

## 7 PART STUDY ON “SPIRITUAL WARFARE”

**SESSION 2:** The enemy’s objectives – Israel and the Church.

### Introduction:

As we learnt last week, our enemy the devil has clear objectives in his warfare, which he has waged upon this planet. As we read last time, the objectives of the enemy in the beginning were evident in the pride of his heart “[I will become like the most high.](#)”

We see this exact same temptation used again against Eve “[If you eat of the fruit you will be like God.](#)” And although some may say it is a stretch, I see the same temptation throughout all the generations of humanity. In the Bible we see such examples of men following that same desire of the enemy e.g. Nimrod, which literally means “we rebel”, Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, many kings of Israel and all the way to the pharisees and religious leaders in Jesus’ and the apostles’ times.

And not much has changed nowadays; there is a continuation of that same precedent throughout humanity...WE WANT TO BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH. However, humanity, like the devil, wish not only to be like him but instead to take his place. Humanity, as the bible described, is truly following the spirit of the world.

[Ephesians 2:2](#)

“[In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.](#)”

However, the story does not finish there. Satan has clear objectives - since his failure to obtain the throne at the beginning, he has set out on a mission to both disrupt the work of God and create for himself a throne in which he can once again chase his prideful, sinful dream of “[being like the most high.](#)” In our second study we will take a look at some of these objectives concerning Israel, the church of God and the world.

## ISRAEL: THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

This is in itself such a dense subject that it seems like an overwhelming one to consider. The enemy's activity in wanting to destroy this nation has been so clearly evident throughout history: biblical and secular. I feel as if we need several sessions just on this one topic. So please forgive me if I only manage to get to a certain depth when wading through this amazing and yet painful story of the Devil vs Israel.

Where did it start??

GENESIS

Genesis 3:15

"I will put enmity between you and the women, and between your offspring and her offspring: he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel."

In session one we talked about going back to the beginning. Well with Satan's desire to destroy Israel we will do exactly that; the attempts to destroy them by the enemy have happened over not hundreds but instead thousands of years and are still ongoing today and will continue right up to the end of the world itself.

### **"I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMEN, AND BETWEEN YOUR OFFSPRING AND HER OFFSPRING":**

Many have concluded that God is referring here to Eve or to womanhood or about Mary the mother of Christ, as through Mary Jesus was born and so through a woman the son of God entered into the world. This very well could be the case.

However, there is also another possibility due to some evidence within the scripture – God refers to HER OFFSPRING and then also THE DEVIL'S OFFSPRING. We see in the New Testament that Jesus refers to the Pharisees as "CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL" and 1<sup>st</sup> John further supports this in laying out evidence of whether we are "children of God or children of the devil" and so it doesn't quite fit to simply say ALL of humankind fits in the bracket of being the offspring of the women.

In Revelation chapter 12 Israel is referred to as a “woman”, see below:

Revelation 12:1

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a **woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars.”

It is widely agreed upon that this woman in Revelation 12 is indeed referring to Israel, the crown of twelve stars referring to the 12 tribes of Israel plus the context of the chapter helping build the understanding of Israel being the woman. Israel is also referred to as a woman in the Bible in the following books: Ezekiel 16 / Jeremiah 8.

And so, it is a possibility that, in fact as early as Genesis 3:15, the Lord is alluding to the nation of Israel. I believe the devil would have understood the specific threat from the Lord and that this indeed was referring to a far more specific person or group than just a general enmity between Satan and humankind.

This of course can be debated and is only a conjecture; however, if agreed upon I see no contradiction with the scriptures, instead it fits well with the pattern of events from then on. And so, if we are correct in assuming this “women” in Genesis 3 is actually not referring to Eve but to the nation of Israel, although not yet known at this point in Genesis by the devil, then we can assume the devil had his eyes out for when this “women” would appear.

## “He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.”

We now, with the full counsel of God, understand the HE is referring to our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, the risen son of God who came to destroy the works of the devil ([1<sup>st</sup> John 3:8](#)).

Notice God does not say “they”; it is not a plural description but singular but before he refers to offspring on both sides. Now God addresses both individuals, one individual being our saviour and Lord Jesus Christ and the other individual being Satan. Attempting to link this to previous exposition of verses I would suggest the lineage of Christ is at play here, the women as Israel and the saviour coming through the lineage of King David and evidently born out of the nation Israel through the tribe of Judah.

And so, all of this to say, the enemy knew early on that at some point, an individual would be born of a “woman” who would challenge him. From that point on, we see a devil keen to keep that exact promise from coming to pass.

## REASONS FOR THE ENEMY TO TARGET ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Below are some bullet point reasons as to why the enemy has such a hatred and agenda against the chosen people of God.

- The promised “man” who will bruise his head will come from this nation referred to as the “women” in Genesis.
- As he understands more and more of God’s plan through prophecies and words given to men of God, it becomes evident that the saviour will come through Israel and in turn through the tribe of Judah. I personally believe this is a big part of the reason as to why Satan, through king Rehoboam, split Israel in two, with Judah on one side and Israel on the other. To try and destroy specifically the tribe of Judah in order that the messiah may not be born. ([1 Kings 12](#)).
- A constant need to subvert and try and compromise Israel’s place in God’s heart and mind – if Satan is able to lead Israel away from God, he is able to prolong or even stop the ultimate plan of salvation from taking place.
- Hardening the hearts of Israel over a long period of time of captivity and subjection under other nations in order for them to reject this messiah.

## THE MANY ATTEMPTS OF THE ENEMY IN HIS OBJECTIVE AGAINST ISRAEL.

Below are just some examples of how, in biblical times, we see the work of the enemy against the nation of Israel. There are certainly many more examples, I am sure.

### 1) Abraham conceiving by Sarah’s concubine giving birth to Ishmael – [Genesis 16](#)

*Desiring to pollute the promise of Isaac and from him the promised nation of people descended from Abraham. We see here the devil using this situation to create a “false” promised child. To this day Ishmael is seen by the Islamic / Muslim beliefs as the “promised son” and not Isaac. A denying of the entire Jewish ancestry and right as God’s chosen people can be created through believing Ishmael as the promised son.*

## 2) All first born male children ordered to be killed in Egypt – Exodus 1: 15-21

*We see in Exodus a pharaoh who didn't know Joseph, rise into power, and look upon the Jews with fear and disdain for their number and power and so then enslave them. However, we have to look beyond the "physical curtain" and understand there is an evil power at work behind the man. Now remember back to the passage of Genesis we looked through earlier; the devil knows the person who will bruise his head is a 'HE'. It is not a coincidence that the pharaoh ordered for all the "first born MALES" to be killed only. The devil wants to wipe away any possibility of Israel being able to give birth to this man. If not for the brave and courageous midwives, used by God, he would have succeeded.*

## 3) Aaron and the golden calf / Israel in idolatry – Exodus 32

*It should not be overlooked that many times Israel have fallen in the sin, tempted by Satan, into idolatry against God. Satan knows, similar to us in the church, that if he can cause us to sin against God, he creates a void between us and Him, a separation almost therefore hindering Israel in their walk with the Lord. In the case of the golden calf God says to Moses he is going to wipe the nation from the face of the earth and start again with Moses. If it wasn't for the desperate pleading from Moses for God to remember his promises, the nation would have ceased to exist.*

## 4) Saul hunting King David – 1 Samuel 16

*Why is it that Saul seemed to have such a drive to continually hunt and kill David? What is it about David that infuriated the devil so much that David would become a target for such attack? We know through Prophecy that it would be from the line of David that the messiah would come as mentioned in various places in scripture. This leads to an obvious plan to destroy David and therefore destroy the lineage. We also see a common theme from the enemy of attacking those closest to God or those God uses to lead his people, Israel.*

## 5) The story of Esther – Esther 3

*Although the book has no mention of either God or the devil, we do see the spiritual attempt manifested into the physical as Haman attempts an entire genocide of the Israelite people. Now we can read the story purely from the physical aspect, but once again, looking behind the spiritual curtain, we can identify there is a common theme of trying to annihilate the people of Israel. If not for God using Esther and Mordecai, the Israelite nation would have been wiped out.*

#### 6) The evil kings of Israel – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings.

*Many kings of Israel reflected the evil and sinful ways of the devil creating divisions within the nation itself, creating distance from God, defiling their lands with idols, desecrating their holy places and causing a stumbling and falling away from the God who loves them. We see Satan's hand in not only trying to destroy them from the outside but also a more subtle and yet effective method of trying to destroy them from the inside. A truly terrible action which resulted in truly terrible consequences (captivity by Babylonians / Persians / Greeks and Romans / even civil war within Israel).*

#### 7) The killing of all the first-born males in Israel by King Herod – Mathew 2:16

*Here we see a repeat of what happened in Egypt all those years ago. The devil now knows for certain the "King of the Jews" has been born and, through King Herod's desire to keep his power and wealth, orders for all first-born males in the region to be killed. Now the desire here was to thwart the plan of Christ; however, it is still an attack against the people of Israel in an attempt to destroy their only hope in redemption.*

There are countless other examples, some bold and some subtle, of the devil's attacks against Israel as a nation, both internally and externally.

## WHAT ABOUT IN OUR PRESENT TIME? IS ISRAEL STILL ON THE DEVIL'S HITLIST?

The short answer: Yes!

Many would think that the new target is the church and that the threat of Israel is over, the enemy lost, he never managed to thwart God's promise in the garden of Eden. Jesus was the "man" whom God referred to and he did indeed bruise the head of Satan and defeated him at the cross. And so, some may say, well Israel's part to play is over, now the church is the main target.

NO!

While the church is most definitely a target for Satan, Israel is still very much a part of the picture. This is where our study of "eschatology" comes into play (study of end times). Israel still has an incredibly important part to play in the final part of God's plan and is still promised a future salvation by God even if it is just a "remnant" of them.

So why does the Devil still want to destroy Israel???

**1) Jesus will sit on the throne of Israel and return as their Lord and Saviour.**

Isaiah 9.7

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this

Now before this the tribulation takes place and all the nations rage and war against Israel. However, Jesus does return to the chosen people of God, and they accept him as their Lord and saviour. Their hearts are turned to him. From that moment on Jesus reigns over all the world in what is known as the 1000-year reign. Now why is this a problem for Satan? Well, when the true Lord sits on his throne in Israel, Satan is thrown into a pit to be kept for 1000 years.

Revelation 20: 1-3

**20** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had in his hand a key to the hole without a bottom. He also had a strong chain. <sup>2</sup>He took hold of the dragon, that old snake, who is the Devil, or Satan, and chained him for 1,000 years. <sup>3</sup>The angel threw the devil into the hole without a bottom. He shut it and locked him in it. He could not fool the nations anymore until the 1,000 years were completed. After this he must be free for a while.

And so, if Satan is able to destroy Israel now, he is then able to stop the 1000 years reign of Christ and in doing so, rescue himself from a 1000 year prison sentence.

**2) Christ defeats Satan and throws him into hell in the war of Armageddon.**

Revelation 20: 7-10

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven<sup>[b]</sup> and consumed them, <sup>10</sup>and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Remember Satan now, like us, has this information. Now while he may have deceived himself into thinking he is able to win, he still now understands beforehand the plan of God, something which had been kept from him for most of bible history. And so, his target in order to prevent his own end and in his mind “win the war”, is to destroy the nation in which God says all this must take place.

If Satan is able to destroy Israel he destroys the throne of Christ, the only nation who stands against him, the nation which faces Gog & Magog. If he is able to destroy Israel before this time, he is able to basically ‘pull the rug’ out from under God’s plan. As God’s plan for salvation STARTED with Israel and now Gods plan for the redemption of the world and heaven ENDS with Israel being at the centre piece with Jesus Christ amongst them as their Lord and saviour.

Even when the antichrist takes his place at the temple mount, 3 ½ years into his reign he tries himself to destroy Israel to ensure Satan’s victory, a victory which is never going to happen.

## MODERN DAY EXAMPLES OF ISRAEL UNDER ATTACK FROM SATAN

**1) Jerusalem destroyed:** *This happened in 70 AD first prophesied by Jesus Christ in the Gospels. This horrific time for Israel saw the Romans capture Jerusalem and destroy the temple in response to the Jewish people trying to take back their country which they nearly accomplished. The war was 4 years long and finished in defeat for Israel when Nero ordered the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. According to Josephus (Historian at that time) 1.1 million Jews died during the siege.*

**2) The Holocaust** *(The word Holocaust comes from an ancient Greek word meaning “burnt offering”). This burnt offering, however, was not like one given unto our God in the Old Testament, instead it seems it was a “burnt offering to Satan” with the Jewish people being the sacrifice. 6 million Jews were reported to have been destroyed during this awful time. Once again it is easy to only see the physical enemies but behind the spiritual curtain we see a far more evil agenda with a far more evil enemy than any man – the devil and his goal of the complete annihilation of God’s chosen people.*

**3) The 6-day war:** *Despite the devil’s attempts to destroy them during the terrible time of the Nazis, our God often has a purpose over and above the purposes of the enemy and from this terrible time for the Jews came a miracle. The nation of Israel in 1948 was reinstated and Jews from across the world travelled back to their promised land, fulfilling scriptures of the bible in*

*doing so. But in 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan declared war on Israel over disputes over the promised land. In one of the most spectacular modern-day testaments to God's sovereignty and protection over them, Israel not only defeated all 3 nations in only 6 days but also gained a large part of the promised land back into their nation, including the Gaza strip. The devil had once again been thwarted.*

**4) Palestine and Israel:** *To this day Israel, despite now being a free nation once again, prophesied about in Ezekiel and Jeremiah and all in time for the Lord's return, are however still under a partial occupation. The majority of the promised land being disputed over and even their most holy of places, the temple mount, being under the possession of Palestinians with the nation even building one of their biggest mosques directly on the land believed to have had the temple on it. To this day it still is the centre of spiritual warfare and highly contested by Satan.*

Let us continue to pray for this holy nation of God, for the first time Jesus came it was through Israel. The second time he comes it will be to Israel. One thing is for certain and cannot be disputed by any true bible believer – God is not done with Israel. And as long as God has his hand over them, we can be sure they are a target of Satan.

## **SATAN'S WAR ON THE CHURCH OF GOD**

To understand what it is about the church that is such a threat to the enemy we must first understand the purpose of the church. To understand the purpose of the church is to unlock the reason for the devil's constant attack and sabotage toward the church.

What is the purpose of the church?

**1) To be a light to the world and declare the kingdom of God.**

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

One of our missions as the church of Christ is to evangelise and reach others for the Lord; we are called, as the apostle Paul was, to be fellow workers alongside God for the sake of his kingdom. However, where we are wanting to reach souls for Christ, our adversary "prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

And so, it is inevitable for him to want to not only hinder the work of the Gospel in the world but also to confront those who share it with oppression and persecution.

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL TO THE DEVIL?

The Gospel to us is victory, redemption, love, life. The Gospel is God loving us so much he sent his only son Jesus Christ, God himself, to die on the cross for our sins and our trespasses and then raised him from the dead bringing us up from the grave with him, washed clean of our sins. This is salvation unto men, humanity's only hope and the core of our faith. *"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

However, despite how glorious it is for the believer and even though the news is so good for the unbeliever, what in turn does it mean for the devil?

**DEFEAT!** It is nothing less than defeat. It is defeat in several different ways.

> **The gospel saves the person from "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).** When a person believes in the gospel and Jesus Christ becomes their Lord and saviour, they are in turn breaking all allegiance and loyalty, even when unknown, to the devil. He is no longer the "god" of their life, and they are no longer *"following the course of this world, following the prince of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience."* (Ephesians 2:2).

This then takes us back to the devil's first ambition that led him to sin when he wanted to be *"like the most high"* (Ezekiel 28). The Gospel shows him for what he is and exposes his dark influences in this world and in our lives prior to Christ. We are no longer ignorant of his devices, instead we are awoken to the spiritual world and the working of it.

> **The gospel of Jesus Christ is the weapon the enemy fears most.** In turn the Gospel sets us free *"you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:32). However, there is another aspect. The battle raging in the spiritual is very similar to the battles we wage in the physical. It is all about KINGDOMS. In the physical there are physical borders and nations and places. This reflects the spiritual. In the same way the spiritual warfare being waged every day is about gaining land for either the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness. *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent take it by force."* (Mathew 11:12). The word violent here is translated as "zeal / fervour". It describes the people who take it forward and gain ground for the kingdom.

The gospel then in turn is a weapon. Not to be used against human beings but instead against the enemy. Although that is not the direct reason we share it (we share it to see the captives set free) nonetheless, it serves as an almighty weapon in seeing Satan stripped of his power over people's lives *"We know we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19).

An incredible example of this is Paul in Ephesus ([Acts 18](#)). Paul arrives to a land saturated with witchcraft, sorcery, idolatry, dark magic and all sorts of demonic influence. Paul does not go there with the intention of tackling those things but instead, first and foremost, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. In doing so, the effect on people's lives being changed by the gospel, is that strongholds are broken, bonds loosened, chains smashed and the city gathers all of their magic, demonic books and burns them. It even comes to quite a substantial amount of money when they work out the goods which were burnt and destroyed. You see, the true Gospel has in itself, self-contained power, we can neither add nor take away from it. And so, Jesus Christ saves the person and in doing so "[destroys the work of the devil](#)" ([1<sup>st</sup> John 3:8](#)).

**2) To be sanctified by God through Christ Jesus and by the Holy spirit, loving one another and growing as a household of God in holiness and understanding and all things that pertain to Godly living.**

[Ephesians 2:19-22](#)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The second purpose of the church is to be 'sanctified'; we are to be made into the image of Jesus Christ on an individual basis but also as a community of believers, reflecting the very character of God. We are, in a way, a lighthouse to the world, shining a light on the darkness and offering sanctuary to those lost in the storm "[For at one time you were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.](#)" ([Ephesians 1:8](#)).

Now, the brighter the light, the greater the darkness is exposed. And so, one of the objectives of the devil is to try and "dim" the light. Now as we see the scripture clearly says, the darkness cannot overcome the true light but that doesn't mean he doesn't try. Remember, Satan is deceived into believing he can win. And so, although the light of Christ cannot be overcome, it is possible for churches to be hindered in their own walk with the Lord and therefore in turn affect their effectiveness for the kingdom. We see this in Revelation when the Lord is addressing the church of Sardis, "[I know your works, you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.](#)" ([Revelation 3:1](#)) and again when Jesus addresses the church of Laodicea "[I know your works, you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you be either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold I will spit you out of my mouth.](#)" ([Revelation 3:15-16](#)).

And so, we can clearly see that while the enemy can never truly overcome the light of Christ, he is however able to hinder and affect the church in a way which makes the bride of Christ less effective or even in some extreme cases, such as with Laodicea, completely ineffective.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO THE DEVIL?

The church is the constant reminder of defeat for Satan.

The church represents Christ on earth. The church represents victory over sin and death through Christ. The church is the curse of sin undone and the power of the enemy thwarted.

I truly believe there is nothing that Satan despises more than the church of God in this world, the church is the last stand, the final barrier. If the “[whole world lies in the power of the evil one](#)” (1<sup>st</sup> John 5:19) and the church is no longer of the world then we are indeed an eyesore to the enemy. In a way we are the rebellion against sin and evil in this world, a guerrilla army behind enemy lines preaching the gospel and leading people to freedom in Christ.

And so it is no surprise that Satan has done his utmost to remove, destroy, weaken and torment countless churches throughout the generations of the church. And it is a shame to say but, in many cases, it seems he has succeeded. While he has been served many defeats in souls saved, more and more churches are becoming ineffective, weak, and powerless in the “[good fight of faith.](#)” (1 Timothy 6:12).

## HOW DOES SATAN COMBAT THE CHURCH?

Now once again, the list below may be missing some different demonic devices; however, from what I can see in scripture, the list below consists of the main weapons of the devil’s warfare against the church.

### 1. External persecution.

Revelation 2: 9-10 (To the Church in Smyrna)

“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.”

External persecution can take many forms. It could be angry letters, unwelcome visitors who disrupt the services and worship, protests from different groups or people outside of the church, criminal and civil lawsuits taken up against the Church, members arrested for beliefs.

It can also be individual, such as a person being bullied, beaten, or even killed for testifying about Jesus Christ. Whether as an individual or as an assembly, this type of persecution is a full-frontal assault on the Church of God.

### What is the aim of this type of persecution?

To intimidate and pressure churches and Christians to cower under the weight and pressure of an ongoing onslaught from people being used by Satan to try and force the truth to retreat. Satan uses this method to discourage members, bring about fear in future evangelistic projects and create an environment where Faith is forgotten, and the Church sinks back into a place of either conformity or silence keeping the Gospel to themselves.

### How effective is this type of persecution?

There are two types of responses to this type of persecution. One of which I have described above, the church basically, for lack of a better word: RETREATS. The fight is too fierce, the faith dwindles, the leaders buckle, the congregation follow suit and the church is either conformed into teaching a 'watered down' version of the bible or, in most cases, only preach and teach on the subjects which cause the least amount of disruption, refusing to teach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Satan has won in that church; they are no longer effective nor advancing the kingdom of God. They have fled the battle to safer ground. For this Church, repentance is needed and a bold turning back to the battle.

HOWEVER, this is not always the case. Despite the aim of the enemy being obvious in this type of persecution, it can backfire on Satan in the most amazing of ways. It has long been the pattern of our great Faith in Christ that full frontal persecution has been the CAUSE of church growth, church planting and missionaries sent across the globe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. A biblical example of this is the first ever Church in Jerusalem. It was a thriving Church, the closest thing to a "mega church" we see in the Bible, with thousands of members, all unified, giving and supporting one another and the church was growing each day. The Devil orchestrated the killing of the great witness and Martyr Stephen (a bit of a bible hero of mine). What was the response? Well, at first it seems they all did the same as what was described earlier, they scatter, but from that scattering the most incredible event happened. Not only did the Church in Jerusalem remain strong and stood their ground but the scattering of saints led to Churches across the world being planted. The Gospel went out, souls were saved and regardless of the enemy's intentions, his plan had backfired, the kingdom of God didn't lose any ground...instead it gained ground across the entire globe. (See Acts chapters 7 & 8).

We must remember, what Satan plans for our harm, God is able to turn to our good but more importantly the victory for the kingdom of God "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20).

## 2) Internal deception.

Revelation 2: 14-16 (To the Church in Pergamum)

“But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practise sexual immorality. So also, you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

A dangerous and sometimes more subtle attack than that of external persecution. This attack compromises the integrity of the church from within the gathering. We are taught in scripture that “all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproofing, for correction and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

### What is the aim of this type of attack?

If the enemy is able to compromise, through false teaching, the integrity and biblical foundation of the preaching, then it stands to believe that there is now the reverse of each of the above descriptions happening in that church. For example: it is no longer profitable, no longer good for reproofing or correction, it does not train righteousness and then the man of God is not complete and is equipped for NO good works. It is an attack on the very core centre of Christian living – the word of God.

Internal deception can be as subtle as a member of the congregation spreading heresies and twisted out of context biblical doctrines subtly throughout the congregation OR it can be as obvious as a preacher simply teaching these same heresies from the pulpit, leading astray all those who stay to listen.

### How effective is this type of attack?

Unfortunately, it is an extremely effective way of hindering the work of a Church, as we can see from the Church in Pergamum. The teaching of Balaam symbolises a time when Balaam, a false prophet in the Old Testament, laid a stumbling block before Israel by encouraging them to intermarry with other nations. Something our Lord God had strictly warned against, and it led the people to all sorts of detestable sins such as idolatry toward the other nations’ false Gods (Numbers 22-24).

Likewise, the Nicolaitans were into all sorts of sexual perversion in their religious ceremonies and practises. And so, whether it starts subtly or was simply bought in with fierceness, this teaching completely undermines the integrity of scripture and furthermore, brings about sinful practises within the church of God.

### 3) Church division.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1: 10-17

<sup>10</sup>I appeal to you, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." <sup>13</sup>Is Christ divided?

"Is Christ divided?" This truly is the sentiment which holds the most meaning when discussing church division. To put it very simply, there is NO place for it in the church of God. It does not reflect God, please God, build the kingdom or help the saints in any way. It is from the root, evil in its nature, intentions and results, when fully grown in a church. How are we able to be "ambassadors of Christ" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:20) in whom there is no division when we as a church are divided? The answer: we can't – we become a walking, talking contradiction to the love and unity of God.

What is the aim of this type of attack?

Our Lord Jesus Christ said it perfectly "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand and if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."

(Mathew 3:24-6). Now in context this verse is referring to a response to the Pharisees accusing him of being of the devil after having cast out an evil spirit and in context Jesus is saying if Satan's kingdom is divided how can it stand, how could Satan cast out demons? However, we are indeed grafted into the "Kingdom of God" (Mathew 6:33) and we are also called the "household of God" (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17). So, while Jesus was referring here to Satan's kingdom, we can draw from the lesson comparisons to any kingdom or any household...if divided it is weakened and cannot stand.

What can it not stand against? Attack! Its ability to defend itself is seriously hindered and its ability to move as a unit is compromised. We are not effective in battle nor are we at defending ourselves and each other in that battle. The devil has pretty much rendered us powerless and through division can bring all sorts of other attacks which are explained in this document. Remember the last thing our enemy wants is for us to be professing Christ AND living out the character of love of Christ in our lives. However, if we are to profess Christ while arguing, hating one another, creating cliques, being divided on issues, fighting over opinions and all round simply just not united, what testimony is that to the world? What "Christlikeness" are they seeing?

How effective is this type of attack?

The effectiveness of this attack is in the subtle and not so subtle nature of it. The devil turns out attention away from the true battle of salvation unto man, turns us away from his front lines where people are lost in sins and dead in their trespasses. He instead turns us on each

other. This has a two-fold consequence to it. Not only are we dishonouring the very word of God and our Lord's commands in doing so, but we are also actually sinning against God. In addition, and equal to the first consequence in seriousness, we are no longer evangelising. We are so busy focusing on ourselves and each other that we are forgetting the point of it all, to reach the lost, and we in turn have become internally focused and not externally focused. We are no longer a light in the darkness. We are not darkness either; we are some strange blob in the middle fighting amongst ourselves. We are not called to be united in opinions, politics, likes / dislikes. We are instead called to "agree in the Lord" (Philippians 4: 2-3).

That is only possible when our love for each other through Christ overrides all other aspects of life. As long as we agree in Christ, agree in his Gospel and the basic foundations of our faith, all other things should become secondary. As Paul mentions at the end of having talked about all the different gifts of God, his last line in chapter 12 is so revealing, he says "Still let me show you a better way..." (1 Corinthians 12: 31). What is that better way? LOVE. Only love found in Christ is the conqueror of division.

#### 4) A lukewarm church.

Revelation 3: 1-2 (To the Church of Sardis)

"I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God."

Revelation 3: 15-17 (To the Church in Laodicea)

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked."

I am actually of the opinion that attack can cause some of the worst damage to the advance of the kingdom of God and has a terrible impact on the church. It is often underplayed or spoken about as something which isn't that bad, just requires a little bit more bible reading and prayer. THIS IS NOT TRUE. This is a serious heart issue of both the individual and church and it can even be said that the understanding of the kingdom of God and our role within it is severely misunderstood and mistaught if this is the condition the church finds itself in. As we can see from above, from all of the letters to the different churches, it is in the subject of being lukewarm where the Lord Jesus Christ uses the firmest rebuke and truly shows his disdain for this condition.

### What is the aim of this type of attack?

Satan has no worry or concern regarding a Christian soldier who is lukewarm. What concern is there for him? In the life of a lukewarm Christian or a lukewarm Church what danger is there of evangelism? Prayer? Power? Biblical teaching? Gospel preaching? Is it not all of these which the devil fears? Yes.

And so, in the lukewarm church, they haven't retreated from the battle, they aren't engaging in the battle, they are spectators. Watching from the stands offering their personal judgments and useless opinions on worldly topics that have no standing in the kingdom nor help or aid those involved in seeing the kingdom gain ground. They have been tricked into a spiritual coma, not dead, not alive, just dormant. And so the aim of this attack is simple: take away the effectiveness of kingdom preaching and building AND lead a people to anger and displease our God. These churches don't suffer from many of the other types of attack for one main reason, why does the devil need to bother? He doesn't. They are beaten already in their lukewarmness.

It may seem that I am being overly harsh in these statement but I would encourage you to read the above scriptures. How does the Lord address it? **"You have the reputation of being alive but you are dead"** OR **"I will spit you out of my mouth"** AND **"you are wretched, pitiable, poor and naked."** Evidently the Lord doesn't seem to think this is a "minor" deal but rather one which is very serious.

I do also want to add, a church may **"seem to be alive"** but can still be lukewarm. These are churches who are fixed upon ACTIVISM. Lots and lots of activities; things going on, toddler groups, coffee mornings, days out, theatre shows at Christmas, Easter egg hunts, even worship evenings, sermons on a weekly basis and maybe even multiple services. The churches can even be quite big, hundreds if not thousands of people. HOW? You might ask how, if lukewarm? Well, it's quite simple, that is an EASY church to attend - it becomes a social event, a community centre rather than a church, rather than a people with a 'kingdom of God' mentality. It just becomes a watered-down version of the bible with a faint idea of "love" and "loving each other" with a love that requires no sacrifice or self-denial.

The Bible says clearly **"the path to hell is wide and EASY and many will go down it, the path to heaven is HARD and narrow and few will find it."** (Mathew 7:13). A lukewarm church reverses this statement and makes it easy to go to heaven and hard to go to hell through a lukewarm mentality, teaching and kingdom perspective.

### How effective is this type of attack?

VERY! Truly, it is solely responsible for churches across our nation being nothing more than social events with a bible twist. It has found its way into more churches and individual Christian lives that I actually believe can be accounted for. Satan has attacked the church with persecution in all different ways, and many ways strengthen the church in the end. I believe our enemy has realised the error of his previous attacks in the churches that have grown

stronger because of them. However, in this tactic there is no plus side. No one grows stronger, no one gains anything. They just simply exist in a lukewarm state UNLESS God's spirit shakes and rattles the church to its core and brings it to repentance OR our Lord Jesus decides to "spit it out of his mouth."

There is hope. Hope in the fact that with our God all things are possible, and the Lord does ask churches like this and individuals to REPENT. Later, in the very letter to Laodicea, Jesus says this after having addressed them so sharply: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." Revelation 3:19.

## OUR DEFENCE

You may be thinking "ok Aaron but how do I defend from these things?"

Well, to put it simply, this is the first defence.

Knowing is half of the battle; this is the type of knowledge that builds our all-round spiritual ability to defend ourselves. The more we know the more prepared we are, the more prepared we are, the less likely we are caught off guard. We will, of course, get into more practical methods of defence later but for now, before we can engage the enemies of our faith, we must first learn what it is we are fighting against. Lots of people want to fight in spiritual warfare without having done any homework on what it actually is.

These are the people who fight like "creatures of instinct" (2 Peter 2:12) rather than based in wisdom and knowledge and biblical understanding. God has given us a spiritual warfare manual which includes all details we need. Before we can take part in spiritual battles, we must first be spiritually trained.

Always remember the verse this whole study is based on and keep it in your mind when considering all these things:

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:11**

**So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.**