

## Cosmic Battles

Although our Western society has become secularized and many have abandoned the church, there is a new interest in spirituality. And the latter has taken on many different forms; one of them is a fascination with Satanism, demon possession, and exorcism. Satanism has received excessive publicity in the news media. In 1991, Time magazine even featured an article on the mystery of evil. So many TV programs and shows have discussed the revival of Satanism that one is left with the impression that many people are getting involved in the most bizarre rituals, including Black Masses. Of course, Hollywood has cashed in on this new religious phenomenon. As one critic put it, "You just can't keep the devil down for every long, especially in Hollywood." In view of this rising prominence of evil and the occult in Hollywood, Gary DeMar suggests that "something happened at the movies beginning in the sixties when the occult entered the real world. The (seven) dwarfs were out, and the devil, the real Devil, was in. Hollywood made the occult mainstream in the enormously popular Rosemary's Baby (1968)." Other movies that gave prominence to the devil in recent decades include The Exorcist (1973), The Exorcist II; The Heretic (1977), and Poltergeist (1982), just to name a few. All these movies make the devil seem all-powerful. He always seems to get the upper hand. While the devil receives the glory in Hollywood, Christ's glory is shamed. One example of this is Martin Scorsese's film, The Last Temptation of Christ. This movie gives an objectionable and highly offensive portrayal of Christ.

We can dismiss this fascination with the devil as just another fad. But not to believe in the existence of Satan and his influence is as dangerous as it is to be preoccupied with him. The spiritual world is real. The Bible speaks about two kinds of spirits - angels and demons. The demons are fallen angels. They rebelled against God and were cast from heaven. They became instruments of the ruin and fall of human beings. They have influence on the earth, not only in the spiritual realm, but also in the physical, visible, and material. Satan is our enemy. The Bible sees evil against the background of a mighty, invisible, demonic spirit world. It tells of a cosmic war being waged between the forces of God and the forces of Satan." For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Satan is the enemy of God, the foe of goodness, the opposer of the truth. He operates on the world scene. He incites war and promotes injustice and oppression. He also undermines relationships, sows strife, and deceives peoples. He blinds the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

He raises up false teachers, invents new devices and cults in every generation and leads multitudes to trust in their false teachings.

But Satan does not have the last word. God has. Hollywood may give the impression that he is victor, but it does not know the Bible. Satan is not victor. He is a defeated enemy.

Nowhere in the Bible is victory conceded to the forces of darkness. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that God never suffers evil to run out of hand. Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life," came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and on the cross the defeat of Satan was accomplished. Behind the Cross we may see all the massed legions of Satan and hell trying to overcome the Truth. As Jesus faced Calvary, he said, "Now is the time for judgement on this world, now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:31,32). The Cross is God's answer to Satan.

Those who trust in Christ for their salvation know that they are safe in Him. They know that his commands must be obeyed. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). "Do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27). "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:10,11). Satan can neither touch nor overcome all who abide in Christ. They are more than conquerors through Him who loved them, gave His life for them - and loves them still. The resurrection of Christ confirms that light not darkness, life and not death, good and not evil, God and not Satan are victorious.

*Jesus lives! Our hearts know well  
Naught from us His love shall sever;  
Life nor death, nor powers of hell  
Tear us from His keeping ever.*