



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XII  
Issue 280

# The Role of the Adversary in God's Purpose

by – James A. Webb (1902-1990)

The Bible says *“The Devil sinneth from the beginning”* (I John 3:8, King James Version). His sin lies in the motive behind his acts, but his acts had to be done in the sense that they were required for the purpose of God to be fulfilled. This is seen in the death of God's Son. Those who demanded that He be crucified did so with a sinful motive. Yet Christ, after His resurrection, asked,

*Must not the Christ be suffering these things?* (Luke 24:26, Concordant Version).

Yes, He had to suffer. Without His suffering and death there could have been no salvation, and there would have been no sinners to be saved if the Devil, or Adversary (which is the better translation), had not sinned from the beginning, for it was he who introduced sin into the universe and among the human family. His motive was to defeat God, and his motive constituted sin. Yet without sinners to be saved, there would have been no need for the Son of God to come and go through His sacrificial suffering, and hence no need for Him to be,

*The Lamb slain from the disruption of the World* (Revelation 13:8).

The Adversary did not do something that God planned for him not to do. He did that which was required to be done for the future glory of God. If the Adversary had acted contrary to God's purpose, then, at that time, God was not operating *“all according to the counsel of His will”* (Ephesians 1:11). Yet God does,

*According to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth* (Daniel 4:35).

The Adversary himself is the work of God's hand, for,

*By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand formed the crooked serpent* (Job 26:13).

The crooked serpent is *“the Adversary and Satan”* (Revelation 20:2). The Adversary, in the form of a serpent, beguiled Eve (Genesis 3:13), thus proving that he was, and is, the deceiver. The woman, being deluded, had come to be in the transgression (I Timothy 2:14).

God intended the deceiver to delude the woman. The Adversary was under God's control, the same as the woman was. When He used the deceiver to delude her, He was using creatures that were His (Job 12:10). Yes, both were His, and He used them to bring about an increase of knowledge.

God well knew that the Adversary would deceive Eve, for He formed him to be an Adversary and a Deceiver.

*Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, “Why hast Thou made me thus?”* (Romans 9:20, King James Version).

The Adversary was fulfilling God's intention when he deceived mother Eve. It was part of God's purpose to bring (see **ADVERSARY**, page 2583)

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This weekly 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 (1 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 (1 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 forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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**ADVERSARY** (continued from front page)

about an awareness. The woman did not partake of the fruit until she saw that it was desired to make one intelligent. The serpent said to the woman,

*"God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise (intelligent), she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:5,6).*

While the motive of the Adversary was sinful, yet what he did in deceiving the woman was something within the purpose of God, for the result was an increase in awareness, in as much as we read that the eyes of both the man and the woman were opened, and they knew that they were naked (:7).

Many believers are blinded concerning the truth, even as Joseph's brothers were blinded. There are those who say that God did not have, and is not having, anything to do with Satan and his works. When we refer them to Joseph and ask, "Why did Joseph's brothers sell him?" they answer, "Because they hated him." This of course is true, but when we point out to them that in later years Joseph said to his brothers, "Therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5), they become confused, for they do not like to believe that God actually did evil to Joseph. They want to place all of the blame on his brothers. Of course, God cannot be censured; but the truth is that Joseph's brothers did exactly what God intended for them to do. There is no doubt that it was the Adversary who suggested their actions to them, but the Adversary belongs to God in the sense that God created him and can use him as He wills.

So God used Satan, and Joseph's brothers, to preserve life. This seems strange, for the Adversary is a murderer, but God can, and does, use him for the opposite purpose whenever He pleases to do so.

That the Adversary is subordinate to God is proved by his obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus. When Jesus said to him, "Go away, Satan," he left Christ without tarrying (Matthew 4:11).

Concerning God, the Scriptures declare that,

*Out of Him, and through Him, and for Him is all (Romans 11:36).*

He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and omnisciparous. That is, He is able to do all; He knows all; He is present everywhere at the same time; He is the producer of all.

If He is able to do all, then He is able to keep the Adversary from going contrary to His intentions, and He is able to have him do whatever is in accord with His intentions. If God knows all – even the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) – then the Adversary has never deceived Him. God knew beforehand just what Satan was going to do at all times. If God is present everywhere at the same time, then Satan has never been able to hide from God. If God is the producer of all, He made the Adversary as well as everything else.

Satan never thwarts God's plans; instead God uses him in carrying out His plans, as has been shown. A look at the book of Job will show that Satan does whatever God intends for him to do. If we are to take the record in Job as a model, he does not do any more than God allows him to do. God gave him authority to afflict Job, but told him to spare his life, and Satan obeyed implicitly. He afflicted Job, and he spared his life. In the temptation in the wilderness, Satan did just what God had purposed him to do, when he tested Jesus. The Scriptures say that Jesus "was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tried by the Adversary" (Matthew 4:1). When the period of testing was over, Jesus told him only once to go away, and immediately Satan left Him.

It is admitted by all that when messengers came to Christ after Satan left Him, they were doing just what God had told them to do. This is true, but it is also true that, in testing Jesus, the Adversary was doing just what God intended for him to do. When we attribute false values to the Adversary, we also attribute false values to God, for we assume that the Adversary is operating independently of God, and that God cannot have it otherwise. The fact remains that the Lord God is the Lord God of the Adversary (though Satan would not acknowledge this at this time), for the Lord Jesus quoted to him the words from Deuteronomy (6:16),

*You shall not be putting on trial the Lord your God (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12).*

Satan is a slanderer, but much of Christendom (including many of its clergymen) is slandering the slanderer, and in doing so, is also slandering, maligning God.

God brought the Adversary into being, for "ALL is out of God" (Romans 11:36), and God had determined beforehand that sin and estrangement would enter the uni- ►

verse through the acts of the Adversary, but this fact must not be considered in isolation. God had also purposed His mighty work of SALVATION by way of the cross of His beloved SON and, in order to reveal the glory of His saving Power in Christ Jesus, God required the dark background of sin and estrangement. God, Who Himself is love, could never have suffered His love to remain forever unrevealed and unrequited.

Had Satan, the Adversary, in introducing (through his activities) sin into the universe, acted in absolute independence of God, then he should be praised for bringing about the condition that gave God the opportunity to manifest His saving grace. God will not give HIS GLORY to another (Isaiah 42:8).

Until we are able to recognize the mighty power of God, "Who is operating all [and Satan is included in the "all"] in accord with the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11), we cannot avoid attributing to the Adversary what God achieves and will achieve. Yet this we must refrain from doing, being concerned always to ascribe all praise to God.

It should be known that Satan is not an intruder in God's

universe, but rather holds, as the chief of the jurisdiction of the air, high office among God's celestial hosts. In the book of Job, he is referred to as "Satan," and Satan, in Hebrew, means "adversary." It is just as necessary that God should have an adversary in His government as it is that He should have any other officer. An adversary opposes, and Satan opposed Job, and thus God had an opportunity to show what His grace and compassion could accomplish for Job. Indeed, had it not been for the Adversary, there would have been no "wisdom of this world" (I Corinthians 1:20), against the dark backdrop of which is revealed the glory of Christ, Who is the power and wisdom of God, the universal Savior (I Corinthians 1:18-25).

If those who seek to expound the Scriptures would first of all realize and then proclaim that the Adversary, Satan, fills the role assigned to him (and required) by God, and that in that role he is subject to God's authority and control, and can go no further than the limits God has prescribed for him, then there would be less uneasiness within the ranks of Christendom.

*Grace & Truth Magazine* ■

## *"Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."*

Luke 23:43

by – Cecil J. Blay

**I**t is important to remember that in most versions the translation of certain passages was "slanted" to suit the popular teachings of the day. This was not necessarily deliberate, though some preconceived idea is much inclined to influence a translator's thinking. That notorious verse containing our Lord's words to the thief on the cross is doubtless the best known example of theological influence on translation in the *A.V.* Since there are no punctuation marks in the Greek, the translator here elected to place a comma where it would reflect his own theological bias. This distorts our Lord's promise to the thief as if it were something he would realize that day: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Properly punctuated, the promise should read: "Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." The incorrectly rendered text accords with orthodox theology and the error which still persists among nominal Christians, that death is followed immediately by some kind of disembodied existence. This theory does violence

to the entire context of Scripture truth. Our Lord's words as rendered by the misplaced comma would be no answer to the thief's prayer asking to be remembered when Christ comes into His kingdom. The promise he did receive, and will in due time enjoy, is that he will be with Christ in paradise when His glorious earthly kingdom dawns. Vividly then will the thief recall the day on which he received the promise – "Verily I say unto thee TODAY [THIS DAY]" – that former dark day when all hope of Messiah's kingdom seemed lost, so only faith of the highest quality could look beyond the day of the Suffering Servant and visualize His future as David's Greater Son.

*Treasures of Truth,*  
No. 10, August-September 1973  
Reading, England



I just wanted to let you know how thankful I am that you sent your mailer to us. I've ordered several of your books and have been so blessed by the truths you have opened up to me. *The Salvation of All*, what an amazing book. I feel the veil has been lifted and finally I see clearly the glory of our Lord and Savior. Thank you so much for bringing the correct translations of the Bible to light. Even though I have always believed in Jesus as my Savior, I always had doubts as to the "fire and brimstone" hell and all the negative teachings of a God of Love and Mercy. What a joy to know the truth and understand just how amazing our God truly is to all. You are a sincere man of God, whom I trust and respect. God Bless you as you continue His work. – *VA*

Father's true identity and His revelation to me that I am a son has changed me from the inside out. So I share small tidbits with my "little brothers and sisters" of Dad's true character and their place in Him.

The truth is we are precious and dearly loved by the Father of us all. It was the truth of Christ in me, the hope of glory that lifted me out of death and darkness, not the slanderous doctrine of a wrathful God that I was never good enough for.

The sense of separation has withered and died and the reality of union has flooded me. I now live in peace and rest no matter the circumstance. How can one not share this?! Many truly appreciate your labor! – *FL*

I love your *Daily Email Goodies* and am now reading your book *The Great Omission*. I agree with everything you teach in this book. You are truly gifted by God on your understanding of Scripture and you are a gift to me and others when you spread such truths. – *TN*

I have been blessed by reading your *Daily Goodies* and some of your books. I am receiving spiritual sustenance from you and you are receiving a small bit of physical sustenance from me. I am definitely making out in this deal :)

Your writings connect well with me and I am sharing them with my family and with the small organic house church that I am involved with. I was raised in a Baptist Church and spent about 10 years pastoring a non-denominational church with a heavy emphasis on evangelism and have been on a free spiritual journey with a small group of dear friends for the last 10 years. So as you might guess I can

identify with your journey. – *OH*

I want to tell you how much we enjoy the *Daily Email Goodies* and the challenging and encouraging thoughts therein. It is something that comes up every time I turn on my computer and a very good way to start the day. Thank You for that effort. – *CA*

Your booklet called *Paul's Neglected Message* is great! All should know about it! – *IA*

I am reading the *Daily Goodies* book on a regular basis as it is so much joy to study when concepts are explained in a simple manner of understanding. So far my favorite subject is how God works in us and uses us to accomplish His purposes. I love debt free grace – what a gift to mankind. I have been there – in the bondage of manipulative mind control. I thank God I am free to search out the Scriptures on my own.

You write literature regarding God's Word for the simple person to understand. I hope you will live a long, blessed and joyful life. – *WA*

Your explanations on all subjects are clear, precise and to the point. (Not to mention irrefutable!) It is yet another proof that most are blinded from the truth, if they read from your explanations and can't get it! How humbling for me to consider that Father chose me out of billions! I know I wouldn't have! – *LA*

I received your book *The Great Omission* and love it. I read it and was impressed by the arguments. Most folks would flip out and not be willing to read it by the end of the first chapter though. It was encouraging to me, because a lot of it was stuff I had already seen on my own. I plan on ordering several copies to share with others.

I started reading *The Salvation of All* this morning and I'm really enjoying it. Thanks for helping me to pay attention to a couple things I hadn't really stopped to ponder in Romans 5. – *FL*

I know it takes a lot of work to put the *Daily Email Goodies* together. For my part I appreciate them and quite often they jog me into areas I haven't been. – *OH*

I just wanted to take a moment to write and express my appreciation for your faithfulness in e-mailing your various articles that have not only been an inspiration and spiritual blessing to me, but to some of my friends and relatives as I have shared some of your writings with them as well.

It never ceases to amaze me how many resist the love and goodness of God and hold to and choose to embrace the image of "an angry God," instead of a "happy God" Who is in love with all of His creation. How well our ad-  
(see **MAILBOX**, last page)



# Translation Treasures #3

## The "Cross"

The "Christian Cross" is the preeminent symbol of Christendom. However, most are unaware that the Greek word *stauros* traditionally translated "cross" actually indicates a simple upright pole or stake.

Here are definitions for the Greek word *stauros*:

a stake or post. – James A. Strong<sup>1</sup>

an upright pale or stake. – E.W. Bullinger<sup>2</sup>

an upright stake or pale, without any crosspiece. – A.E. Knoch<sup>3</sup>

an upright stake. – Joseph Thayer<sup>4</sup>

a mere stake of one single piece without transom [crossbar].<sup>5</sup>

staurós, designated a pointed, vertical wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. ... they were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of law were publicly suspended to die.<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing in the Greek of the New Testament even to imply two pieces of timber. – E.W. Bullinger<sup>7</sup>

*Stauros* denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such, malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of the two-beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as a symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the third century A.D. the churches

had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered [t], was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ. – W.E. Vine<sup>8</sup>

We can see from these Greek language sources that the word "cross" is just another place where *religion* has "changed the truth of God into a lie."

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not give His life for us on a "cross." He died on "a stake or post," or what is elsewhere referred to in the Scriptures as a "tree."

*Who His Own self bare our sins in His Own body on the tree ...* (I Peter 2:24).

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree"* (Galatians 3:13).

The "cross" is not just something that religion has *corrupted* for its own purposes; it is something it *injected* as a replacement for our Savior's "tree." There is NOTHING Christian about the pagan "cross."

Genesis' garden starts with a "Tree" of Life. Revelation end's with a "Tree" of Life. In between our Savior provided *Life* for us on a "tree."

### REFERENCES

In the Egyptian churches the cross was a pagan symbol of life borrowed by the Christians and interpreted in the pagan manner.

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## From the Editor

Dear fellow saints,

### Great Projects Underway

I so appreciate your labors with me – all of your prayers, support and encouraging words. I am also glad to let you know that we have some really exciting projects that are already in progress for this year.

### Book in Dutch

As you probably saw in last week's *Bible Student's Notebook* we now have a book of some of my writings in Dutch: *Studeren in het Schriftwoord* (Studies in the Scriptures) is a collection of specially selected studies.

### Book in Spanish

We are also working on a collection of our studies in Spanish with the help of Christian Luca and Hector Moreno. We hope that this will be ready just a little later in the year. If you or someone that you know can read Spanish, we could use your help in reading the proof of the book.

### Slate of New Books

We also have several books in English on their way to you in the next few months.

*The Rich Man and Lazarus*  
(Dan Kreamer)

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### MAILBOX (continued from page 2585)

versary has polluted and convinced the majority of those who profess to be "believers" that the God they worship is just like themselves!

I love and appreciate you and your beautiful family for loving the Body of Christ enough to write and publish books that magnify and glorify our beloved Lord, even at the expense of being misunderstood and maligned as "being deceived and in error." We know that Jesus, who "is the Way, the Truth and the Life" will triumph and with hearts overflowing with His love, we yearn for that day when "the eyes of (spiritually) blind will be opened" and they too, will truly behold HIM as He Is and not how institutions of religion have made Him out to be! – *VA*

Been enjoying the *Daily Email Goodies* that you have sent. I have sent them on to other believers for their consideration and hope they will subscribe. – *PA*

I have been trying to find time to read some of the book-

*Things to Come Journal, Volume 1*  
(E.W. Bullinger)

*Foundations of Dispensational Truth*  
(E.W. Bullinger)

*The Chief Musician*  
(E.W. Bullinger)

*The Invisible Church, Dispensationally Viewed*  
(H.M. Binney)

*The Bible in Brief*  
(William C. Rebmann)

### Audio Teaching

Last but not least, we have audio teaching that should begin to be available this week. We will be alternating these audios with our written *Daily Email Goodies*. So, those on our email list would receive a written lesson one day, and an audio the next. If you do not receive our *Daily Email Goodies*, send us an email and request them!

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Until next week, Grace and Peace,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

lets that I brought back from the Sacramento meetings and I find them so very helpful and written in such a loving way. Bob and I got so much out of the fellowship we found there and are so thankful that we were able to attend. Thank you for the work you are doing and we praise God for it! We will be sending donations as soon as we can and will be getting more of your writings so that we can share them with others.

*The Gift of Suffering* was especially helpful. Of course most of this has been written in my spirit from having pored over these Scriptures for many years, but it is helpful to see the thoughts put in words with the scripture references to go with the exposition. I will be trying to commit the thoughts to memory that I can share as part of that gift of consolation that I have found already there, but could be exercised with more finesse and practice! Thank you and thank God!

Our prayers are sent for your prospering in spiritual and physical blessings in your work. – *Email*

■