

# The Conflict of the Ages #23 and #24

## By Lloyd Anderson

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Lloyd Anderson:

You remember in our studies together, we've shared with you the idea that there is a conflict of the ages. That across the years of human time, Satan has been arrayed against God to thwart the purposes of the Lord in everything that God would do through our Lord Jesus Christ. You'll remember the devil himself has been on a general campaign for battle, which has to do with first of all, you remember, in keeping Jesus Christ from coming into the world. And so he begins to move back as far as Adam, does the devil, and he begins to move militantly against Jesus Christ, who would come into the world. Finally, when Christ had come into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, then the devil opened up the second phase of his campaign against the Lord. And you remember he tried to keep the Lord Jesus Christ from going to the cross. He sought to do away with Him with a stoning of the mob, when He said, "I and the Father are one." You remember in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, the storm became so great that Jesus Christ was in peril of His life. And then He stood to His feet, you remember, and He caused the wind to subside and the waves to go down. You remember the Lord Jesus Christ was in the garden of Gethsemane, and instead of perspiring sweat, He perspired great drops of blood. Now, this certainly indicated the pressure that was upon Him to keep Him from going to the cross, to prematurely put Him to death before He could ever reach Golgotha, and there give His life a ransom for you and me.

For you see, and I know you do, that the real purpose of Jesus Christ coming into the world was not to live. Instead, He came to die. When Jesus Christ came into the world, He was destined to go to the cross. And there for you and for me, He would take all of the horror of sin's judgment upon Himself, and Jesus Christ would bear your sins and mine. Now the devil, after Jesus had gone to the cross, and after the Lord Jesus Christ had resurrected from the dead, and declared His victory over the Devil at the cross, now we find a third phase tactically of this tremendous campaign, and that is to keep the Lord Jesus Christ from coming back again to rule and to reign over this world; to keep Him from assuming His rightful place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And it all goes back to Genesis 3:15, where you have that key verse given to us, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman," said God to the serpent, "And between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel." Now, what's interesting to notice as we come to a study of the word of God, that Satan now begins to attack the New Testament church, which is the body of Christ, you see. And if he can cause the church of Jesus Christ to go down the drain, then, of course, Christ will not come again. Now, a Mohammedan gentleman some time ago said to a missionary, "When we go to the Muslim mecca, we find a coffin. But when Christians go to Jerusalem, they find nothing but an empty grave." To this, the missionary smilingly replied, "Yes. That is the difference. Muhammad is dead. He's in the dust of his coffin. But Jesus Christ is not dead. He has risen, and all power in heaven on earth is given unto Him."

You see, Christianity is the only religion in the world that has a living leader at the present time. In the sense that He was raised again from the dead. All other great religious leaders, and I use the word great for many of them were, went down into the dust from which they have never,

never come back. But Jesus Christ came back from the dead, and by that one great victory of His, He made it possible for you and me to have everlasting life. Now, with the resurrection of Christ, Satan realized that the last part of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 had now been fulfilled. You see, He would crush the head of the tempter by His death and by His resurrection from the dead, and with the Lord Jesus Christ in His ascension, which no doubt Satan tried in some way to prevent, he now realizes that one day the risen Christ is going to come back again. He will return, and then the first part of the prophecy will be fulfilled. The seed would then ruthlessly and fatally bruise the head of the serpent. Now the devil had planned, therefore, to prevent the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own saints. He attacks the church, the body of Christ, because it's the body of Christ, which is the group of believers who know Christ as their own personal Savior. I think we need to remember that the church originated in the mind of God before the foundations of the world had ever been laid. But it did not exist until the day of Pentecost, when the 3,000 believers were baptized by one spirit into one body.

The word church, you remember, comes from the Greek word ecclesia, which means assembly or a congregation of called out one's. The church was unknown to the Old Testament prophets and believers who thought only in terms, generally, of Jew or Gentile. The mystery of the church was a new thing. It was an unheard of thing. And in Ephesians chapter 3, and you want to study that at your leisure, Ephesians 3, verses 1 to eleven, a body composed of Jews and gentiles, who in faith believe Jesus Christ to be the son of the living God, and who trust Him as Redeemer and Savior, who alone could free men from sin and the devil, become members of the body, which is the church, the called out one's, the body of Christ. A wonderful group. Of such is the body of Christ, whose many members have been redeemed by the blood. They have been regenerated by

the Holy Spirit. They have been re-created by the power of God, and reclaimed by our Heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the head of this body called the New Testament Church, reveals Himself through those Spirit-filled believers whose motto is as stated by the Apostle Paul "For to me, to live is Christ." Now this term, the body of Christ, sometimes confuses the student of the Bible, though it's clearly defined by a direct statement by the Apostle Paul. Perhaps the confusion arises because the church is symbolized as the bride of Christ as well. Now how can the church be both the body and the bride? The explanation is very, very clear. The true church is the body of Christ, in fact, and it's the bride of Christ in symbol. Israel is the chosen nation, in fact, and she is the wife of Jehovah in Symbol.

Now, this is the age of the church. The age of grace. It is also an evil age, for Satan is busier than ever directing attacks against the body of Christ. It is his diabolical aim to usurp the place which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that place is the head of the body, which is his ransom church. And I want to confess to you, as a pastor of a number of years, that I have never seen a more difficult time for the Church of Jesus Christ than at this present moment. Now, on the other hand, I have never seen a more glorious time for the church than I see at the present time. I think our opportunities are absolutely endless. And I think the darker the age becomes in sin and iniquity, the more opportunities we have to present Jesus Christ to men and women. And so, the body of Christ, the church, is a tremendous organism of the New Testament. Now in Second Corinthians, chapter 4, beginning with verse 1, it's interesting to notice that the Apostle Paul says as we get nearer to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is going to be more delusion in the church and more departure. Now, here, I'm not talking about the body of Christ as such. I'm talking about the church as it takes a visible local form in a community. There are

many, many churches that once upon a time were shining in revival, and souls were being saved, and the gospel was being preached. But my friend, in many, many areas, that is no longer true. You know, in your own community, as you listen to me right now, whether it's a large city or a small community, you know, the churches in that town which are really preaching the gospel. You know, the churches in your community which have left the preaching of the gospel, and the blood of Christ, and personal salvation, and are now busy in social action as a substitute for the gospel.

You know this to be true. And my friend, this is one of the great tragedies of this hour. The Church of Jesus Christ, as we think of the local visible church, which is the earthly form of the body of Christ, into which people come and belong as members, but not all of them, of course, are saved. This is the tragedy of this hour, and it will continue to be that way until Jesus Christ comes again. Now, notice what he says in Second Corinthians, chapter 4, beginning with verse 1, "Therefore see we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, but handling the word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world, that is the devil, hath blinded the minds of them, which believe not, less the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Now the devil is endeavoring today to break down the testimony of believers in the witness of Christians. He knows that the church has been committed the task of making known the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to the whole world. And when I use the word church, I'm thinking of every Christian organization that preaches Jesus Christ. As far as I'm concerned,

Campus Crusade, Young Life, Youth for Christ, Navigator's, any missionary group you care to name, as far as I'm concerned, from a study of the New Testament, these are simply arms of the church. It is the church in the New Testament which comes to the forefront. It is the church in the New Testament which takes the limelight in the teachings of the scripture concerning the body of Christ. And the church takes many, many different forms.

Over here, it may meet in the home. Over here, it may be on a mission field. Over here, it may be meeting in a nice, new, beautiful building. Over here, it may be a group of believers who have gathered together. Over here, it may be a group reaching young people for Christ. Whatever it is, it's all a part of the extension of the Church of Jesus Christ, Gideon's, whatever it may be. All of this is a part and partial of the ministry of the total church. Now, in these verses, 1 to 6 of Second Corinthians, chapter 4, you'll remember it is made crystal clear to us that there will be a spiritual blindness. So it is that the devil deliberately blinds the minds of men everywhere against the gospel of Jesus Christ. He keeps them ignorant of the word of God. He would have men believe that evangelistic fervor is a form of insanity that should be curbed. As the age has progressed, this purpose of the devil has met with increased success on his part. Was there ever an hour when churches were so indifferent as they are today, to the needs of the perishing millions without Jesus Christ at this particular hour? We have not been given the salient primary business of social action. We have been given the primary business of winning individual people to Jesus Christ, because without Jesus Christ, they are lost. Now, certainly any church, if it's worth its salt at all, if it really preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, is also going to be interested in some form of social action. A true believer is going to be interested in the civil rights of other people. He is going to be interested in the fact that everybody should have equal opportunity.

But my friend, having said all of that, remember that the primary first business of the preacher when he stands behind the pulpit is to preach the word of God and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. When you go to so many churches today, and I say this as a pastor, and I know the ministry, you go to so many churches, and all that the people receive on Sunday is a little tiny sermon that on how to be good, and how to do right, and how to vote for the right councilman, and how to get the right mayor into office, and how this and that ought to be done in the realm of social action, and the people go out of church Sunday after Sunday, hungry and starving in their hearts for the word of God and for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I say this is a devastating shame. Thank God there are churches, however, that are really preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And my friend, as you look around, these are the churches that are filled with people, and these are the churches that are prospering under God. Now, what does Paul say? He says we have this ministry, that is the Ministry of Reconciliation, the ministry of Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and Paul believed it to be a tremendous privilege to be given this ministry of preaching the gospel. But he said, "If our gospel is hidden or veiled, it is hidden to them that are perishing without Jesus Christ." It is not the fault of the gospel that people perish. Its saving power is just as great today as it was on the glorious day of resurrection. Men are lost because their eyes are veiled by the devil. They have no perception of the meaning of Calvary's cross. The word of God is necessary to receive spiritual life.

Many, many millions of people are waiting for the message of salvation, not only in strange lands and islands of the sea, but within the boundaries of our own United States. And the devil is succeeding in keeping the Bible, and much pertaining to Christianity, out of the schools, and

homes, and governments, and even churches today. In more instances than one cares to remember, the name of God means absolutely nothing to many children except as an expression of profanity. And I say to you, this is a heartbreak, especially on the American scene. Now the devil hinders all missionary endeavor in every possible way. He blinds the eyes of believers to the value and importance of missions, which in turn keeps them from becoming the bearers of the good news to the lost. And so the devil is busy, as Paul tells us in Second Corinthians 4 beginning with verse 1. It's his business to blind the eyes of those who don't believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in unto them. Now he deadens the conscience, and people are not interested in the word of God. And, my friend, this is the problem we face. And yet how great it is to know that the Holy Spirit is busy today, just as He's ever been before. And with the increasing spiritual darkness, there is also a tremendous upsurge in people coming to know Jesus Christ. It's wonderful, and it's great, to be in this great work of reaching people with Jesus Christ. This is the greatest thing in all the world.

[Shuffling papers]

Lloyd Anderson:

It has been our prerogative during this series of messages to share with you the idea that there is a conflict of the ages between the devil on the one hand and the Lord Jesus Christ on the other. By the forces of righteousness on the one hand, and the forces of unrighteousness on the other. And this conflict of the ages has continued since the day of Adam, or even before Adam, when the devil himself moved against God and became the devil as we know him today. And so across the centuries of human time, has been this conflict of the ages, with Satan moving against the promises of God, regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and Savior. We sought

to show you how that in this conflict of the ages, the devil uses every possible device. He uses occultism, he uses astrology, he uses departure from the faith, he uses people, he uses institutions, in every possible way he can to thwart the purposes of God regarding Jesus Christ and His wonderful salvation. And you remember before Christ was even born, he tried to do away with Christ way back as far as Adam, by destroying the line through which Jesus Christ would be born. Then when Christ was born, he tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross by giving the Virgin Mary a very difficult time. When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, he tried to prematurely put Him to death by the pressures of hell upon Him. You remember when He was on the boat on the Sea of Galilee? He tried to do away with Him by the tempest that came on the storm. You recall he laid it upon the hearts of the Jewish people to try to stone Him to death, when He said "I and the Father are one." And He was absolutely right because He is God. Jesus Christ is God.

And so the attempts of the devil have been to do away with Christ, the seed of the woman. And then after Jesus had gone to the cross and had been raised from the dead and ascended back to the Father, you remember he now begins to work against the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the body of Christ. And so he is operating today, and the age is getting darker and darker as far as spiritual apostasy and spiritual declension are concerned, and this will continue, as Jesus tells us and Paul tells us, until Christ comes for His church again. Now, you remember in our last study together, we shared with you that the devil now begins to attack the body of Christ, which is the New Testament church. And so in Second Corinthians, chapter 4 in verses one through six, the Apostle Paul makes it very clear that the devil blinds the minds of people who do not believe, less the light of the glorious gospel should penetrate their thinking, and they should become

Christian people. We see this around us on every side. I see it in this part of Southern California, just as you do where you happen to be living. People who have heard the gospel time and time again, who know exactly what they need to do in order to have everlasting life, but my friend, they don't want to do it. Their wills are set against God, and they say, "I'm going to live my own life. I don't want Jesus Christ interfering with me!" This is literally what they're saying, even though they don't count them in so many words. And so the gospel is not penetrating some minds, but thank God, in many, many other areas of the world and the United States, there is literally spiritual revival going on. And we thank God for the privilege of knowing Jesus Christ.

But, the body of Christ is subject to the attack of the devil in his attempt to do away with the message and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you remember, Paul makes it very, very clear in Second Timothy, chapter four and verses one to four, that there would come a day, and that would be toward the end of the age of the church, when many, many people will depart from the faith. They will not want to listen to the gospel. They'd rather go into astrology. They'd rather go into séances. They'd rather go into many, many other things instead of the pure, unadulterated gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Satan is very, very busy within the church today. Paul, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, warned the early churches that there would be such a day of falling away, a day of apostasy. And apostasy is a departure from true Christian doctrine, and can only take place within the sphere of Christian profession at the devil's instigation. The world has nothing to apostasies from, but the church does. And this has taken place in many, many areas. Now, he says in the book of Timothy first Timothy 4:1 to 5, second Timothy chapter 4:1 to 4, the difficult days will come upon the church before Jesus Christ returns again. And he said they will depart from the faith, many of them. Now, this can only mean that some depart

from the faith of the truth, as revealed in the word of God. It does not mean that as individuals that they were ever true Christians to begin with. Now you can be a member of a local church, my friend, and not really be a Christian.

I know people who belong to church and who are even trustees and leaders in churches who, if you were to talk to them about salvation and Jesus Christ, they would say, well, I don't believe in that. I think the blood of Christ is foolish, or I think the cross of Christ is nonsense. And yet they're leaders in the church. Well, my friend, what is the gospel all about? Why did the church ever come into existence? It came into existence because man is lost. He needs a savior. Jesus Christ came into the world to become that Savior at the cross. He arose again from the dead. He's coming back again. This is the message that the church has been commissioned to preach. We're to evangelize the lost, and we're to build up the believers in the most holy faith. But my friend, as I said on our last broadcast, think of the churches today that are no longer preaching the gospel and the word of God. This is a deep seated tragedy. I trust, my friend that you with your family, for whom you're going to give an accounting to God spiritually, I hope that you and your family are in a Bible preaching, Bible-believing church where the gospel of Jesus Christ is really, really preached. You owe it to your children to have them in that kind of a Sunday school and in that kind of a church, wherever you happen to be living. And so he goes on to tell us in the book of Timothy of the problems of the church as we get nearer to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then in second Timothy, chapter four and in verses one to four, he has this to say "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, and His kingdom."

Preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers because they have itching ears, and they shall run away- turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto the fables.

Now, Paul says this would be a prevalent spiritual condition in Christendom as we get nearer to the coming of Jesus Christ in that glorious moment. Now, Paul's own days were numbered physically. He knew that very shortly he was going to physically die, and so he writes to young Timothy to indicate to him that he must be very, very careful, that the devil is busy seeking to thwart the purposes of God when it comes to the Church of Jesus Christ. He tells us to preach the word of God. And Paul, here, is setting forth five rules for a successful minister. The most important one, as it should be, is mentioned first in second Timothy chapter 4, beginning with verse 1. The word of God is to be expounded and explained to the people. Now, this is the primary business of the pastor of a church; not to preach on social action, not to tell the people how to vote in the election, not primarily to deal in entities that are not in keeping with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But, you know, when a man loses his message, as a preacher, then he goes into a lot of other things. And the people starve spiritually because there is no food. And so, first of all, a preacher is to preach the word of God, explain it, and expounded it. Knowledge and a proper use of the Bible is the only weapon to defeat the devil. And then he is to be instant, that is, there is to be a sense of urgency associated with a spreading of the gospel in his life.

The Christian is to be prepared to give a good word for Jesus Christ at every moment. And, we read that he is to reprove, and thereby convince men of the truth of redemption and their need for it. And he's to rebuke, which implies authority and the right to declare what is wrong, and the

need to declare that which is right. And then he's to exhort. It means to call believers to one side with a purpose of helping them in a time of spiritual need. Now, all of this is the business of the faithful preacher of the gospel and the pastor of a church. But he said there will come a day when people will not endure sound doctrine. Satan may not be able to prevent the true minister from practicing what Paul preaches, but he can try to influence the members of the congregation so that they will not listen to and heed the words of the preacher when he gives it to them. They will seek the kind of preaching that appeals to their own sinful carnal desires, and which deals very gently with their faults and vices. You see, this is what people want. They don't want to be told that a need of Christ and so on. And Paul said this would prevail as we get nearer to the Lord's coming. And so the devil would be busy, as a roaring lion. He would be the accuser of the believers, and he would do his best on every hand to thwart the purposes of God relative to the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the body of Christ.

Now, apostasy may be extensive, but Jesus Christ is able to keep the believer from falling into it. The body of Christ, which is the church, is promised victory in every assault by the devil, and Satan as the author of all slander, but the Lord Jesus Christ is an advocate who never sleeps. But He is always watching and keeping the believer in Jesus Christ. And so we need to remember that as we get nearer to the Lord's coming, it will become more and more evident that the devil's time is running short and running out. And he's going to do his best in great supreme efforts to do away with God's purposes through Jesus Christ in the church. And I think we need to remember that. And if we're cognizant of it, it will make a vast difference in our attitudes toward the preaching of the gospel. Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this privilege of being together for just a moment. We thank Thee that Thou art the God of the believer through Jesus

Anderson: The Conflict of the Ages #23 and #24

Christ, our Lord. And in this moment, we pray that Thou will open our hearts to thy truth. May we understand it's deeper and more glorious meaning, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake, amen.