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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**WHO REALLY
RULES THE
WORLD?**



Is There Someone Behind All Evil?

“I SHOOK hands with the devil.” So said the commander of the United Nations forces in Rwanda, reflecting on their failure to stop the genocide in that land during 1994. Commenting on the unbelievable savagery at that time, another observer stated: “If someone still dares to deny Satan, meet me at a mass grave in Rwanda.” Are such atrocities really the work of the Devil?

Most people do not regard wanton violence and cruelty as the work of an invisible wicked spirit creature. Many think that such things are a result of the evil inherent in human nature and that the main cause of evil is our own dark instincts. Others theorize that a group of the wealthy and powerful, some sort of a shadowy global network, has been manipulating people for decades in order to rule the world. Then, of course, there are those who blame the national governments and rulers for all the injustice and suffering they see.

What do you believe? Why is it that evil, cruelty, atrocities, and suffering run rampant throughout the world today in spite of efforts to curb them? Why is it that mankind seems to be dashing headlong into a self-destructive course, turning a deaf ear to repeated warnings? Is there someone behind it all? Who *really* rules the world? The answer might surprise you.

Who Really Rules the World?

LIKELY you have never met any leaders of organized crime. Does that mean they do not exist? Criminal bosses are skilled at hiding their identity or even operating from behind prison bars. Yet, newspaper headlines about drug wars, prostitution rings, and human trafficking, to name a few, remind us of the corrupting influence and dire consequences of the activities and of the existence of such crime figures. By the mark they leave on human society, we know that criminal leaders exist.

God's Word, the Bible, reveals that Satan is a real person who, like a powerful criminal kingpin, sees to it that his will is accomplished through "lying signs" and "unrighteous deception." In fact, he "keeps transforming himself into an angel of light," says the Bible. (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 11:14) The Devil's existence can likewise be ascertained by the marks left by him. Yet, most people find it difficult to believe in an invisible, wicked spirit being. Before we examine more closely what the Bible says about the Devil, let us look at some common obstacles and erroneous beliefs that prevent many from accepting the idea that the Devil is a real person.

■ "How could a loving God create the Devil?" Since the Bible says that God is good and perfect, it seems contradictory to think that he would have created an evil, malicious, and wicked being. The fact is that the Bible does not say that God created such a person. On the contrary, it says about God: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he."—Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 5:4.

The point to consider is whether a perfect person created by God could do anything other than what is right. Far from making his creatures like robots, God granted them free will—the ability to make their own choices. Hence, a perfect, intelligent creature can choose to do good or to do evil. In reality, only deeds performed by an intelligent creature, human or spirit, endowed with free will could have real moral significance.

It follows, therefore, that God would not have granted his creatures moral freedom and at the same time prevented them from doing evil should they choose to do so. Jesus referred to a misuse of free will when he said of the Devil: "He did not stand fast in the truth." (John 8:44) That statement clearly indicates that the one who became the Devil was originally a perfect spirit person, who at one time did "stand fast in the truth."* Jehovah God made his creatures free moral agents because he loves and trusts them.

* To understand why God did not immediately put an end to the Devil's rebellion, see chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

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—See the box “Could a Perfect Creature Lose Perfection?” on page 6.

■ **“The Devil is a servant of God”** For some, the Bible seems to suggest this idea in the book of Job. According to one Bible commentary, the statement that the Devil was “roving about in the earth” refers to the role of ancient Persian spies, who traveled and reported matters in the service of their king. (Job 1:7) However, if the Devil were really God’s spy, why would he have to explain to God that he had come from “roving about in the earth”? Far from depicting him as an ally of God, the account in Job calls the Devil by the name Satan, meaning “Resister,” thus

Is the Devil a servant of God
or a resister of God?

indicating that he is actually God’s chief Adversary. (Job 1:6) Where, then, does the idea that the Devil is in God’s service come from?

As early as the first century C.E., apocryphal books, such as the “Book of Jubilees” and the “Common Rule” of the Qumran sect, depicted the Devil as bargaining with God and yet subject to His will. In his book *Mephistopheles*, historian J. B. Russell explains that Protestant Reformer Martin Luther regarded the Devil as God’s tool, “like a pruning hook or a hoe that he uses to cultivate his garden.” The idea is, adds Russell, that “the hoe takes pleasure in destroying

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⁺ CD also available.

[°] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

^{°°} Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

the weeds,” but it remains in God’s mighty hand, thus fulfilling God’s will. Luther’s teaching—later accepted by French theologian John Calvin—offended many believers’ sense of justice. How could a loving God not only permit evil but even will it to happen? (James 1:13) This doctrine, along with the horrors of the 20th century, prevents many people from believing both in God and in the Devil.

■ **“The Devil is merely a principle of evil”**
To consider the Devil a mere principle of evil would make some Bible passages almost impossible to understand. For instance, as described at Job 2:3-6, with whom was God having a conversation? Was he possibly speaking to an abstract principle of evil in Job, or was he perhaps even talking to himself? Furthermore, would God be praising the virtues of Job at one moment and allowing Job to be tested by a principle of evil the next? Ascribing such motives to God would amount to making him a perverse Being, not the one “in whom there is no unrighteousness.” (Psalm 92:15) Quite the contrary, God refused to ‘thrust out his hand’ to harm Job. Clearly, the Devil is not a principle of evil or a dark side of God’s personality but a spirit person who made himself God’s Adversary.

Who Really Is Ruling the World?

Today, many feel that it is old-fashioned to believe in the Devil. However, no explanation for the harsh reality of evil, apart from the Devil, has proved satisfactory. In fact, the attempt to do away with the idea of the Devil has led many people to reject God and any moral boundaries altogether.

“The devil’s deepest wile,” wrote 19th-century poet Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, “is to persuade us that he does not exist.” By concealing his identity, the Devil has actually raised doubts about the existence of God. If the Devil did not exist, would that not make God responsible for all evil? Is that not exactly what the Devil wants people to believe?

Like a criminal boss, the Devil conceals his identity in order to achieve his objective. What is that objective? The Bible answers: “The god of this system of things has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through.”—2 Corinthians 4:4.

One important question remains. What will God do with this secret mastermind who is behind all evil and suffering? This we will consider in the following article.



Could a Perfect Creature Lose Perfection?

The perfection granted by God to his intelligent creatures is relative. Although created perfect, Adam needed to respect the physical limits imposed upon him by his Creator. For example, he could not eat dirt, gravel, or wood without suffering the consequences. If he had ignored the law of gravity and jumped from a high cliff, he would have died or been severely injured.

Likewise, no perfect creature—human or angelic—can go beyond the moral boundaries set by God without exposing himself to ill effects. Thus, when an intelligent creature misuses his free will, he easily falls into error and sin.—Genesis 1:29; Matthew 4:4.

The World's Secret Ruler Exposed

"THE ruler of this world will be cast out," said Jesus to the people on one occasion. Later, he added that 'the ruler of the world had no hold on him' and that "the ruler of this world has been judged." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) Of whom was Jesus speaking?

Considering what Jesus was saying about "the ruler of this world," it is obvious that he could not have been referring to his Father, Jehovah God. Who, then, is "the ruler of this world"? How will he be "cast out," and how has he been "judged"?

"The Ruler of This World" Reveals Himself

Just as a master criminal often takes pride in boasting about his power, so did the Devil when tempting Jesus, the Son of God. After showing Jesus "all the kingdoms" of the world, Satan made him this offer: "I will give you all this authority and the glory of them, because it has been delivered to me, and to whomever I wish I give it. You, therefore, if you do an act of worship before me, it will all be yours."—Luke 4:5-7.

If the Devil were merely a principle of evil, as some have suggested, how could that temptation be explained? Was Jesus being tempted by some evil thought or by some inner turmoil that possibly followed his baptism? If so, how could it be said that "there is no sin in him"? (1 John 3:5) Far from denying the Devil's power over mankind, Jesus actually confirmed it by speaking of him as "the ruler of the world," describing him as "a murderer" and "a liar."—John 14:30; 8:44; *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

Some 60 years after Christ's encounter with the Devil, the apostle John reminded Christians of the Devil's powerful influence, saying that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." That one, John also said, "is misleading the entire inhabited earth." (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9) Clearly, the Bible speaks of an invisible spirit as "the ruler of the world." But what is the extent of his influence over mankind?

The World Ruler Delegates Power to Associates

Writing about the Christians' fight for the faith, the apostle Paul clearly identified their worst enemies. "We have a wrestling," he candidly said, "not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Thus, this fight goes beyond the human sphere, since it is carried out, "not against blood and flesh," but against "wicked spirit forces."

According to most modern Bible translations, "the wicked spirit forces" here refer, not to an abstract principle of evil, but to powerful wicked spirit *persons*. Some versions offer such renderings as "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (*Revised Standard Version*), "the spiritual army of evil in the heavens" (*The Jerusalem Bible*), and "the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens" (*The New English Bible*). Thus, the Devil has been exercising his power through other rebel angels who forsook "their own proper dwelling place" in heaven.—Jude 6.

The prophetic Bible book of Daniel discloses how these “world rulers” have been exerting control over the world since ancient times. Deeply concerned about fellow Jews who in 537 B.C.E. had returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian exile, the prophet Daniel prayed in their behalf for three weeks. An angel, sent by God to reassure the prophet, told him why his arrival had been delayed. He said: “The prince of the royal realm of Persia was standing in opposition to me for twenty-one days.”—Daniel 10:2, 13.

Who was this ‘prince of Persia’? The angel was obviously not referring to Persian King Cyrus, who at that time looked with favor upon Daniel and his people. Moreover, how could a mere human king resist a spirit creature for three weeks when it took one angel only one night to destroy 185,000 mighty warriors? (Isaiah 37:36) This hostile ‘prince of Persia’ could only be an agent of the Devil, that is, a demon who was given control over the realm of the Persian Empire. Later in the account, God’s angel stated that he would once again have to fight against “the prince of Persia” and another demon prince, “the prince of Greece.”—Daniel 10:20.

What can we conclude from this? Simply that there really are invisible “world rulers,” demon princes who share control of the world under the authority of their chief, Satan the Devil. But what has been their aim until now?

The World Ruler Shows His True Face

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, the apostle John relates how Jesus, as Michael the archangel, defeats the Devil and his demons and tells of the disastrous consequences resulting from their expulsion from heaven. We read: “Woe for the earth . . . be-

cause the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.”—Revelation 12:9, 12.

How has the Devil shown great anger? Just as many desperate criminals follow the policy of ‘rule or ruin,’ the Devil and his demons are determined to bring the earth and its inhabitants to ruin with them. Knowing that his time is short, the Devil has been using one of the key elements of human society under his control—big business—to promote a frenzied spirit of consumerism, which leads to depletion of natural resources and destruction of the environment worldwide, thus threatening humanity’s survival.—Revelation 11:18; 18:11-17.

Since the beginning of human history, the Devil’s thirst for power has also been reflected in politics and religion. The book of Revelation depicts political powers as wild beasts to whom the Devil has given “great authority.” It also describes the shameless alliance between politics and religion as disgusting spiritual adultery. (Revelation 13:2; 17:1, 2) Think of the oppression, enslavement, wars, and ethnic conflicts over the centuries that have resulted in the loss of millions of lives. Can anyone honestly say that the shocking and horrifying events that have tainted the pages of human history were the normal activity of humans? Or were they the result of manipulation by unseen wicked spirit forces?

The Bible unmistakably identifies and unmasks the one who has been maneuvering human leaders and world powers. Whether consciously or not, human society reflects the personality of its ruler and his ‘rule or ruin’ policy. But for how long will mankind suffer under the Devil’s rulership?

The Devil’s Last Gasp

Christ’s activity on earth in the first century sounded the death knell for the Devil and

Under Christ's loving rulership, righteous humans
will turn the earth into a paradise

his demons. When Jesus' disciples related how they had cast out unseen demons, he told them: "I began to behold Satan already fallen like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10: 18) With those words, Jesus was rejoicing at his future victory over the ruler of the world, to take place once Jesus was back in heaven as Michael the archangel. (Revelation 12: 7-9) A thorough study of Bible prophecies indicates that this victory took place in heaven in or shortly after 1914.*

Since that date, the Devil knows that the time remaining before his destruction is short. Although 'the whole world is lying in his power,' millions of people today have not been misled by his desperate attempts to control them. The Bible has opened their eyes to his true identity and his designs. (2 Corinthians 2:11) They draw hope from Paul's words to fellow Christians: "The God who gives peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."#—Romans 16:20.

Soon will come the Devil's last gasp! Under Christ's loving rulership, righteous humans will turn God's symbolic footstool, the earth, into a paradise. Violence, hatred, and greed will be gone forever. "The former things will not be called to mind," says the Bible. (Isaiah 65:17) What a relief it will be for all who break free from the secret ruler of this world and his authority!

* For more details on this date, see the appendix to the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses, pages 215 to 218.

Paul's words here echo the first Bible prophecy, recorded at Genesis 3:15, pointing to the Devil's eventual destruction. To describe the event, Paul used a Greek word that means "to shatter, shiver, break in pieces by crushing."—*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*.

