts warning by bishop for future of minority in Muslim countries.” (News Headline)

“The more atheists who come out of the closet and admit publicly what they stand for, the more difficult it will be for the fanatically religious to impose their bronze-aged morality upon the rest of us.” (Atheist organization website)

“We are so sick of hearing those ignorant and self-righteous Christians complain about the problems in our society. Boo stinkin’ hoo.” (Atheist blog)

“Christians are a hateful, mean and nasty bunch of losers.” (Facebook comment)

Why is the Church under physical and verbal attack around the world today? What or who is behind the attacks? Before you name someone or some group, think about an important insight the Apostle

Paul gave us.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
Ephesians 6:11-12

As easy as it is to get caught up in viewing attacks on the Church as coming from people (“flesh and blood”), we must grasp what’s really going on. It’s the only way we can possibly comprehend the work God has given us to do during our time on earth and how to do it with the right attitude toward our fellow humans.

One of the main things God wants us to do during this lifetime is “stand against the wiles of the devil.” Why? Because the devil’s “wiles” (*methodeia* – craft, deceit, cunning device, trickery) are what we really face as followers of Jesus Christ.

To say that Satan is crafty, deceitful, and cunning would be an accurate statement. Jesus called the devil “the enemy” (Matthew 13:39), “murderer” and “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). But wait a minute – didn’t Jesus create Satan? The apostles wrote that Jesus created everything, including angels, and Satan is an angel (John 1:1-3, 10; Colossians 1:16-17), so why would Jesus call the

devil the enemy, a murderer and the father of lies if He created him?

Jesus shared an important insight into Satan's history in Luke 10. The Lord sent 70 of His disciples out with the command to heal the sick and tell them that the Kingdom had come near to them. The 70 returned with joy and told Jesus that even the demons were subject to them in His Name. Jesus said to them – "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:18) That may seem a strange thing for Jesus to say to His disciples, but it makes perfect sense when we understand He was addressing the supernatural realm of His authority.

"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to

you.’ But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me. Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” Luke 10:1-17

Jesus sent His disciples “two by two” for the purpose of demonstrating His power through their healing the sick and for saying to the people that the “kingdom of God” had come near to them. The disciples were representatives of the King and thus carried His authority wherever they went. Jesus told His disciples that at the judgment of the world He would reject the people who rejected them and their message. Why? Because people who rejected the disciples’ message rejected Jesus and God the Father Who sent Jesus. When the 70 disciples returned from their ministry, they rejoiced that “even the demons” were subject to them in Jesus’ Name. It was in that

context of Jesus' supernatural authority as Judge of the world that He said – "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

Was Jesus referring to Satan's fall from his position as a leading angel (Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14)? The fact that the Kingdom of God had come to earth because King Jesus had come (Matthew 12)? Christ's triumph over Satan through His death and resurrection (Colossians 2)? Satan's final defeat after the Millennial Reign of Christ (Revelation 20)? or was Jesus thinking of all of that when He said He saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven?

Jesus said something else of importance to the 70 disciples -

"And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'" Luke 10:18-20)

In the context of the Lord's disciples rejoicing that demons were subject to them in His Name and Jesus seeing Satan fall like lightning from Heaven, the Lord told His disciples that He had given them authority over all the power of the enemy. However, Jesus told them that something even greater than having the spirits subject to them was that their names were written in Heaven.

Jesus then said this -

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.’ Luke 10:21-24

It is good to remember as Christians that we know what prophets and kings desired to know. It’s good to remember that God has given us power over the enemy (Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:1-10; 1 Peter 5:8-11). However, the most important thing to remember is that because of the great gift of Christ our names are written in Heaven (Revelation 20:11-15). We take that knowledge into the battle knowing that we win because Jesus won it for us.

Someone may ask why spend time focusing on what Satan is doing

and has done when the subject of this series is *Evangelistic Apologetics – The Church Under Attack*. Look at each word in the title and think about why it exists:

Evangelistic – we preach the “good news” because there is “bad news” that began with Satan

Apologetics – we “defend” the Christian worldview because of anti-Christian worldviews fostered by Satan

The Church – those who Christ redeemed by the shedding of His Blood on the Cross

Under Attack – the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental attacks on those who Christ redeemed

What Satan did and is doing is behind every aspect of evangelism, apologetics and the attacks the Church faces. That’s why Paul wrote we do not fight against flesh and blood, “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”

The Enemy

I've spent most of my life as a professional journalist, which has afforded me a fascinating opportunity to see not only **what** people do, but **why** they do what they do.

If you watch or read the news on a regular basis, you're familiar with how bad things are in the world. Newscasters move from one negative story to another - economic decline, joblessness, poverty, crime, war, terrorism, lying, cheating, stealing. You may have said it out loud – “the world is a mess!”

After covering news stories for 40 years, I want you to know that I agree with you. The world **is** a mess. However, the world's problems didn't begin with my generation or yours. My grandparents were born in the 19th century and they told stories about what a mess the world was back then. They survived tough economic times, crimes and wars. Their grandparents were born in the 18th century and their world was a mess.

The point is that the world has been a mess for thousands of years. As far back as we can look in history we'll find people living in a messed-up world. Guess how long it took to mess up the world? Less than a minute!

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

That brief conversation put in motion a tidal wave of damage that continues to this day. It’s because of that conversation between Satan and Eve and Adam’s response to Satan’s deception of his wife that we need **evangelistic apologetics**. It also explains why the Church is under attack.

Satan is one of the most powerful creatures in the universe. The devil is no match for God, but he is more than a match for humans. The first person born on earth (Cain) murdered the second person born on earth (Abel) because of jealousy and greed (Genesis 4:1-8). It happened because of what Satan put in motion years earlier in the Garden.

I used to cover the crime and courts beat (also called the police and legal beat). That's where you cover the crime, the search for a suspect or suspects in the crime, the arrest of suspect(s), the trial of suspect(s), the conviction or acquittal of suspect(s), the sentencing of the convicted, how the families of the victim and convicted deal with it, and how all of that affects other people in the community. You learn a lot about what motivates people when you cover crime and courts.

I can tell you that most people I covered who were found guilty committed their crimes for the basic reason of **selfishness**. Strip away all of the lies and excuses and you'll see that people hurt people because they're selfish. Can it really be that simple? Yes, it can.

Satan = selfish

Eve = selfish

Adam = selfish

Cain = selfish

Here's a list of "crimes" from the Bible. The root cause for each one is selfishness.

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21

Look again at what Satan offered Eve – "God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Here's how Eve responded to Satan's offer – "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate."

Adam was standing with Eve the entire time. Here's how he responded – “she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” What happened next is a tremendous insight into the sinful nature of humans -

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself Genesis 3:7-10

1. their eyes were opened
2. they knew they were naked
3. they covered themselves
4. they hid from God

God went straight to the problem – “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Adam's answer? “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Remember that Adam had walked and talked with God in the garden many times before and had never experienced fear. Something

happened to Adam that caused him to be afraid of God.

What did Adam and Eve say when God confronted them about eating the forbidden fruit? Adam blamed God and Eve – “Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’” Eve blamed the serpent – “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The serpent is not recorded as saying anything to God. Satan’s work was done.

What about Cain and Abel? Hebrews 11:4 – “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” 1 John 3:12 – “not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.” Where did this evil begin? Selfishness. Cain wanted what his brother had and became jealous and angry. God said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” How did Cain respond? Did he repent of his selfishness and do what was right? No. “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

God confronted Cain and said, “Where is Abel your brother?” How did Cain respond? He’s selfish and cares only about himself, so he lies: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” God said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the

ground. So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

What did Cain do when confronted with the horror of murdering his own brother? Remember, he's selfish and cares only about himself. "My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me."

"My punishment" ... "greater than I can bear" ... "You have driven me out" ... "I shall be hidden from Your face" ... "I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth" ... "anyone who finds me will kill me."

Do you see all the personal pronouns? "My" "I" "me" – It's all about **self** fulfillment and preservation; not a word about God, his parents, his dead brother or other siblings. Everything's about Cain. We're still that way – it's all about us.

The Apostle John explained this "selfishness" problem with great clarity and perspective -

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,

that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." 1 John 3:8-12

This may be one of the most important things anyone will ever tell us. The root of all problems in life is sin and sin demonstrates itself in pride, selfishness and fear. The antidote is "love" – love for God and others. This is how God created humans to function in a perfect world. It's still how God wants us to function in an imperfect world. Understanding this basic fact of human nature will help us deal with attacks on the Church and how to use evangelistic apologetics to help the people God brings into our lives.

The Tension

It's important to our understanding of why the Church is under attack to understand the "tension" between God and Satan. We saw it first in the Garden of Eden when God said this to the Satan-possessed serpent:

"Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:14-15

Satan is a defeated foe, cursed by God, but that does not mean the devil is not active and powerful in this world. Fortunately, we know what Satan does, how he does it and why he does it.

Satan gained a powerful advantage with the human race after Adam and Eve sinned against God. We know it as the "sin nature." Satan knows it as "leverage."

Sin became part of the nature of every person born into the world. That sin nature makes people susceptible to Satan's will. Cain's jealous, murderous rage against his brother is an example. Satan

was so successful in using sin in his attack on the human race that God seriously considered bringing an end to life on earth.

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Genesis 6:5-8

Even as “sin” is one of Satan’s greatest tools against the human race, so “grace” is one of God’s greatest tools for the human race. God’s “grace” is why the world is still here and not destroyed.

Even though every person on earth died, except for Noah’s family, the dreaded sin nature was still active on earth and Satan was still the enemy of God and man. God, understanding the sin nature and how Satan would use it, established a very firm law following the Flood. It hearkened back to what I believe is Satan’s primary reason for attacking humans – God created people in His “image” (Genesis 1:26-27). Satan hates God and anything that “looks like” God. That includes us.

“Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man.

From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it." Genesis 9:5-7

God made a covenant with Noah and his family that He would never use water again to destroy the human race, but that did not mean Satan would give up trying.

The devil used the sin nature to lead people to build a city and a tower "whose top is in the heavens" to make a name for themselves "lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the earth." (Genesis 11) Their fear was based on God's command to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." (Genesis 1:28; 9:1) They wanted to do what they wanted to do, not what God wanted them to do.

How did God respond to that? He confused their language and "scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth." (Genesis 11:7-9) Why did He do that? "Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Genesis 11:6-7) God intervened to protect people from themselves.

That's what God does – He protects us. Think about what He did in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned against Him. What would have happened to the human race if they had remained in the Garden and eaten from the Tree of Life?

“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:22-24

God intervenes in history to provide and protect those He created in His image. What He did after confusing language and scattering people across the planet was to choose and bless a particular family so they would be a blessing to the world. God chose a man named Abram from the lineage of Noah's son Shem.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him

who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:1-3

The story of Abram (Abraham) is a story of the battle mankind has with the sin nature and how God rescues because of His Love and Grace. Though Satan is not referred to by name during the life of Abraham and his family, we know that the devil was involved because of what the Bible teaches about Satan’s attacks on the people of God.

We also know some important things about how the devil attacks God’s people through the story of Job and his family.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it. Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out

Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face! And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord."
Job 1:6-12

This is a revelation that pulls back the curtain on what happens in Heaven. The angels present themselves before the Lord and Satan sometimes comes with them. Satan accuses people who please God and God allows the devil some space to carry out limited attacks on people.

Job's response to the calamities that befell his family are an amazing testimony to his faith in God.

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.' In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Job 1:20-22

Even when Satan went before God and accused Job a second time and received permission to attack Job physically, Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2). What did happen to Job during this very difficult personal time was to come to a deeper understanding of the sinfulness of man and the perfect purpose of God – and so can we.

The Lie

I write about Satan as if he's a real spiritual being. All Christians believe that – right?

What if I told you that more than half of Christians in the United States “strongly agree” or “agree somewhat” that Satan **is not a living being** but is a symbol of evil? That's based on a Barna Group study from 2009. Here are the results based on a nationwide survey of adults' spiritual beliefs (1,871 self-described Christians were surveyed).

40% – strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil”

19% – agreed somewhat that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil”

10% – disagreed somewhat that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil”

26% – disagreed strongly that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil”

8% – not sure what they believed about the existence of Satan

That means less than one-third of Christians strongly believe in the existence of Satan.

So, how does that compare with what the rest of the country thinks about Satan? According to a 2007 Gallup Poll, 70% of Americans believe in the devil, while only 21% don't believe in Satan and 8% are not sure. That's up dramatically from 1996 when only 56% of Americans said they believed in the devil.

Does it surprise you that more Americans believe in the devil than Christians do? It shouldn't because it's part of Satan's attack on the Church. The devil has worked hard to throw a thick cloak over himself and his kingdom of evil, even though the Bible clearly presents Satan as real as Christ (e.g. Matthew 4:1-11; 5:41; Acts 10:38; Revelation 2:10) and warns Christians to "resist" Satan (James 4:7) and not give place to him (Ephesians 4:27).

Paul warned Christians that Satan has many tricks up his sleeve (Ephesians 6:11) and regularly set traps and snares for Christians to fall into (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26). What's the most important part of setting a trap for someone? Make sure they don't see it. People rarely fall into traps they see, so the trapper has to be careful to disguise the trap so people don't know it's a trap. Pretty clever, huh?

Two of my favorite authors are C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Lewis wrote a series of letters in London's Guardian newspaper more than 70 years ago known as *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis published the letters in book form and dedicated it to his friend Tolkien. *The Screwtape Letters* became very popular on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Screwtape is a senior demon who writes to his nephew Wormwood, a junior demon. Wormwood is responsible for the damnation of an English man known as "the patient." However, the patient becomes a Christian early in the book and Screwtape then guides Wormwood in what to do to keep the new believer from becoming serious about his new faith. Wormwood wants to tempt his "patient" to commit terrible sins, but Screwtape guides his nephew to distract his patient so that he becomes dull to his faith. That is a powerful image of what has happened to Christians in our lifetime. As we saw in the Barna survey, most Christians don't even believe in a real Satan.

The insights of Lewis into modern Christianity and its lack of spiritual power – are powerful. Satan does his best work in the dark, unseen and unexposed by the light, where people (especially Christians) do not believe in him and his power. What do you see in these quotes from *The Screwtape Letters* about your life in Christ, your commitment to living for God? [Keep in mind as you read that the "Enemy" Screwtape refers to is God.]

“Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts ...”

“Whatever their bodies do affects their souls. It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out ...”

“Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him.”

“A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all—and more amusing.”

“Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man’s best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them, in drumming of fingers and kicking of heels, in whistling tunes that he does not like, or in the long, dim labyrinth of reveries that have not even lust or ambition to give them a relish, but which, once chance association has started them, the creature is too weak and fuddled to shake off.”

“There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human’s mind against the Enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them

thinking about what will happen to them.”

“All is summed up in the prayer which a young female human is said to have uttered recently: ‘O God, make me a normal twentieth-century girl!’ Thanks to our labors, this will mean increasingly: ‘Make me a minx, a moron, and a parasite.”

“Keep his mind on the inner life. He thinks his conversion is something inside him, and his attention is therefore chiefly turned at present to the state of his own mind—or rather to that very expurgated version of them which is all you should allow him to see. Encourage this. Keep his mind off the most elementary duties of directing it to the most advanced and spiritual ones. Aggravate the most useful human characteristics, the horror and neglect of the obvious. You must bring him to a condition in which he can practise self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office.”

“Surely you know that if a man can’t be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that “suits” him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.”

“The search for a “suitable” church makes the man a critic where God wants him to be a pupil. What he wants from the layman in church is an attitude which may, indeed, be critical in the sense of rejecting what is false or unhelpful but which is wholly uncritical in the sense that it does not appraise- does not waste time in thinking about what it rejects, but lays itself open in uncommenting, humble receptivity to any nourishment that is going.”

“What he says, even on his knees, about his own sinfulness is all parrot talk. At bottom, he still believes he has run up a very favorable credit-balance in the Enemy’s ledger by allowing himself to be converted, and thinks that he is showing great humility and condescension in going to church with these ‘smug’, commonplace neighbors at all.”

“Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy’s) you don’t realize how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary.”

“The Christians describe the Enemy as one “without whom Nothing is strong”. And Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man’s best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them ...”

There is a reason Satan doesn't want you to know he really exists. People don't pay attention to things they don't believe exist. That allows the one who exists to go about their work unbelieved, unthought, unseen, unheard, unknown. What better way to control a mind and life than convincing the mind they are not real. Even when we think the devil and his demons might be real we hear a voice in our mind say, "move along, there's nothing to see here." And we do the bidding of the voice.

How can we resist something we don't believe exists? We can't and don't. How can we flee from something we don't believe exists? We can't and don't. How can we know the roaring lion is charging at us with full fury to devour us if we don't have ears to believe in the danger of his attack? We can't and don't. How can we succeed in following Christ exclusively if we don't believe in the devil who tempts us to follow everything and anything inclusively? We can't and don't. How then can we please the One Who died for our sins and lives for our future? We can't and don't.

May God open our eyes and ears to see and believe in the reality of Satan and his power to steal, kill and destroy.

“Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.” Mark 4:12 (NKJV)

The stage is set, the battle ready, the players on the field, the stakes high – very high. God created, Satan attacked, humanity failed, God loved and sent, Jesus came and died, believers saved and sealed.

This thing we call “Church” is real. Jesus Christ is building His Church, so it’s very real. And what does Satan do now? He doesn’t stop, he attacks again and again. Satan is relentless. Why? Why would a defeated foe keep attacking? Because he knows what’s coming.

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’” Revelation 12:7-12

“... because he knows that he has a short time.” Satan is a realist. He messed up and will pay for it with his life. “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) Satan knows what he will do for eternity, but he’s not going quietly.

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:13-17

Satan is a fighter. He’s defeated, but he won’t stop fighting until God takes the fight out of him forever. I am convinced that until Christians see Satan for who he is and engages him in serious and effective

spiritual battle, we will have limited success accomplishing the Lord's goal for us.

What is that goal? Before you look in your Bible, look around at Christians you know, especially Christians in positions of church leadership. Based on what you see with your eyes and hear with your ears, what do you think is the Lord's goal for Christians? Personal prosperity? Health and wealth? The "good" life? Getting more "stuff." Climbing the personal and corporate ladder of success? Getting ahead? Even if it means leaving others behind? Live it out "safe" and "easy"? Get a little involved in helping others, "but not too much"?

You know I'm not making this up. Be honest. Look at how Christians around you walk and talk. Look at how Christians spend their time and money. Based on what you see, what's their goal in life?

Now, open the Bible and compare what you see around you with what you see God say.

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." Matthew 16:24-25

"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take

up the cross, and follow Me.” Mark 10:21

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ...” Matthew 28:19

“... you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Notice anything different between Christ’s goals for Christians and Christians’ goals for themselves? I know you do because it’s the elephant in the room. Everybody knows it, but nobody talks about it. It’s the ugly truth we all know, but we do everything we can to paint it another color or put something over it so no one notices it’s there. We do our best to disguise it and say it’s not really what it is, but no matter how good we are at covering it up it’s still there and anyone with eyes to see can and will see it.

The fact is – **we make Jesus sick!** Think I'm wrong? Then, why did Jesus say this?

“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ‘I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Revelation 3:14-19

“But,” you say, “we’re not like the Laodiceans!” Really? Don’t we love our wealth? Don’t we love our position? Don’t we love how we have need of nothing? Yes, that’s exactly what we think and say, and we don’t realize we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked!

The goals of Christians look nothing like the goals Christ established for His Church – and until we realize that **FACT** and **REPENT**, our future will continue to get darker and darker every day. There is only one way out of this mess we’re in and it’s to do what our Lord says **DO!**

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”

Christians, everyone of us should be embarrassed. Our eyes should fill with tears, our hearts should fill with fear, and our mouths fill with repentance. And let's be real this time. Enough of the puny stuff that leads us down the aisle during the altar call – after altar call after altar call after altar call.

Do you think that's what Jesus had in mind when He told John what to write to the churches? Do you think Jesus wants us to repent from 11:55 – 11:58am on Sundays? That's not repentance – it's convenience!

Repentance is when God grabs your heart by the throat and you know what He's telling you is true. Repentance is when you hear Christ Jesus the Lord call you wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and it breaks your heart because you realize He wants to vomit you out of His mouth. Repentance is when you fall to your knees and can't stand up because of the pressure of God's Hand on

your heart, mind, soul and strength. Repentance is when you say to God – “not my will but thine be done.” Repentance is when you say **yes** to God and **no** to everything else.

Remember the stage? Remember the battle? Remember the stakes? Satan is the enemy. Don't let him win the battle for your obedience. Don't let him win the war for your heart and mind. Don't let him control your time, your finances, your talents, your gifts. Why? Because your time, your finances, your talents and your gifts belong to God! The Lord has given you all of these things for one purpose – to fulfill His goal for your life. And, as a member of the household of faith, you will find that by fulfilling God's purpose for your life, your life will have meaning and purpose far beyond anything you could imagine in this world.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

Matthew 6:19-20

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