

THE PRINCE OF THE WORLD JUDGED

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning February 13th, 1859

By Mister JAMES WELLS

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

Volume 1 Number 7

“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” John 16:11

WE have, in connection with the subject, we have this morning to advance, noticed the beginning of the work of the Blessed Spirit in convincing the world of sin; that is, the world which God loves, the world which Christ died for, and the world which will ultimately be saved. I have before observed that the Lord has taken all his people in their lowest position, namely, under sin, under unbelief; and the Holy Spirit therefore convinces them of sin, because they do not believe on Christ; and that conviction of sin will lead to a belief in God's word. But, then, this could not save the soul; this is that kind of faith which it is the duty of all men, as I have before observed, to render to God; it is the duty of all men to believe in God's word; and the Holy Ghost, therefore, will take care that the people of God shall not be deficient in this respect; so that they shall have that faith or belief in God's word, which it is the duty of all to render to God. But then this faith is not the faith that saves the soul; this faith is not the faith that can bring us into fellowship in a saving way with the blessed God. Therefore, the Savior goes on, and “of righteousness, because I go to my Father.” So that the Holy Spirit does not merely convince of sin, in the general sense of the word, and give us a persuasion of the truth of God's word, but he carries on his work, deepens these convictions, opens up the ground, upon which the Savior went unto the Father, that it was on the ground of his finished work. And then, when the Holy Spirit brings the soul thus far, he leads it on still further to see where in the prince of this world is judged, finally overturned and finally defeated. So, we have, in this description of the work of the Holy Spirit an illustration of the Apostle's words, He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Now, the enemy in our text is called “The prince of this world.” I notice the subject then this morning under these four ideas; first, *the character of Satan*; secondly, *the limitations that he is under*; thirdly, *his judgment*; and, fourthly, *his final defeat*.

First: I notice then, first, THE CHARACTER OF SATAN. Now he is called in our text, “The prince of this world.” The original word will mean a person who stands first; a prince, therefore, is a person of priority, a person who stands first. And, so when the fall took place, Satan took the place of the blessed God. If the fall, or if sin, could have consisted in something different,

something that was not apostacy from God, then sin would not have been so deadly as it is. Let me here just observe then, as to the character of Satan, in the first place, he is an apostate from God. I think there is no Scripture that throws more light upon this than that in Jude, where it is said of the angels that fell, that “they kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation; whom he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Now look back at that Scripture again, that “they kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation;” clearly showing that the Lord had allotted them a certain position, a certain habitation; but that was not enough for Satan; he, by some means that we cannot ascertain lifted himself above God; for the apostle, when describing to Timothy the kind of person suited to be a bishop; says, “not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil;” showing that pride, was in this matter, and that this pride was against God. Therefore, Satan apostatized, he went away from that order of things in which he was originally placed and of all kinds of evil, there is no evil to equal this; there is nothing that so steeps the soul in malice against God as apostacy. Now Satan himself being an apostate from God, when he came into the garden of Eden his object there was to make Adam and Eve like himself; and he succeeded in so doing, so that they did apostatize, and they put Satan’s falsehoods into the place of God’s truth. Now as I just hinted, if sin could have consisted in something else, and not in apostacy from God, then sin would not have been so deadly as it is. For instance, suppose Adam and Eve could, if such a thing could have been, if Adam and Eve, as man and wife, could have had some disagreements between themselves before the fall took place, and had held some disputations, and had become angry with each other, which is a thing not altogether unknown between a man and wife now days; supposing such a thing could have been before the fall took place, why such faults as these would not have constituted apostacy. But Satan knew this, he knew it was no use to set them at variance with one another. No, he said, I must take them from God’s law; I must infuse into their minds my own falsehood, and make them what I have made myself. I was discontented with my first estate, and with my habitation and therefore I lifted myself above God’s order of things; I disdained his order of things; I left his order of things; and now I will get them to do the same. If I can get them to leave this order of things, and substitute my falsehood for God’s truth, that will steep their souls in malice against God’s truth, it will steep their souls, double-dye their souls in this malice, and it will be a dye that nothing but a Savior’s blood can extract; it will so steep their souls in malice against God, that I shall have them entirely under my control; as though Satan would say, and I shall thus become the prince of this world. Apostacy then is the character of every man by nature. All of us, therefore, in the fall are deadly apostates from God; and the result is that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Satan having succeeded thus far, we see how wonderfully he prevailed over men, and to what an awful extent, when he had once got them into a state of apostacy into a deadly enmity against God. See this in Cain; see how Satan succeeded in the old world, how he kept the old world away from God; he caused them to employ all their physical, and all their mental, and all their moral powers against their Maker; and their delight was to slay the saints of God; so that when the flood took place there appeared to be but very few remaining in the world, only Noah and six with him; for out of eight saved in the ark, one was an ungodly man; and therefore, the earth, we read, “was filled with violence;” which word violence must not be taken as a general term merely, but it must be understood that, there was some particular object of that violence, and the object was God’s truth, God’s people, and God’s way; for “all flesh had corrupted his way.” So much for Satan before the flood. Then after the flood, when God had ordered the different tribes of the earth, to the different parts of the earth, Satan prevailed upon men to rebel against their distribution into different lands by a kind Providence, and got them to build a tower whose top should reach as it

were to heaven, lest they should be scattered upon the earth, and fall in with God's order of things. So, he became the prince of this world, stood first with all nations of the earth. If we look at ancient nations in the light of the Scriptures, what an awful development there is of malice and enmity against God! Does the Son of God come? Satan succeeds in getting poor, blind, deluded men to slay the Son of God. Does he rise from the dead? Do his apostles preach the gospel? Satan still goes on, and succeeds in getting men to persecute them, and to work out their own entire destruction. And so, it is in the day in which we live. The success of Satan in our day is tremendous; it is really frightful when we look, for instance, at the population of the globe, supposing it to be about ten hundred million and only about two hundred million that profess Christianity. And then, when we come to those nations so called Christians, why we see men received and looked upon as ministers of the gospel whom I believe most solemnly to be nothing but ministers of Satan, for they are at war with God's sovereignty and with God's truth. So that we live in a day when Satan is succeeding most frightfully not only in the nations of the earth generally, but also even in those lands where the Bible is, and where the gospel by some few is faithfully preached. His powers of deception are very great. He is a mighty being; his intellects are gigantic; he is no fool in one respect; you may depend upon it he is not blind; it is men that he blinds, while he himself carries out his own deadly and malicious designs.

Second: But, while he is thus the prince of this world, and stands first with the world in some shape or another, still he is under, as I shall now show, LIMITATIONS. First, by the power of God. And I may just observe, that the dominion which Satan originally obtained over us, lies in that one thing; I am aware there are many other minor respects in which he had dominion over us; but never lose sight of the essential, that the respect in which he had dominion first over us, was that of getting us to apostatize from God; there is the point, mark that. He cares not how moral we are, he cares not how pious we are, he cares not how righteous we are before men, he cares not how sincere we are, so that he can but keep us away from the truth. Therein, lies the work of Satan, to keep a man away from the truth. But he is under restraint, first, by the power of God. There is something very sweet to the Christian in the idea of God's power. The power of our God is almighty, it is everlastingly almighty. My hearers, if his love accord with his power, which it does, what will he not do for the objects of his love? David was well versed in this, when he said, "The Lord is my light, and my salvation; Jehovah is the strength of my life; whom shall I fear?" So then, wherever Satan is at work, in whatever way or by whatever agency, however deep his plans, or however craftily he may carry on his work, there is one that perceives his craftiness, there is one whose power is almighty, and to that power we look as did the church of old, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord;" awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. "Are you not it that has cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Bless the Lord, then, having the everlasting God on our side, we need not fear this enemy; he cannot destroy those that the Lord intends to preserve. He has possession, and that by vast legions, of a poor man; and he keeps that man among the tombs; and that man wounds himself, and does himself all sorts of mischief. There he is, with a thousand degrees of madness in him; and yet, this poor Gadarene was watched over carefully by the Lord; the same as you were, when you were in a state of nature, and the same as I was, when I was in a state of nature; so that, though others can be destroyed, you cannot be destroyed. Jesus comes that way, and asks the poor man; "What is your name?" Ah! it is difficult to tell in some of the words there spoken, who is the speaker, the devil or the man; for they are so mixed, the devil being in the man, and the man in the devil. There he was in the presence of Christ, the man was uneasy, and the devil was uneasy, and they were all uneasy together; so that you can hardly tell

which it was of the two; Never mind; that confusion shall not last long. The devil trembled at the Savior's presence; and just one touch of the finger of his power, cast out the whole legion of devils, and the poor man was brought into his right mind, clothed, sitting at the feet of Jesus and entreating the Lord that he might be with him. But, no: "Go home to your friends, and show how great things God has done for you." Ah, then, how encouraging this is, to look to him whose power is almighty, and whose arm is raised for our defense. Then again, is there a poor woman whose daughter is grievously troubled with the devil? The devil has some mysterious hold of her; and she is a woman of Canaan, having no ancestral right to expect, according to the notion of the Jews, any favor from the Messiah. Well, she says, I will go to him; I will call to him. He did not answer her: very discouraging; and then his disciples sought that she might be sent away. She would not go away. And then, when he did speak, he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Well, that could not stop her: she would not go away. Well, Lord, there is the devil; I cannot manage him. People tell me, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." I have tried, Lord, but here I am, as bad off as ever: my daughter the same as ever; and I can't get out of the trouble. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Still she would not go away, no. Well, she said, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." See then, how the power of Satan is restrained by the power of the blessed God. And is there a poor woman bowed down eighteen years by satanic power? And what is satanic power? Why, sin is Satan's power. He will lay hold of some sin of your heart, some sin of your life; he will bring the circumstance, he will lay it upon your heart; he will bow you down, and try to persuade you, that you would have been a Christian if it had not been for this; that God would love you if it were not for this; that you would have been happy if it were not for this; and thus he will bow you down, so that you cannot get away from it. That's all the devil, and the pride of your heart together. Well, Jesus came, cast the devil out, made the woman upright; the people murmured at it; but the Savior said, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Thus, then, when we are made to contrast the power of God with the power of Satan, how contemptible does the old serpent look! But, secondly, he is limited, not only by the power of God, but by something also not exclusive of that power, but inclusive of that power. He is limited by that which man cannot endure to be limited by the devil hates it, and men hate it. What is he limited by? By a certain order of things; not only by the abstract power of God, but by a certain order of things. Now there is an order of things in the garden of Eden; says the devil, I don't care for that; it is conditional; I will stop man from performing the condition; I will alter that; I will upset him there. There is an order of things in Judea; the Jews are established in a temporal covenant; says the devil, I don't care for that; I'll bring some of my gods among them; I will get them away from the true God; I will get them to set up something in the place of God's truth, and then they will go on in idolatry, and forfeit their land, and bring themselves to ruin. But presently in comes, "Whom he did foreknow!" Oh, says the devil, I don't like the sound of that at all. "He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Oh, says the devil, there is a chain that binds me here. If I go to the first thing, God's foreknowledge, I cannot blind the eyes of the Almighty; I cannot hide from his eyes the objects of his heart's love; he has loved his people with an eternal love. Ah, that foreknowledge; he has recorded their names in the book of eternal life; there I cannot reach them; he has predestinated them to be just like his dear Son, and there I cannot reach them; I cannot reverse that decree, I cannot turn back his outstretched

arm; there I am defeated; there I am beaten; there I am altogether nonplussed. "Them he also called;" and I know from experience, says the devil, that when he does call a sinner by his grace I am dislodged immediately; when I go out of a man's heart I can take the key with me, and come back when I please; but when Jesus Christ comes and casts me out of a man's heart, he takes the key of that man's heart to himself; I go back and visit him again, but I can never dwell with him as I did before; I can never make him what he was before; he is called by grace, and that calling is based upon foreknowledge and absolute and eternal decree. And then, says the devil, that provokes me even more. Now then, poor sinner, I have called you to the knowledge of your sinner-ship, and here you are, internally and externally, originally and practically, in every point, you are a sinner. It's no use, Joshua, you may depend upon it there's nothing but despair for you; look at your filthy garments, and look at you altogether, all despair. But the Lord stepped, in, and said, The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Take, away the filthy garments from him, and I will clothe him with change of raiment." "Whom he called, them he also justified." Ah, says the devil, I'm defeated again. Now what will he do with this; justified people? He will glorify them. Ah, says the devil, I don't like that, *justified*; and so, you will find all our bishops in their sermons, they don't like this gospel chain at all; it limits them too much. So, you will find our duty-faith men, our low Calvinists, they don't like to be limited by that. Ah, say they, We don't dispute about the five points; it's all very well to put these great truths into that dry intellectual form; and you, cunning fellow, led by the devil, you think, I suppose, you are going to deceive us; but you are mistaken, for we are not ignorant of the wiles of the devil. Why, your duty-faith men, that profess to love these truths, they see but little in them, and therefore they don't speak much of them; they see no vital, affectionate interest in them, and therefore they set them aside as much as they can. Depend upon it, the devil is transformed into an angel of light. Well then, he is limited by the power of God, and by this order of things. There is no part where he can get in to touch you. Can he take away God's, foreknowledge? No. Can he intrude into his decree concerning: you? No. Can he condemn those whom God justifies? No; Can he destroy those whom God glorifies? No. Look then at Satan as the prince of this world; look at his character as apostate; look at the oneness with himself into which he has brought us by the fall, apostates; but look at the power of God that restrains him; above all look at this new covenant order of things that entirely defeats him. Jesus having sealed this new covenant order of things, it may well be said, that he has "bruised the serpent's head;" it may well be said that he has "wounded the Dragon." Depend upon it, the old dragon was never so hurt in his feelings, as in what Christ has done. Ah, says he, it has hurt my feelings very much, and if I am speaking this morning to anyone who is led captive by Satan, perhaps you are sitting and grinding your teeth at what I am saying. Oh dear, I will never come here again. That is the devil that teaches you that. Ah, my hearer, it is Satan; may you be aware of his devices, and remember that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," against, that very order of things by which alone we can be saved, Satan then is limited by this new covenant order of things. When the apostles went forth and preached, Satan fell as lightning from the heavens; they preached those truths that he cannot overthrow. But, thirdly, he is limited not only by the power of God, and by that new covenant order of things, of which I have spoken, but he is limited also by his own finitude. He is not infinite as to his mode of existence, nor as to his knowledge. It is pretty clear that Satan cannot see always how things will turn out. If he could foresee how things would turn out, he has done a great many stupid things. How useless would it have been for him to incite the Jews to crucify Christ, had he known that he would rise again from the dead, and that the last evil to himself would be worse than the first. It is very evident he was blinded there. Apostacy from God is a wonderfully blinding thing. God, in addition to the apostacy

under which we all are by nature, sends to some an additional kind of apostacy; "He has sent them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie." that shall carry them on into a deeper, a greater, a more fearful gulf of apostacy. But even if Satan could have foreseen the result of his getting Judas to betray the Savior, perhaps even then his malice was so great, that though he knew he himself would suffer by it, and have the sin to answer for, and be the more deeply damned; yet to gratify his infernal malice, he would nevertheless do it. Hence, there are many people now that speak against God's truth, and against God's ministers; they know they are wrong, though they don't know the truth, yet they know they ought not to indulge in the spirit they do; but then it gratifies Satanic revenge. Again, it is just possible, if he could have foreseen that Job would have had twice as much at the end, as he had at the beginning, and the devil would prove to be a liar, he said that Job would "curse God to his face," whereas Job blessed God, it is very likely he would not have taken that step. Ah; says Satan, where are you now? Your property gone, your health gone, your family gone, and indeed your character gone, for nobody will believe you are a good man now; nobody will believe but that there must be something wrong somewhere, or else you would not be afflicted like this. And even poor Job began to join in the despair, and cursed the very day of his birth. But the time came when the Lord turned the captivity of Job, proved the devil to be a liar, defeated his plans, put him under Job's feet, thus judging the enemy. And thus, the Lord endeared himself to Job ten thousand times more than ever he was endeared before. Perhaps, if Satan could have foreseen how his persecuting the apostles in Judea would drive them into the Gentile world, and set those nations on fire with that vitality of eternal truth that would go living on, travelling on, shining on, conquering on, down to the end of time, he might not have been so eager at his work? So, he is limited then by his finitude; he cannot be in all places at once; he cannot foresee everything. Still he is a dreadful enemy and he is more among the people of God, either personally or by his fellow apostates, than among any other people. Whenever you hear slandering, backbiting, and so on, some that carry on that trade; be assured the devil is there. Hence that Scripture where the Apostle says, "Not slanderers;" the original word there is "not devils;" so that he knew that all such, in such conduct, were one with the devil. Oh, how hard he strives among the people of God to bring about divisions and confusions. I look through the land of England now why nearly one half of our churches, little churches about the country, are three parts of their time occupied in some, disputation or another arising from slander or backbiting; or perhaps there are persons that throw such impediments in the minister's way that he can never preach with spirit or with freedom. Very few, I believe, understand thoroughly, what a minister's feelings are, very few; there are some, it is true. And the remedy after all is for the minister to fall back upon his motive, to fall back upon God's truth, and say, "I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you (as far as I have known it,) all the counsel of God." Therefore, all the divisions are of Satan, my hearers; he it is that sows the tares among the wheat. Thus, then, he is limited by the power of God, by the order of things the Lord has established, and by his own finitude. But he is (as I have said), a dreadful enemy; I am no match for him, not the slightest. I am no more in his hands than a straw or a feather; he could toss me about as a mere nothing. But give me oneness with Jesus, then I am a match for him; give me the presence of the blessed God; then I am a match for him; give me the Holy Spirit resting upon my soul and causing me to triumph in Christ; then I can resist the devil, then he flees from me; then I can rejoice in the blessed freedom that I have in Christ Jesus. Now after noticing his dreadful character, apostate, the prince of this world, it is a world of apostates and the majority, of the Christian world consists of a kind of double apostates, originally in Adam and apostates from God's truth; and they thereby become a double kind of

apostates; and they will be; doubly damned; damned as apostates with the first Adam, and damned as belonging to the apostate church.

Third: But I notice thirdly, THE JUDGMENT OF THE ENEMY. His original judgment was a judgment of degradation and defeat. "Upon your belly shall you go:" that is a term of degradation, to denote he should be always groveling. You will understand the meaning of it; if you can't, I'll make you somehow or another. You know when a thief wants to enter an orchard to rob it, he creeps through the hedge; he dares not come in boldly and openly. When a thief comes into your house he creeps in; when hypocrites want to come into a church they will cringe, and turn, and twist, and seem wonderfully pious, and they deceive us and when they get in they turn out to be slanderers, gossips, hypocrites, contemptible to the last degree. We have had some of this stamp in our church; and I'm not sure that we have not some now. "Upon your belly shall you go;" it means that cringing, sycophant sort of way in which a thief creeps along. And you will find that to be true of all sorts of error. There is a man creeping along to kiss the Pope's great toe; that's of the devil, there is a poor slave of a clergyman, when he meets his bishop, he trembles infinitely more than he ever trembled at God's name, or God's truth, or than he ever trembled at anything that is eternal. But the man that is taught of God does not creep along like that; he looks up, "We were bold to speak unto you the gospel of God." "The righteous is bold as a lion;" he stands like an iron pillar, like a brazen wall, like a defended city. Though he has his mortal weaknesses, like all, yet he stands firm by the truth, endures whatever cross there is for him to endure, pours contempt upon the shame, glories in being reproached for Christ's sake, walks on his heavenly way, stands out bold for God's truth, no cringing for him. "And dust you shall eat." Dust, you all know, means something earthly. Universal redemption is an earthly doctrine, it is not of God; freewill is an earthly doctrine; duty-faith is an earthly doctrine. All these earthly doctrines are the dust the devil lives upon, and all his followers too. "Dust you shall eat." never change his diet all the days of his life. "But there shall be enmity between you and the woman." There is a woman (Revelation 12) that I intended to describe this morning, but I am afraid I shall not get so far as that. "There shall be enmity," and so there is, only the enmity on the one side is lawful, the enmity on the other side is unlawful. Ah, says one, I know how you are going to make that out; you are going to make out that it is lawful for you to hate, but not for others to hate. Well, it is lawful for me to hate error; it is lawful to hate every false way; I never felt my conscience troubled at that, never, and never shall. But it is not scriptural for you to hate the truth, to hate God's way, to hate that order of things that I have glanced at this morning, and by which Satan is defeated, our souls saved, and God glorified. There is enmity; they hate the truth, and in so doing they are wrong; we love the truth and hate error, and in so doing we are right, and everybody else is wrong. Judgment, "He shall bruise your head;" Christ Jesus shall bruise your head; he shall meet you boldly; he shall not meet you in some cringing, creeping; crafty sort of way; no, he shall meet you boldly. Already Jesus has caused it to be written, (Isaiah 1) "Who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is my adversary? let him come near to me." Let us stand together; let me be put to the test, and see whether the devil can conquer me, whether the devil is stronger than I am, whether he can close my eyes in everlasting sleep; whether he can shut the mouth of the tomb upon me, so that I shall rise no more; whether he can sever me from my disciples, so that I shall not return to see them again; whether, while my disciples shall be temporarily scattered, he can scatter them forever. "The Lord God will help me therefore, shall I not be confounded; therefore, have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be, ashamed." Here is no cringing here. "He shall bruise your head;" meet you boldly.

I intended this morning to have ran through the twelfth chapter of Revelation, in order to set before you the various gradual steps by which the enemy is FINALLY DEFEATED; but I will, if spared, do that next Lord's-day morning.