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GODS

OF THE FINAL KINGDOM

*Unveiling the Secrets
of the Raging Celestial War
that Ultimately Results
in the Restitution of All Things
Brought to Life in the Theater
of Your Mind and Soul*

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Gods of the Final Kingdom: Unveiling the Secrets of the Raging Celestial War that Ultimately Results in the Restitution of All Things Brought to Life in the Theater of Your Mind and Soul

By Carl Gallups

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FOR PARKER AND SHELBY

Pam and I pray that your lives, marriage, and ministry will be blessed of the Lord in every imaginable way. Seeing the two of you joined together as husband and wife is an unspeakable joy to our souls.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank the amazing ministry, editorial, marketing, shipping, and publishing team at Defender Publishing. Because of you, writing has once again become a joy for me. May the Lord bless you for that gift.

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As always, I am deeply indebted to my precious wife, best friend, and God-ordained chief ministry partner. Without Pam in my life, I could do nothing truly worthwhile and successful. Obviously, the Lord knew that from the beginning—to him goes the final and ultimate glory.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is the third in the “Gods” trilogy. The first two are *Gods and Thrones* and *Gods of Ground Zero*. Each of these books was written so as to not require reading in a specific order. However, if one eventually reads all three, I am convinced that an entirely new world of biblical illumination will be opened to the student of God’s Word.

Cited within these books are several scholarly resources, including original language studies, biblical language dictionaries, biblical encyclopedias, biblical historical works, and the commentaries of respected modern scholars. However, readers will also find a healthy dose of commentary that is offered by the classical scholars—those from the 1700s–early 1900s.

I use these classical resources to accomplish a very distinct purpose. I want readers to see for themselves that so many of the gems of biblical truth they’re getting ready to discover have been noted for centuries by reputable and still often-quoted biblical experts. I want readers to ask, “If so many others have seen these vital truths for so long, why is it that we rarely, if ever, hear them taught in our modern pulpits, classrooms, Bible colleges, and seminaries?”

I’ve long been concerned that much of the heart of the Bible’s intended communication has been purposely obfuscated down through the ages. And, I am convinced that a great deal of that message-clouding was originally orchestrated at the deepest realms of spiritual darkness. After you’ve read this book, I believe you’ll understand exactly why this is so.

Now...with the turn of the next page, we'll pull back the veil. The contextual revelations of what you will soon discover may surprise you. But, you'll be much richer for having made these discoveries. I promise.

I'm honored that you have chosen to take this journey with me.

Let's get started!

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There is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the evil one,
and man cannot find or make a third domain; if he is not in the
one he is in the other.

—HENRY DONALD MAURICE SPENCE-JONES¹



PART ONE

The Parting

*For in [Jesus Christ] all things were created:
things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;
all things have been created through him and for him.*

—COLOSSIANS 1:16



ENTERTAINING ANGELS

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers,
for by so doing some people have shown hospitality
to angels without knowing it.*

—HEBREWS 13:2

I'm going to let you in on a very personal matter.

Over two decades ago—about five years after I had begun my pastoral responsibilities in what was then a small church in the rural Florida panhandle—I had an angelic encounter. It's a true story, but one that I've never before shared outside my church family.

As of this writing, I've not had another “visitation” like it. I didn't ask the Lord to do such a thing for me in the first place, nor will I ask Him to do so in the future. If I understand Scripture correctly, there can be great spiritual vulnerability involved in actively seeking such “appearances” from the unseen realm.²

But I am convinced that this particular angelic appearance was genuine. And it came at just the right time in my life. After that encounter, it took me a couple of days to understand the significance of what had actually transpired. When the full force of the moment's reality hit me, it dramatically altered my life and ministry perspective. To this day I still draw tremendous strength from the experience.

This is how the story unfolded...

During the earliest years of the 1990s, our church family had been forced—through no fault of our own—to endure an extremely tough time. The disclosure of the situation eventually exploded throughout the local community. Every imaginable twist and version of the story began to spring forth, like a blooming field of daisies on a spring morning.

Because of everything that had transpired, I faced several important decisions that ultimately resulted in the biblical removal of a person from our church membership. If that had been the only matter we had to deal with, the ordeal would have been much simpler. But, as it turned out, the person's removal was just the tip of the iceberg. I will not unfold all the sordid details of the matter here, but suffice it to say that it eventually escalated into a gut-wrenching experience, enveloping the lives of many innocent people along the way as well.

As the specifics of the saga became clearer to me, I realized that the future of my fledgling ministry hung in the balance. But I was determined to do the right thing—*the biblical thing*—regardless. I would not “sweep under the carpet” anything about this situation, as I literally had been ordered to do by a key church leader that was behind the fueling of the disruption. When the issue was finally brought before the membership, one man was voted out of the church and another one had already left, in shocking disgrace, of his own accord. However, both had been assured by our church leadership that upon the offer of their genuine repentance, they would be welcomed back into the church with open arms. Neither came back, and neither tried to make amends.

Within days of that vote, the extended families of the two men had departed our fellowship as well. I had hoped it wouldn't come to that, but our leadership fully expected it would. Our church was not very large. The exit of so many people was devastating. But we pressed on. We had followed a godly course—seeking a redemptive, biblical solution.

The community in which our church was located was still very small at the time of the ordeal. In those days, we were living in one of those

areas where everyone knew everyone else's business—or at least they wanted to believe they did. So they told their stories accordingly, as if they knew all the intimate details firsthand. Which they didn't. Not even close.

Consequently, the broadcast of “those problems out at *that* church,” primarily fueled by the ones who had left in anger, soon flooded the local church society's gossip circles. From there, the “news” spilled over into the rumor mills of several prominent business establishments and even reverberated through the halls of the local courthouse. As the story continued to take on its own grotesque life, the ludicrous chatter only grew worse.

The wave of public defamation began to build like a great tsunami, and it was headed straight for us. It seemed our community had never before seen a local congregation actually remove someone from membership because of abject, unrepented sin.³

A stranger in town who might have overheard the random telling of the gossip-riddled story would have thought I had committed some sort of heinous crime by handling the ordeal in a biblically prescribed manner. As a matter of fact, in a vain attempt to shift the focus off of himself, one of the men involved, who subsequently left the church, did in fact accuse me of that very thing. I kid you not.

The entire affair quickly took on a surreal quality. I felt like I needed to look down at a wide-eyed, shaggy little black dog sitting at my feet, gently pat it on the head, and whisper, “I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.”

It was while we were still wading through the immediate aftermath of that hellish scenario...

When it happened.



THE VISITATION

*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent
to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

—HEBREWS 1:14

Only a week or two after handling the upheaval, I was standing in front of the elevators on the first floor of the local hospital. The patient I planned to visit that morning was on the fourth floor. I had just pushed the “Up” button. I watched the lights flickering above the doors, indicating that my ride to the top would soon arrive. My mind was still reeling from the ordeal we had just been through. I found myself constantly questioning every detail of the matter. Had I handled everything exactly as I should have? Satan relentlessly tormented me through my overly critical thought process.

Finally, the door clunked open and I entered. Only one other person was on board—an elderly gentleman with a pleasant countenance. I nodded at him and smiled, expecting him to exit, because I assumed he had just come from one of the upper floors. But he didn’t move. Instead, he simply returned the smile and asked, “What floor?”

He was dressed in a nice suit, and along with his perfectly styled, full head of wavy, gray hair and dignified presence, he had an unusually

inviting aura about him. I had never seen this man before, but I felt as though there was an instant connection between us. It was an odd and unexplainable sensation—yet he exuded a truly comforting presence. The elevator door closed, and we lurched upward.

I started to introduce myself. However, instead of me leading the way in the typical “elevator chat,” he spoke up first.

“You’re Pastor Carl Gallups, aren’t you?”

I was startled by the matter-of-factness of his opening salutation. “Yes, I am,” I replied. “Do we know each other?”

I reached out to shake his hand, wondering how he knew me. I quickly flipped through the pages of my memory. *Nope. I had never seen him before.*

He shook my hand. “No, Pastor Gallups. You wouldn’t know me. We’ve never met.” He paused for a few seconds and then added, “But I know all about you.” He smiled again, and looked straight ahead, staring at nothing.

I remember thinking: *What an odd thing to say to someone you’ve just met.* What did he mean that he knew *all about me*? How was that even possible? Don’t forget, this happened in the days when we didn’t have ubiquitous Internet services and in-depth “people search” capabilities, or social media. Before I could inquire how the man had come to know so much about me, he spoke again. It was as though he was staying one step ahead of my brainwaves.

“The truth is,” he said, “I’m a *fellow minister* with you in this community.”⁴

Ab! That was it...

Obviously, he was a pastor whom I simply had not yet come across. The community was still a small one. I thought I was at least familiar with almost all the pastors in our county. *But, maybe this pastor was brand new to the area.* I was opening my mouth to ask the gentleman what he “knew” about me when, again, as though he knew my intentions, he spoke up first.

“That horrible ordeal that you recently had to handle at your church. . .”

I smiled as I thought to myself: *Well, goodness! Everyone in the county knows about that! There’s no secret there!*

“You need to know something, Pastor Gallups,” he continued, “the Father has sent me to tell you this.”

He now had my attention, but the next words that came out of his mouth truly stunned me.

The elevator arrived at the fourth floor. When the door opened, I smacked the “Hold” button. I was mesmerized by this man. What was it that he supposedly knew? And how could he presume to be speaking for “the Father” when, before this day, we had never even crossed paths?

At that moment the “minister” on the elevator revealed a particular piece of information about the ordeal. It was a very private detail—and, the man was *exactly* specific. What was most shocking, however, was that the info he related was an element of the story that, at the time, only my wife and I were privy to.

Today, a small handful of my trusted church leaders also know about the specific piece of information I’m referring to. If you were to ask them, they would agree: There’s no way that this “stranger on the elevator” could have known that specific detail when he was speaking to me. It would have been humanly impossible.

That should have been my first clue.

I was flabbergasted. How could this completely unfamiliar person know the intimate facts about something we had so carefully kept private? Yet this stranger, claiming to be a fellow minister, stood right there before me and, in just a few short sentences, unfurled the substance of the matter right into my lap. Again, as if he instantly knew my thoughts and the fact that I was physically unable to comment at that moment, he continued.

“The Father sent me to comfort you, Pastor Gallups, to tell you that you have handled the situation correctly. He wanted me to tell you to get on with your ministry. *Don’t quit.*”

Like a baboon in a zoo cage waiting for another peanut to be tossed my way, I just stood there nodding my head. This conversation was increasingly surreal.

But he wasn't finished. "That horrible thing I told you that I knew about—it was actually an unclean spirit." He then named the spirit. The name he gave it further punctuated the fact that he knew exactly what he was talking about regarding this "unknown" detail.

Then he continued, "That spirit was sent as a ploy. It was meant to ensnare you, to destroy you. Its whole purpose was to have power over you and the church. But you walked right through the ruse. The Father is pleased."

When I look back on that day, I can think of so many questions I should have asked the man on the elevator. I certainly should have pressed for more details. After all, it was he who had invaded *my* life—and privacy—not the other way around.

I should have asked exactly where his church was and how long he had been in the community. I should have inquired as to how he came to possess such intimate and humanly unknowable information about the situation. But it was as though I had become mute. My mind was a swirl of inexpressible thoughts.

As if he was keenly aware of my dilemma, he simply smiled, stretched out his hand to shake mine, and exited the elevator. He turned towards the hall on our right and entered the big double doors of the hospital's rehab unit. I watched him until the doors flapped shut behind him.

I then turned to the left and stopped at the nurses' station to get the room number of my congregant. Armed with the information, I started down the hall, but I was still in a fog. *Who was that guy?*

The greatest shock was yet to come.



PART TWO

The Perversion

*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea,
seven are an abomination unto him:
A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands
that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked
imaginings, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
A false witness that speaketh lies,
and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

—PROVERBS 6:16–19, KJV



OUT OF THE MIST

About 4,000 BC.

His words were smooth. Hypnotizing. Musical. Irresistible.

When they first laid eyes upon him, he had materialized out of an ethereal mist.

The young couple had heard him in the Garden before they physically saw him. In fact, they thought they had even *felt* his presence. It was as if he had been there among them—even before he was.¹⁰

As his form became increasingly visible, his swaggering saunter captivated them. It was as though he *floated* rather than walked. His slightly veiled visage shimmered as he moved, bathed in an emerald-colored, translucent light. How could a creature be so breathtaking—so stunningly lovely in countenance and deportment? His bodily movements were dancelike as he approached them. Other than the *Creator* Himself, nothing they had ever seen was as majestic as this one.¹¹

They knew he had been appointed by the throne of Elohim to be the guardian of earth's newly created domain.¹² He was one of the holy cherubim. He was the *Royal Regent* of the Garden of Eden—that's what Creator had called him.¹³

Earth's first couple truly wanted to feel honored that this regal being from the divine council of Elohim¹⁴ had come to them. But, they had

also been cautioned about him. Apparently, something was beginning to go askew in paradise. From what they had gathered, it was suspected that this particular “mighty one”¹⁵ was the author of the recent cloud of uneasiness that had previously been so foreign to the usual atmosphere of Eden.

Yet, here he was. Gigantic—and utterly beautiful. Standing right before them. What were they to make of this grand entrance?

Then, he spoke.

THE ENCOUNTER

“Well, well...*here* you are!” A childlike innocence engulfed his countenance. His voice was deep, rich, and sodden with condescension.

“I was just taking a stroll,” he continued, “roaming to and fro through this magnificent domain of mine—” He paused midsentence, spreading his arms open wide as if everything they now beheld truly belonged to him. The morning mist swirled about his head as he spoke, causing the heavy droplets to sparkle like a luminous crown of diamonds.

He tilted his head to one side as though he just now noticed a great curiosity. His eyes scanned their forms from head to foot.

“*My*, the two of you certainly *are* very lovely! I don’t think I ever realized just how exceedingly exquisite you are.” His words were smooth. Hypnotizing. Musical. Irresistible. The lustful probing of his eyes continued to survey their figures.

The couple froze in their tracks. Eve blushed in the flattery of the moment. Adam leaned in and whispered in her ear.

“Eve!” he cautioned, “We were warned not to have anything to do with him. *You know this!* In fact, we were specifically instructed by Creator not to partake of the fruit this one would offer to us. We are not to even touch it.”¹⁶

“I know that,” she snapped. “But he hasn’t *offered* anything yet. Let’s

hear him out. After all, he *is* Elohim's Royal Regent. In that regard alone, he's certainly deserving of our utmost respect. He's also worthy of our fullest attention—don't you think?"

Adam eased his head away from her ear and stepped back, still trying to size up the gravity of the meeting. *Why was Eve so mesmerized?*

There was no doubt about it: she was flatly enthralled by the Mighty One. She would later protest that she had been unfairly *beguiled* by him. But for now, she refocused her gaze, resting it upon this figure of abject beauty.

"Come now," the serpent hissed. "I'm so anxious to introduce you to a multitude of amazing things. Also—and please forgive me for not mentioning this before—I have glorious knowledge at my disposal, information you have never imagined. Why, I *could* offer you..."

There it was! He was going to lay out a scheme, just as they had been warned that he might do.

With an uplifted hand, Eve interrupted him. "We are *not* to eat of the fruit you propose to us!" She seemed to have stepped up to a sober moment of consideration. She gathered her courage and continued.

"In fact, we are not to even *touch* whatever it is that you might offer. This is what Creator has commanded."

There. She said it. Now, in her nervousness, she struggled to catch her breath. Eve dropped her head as soon as she uttered the words. She was embarrassed that she had spoken so hastily. Had she done the right thing? *Why didn't Adam defend her position?* Instead, he just stood there like a lifeless lump of clay.

THE SEDUCTION

The keeper of the Garden gently knelt before them, as if Adam and Eve were his own dear children. They remained standing some distance from him, still hesitant to approach.

Satan enticed, “Come now. Come just a little closer.”

When he saw they were still reluctant to move closer to him, he continued. “Surely, Elohim did not say all of that? Why would He utter such a charge in the first place? Think about it for a moment... My dear little one, you don’t even know what I am offering.” Eve felt her face growing hot with embarrassment.

“Yes. *It certainly was* what He told us.” Her voice trembled as she defended her memory of Elohim’s prior conversation with them. She spoke much softer now. As she responded, she could not look directly at him.

Maybe...*was it possible?* Perhaps she had misunderstood Elohim as she and Adam had walked with Creator in the Garden a few evenings back? What if she was falsely accusing the Mighty One?

She shot an accusing glance at Adam, signaling her frustrated thoughts: *Why have you not yet said a word?*

“Well then, if Elohim really said *that*—” the Mighty One snapped, “then He *lied!* That’s all there is to it!”

Eve gasped. Did she truly hear those words coming from this being’s lips? Did he just call Elohim a liar?

None of this made sense. Her thoughts began to swirl with confusion. This was a fruit she had never before tasted.

“As a matter of fact,” the serpent continued, “The problem is this. He knows that in the day you follow me, you’ll become like *us*—just like the angelic council of the Most High. You’ll even be like Elohim Himself! And...it appears He is purposely keeping this delightful morsel of enjoyment from you.”

The mesmerizing cherub continued his appeal. “That certainly doesn’t seem fair—does it? Don’t you see how perfect this is, how beautiful? Behold how lovely...how *so* sweet to the *tas*te.”

Eve beheld the object of temptation. It *was* beautiful, and alluring. He had at least spoken truth in that regard.

Before she could respond to his question, he spoke again. “What

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harm could come from only partaking in just one little tiny nibble? Ponder it for a moment! You'll soon come to understand that I *am* correct in thisss matter! *You'll sssee...*”

Eve took a step closer. Adam followed.

The hook was embedded.



THE DESCENT

**The music of his presence softly
lit up the atmosphere around them.**

Eve, and Adam—the still-silent lump of clay—eased a few paces closer to the Mighty One. The trio stood just a few feet from each other.

“But...*but*,” Eve whimpered as she approached, “Elohim also said... that if we did this...we would surely invite death upon ourselves.”

“In fact,” she protested, “He made it very clear that we would be separated from Him, and from His love, forever.”

Eve wiped a tear that drained from her eye and trickled down her cheek. Here was something else she had never tasted: *sorrow*. It was bitter, and salty—and it caused an odd and dreary heaviness deep within her chest.

“I’ll let you in on a little *sssecret*,” the creature hissed. “You surely shall *not* die! I am here to straighten all of that out. *Trust me!* There’s *ssimply* been a huge misunderstanding... Besides*ss*, it’s utterly impossible for you to die! Have a little faith. I wouldn’t *lie* to you ...”

The distressed couple stepped back a few feet.

Confusion. Sorrow. Fear. From where were these emotions flowing? What was this sorcery that danced in the halls of their minds and souls?



PART THREE

The Plan

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing
out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his
counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay
them? For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

—ROMANS 11:33–36



THE IMPORTANT ONES

AD 30

Approximately 2,500 years after the Flood

During the time of the Roman Empire

Emperor: Tiberius Caesar Augustus

(known as *The Divine Son of God*)³¹

John the Baptist was at the Jordan River

Satan is now the one being hunted.

He doesn't know it yet. He only suspects it. But he'll soon figure it out.

When he finally realizes the divine safari—emanating from the throne of Elohim—is aimed squarely at the eventual toppling of his stolen kingdom, it will infuriate him. His suffocating conceit will not abide such a scheme. So, he will unleash his vicious counterattack, and it will be drenched in ravenous fury.

Satan has ruled as the *prince of the earth*³² for thousands of years. He believes it is his rightful domain. In his perverted arrogance, he is certain his ownership came to him through a perfectly valid “legal” claim.

A number of the Roman Empire's governmental officials, including the emperor himself, were unwittingly acting as Satan's pawns. So were most among the ranks of the Jewish religious elite. Yes...this was *his* exclusive principality, and nobody in heaven or on earth would take

it from him. Thus, Satan was willing to launch every power available to him in an attempt to thwart heaven's strategy to wrest the kingdom from his diabolical grip.

The saga unveils in the Judean countryside, down by the Jordan River. This is where the prince of darkness, as he observes the gathering throngs, first imagined that a grand scheme is finally taking a physical form. The crowds were daily rushing to the river's edge to listen to a bellowing preacher proclaim that God's kingdom was on its way. He assured the people that their "savior" would soon appear. This was not good news.

Satan furiously snatched at the strings of his earthly puppets. He summoned the power of the thrones that he and his demonic hordes manipulated. His mortal marionettes were all too eager to play their parts...to do his bidding. The cup of demonic power from which they drank was exquisitely intoxicating. So, they liberally imbibed—bathing in its glory.

This is how it began...

THE VISITORS

John shielded his eyes from the blazing Judean sun as he focused upon the advancing confederation of gloomy looking religious authorities.

"The Baptizer" had just lifted another convert out of the cool Jordan waters. Dozens stood in single file, in the waist-deep water. Thousands more lined the shores.

He knew the approaching black-robed men were powerful emissaries. They had been sent by the prestigious Sanhedrin Council, headquartered in Jerusalem. John had been warned of their imminent arrival. The word of his recent ministry endeavor had apparently spread faster than he had imagined.

But who could have missed this envoy? Adorned in their flowing

orthodox garb and long phylacteries, their station in society was unmistakable. John wondered if they had even a clue as to who their real master was—the prince of this world.

In truth, John thought, they were a ridiculous-looking, swaggering gaggle of self-important men. They prodded, demanded, and pushed their way through the throngs with their usual air of entitlement and pomposity. If the scene had not been immersed in so much veiled evil, it would have been downright comical.

However, most of the people feared them. Knowing this, the approaching *important ones*, engrossed in the pageantry of their own grand entrance, basked in the crowd's obvious awe. Not only did these men hold places of prominence presiding over the religious and social life of the Jews, but they also represented the most powerful indigenous religious body—the Sanhedrin Council, one that held weighty connections to the local Roman governing authorities. Within the confines of proper procedure, the Sanhedrin, made up of seventy elite Pharisees and Sadducees, could even arrange for one of their own—a fellow Jew—to be crucified.

Seen from above, from the view of the *birds of the air*, this line of men, dressed all in black, slithering through the crowd, took the form of a viper. They appeared to be slipping and winding their way toward an unseen prey. The uneasy crowd deferred to them, almost genuflecting as the powerful men glided through their midst. Soon, the brood stood on the sandy shore of the Jordan, looking like a flock of vultures roosting in the top branches of a rotting, leafless, lifeless tree.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

The Baptizer, resembling a rugged prophetic figure right out of ancient times, had been in the area of the Jordon River for several weeks. He would remain here for months. Every day, thousands had flowed out of the surrounding countryside to take part in the messianic fervor that

had recently saturated the land. The crowds continued to move into the waters of baptism. This is why they had come.

Some in the multitude asked, “What should we do then? Since we are here to repent, where should we begin?”³³

John answered them, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same. Love each other. Care for each other’s needs.”

To the surprise of the masses, even a number of tax collectors came to be baptized by John. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should *we* do?”

“Don’t collect any more than you are required,” John replied. “Treat the people fairly—as you would want your own family to be treated.”

There were also a few Roman soldiers who came for baptism. They asked John, “And what should *we* do?”

He answered their query, “Quit extorting money from the people. You know in your hearts this practice is evil. And don’t level false accusations against the people—be content with your pay. Serve your masters with dignity, and treat the populace with equity. These are the things that bring honor to the Lord and to the glory of His coming kingdom.”

The crowds agreed among themselves. Never had they heard a preacher speak such bold and lovely words. However, sometimes he would also broadcast his blistering invectives with a divine authority that commanded rapt attention. So they listened to every word that fell from his lips. What would this preacher from the Judean wilderness say next?

This is why the religious authorities and their governmental counterparts were here. Because the people, thousands of them, were seriously considering everything this man preached.

Sanhedrin emissaries badly needed legal ammunition against this dangerous desert preacher. His zealous religious movement had the potential of going awry—quickly.

What they needed was evidence of sedition.

They would soon get the proof they wanted.



PART FOUR

The Plundering

*How can anyone enter a strong man's house
and carry off his possessions unless he first
ties up the strong man?
Then he can plunder his house.*

—MATTHEW 12:29

10



THE HUNTER

Judgment had arrived. In person.

He was seated upon a rock ledge.

He surveyed the gloomy Judean badlands stretched endlessly before Him. The atmosphere was laden with the presence of evil. Another ledge above Him formed an overhang—a roof, as it were, a shelter from the sweltering midday sun. This would be His base of operation for one month...and ten days.

Yeshua smiled. He remembered the look on John's face only a few days back when He first came up out of the Jordan's waters. It was a moment He would always cherish. That rugged man, wearing rough camel's-hair clothes over his bulging muscular frame, displayed the innocent look of a child's wonderstruck gaze. It was as if John, from atop a soaring mountain peak, had peered for the very first time upon the earth below.

Then Yeshua's thoughts turned more somber. *Dearest John. How I pray for you, that you will have an unwavering strength that will equip you for this mission that you must now endure...for my sake.*

Desolate. Treacherous. Deceptive. Isolated. The scant shrubbery was, at places, joined together like an interlocking and delicately green necklace. However, throughout most of the land, there was not a single

green thing to be seen. The few diminutive “trees” that occasionally dotted the landscape wore the shape of the wind that had pummeled them over the ages. Other than those distinctive features, this place was brown and barren and seemingly lifeless. This was going to be a hellish ordeal. But that’s why He was here in this fallen dimension. And it was why He had come to this specific place.⁴⁴

This part of the plan *had* to be successfully completed before Yeshua could proceed with anything else. He had arrived here for the purpose of plundering Satan’s house. He had come to commence the process of binding up the strong man.⁴⁵

Yeshua was taking the first blow directly to Nachash, right at the front door of his demonic lair. A wilderness, teeming with wild animals. *How fitting.*⁴⁶ He chuckled at the thought of it. And He waited. He stirred the ground with a small stick as His eyes scanned the scene before Him.

The vultures always showed up first...

They scrutinized everything that stirred in the desert wilderness below. They floated on the currents of warm air rising from the blistering hot sand. They waited for things—*anything*—to die.

There would be forty days of this dreadful battle. No food. Scant water. No human companionship. No delivery of emergency supplies. Sizzling heat by day, frigid air by night—every single day. At least 960 grueling hours lay ahead.

THE DECREE

But this is how it had to be done. It could be accomplished in no other fashion.

The number *forty* had often been used, since the primordial times, as a divine signal of judgment, or testing. The enemy would know this all too well.

For forty days, the flood waters of Noah’s day had deluged the earth.

Moses had fasted forty days on Sinai, only to descend and find the people of God dancing around the image of a golden calf.

For forty days the spies sent out by Moses had wandered into the Land of Promise only to return with a bad report. Yahweh's punishment upon them? One year of wilderness wandering for every day they had trod in faithlessness upon the soil of Canaan—*forty years*.

Years later, when the Israelites continuously did evil in the sight of the Lord, He gave them into the hands of the Philistines, their most hated enemies. They were subservient to the Philistines for—you guessed it—*forty years* (Judges 13:1).

Also, it was for a period of forty days that Goliath came forth and taunted the armies of God's people. On the fortieth day, the giant man lost his head due to his misplaced derisions.

Periods of forty were also used to mark God's hand of divine appointment. Deborah, the faithful judge of Israel, brought forty years of peace to her domain because of her fidelity in the service of the Lord (Judges 5:31). The same could be said for Gideon's days as the main judge of Israel (Judges 8:28).

It was King David who would bring the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant back to the heart of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, to reestablish sacrificial worship of Yahweh. Thus David would be given the divine appointment of reigning forty years (2 Samuel 5:4). The same with his son, Solomon, the one who built the Temple of the Lord; He, too, was given forty years of divinely appointed rule (1 Kings 11:42).

But that's not all. It would only be three years hence when Yeshua Himself would rise from the grave and spend exactly *forty days* walking the earth before His glorious ascension. Those forty days would be spent performing additional miracles and fellowshiping with His disciples. Each one of those days would be a signal to Satan: "Your judgment has been leveled. Your time is short. You will soon be reduced to ashes, and you will be no more. The Seed has arrived. He is here to destroy your kingdom."

In this way, Jesus' forty days in this barren wasteland, the domain of

the strong man, sent a message that could not be missed: *The Stronger One is here.*⁴⁷

THE SECOND ADAM

The next forty days would remind the ancient serpent of his profane defilement of the Garden.⁴⁸ The *second Adam* had now arrived. He was getting ready to set in motion the reclamation of Eden, the reality of which would eventually be delivered to heaven's throne as the grand prize in this cosmic war.⁴⁹

Try as he might, the serpent would not be victorious in this garden-enticement scenario. The "tree of temptation" would have no sway over the second Adam. The "fruit" would not be eaten. The "lies and false prophecies" would not be believed. The beckoning to rule Satan's kingdoms would hold no sway.

*This mission would not be "defiled."*⁵⁰

Nehushtan—"the brazen one"—would eventually appear. Of this fact there was no doubt.⁵¹ In exactly what form he would manifest, Yeshua was uncertain. The serpent had several options from which to choose. But *show up* he would. This was the Garden serpent's fame; it was his characteristic mark of pretentiousness.

One day soon, that same flawed trait would prove to be his undoing. . . but right now he was out there, somewhere. Watching. Waiting. Calculating.

And this is why Yeshua was here as well. Seated upon a sparsely shaded ledge. Watching. Waiting. Calculating.

Through the human presence of the promised divine Seed, the repossession of the Garden of Eden was officially underway. Elohim's Garden promise was coming to pass.

Judgment had arrived. In person.

So, He sat...knowing that the ancient serpent would soon show himself.



PART FIVE

The Pummeling

*For we do not have a high priest who is
unable to empathize with our weaknesses,
but we have one who has been tempted
in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

—HEBREWS 4:15



PLUMBING THE DEPTHS

It is certain, whatever Satan might suspect, he did not fully know that the person he tempted was the true Messiah. Perhaps one grand object of his temptation was to find this out.

—ADAM CLARKE⁶⁸

Exactly what did Satan *really* know about Yeshua?

This question has been bandied about by renowned scholars for hundreds of years. Yet, there are several important aspects to this dilemma that we are able to settle through a contextual examination of Scripture. Once the appropriate links are connected, the true depth of the biblical account of the cosmic war of the ages becomes much clearer.

Most commentators believe Satan already knew that Yeshua was, indeed, the Son of God at the time of, if not before, the wilderness temptation event. But here's the catch: Exactly what did the designation "Son of God" mean—and what were the specific details of His mission? Those things appear to be what Satan did *not* know...and for a very long time.

First on Satan's list was to determine exactly what kind of authority Jesus had over the elements of the earthly realm. Knowing that piece of information might help Satan determine what power this Son of God might wield over his domain. This would also explain why Satan's initial

test of Jesus was to “turn these stones to bread...*if you are* the son of God!” (Luke 4:3, Matthew 4:3).

Have a look at how various scholars have addressed the matter of Satan’s very first challenge.

Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible

If thou be *the Son of God*—Or, *a son of God*, is here, and in Luke 4:3, written without the article; and therefore should not be translated The Son, *as if it were*, which is a phrase that is applicable to Christ as the Messiah; but *it is certain*, whatever Satan might suspect, *he did not fully know that the person he tempted* was the true Messiah. Perhaps one grand object of his temptation was to find this out.⁶⁹ (Emphasis added)

Peoplé’s Bible Commentary

If thou be the Son of God. “If” suggests *a doubt*, and, perhaps, *a taunt*.⁷⁰ (Emphasis added)

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown: Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible

What was the high design of this? ...That the tempter, too, might get a taste, at the very outset, of the new kind of material in man which he would find he had here to deal with.⁷¹

The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

If thou art... The same words were tauntingly addressed to our Lord on the Cross (Matthew 27:40). The Greek strictly means “*Assuming that Thou art*...”⁷² (Emphasis added)

GODS OF THE FINAL KINGDOM

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

*If thou art...or seeing thou art [since you claim, or assuming you are] in such a relation to God, and so equal to him, and possessed of all divine perfections... command this stone that it be made bread.*⁷³ (Emphasis and brackets added)

Biblical Illustrator

There seems little reason to doubt that Satan knew Jesus to be the promised One, whose advent the prophets had foretold. But although Satan was thus far in possession of the truth respecting Christ, **it does not follow that he “knew the whole truth” respecting him.** If *Satan had no just view* of the person of Christ, **of His true divinity**, he would necessarily have imperfect views of His perfect holiness.⁷⁴ (Emphasis added)

THE RECRUITS

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, we observe Jewish religious leaders demanding that Jesus should show them some sort of heavenly sign. Frequently, their caustic attacks were leveled by using Satan's very own wilderness taunts: “*If you are the son of God...*”

This scriptural detail is a huge clue, demonstrating that Satan knew a good deal about Jesus, but also that he certainly didn't know it “all.” If Satan had known every detail about Jesus he desired to know, you can bet that Satan's human puppets would have been let in on the secret, too. Yet, we are shown the opposite throughout the biblical account.

EVEN THE ANGELS...

Of all of the biblical affirmations indicating that Satan *could not* have had total foreknowledge of the “Christ event,” one of the clearest comes from the first chapter of 1 Peter.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. *Even angels long “to look into” these things.* (1 Peter 1:10–12, emphasis added)

The exacting details of redemption’s plan were the exclusive *top secrets* of the throne of Elohim. The scholars agree this is, indeed, the very point Peter is expressing in his first letter to the early church.

Ellicott’s Commentary expresses this important truth like this:

Angels, who were present at every detail, and bore an active part in it all (see Matthew 1:20; Matthew 4:11; Matthew 28:2; Luke 1:26; Luke 2:9; Luke 22:43; John 1:51),—angels, of whom He “was seen” (1 Timothy 3:16),—covet now to exchange places with you that they may gaze into the mystery.⁷⁵

GODS OF THE FINAL KINGDOM

Barnes' Notes on the Bible:

The object of this reference to the angels is the same as that to the prophets. It had excited the deepest interest among the most holy men on earth, and even among the inhabitants of the [heavens]. They [the church] were [now] enjoying the full revelation of what even the angels had desired more fully to understand, and to comprehend which they had employed their great powers of investigation.⁷⁶ (Brackets added)

Pulpit Commentary

The salvation which God's elect receive is so full of glory and mysterious beauty, that not only did the prophets of old search diligently, but even angels desire to look into it.... The verb [to look into] means "to stoop sideways;" it is used of persons standing outside a place who stoop in order to look in.⁷⁷

We can, therefore, be confident that if the obedient divine beings had not been let in on every detail regarding the incarnation and redemption events, neither had Satan. Remember, as powerful as Satan is, he and his angels are not omnipresent. Nor are they omnipotent. And they certainly are not omniscient.

There is only *One* who fully embodies those attributes. And now, He was standing before humanity—in the flesh.