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SATAN'S FINAL EFFORT TO DECEIVE

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Number Seventeen: "**Satan's Final Effort to Deceive**,"--another look at the enemy's last, most diabolical attempt to mislead us into joining his side in the great controversy over the character and government of God.

The book of Revelation describes not only God's last pleading with His children (chapter 14) but also Satan's final effort to deceive (chapter 13). Though Jesus said that He "saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18), the defeated enemy of God and man still "prowls around like a roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8), knowing that his time is short (Revelation 12:12). The one whose insane desire to be God led to the war up in heaven will at last seem to enjoy complete success. "All who dwell on the earth will worship him"--except those who prefer to believe Jesus' testimony about His Father (Revelation 12:17) and so remain loyal to God (Revelation 14:12). Naturally these loyal ones are the object of Satan's special efforts to deceive.

If even angels could be taken in, how can mere humans hope to resist Satan's most cunning persuasion? History warns of over-confidence. Even God's chosen people in the promised land were misled into crucifying their Redeemer and then hurrying home to keep the Sabbath holy. They read their Bibles, paid their tithe, watched their diet--and hated Jesus' picture of the Father! Is it possible we could be similarly deceived?

Just as through the centuries God has demonstrated His trustworthiness, so Satan has displayed his ability and willingness to deceive. His counterfeit of the first coming of Christ in the "mystery religions" should alert us to expect brilliant counterfeits of the second coming in the end. Since truth and evidence are not on Satan's side, he has countered with the widely held belief that religious faith requires no evidence, that religious claims need not be investigated. Such subjects as sin, the atonement, the cross, the law, the judgment, Christ's intercession, the destruction of the wicked, have all been bent to support his misrepresentations of our God. How can we prepare to resist his final efforts to deceive?

Welcome to the seventeenth of our conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger view, the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. The topic for our conversation this time is "**Satan's Final Effort To Deceive**". The question for this evening is: How should we prepare ourselves to resist Satan's last, most diabolical, attempt to convince us of the truthfulness of his lies about God and persuade us to join his side as the great controversy comes to its end?

The book of Revelation, as we all know, describes not only God's last pleading with His children in Revelation 14, but Revelation 13 describes Satan's final effort to deceive us into accepting his lies as the truth and thus sharing with him in the final disastrous consequences of his revolt as described in the third angel's message.

When Hitler knew that he had lost the war, he announced his intention to bring the whole third reich down about his ears in destruction. The world said he was mad. Satan knows too that

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he has lost the war. His only purpose now is to bring us down with him in destruction in the end. When Jesus said, "it is finished!", Satan knew much of the meaning of that. He knew he had lost his case. He knew that the falsity of his charges had been exposed before the whole family of the universe. He knew that he had failed to provoke the Son of God to anger and retaliation.

How easily Jesus could have used His power to blot out His tormentors. He knew that if He used His power the people would be pleased. They would follow Him, but for the wrong reason. The people were looking for a Messiah that would use His power to conquer their enemies and set up their earthly kingdom in which they would rule over the world. What a temptation it was to Christ to show His power and His majesty and come down off the cross and blot out the Roman soldiers; to see all the people fall at His feet and worship Him; and to hear the cry go out, "The Messiah has come! The Messiah has come!"--all through Judea and the countries beyond. How rewarding that might have seemed for a moment.

So Satan sought to break down Jesus' trust in His Father and in His mission to reveal the truth about our God. The truth is that the things that God desires the most--love and trust, real peace and real freedom--are not produced by a show of force or power, or by terrifying people into falling on their faces in fear. So in a fury of frustration, Satan had to watch, as, instead of becoming angry, Jesus said to His tormentors, "I forgive you." (See Luke 23:34) Satan watched Jesus saying to John, "Please look after Mother." (See John 19:27) Then incredibly, His saying to the thief who had been so misbehaving before, "I would be pleased to remember you when I come into My kingdom." (see Luke 23:43)

Where now were Satan's charges that God is arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe? All the other questions that had been raised about God's character and government had all been clearly answered, not in claims, but in very costly and painful demonstration. The angels and the universe got the message. They have been celebrating ever since.

I have often wondered how Satan must feel when he hears the angels singing incessantly about God's righteousness. Note a few passages in the book of Revelation. How do you think Satan feels when he hears Revelation 4:8,11; 15:3,4 (NIV) "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty...You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power....Great and marvelous are Your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear (or reverence) you, O Lord, and bring glory to Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed." (parentheses supplied)

Note, the subject is God's own righteousness. That is the issue in the great controversy. In the narrower view--in which we are more preoccupied with what God has done for you and me, important as that is,--we would picture them not singing about God's own righteousness, but about what He has done for you and me. You notice they are singing about His own righteousness. God has been accused of being unrighteous and unworthy of the faith and worship of His children throughout the universe. That is Romans 3:25 and 26. Jesus died to demonstrate the righteousness and the trustworthiness of our God. Satan listens to this all the time.

Even before the victory on the cross, as Jesus watched the disciples gradually learning the truth about His Father, He said that He saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. Look at Luke 10:18 (RSV), "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

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It was insane of the adversary in the first place to begin this war over his desire to be worshipped as God. Surely it is insane for him to continue this war, now that he knows that he has lost. But since no one in the universe is willing to listen to his charges any more, (the rest of the universe already knows the truth) he concentrates his destructive efforts on us here on this planet. Only here are any of us willing to listen, even some of us to agree. So the warning of Revelation 12:12, (GNB) "Be glad, you heavens, and all you that live there! But how terrible for the earth and sea! (That is where we live) For the Devil has come down to you, and he is filled with rage, because he knows that he has only a little time left." (parentheses supplied) Compare with that, Peter's warning in 1 Peter 5:8,9 (GNB) "Be alert, be on watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Be firm in your faith and resist him."

As we all know, the apostle John warns that Satan's final efforts to deceive will apparently be awarded with complete success for the whole world is described as worshipping him--the very thing he has wanted all along. Look at the familiar passage in Revelation 13:5,7,8,10. (GNB) "The beast (you know how he is identified in that chapter) was allowed to make proud claims which were insulting to God (those are the blasphemous claims)...It was allowed to fight against God's people and to defeat them...All people living on earth will worship it, except those whose names were written before the creation of the world in the book of the living...This calls for endurance and faith on the part of God's people." (parentheses supplied) That verse is in Revelation 13, but we usually think of those words in Revelation 14:12, don't we? That appeal is made more than once. The closing up of the great controversy, Satan's final effort to deceive, calls for endurance and faith on the part of God's people.

Naturally those who remain loyal to God are the special target of Satan's final effort to deceive. Revelation 12, the chapter that first mentions the war up in heaven, describes these people, the loyal ones, as being the special objects of Satan's wrath. He goes to make war on these who are called the remnant...the ones left over, the few. Notice Revelation 12:17 (GNB). These people who are the object of his special wrath are "All those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus." They do not accept Satan's lies.

If we count ourselves among God's loyal people, knowing that we will be the special object of his effort to deceive, we would do well to notice Satan's successes through the centuries in deceiving, especially saints. He doesn't tempt saints into the more usual gross indulgences--the things that saints would never think of doing. Rather we need to notice the insidious methods he has used to turn even saints and angels against our Heavenly Father, even while they professed to be God's chosen people. You recall his success among the brilliant angels up in heaven. How could he possibly deceive them right in the very presence of the Father?

There is more recorded about Satan's deception of God's chosen people on this earth in the promised land. You remember that after the discipline of Babylon and the great revival and reformation that took place under Ezra and Nehemiah, God's people in the promised land never worshipped idols again. Oh, how they read their Bibles, paid their tithe, watched their diet, and were so very careful not to be contaminated by association with unbelievers. Oh how they waited for the coming of their Messiah, the Christ. You see they all were eager Adventists. More than that, they were Seventh-day Adventists, weren't they?

Yet, when Christ came to live among them, they denounced His picture of the Father as

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heretical and unbiblical. How could that be possible? They even said the Son of God had a devil, to be so describing His Father. Look at the words in John 8:48. (NIV) By the way, when we refer to the Jews, remember that Jesus was a Jew. Paul was a Jew. The apostles were Jews. The wonderful prophets were Jews. Where would we be but for the Jews? I hope we don't sound disrespectful when we look at how their failings were so similar to ours. "The Jews answered Him, `Aren't we right in saying that You are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?'" (parentheses supplied) Think of saying that the Lord had a demon, to be so describing God! While they said that the Lord had a devil, they seemed so devout, so eager to be known as God's true people. They were even working hard to win others to the truth.

You recall the very serious words of Jesus Himself as He commented on the worldwide evangelistic efforts of His people in those days. Look at Matthew 23:15,23,24. (GNB) "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You sail the seas and cross whole countries to win one convert, and when you succeed, you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are!" (Of course, they would win the convert to keep the Sabbath and all those other things, but he might still be a son of hell, as other versions say. So the Lord goes on to speak of how devout they were and how they subscribed to every detail of the blueprint.) "You give to God one tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice, mercy and honesty." (They had accepted Satan's picture of God and missed the whole point of God's use of these emergency measures and what God really wanted) "...Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink but swallow a camel!" (Parentheses supplied)

In all of this they were so concerned to be God's obedient saints. This caused a very serious problem for them on crucifixion Friday. It is mentioned in John 18:28. (GNB) "Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness (as they understood the blueprint required) the Jews did not enter the palace, they wanted to be able to eat the Passover." (Parentheses supplied) You think of what the Passover represented. They very devoutly wanted to partake of the Passover, and the crucifixion was indeed an interruption in their plans.

Since it was also Friday, there was one additional problem that faced them. This is mentioned in John 19:31. (GNB) "Now it was the day of Preparation (Friday) and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. (God's chosen people in the promised land would not think of failing to celebrate that special Sabbath in gratitude to God that He had been so good to them and they were His people, and they had such wonderful things to look forward to.) Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down." (Parentheses supplied) After the bodies were taken down, they hurried home to keep the Sabbath holy--perhaps the most insane thing in the history of the universe. Having nailed their Saviour to the cross, they ran home to keep the Sabbath holy in honor of the One they had just crucified.

These same people had watched the way Jesus behaved as He suffered. They heard Him say, "I forgive you. I forgive you." (see Luke 23:34) They had heard Him say to John, "Please look after Mother." (John 19:27) They had heard Him be so forgiving to that thief (see Luke 23:43) With what feeling Jesus had said, "Yes, you will be with Me in the kingdom." Jesus had behaved precisely as the Old Testament prophets had said He would. They had read those prophecies many times. But they were so deceived by Satan's lies that they were totally unmoved by this. Instead they understood that Jesus was the One Who had accepted Satan's lies about our God.

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At first Saul, later called Paul, shared the same picture of God. His evangelistic methods showed that he, too, had been deceived. He saw nothing wrong in using force or fear to win converts to the kind of God he worshipped.

Jesus had very serious words for hard working evangelists and soul-winners who are actually convincing people of the false picture of our God. What a devastating thing to find later on what one has been doing. Look at the words in Matthew 7:23 (GNB). "When the Judgment Day comes, many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord! In Your name we spoke God's message, by Your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!' Then I will say to them, 'I never knew you.' (We were never friends. You never really knew the kind of Person I was. By the way you misrepresented the truth to the people, you actually supported Satan's charges against Me and My Father)."

Now just as God in many and various ways has sought to reveal to us the truth, so in many and various ways, Satan has sought to keep us from seeing this truth and coming to know this truth that is so essential. He sought to deceive us into turning against this truth, even as we might be claiming to believe it. That is the perversity of it. It's important to remember that his special target is loyal saints.

History records that one of his most successful deceptions has been leading God's people into a certain grateful satisfaction that the Lord has blessed them with so much light that they really don't need to pursue it any more. Not that we would call that "pious satisfaction." We would condemn that as something we shouldn't do. We would rather call this "gratitude that God has favored us with so much truth" that "we become conservative and seek to discourage even further inquiry and further investigations." (CWE 39) Some of you recognize whose words I am quoting there.

Revelation 3 has a most serious message for such falsely secure saints. Look in Revelation 3:15-17. (GNB) "I know what you have done; (and you have worked very hard) I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, (just reasonably good and contented with your condition) I am going to spit you out of My mouth! (The word "spit", comes from the Greek **emeo**, from which we get emetic. Your version may say, "I am going to vomit you out of My mouth". We don't make our Heavenly Father angry, we make Him sick.) You say, 'I am rich and well off; I have all I need.' But you do not know how miserable and pitiful you are! (The Greek word for miserable means "worn out from hard work", trying so hard to please the Lord.) You are poor, naked, and blind." (Parentheses supplied)

Other saints are in danger of underestimating Satan's ability to deceive and confuse. I hear many saying, "There is no way I could be deceived when Satan comes as Christ in the last days. I have two or three things carefully stored away by which I will test him when he comes." They are such obvious things, that I doubt that the devil will treat us so gently. History is full of warnings of such overconfidence. For example, when Jesus suffered and died, and rose again, Satan knew that the great weight of evidence was against him. Therefore, something must be done to destroy the evidence. One of his most diabolical successes, very early in the first century, was in leading some to believe that Jesus did not really come in the flesh. He did not really suffer and really die. He had actually faked it all. There goes all the evidence. The group of people who believed that were known as the docetists. It comes from a Greek word that means, "it seems". They taught that Jesus only seemed to do those things. See how Satan

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sought to destroy the evidence.

Yet this idea was spreading in John's later years. He warned against the teachers of this heresy. Look at 1 John 4:1,2 (NIV). "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God (The Spirit who tells the truth): Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (Parentheses supplied) You might wonder why he chooses to mention that, except that we know historically that people were going around saying that Jesus had not really come in the flesh. John mentions this in many places. He even wrote his whole gospel to show that the One who came was really God.

But even before Christ came, Satan was at work to undermine and confuse the evidence by even counterfeiting the first coming of Christ. He accomplished this most notably in what are known as the "mystery religions". It is almost unbelievable unless you have read about them. Some of these began long before Christ came. The central figure was a dying, rising Saviour who had been supernaturally born, died a cruel and violent death, and then was exalted up to heaven there to mediate supernatural help to his followers on earth. Later he would return and resurrect them and annihilate all the forces of evil. Does that sound familiar? That isn't all. In those "mystery religions" they had Lord's Suppers. They had baptism and washing in the blood and many other things I could list if there were time.

One of the main researchers in this field was a professor at the University of Chicago who taught there just before I came there. His name is Shirley Jackson Case. He wrote a book entitled, *The Origins of Christian Supernaturalism*. In it he observes, that "of the Gentiles it might truly be said that there was no salvation without the shedding of blood." (cf. Heb. 9:22) They were doing this before Christ came. I brought his book along, so you might believe what I am telling you about these incredible mystery religions. Just to read a place or two--"Long before Christianity arose, there were many Gentile religions inviting those who felt the need of divine assistance for the inward man. The rites of the various mystery religions offered an especially good opportunity for the attainment of a new emotional experience, readily interpreted as an effective acquisition of fresh divine power. The stimulation of the senses by music and processions, the play upon the feelings attending various acts in connection with the rites of initiation, the pledge of secrecy solemnly imposed upon all the candidates, the wild orgies connected with some of the cults, all served to produce the desired emotional agitation. The necessity of presenting oneself voluntarily for membership as well as the purifications and the other preparatory acts only heightened the effect. Everything that was done happened to one as an individual. This strong emphasis on the personal relationship between the devotee and his 'god' gave precisely the sense of divine interest which alone could produce in needy humanity feelings of solace and satisfaction. Initiation into the mysteries was likened to the experience of death itself. It filled one with terror, but issued in triumph. It was easy for the members of the mystery cults to believe that they were under the protection of divinities who had successfully engaged in a mighty cosmic struggle with the forces of evil and men spoke of being born again, born unto eternity." p. 166-170

Does it sound familiar to you? I believe we shall see brilliant counterfeits of Christ's second coming. I believe we are seeing them already in great popular, excitable, apparently spiritual, religious movements that are sweeping all over the world by the means of these modern wonders of technology. I heard a preacher say the other day, now "every eye can see Him" (Rev. 1:7). Even the most important beliefs and teachings of Christianity are being bent to support Satan's position against our God. Even faith, the subject of sin, the atonement, the

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cross, law, judgment, Christ's intercession, the destruction of the wicked, all God's emergency measures, are being twisted just enough to obscure the real truth about our God.

Do you feel ready for this? Have we oversimplified? Are we in danger of being overconfident? Are we actually so interpreting these truths that we are leaving ourselves vulnerable and leading the people we win to be vulnerable with us? That is why next time we are going to talk about **"Why God Waits For His Children To Grow Up."** You could trust our God to wait for that.

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Maxwell: Mention was made as we walked out, of the text about how the Jews would sail the seas and cross whole countries to win one convert—not a million, just one. "And when you succeed you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are." As I looked through many versions, I didn't find one I liked just right, but I like this one for other reasons. Many versions say, "you make him twice a son of hell." Now, this is the word for the grave; it's simply a way of saying, not you're going to go to hell, as commonly understood these days. No, it just means a person of infernal thoughts and infernal attitudes.

Did any of the rest of you react to that, and did you look in your version when you— did you have a Bible in front of you, to see how else it's translated? I forget how the King James does it; is it "son of hell"? Something like that, or "son of perdition." There are different words used for it.

Venden: Somebody have a King James around here, right now? Let's see, this was the Good News Bible, wasn't it?

Maxwell: Yes. But you can tell what the intention is.

Venden: I think the question was, doesn't the text teach hell? Doesn't it teach the doctrine of hell? And at first glance, you may be tempted. . .

Maxwell: Many versions will just use the word "Hades," or "the grave," or something like that for this. What do you have in yours.

Venden: This is the New International, here; just a second— going to locate it in the— 23:15. Okay. Well I'm looking in chapter 22 and I'll never find the verse there.

Maxwell: Twenty-three. Of course, if you ask Matthew to find chapter 23, he'd wonder what on earth you're talking about because there were no chapters in those days; no verses, either.

Venden: "You make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

Maxwell: See; so it's just trying to find strong language to suggest that the convert was even worse than the people who tried to convert him, because they had the wrong picture. But then one would have to trace the word hell—Hades, the grave, Sheol—all through the Bible, to get the whole Biblical picture. And of course the common view of hell held now requires that the soul be immortal. It's conceded by many that the Bible does not support the immortality of the soul. I mentioned the book, I think, last time, The Fire That Consumes. Even that evangelical writer concedes that the Bible does not support the idea of an immortal soul. So you can't read that then into the word hell.

It's the way we're so often inclined to read our current ideas back into an old term. You think of what we read into the word "soul" through the years. And that's why many versions have abandoned the word "soul." As I've mentioned, in Genesis 2:7, "God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul." And because soul has come to mean this essence that can be wafted off to heaven without a body, they've dropped the word soul, because the Hebrew word doesn't mean that. And almost all versions now read, "God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being," "a living creature," or "man began to live."

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Whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, they all agreed. Because, see, we read things into the word soul, and we read things into the word hell, that you cannot sustain from Scripture. So this one verse does not teach that these converts were destined to go to hell as many people conceive of hell. Does that seem relatively clear?

Venden: Okay, now, was there another question that you want to touch on before we. . .

Maxwell: Oh, yes, there's another one; it's on the destruction of the wicked. Many questions during this time have been related to the final destruction. It really does reflect on the truth about God, doesn't it, what He does? But then some have raised the question as to why we have the picture that some live longer in the fire, and the suggestion here is that Satan so calloused by sin would naturally die last. However, if sin is by definition separation from God, you'd think that Satan and his angels would be the first to die.

Now what this represents is an attempt to create a model of the destruction of the wicked. And I think I know at least a dozen, by now, and they all contribute something; and I don't one know that answers all the questions, because there are some things in the equation we don't have, in the formula. We don't know what this life-giving glory of God is; it's a very wonderful power, and we're supposed to live in it, and we will be living in it during the millennium, and it won't hurt us at all— it's life-giving glory. We also don't know what sin does to people. We know it really changes them; we know that we pass on to our children what we call a fallen nature, or a weakened nature— not in specific details, but we're not the people Adam and Eve were. Something happened; sin changes us. If we knew what sin does to people, and if we knew more about the life-giving glory of God, we might be in a better position to understand why some, when exposed to this life-giving glory, live longer than others.

We have two unknowns in there, so I'm not concerned to say, I don't know why some live longer than others. There's only one thing I want to know for sure, absolutely, and that's how God is involved. If God is artificially keeping people alive in the fire to torment them and punish them, not that they might be disciplined, but just to hurt them, then He is truly the devil's picture of God. Call it justice, if you like; but we then worship a God who says, "You either love me, you either accept the plan of salvation, or I will slowly torture you to death," or "torture you and you'll never die." And that just cancels out completely— that is the ultimately vengeful, severe thing to do, unbelievably so.

So the question then arises why God raises the wicked at all in the end, and maybe that can come up again sometime. It has to be consistent with what God has paid such a costly, painful price to reveal and demonstrate to us. There is no vengefulness in Him at all.

Now, on the evening; there's a question way over there.

Comment: Does the devil resurrect a dead person?

Maxwell: Can Christ resurrect a dead person?

Comment: Can the devil resurrect a dead person?

Maxwell: Can the devil? Oh. No, I think he appears to do it, only.

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Comment: How?

Maxwell: Well, I've never been to a seance, and I don't intend to go, but they say this sort of thing happens in places like that.

Comment: Does that mean that the person thought to be dead is not dead?

Maxwell: Well, you remember when he seemed to bring up Samuel from the grave; and it was a fake. He's the one who fakes, you know. Samuel didn't come up.

Comment: But that was an evil spirit impersonating, you know, Samuel.

Maxwell: Well, this was Satan making it appear that he had resurrected the dead. That's all he can do; he cannot give life; he is not a life-giver; he's not God.

Comment: Does that mean, then, that the devil can resurrect a human being that maybe you and I know, but is not indeed that same person?

Maxwell: That's right; he will make it appear that he has resurrected this person; he cannot do it, he cannot give life. So he's not the one who resurrects the wicked at the end of the millennium; our heavenly Father resurrects the wicked— for some important purpose, because that will be painful. I'm sure the Lord would much rather practice euthanasia, wouldn't He? Or maybe just leave them asleep. Idi Amin, when he goes to sleep— why not leave him asleep? No, he'll be resurrected. Of course, maybe like Manasseh, he'll come around; let's give him opportunity. It may seem unbelievable, but if Manasseh could come across, so could Idi Amin.

Comment: You mentioned here in your discussion tonight about the glory of God. When this glory of God— is that a— what is the purpose, I mean, what does it do? Does it enlighten a person? Does it give them the ability to see things as they— in a true perspective?

Maxwell: Well, one would have to run all the way through the Bible, and look up all the references to the glory of God, and one would also notice how often it is associated with fire. On Mount Sinai, the glory of the Lord had the appearance of fire, it says specifically. There are a number of places there it talks like that: the glory of the Lord had the appearance of fire.

When Ezekiel saw the wheels within the wheels and wondered what it was, he noticed that it was apparently of infinite complexity. At the heart, he saw something that looked like a human being, calmly presiding over all this complexity. And there was great glory there and the appearance of fire. And he says, "such was the appearance of the likeness of"— that's twice removed, isn't it?— "such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

Then on Sinai, when Moses said, "Show me your glory"; and God says, "No man can see my glory and live." And Moses begged, and you remember, God says, "I'll put you in a cleft in the rock, and put my hand over you and show you my back." And then God caused his glory to pass by, and it was a description of his character.

So in some ways His glory is His glorious character, is everything that's glorious about our God. But some will say, "Well, it's just the character." Well then you have trouble with a lot of other passages; this life-giving glory that surrounds the person of God led Daniel to write that his

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throne was "fiery flames, it's wheels were burning fire, and a stream of fire issued and came forth from before him." And it's not a Hollywood set with little gas jets all over to impress the angels, you know; it surrounds Him with fire. This is the very presence of God; and the brilliant angels veil their faces in awe, as they stand in the presence of all that power and glory.

What I like about the way the Bible swings back and forth between calling His glory His infinite power, and calling it His infinitely perfect character is, I wouldn't want anybody to have all that power if He didn't have a perfect character. That's the thing; the two go together; infinite power and infinitely perfect character go together. He's the only one I would trust with all that power. You know, to think that God can speak and say, "I'll have a universe out there." We can't even create an atom; I mean, look at Him doing this— unbelievable. I still marvel at little babies; got one last one turning up, rather shortly; and it's absolutely wonderful to watch, and then see them grow up. We don't even know how to do that. We know we're somehow involved in a rather interesting way by the Lord's design, though we haven't been able to do this really on our own.

God can create a whole universe with people in it— create people out of nothing. That's the power that's there. Do you trust God with all that power? The God who could, if we were a little irreverent right now, send two she-bears in here, or maybe open up the floor right here and two or three of us go right down. You know, He's done that. Or fire come down— He's done this, too. Do you trust Him with all that power? So I like the other news of the kind of person God is.

The One who wields this power was tempted on the cross to use it to rescue Himself. You imagine how Jesus felt with so few followers; He only had his mother and Mary Magdalene, and He had— John was there, and He won a thief, and He won a centurion. And in the distance was a company of women; this is the Son of God after three and a half years of evangelism. Had His name come up before our conference committee for ordination, they might have suggested that He produce a little more fruitage before He consider being ordained to the ministry. I mean this is sad; how many had He won?

Now, if He'd only shown his power, you know— used some of these modern methods, you know. How people love power. I can't avoid watching so many of these religious programs on television. They're all built on power; that's what they're always talking about— power! Why, if the Lord had shown His majesty and power, even his cruelest persecutors would have been face down on the ground: "Ah, Messiah has come, Messiah has come!" It would have spread all over Judea and out through the rest of the Diaspora, and they would have flocked into Jerusalem to crown Him— absolutely marvelous.

He could have had it very easily, but for the wrong reason. And though He had all that power, He would not use it. He would have broken up the whole plan of salvation if He had, not because He would have sinned so much as He would have shown you can't really do it that other way; you can't really settle things without use of power; you can't really do it just by gently, though painfully, revealing and demonstrating the truth. He did not waver, He went right through to the end.

Now that One, who would rather die than misuse power, is back in heaven possessing all the power of the universe. Will it worry you to walk up to Him and know He has all that power? No, He'd never misuse it. You say, "Well, it's only the Father I'd be worried about; I want the Son to go with me when we meet the other one who has all that power." "No," He says, "My Father can be trusted with His power just as much as I can." That's what makes us feel so safe for eternity.

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It's not just that He has so much power; it's that He'd never misuse it, never. Fear has to do with punishment, remember. Perfect love drives out all fear.

So one has to discuss the destruction of the wicked. And I think it's good to build various models; I've never seen one that answers all the questions. And I just enjoy each one that touches on some aspect of it, but that doesn't mean there isn't one thing we can be sure of: God's own involvement in the awful death of the wicked. That we must be sure of; He is not torturing the wicked in the end, or it cancels out everything we've talked about this whole series, and certainly the content of Scripture, if He does that.

Comment: Now if this power is the— all the wicked would be bathed in this power, Sister White says that each person will see how they were involved in the plan of salvation.

Maxwell: Okay, I will say that one of my models includes that, that as this light of the glory of God surrounds us, we remember, and we see, this picture that we have.

Comment: Right, but it's not burning the person. . .

Maxwell: No, that's right.

Comment: . . . it's enlightening the person.

Maxwell: Yeah, but now I get into a model that I can't preach about, because it's just something I think about at home— that God doesn't turn up the glory all at once, just a little— makes our memory clearer; a little more— even more clear; a little more— we see the whole thing. Then when all the glory comes and we see it all, it's too much for us. That's a very private model; I'd never preach on it. [Laughter] Well, I like to have a model I can live with.

Comment: In the total picture of things, you see God as answering the saints' questions; wouldn't God then be obligated to raise the wicked so that they can also have their questions answered?

Maxwell: Yes, although it won't do them any good, you see.

Comment: But it is answering their questions.

Maxwell: It would do us a lot of good, though.

Comment: Yes.

Maxwell: You see, we may wonder why some are not up there; and God could say, "Well, you take my word for it; if I say it you believe it, that's all there is to it." He's never done it that way, and He won't in the end. He'll say, "You'll see; stay with me and you'll see." And we'll see the people at the end who've turned Him down. And then we'll see them given, almost as it were, a second chance. I mean, there's the Lord, there's the New Jerusalem, there are the saints, there are the angels. And some of us understand this panoramic review you're alluding to of the whole great controversy. If you haven't read the 66 books yet, you'll see it all there in the end, the whole great picture. Does it win anybody? Not a soul. And God can turn to the family and say, "Would it do any good to wait any longer? Would it do any good to bring them any more

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evidence? It doesn't move them at all, does it?" And then we say, "God, then we're ready; you can let them go."

Comment: I watched a TV show last week; a young lady— very sincere, very articulate, appeared to be very Christ-like, who had been very involved in Satanic cults. She really seemed to be sure now of her relationship with Christ. And I sat there watching it, and I thought to myself, Is this real, or is this something that now Satan is using?

Maxwell: Well this is very relevant to the evening. His skill in counterfeiting, I really think we've tended to underestimate. And it's encouraged an undo confidence on our part that it's going to be very easy in the end.

When I first read about the mystery religion counterfeiting, it was extraordinary. And more books have appeared since then; I have just a few of them at home. There are popular treatments of this, and more scholarly treatments of it. But the evidence is there, that in anticipation of the first coming of Christ, being a diligent student of the Old Testament, and knowing a great deal about God and the kind of thing God might do, he set it all up so it would seem that Christianity was just another mystery religion. In fact, members of the mystery religions who had maybe joined a half a dozen as extra fire insurance, when Christianity came along and was such a grand mystery religion, they all flocked into it. And when millions of these people flocked into Christianity they changed it from what we call the primitive church with its true understanding and emphasis, and they truly changed the Christian church into a monumental mystery religion, with lots of mystery and pageant and drama and vestments and miracles, and— I hate to become too specific on that or you'll know the church I mean.

In this book that I have, by this gentleman, Shirley Jackson Case— he's the first man by the name of Shirley I'd known up to that time; a very fine scholar at the University of Chicago. The year he brought out the book was 1946, and I arrived there in 1945; so the book came out the year after I got there. He maintains that Christianity grew lock, stock and barrel, out of the Greco-Roman Oriental mystery religions. He sees God not in it at all; the whole thing is a natural development. And there's quite a school of thought like that. The point is the counterfeit is so close, you can actually seem to be perfectly logical and historical when you assume Christianity just plagiarized from all the religions around, and it's just the greatest of all the mystery religions.

Now, one book I don't have— I wish I could have brought it with me. The man I mentioned, Dr. Harold Ridout [sp?] Willoughby, the most distinguished bachelor I've ever know. What a scholar he was! And he devoted much of his life to this subject. And he wrote a book, a 700-page book, entitled, Pagan Regeneration. And he showed from the documents— and of course, in a Ph.D. dissertation, they have to be, you know, primary documents— he showed from them as he translated them, that in these mystery cults, the all-important thing was faith in your savior, who was a heroic young person born sometimes through the union of the gods with a human mother, perhaps. He lives a good life, he dies a cruel death, then he's exalted to heaven, and there he mediates mercies and blessings in behalf of his followers. And later he comes back and he resurrects the wicked and annihilates the evil. And there's the conflict between good and evil, in there.

And when you're initiated in one of these religions, you have to be baptized, but in blood. One of the methods was called the "tower of bolium"—the bull bath. And there would be a ditch dug,

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with a grating over the top, and the initiate would stand beneath, and a bull would be killed. The bull was a great symbol of God and fertility, as you can imagine. And they would cut the jugular vein and the blood would come through, and you'd bathe yourself in the blood. And you'd sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood." And you'd wash yourself in it, and you would drink it. And that baptism was good for 20 years; it had to be renewed. And I've wondered how that would be in our University Church, you know. If we all had to be rebaptized every 20 years, it might be quite a renewal of our vows— except, that's what communion's all about, isn't it? We don't have to do it every 20 years, if communion is valid.

Well, they also had "Lord's Suppers"; and they ate the bread and drank the wine, except they ate the flesh and drank the blood! And in one of the religions there was a high day in which the women first would become filled with the spirit— that was important, to do some of the things that they used to do. Of course, the spirit was from a goat's skin. And filled with the spirit of love, joy and peace, and so forth, but from a fluid, they would capture the animals that represented their god and tear it limb from limb, and eat the flesh and drink the blood and the nature of their god would come within them.

The whole thing was personal salvation by coming preciously near and dear to your lord savior. And the talk of rebirth was the central thing in a dying, rising savior. The dependence on miracles and on religious drama. A very significant thing— I read it too quickly as I went by— that one of the first things they did to get an initiate in the right frame of mind was to terrify him. First of all, he was shown visions of the infernal realms, and the gods beneath until he was sufficiently terrified; then he was given the good news.

You see, they preached the third angel's message before the first; that's backwards. And woe betide us if we go out to the world and terrify people with the fears of the end, and then when they're sufficiently stirred, then we'll give them the good news. Ellen White's marvelous on that; she says, this is not as it should be; it smacks of selfishness; it's not the right motive. Don't scare people with the Second Coming; don't use it that way. Now, it's true, people should take it seriously, and the Third Angel's Message does lead to that. But we're supposed to be known as taking the Gospel to all the world, which is the Good News. The first angel's message, then the second and the third.

Since we talked about it last week in that order, I was so impressed when I re-read it in here— I'd underlined it before. In the mysteries, first you were absolutely terrified; then you were told, there are friendly gods, there is a way out, there are sacrifices, there's lot's of blood that can be used to propitiate the offended wrath of the angry gods.

It smacks of a great deal of theology that has passed for Christianity through the years. And what's it all traceable to? Why does so much of world-wide Christianity resemble many of the errors in the mystery religions? That's what impresses me more than the similarities in good things. The devil's behind the whole thing, and the best thing he could do right now is not persuade us to give up Christianity—he's not going to do that!—but to persuade us to bend these things just enough, misinterpret them just enough that they could be used as evidence against our God. And how well he's done that through the years. To what extent has he maybe done it with us? I'd like to run the risk of looking at some of those next Friday night.

Can I mention another book, by the way? That first one was The Origins of Christian Supernaturalism; here's one I've enjoyed particularly: Jew and Greek Tutors Unto Christ, by

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McGreggor and Purdy. And you can see what he's done there; he takes all these things in the past, and sees how even early Christianity came from it. There are many other books that I could cite. Ever read the Golden Bough? Now that's a very popular treatment, but that'll give you insight into it. I'm sure you've read that [to Dr. Venden]. And there are others like it; many books on the mystery religions.

Venden: Is it fair to say that there is a very fundamental distinction in here, as you were describing the process by which one got close to his lord, and so forth. The initiative and the kind of control that a person had of that sounds as though the old business of saving yourself by your performance has permeated that.

Maxwell: And the dominant figures, of course, were the priests who knew how to manage this, and take you through it all. That's right. You don't have the picture of God seeking for us in the same way. So it's far from the truth about God, that's for sure.

Venden: But a surface glance could be very confusing.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: This gentleman here had his hand up.

Maxwell: I might mention another book, by the way: Cumont is a name you'll often see as writing on this subject.

Comment: I would like to comment on one of the points that was brought up earlier in the evening when you had said, how can we be sure when the deception's coming. The more I study the Bible, the more I see a God that is chasing harder after us than we're chasing after Him. And the fact that we're living every day; the fact that we're blessed to be here right now, is not by anything that we do. Everything is by God's protection. And it'll be true when those times come also; no matter how excellent, no matter how perfect the counterfeit is, for those who are faithful to God, for those who have put Him first, God will protect us. In 2 Thessalonians, it has a beautiful remark on this. It says, "The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all powers and with pretended signs and wonders. [Maxwell: Right, very appropriate.] And with all wicked deceptions for those who are to perish because they refuse to love the truth and to be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion." Now, He's offered it to them but they ultimately reject [. . .]

Maxwell: Yes, that's a most appropriate passage. In fact, some of those I want to use next week — and I must include that one. Also in Timothy, you know, the Spirit expressly says that in the last days men will arise teaching the doctrines of demons, you know, and all that sort of thing.

Now the question is, how will God protect me? If I say I'm faithful then I won't get into any trouble. But when I'm face-to-face with Satan as Christ, what am I going to have? A feeling within, and trust my feeling? Or will God not allow me to be exposed? He allowed Job to be totally exposed. So its true, I'm dependent on the Lord and on the truth He's brought. And yet He is allowing me to be tested to the limit. He wouldn't allow me to be tested more than I'm able to bear. But the protection, as in that verse, does depend on our knowing the truth that He has revealed. Some want to take a short-cut and say, "I'm going to trust the Lord, I'm just not going to worry; He'll protect me." I think the warning is, don't be so over confident there. It's not a time

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for little children, even; it's time to grow up. Yeah, I'm so glad for the word "truth" in there.

Comment: Did the mystery[?] religions ever claim a basis in Old Testament scripture?

Maxwell: No. That's an interesting thing; the Jews did not. Now, there were some Jews—I was going to say, around the fringes—who got involved in a more mysterious approach to religion, as you may have heard. There are quite a lot of writings on that subject, to be sure. But by and large of course Orthodox Judaism was just death on this, as they were death on the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha— just the 39 books. Ah, they kept that very pure; they did a magnificent job of keeping it pure.

Comment: Did the practitioners of these mystery religions ever claim or usurp any of— for instance, the virgin birth, that you described?

Maxwell: No, that seems to be quite coincidental; not that they may not have read Isaiah, perhaps. But these were Greco-Roman religions and Oriental religions; some came from a long way away, and. . .

Comment: [asked a question not picked up on the tape]

Maxwell: Well, they run from one or two centuries B.C. into one or two centuries A.D. This is the period when they especially flourished. And in these books it's very nicely organized, especially in the Jew and Greek Tutors Unto Christ. It's a brief— you can look, though, in a religious encyclopedia, even the Encyclopedia Britannica, under mystery religions. Of course, there isn't all the information we might wish, because they were mysteries, and they were not supposed to tell. So you might find even disagreement on some of the details, there.

They were not all in existence before Christ came; some came from the East a little later. In fact, one, Mithraism, which is so similar, came a little later, but then had an influence on Christianity as it was developing.

But it's just amazing that all around the world there are these similarities. Of course, when you trace them all the way back, there are similar stories of the Flood and of Creation, that have all been modified. Because if we're right in accepting the Bible the way it reads, everything does go back to the common beginning, doesn't it? I mean, everything has a true beginning: In the story in the Garden of Eden, and in Satan's attempts to deceive there, and in the dispersion after Babel. And so it's not surprising that there should be similarities if we take the Biblical picture, it's true. So in a sense, then, you could almost say there is a common Biblical source, yeah, you're right. But I don't see them saying, "We'll make this look like Isaiah 7," seems to me. That's an interesting question you raised.

Comment: It seems that Satan does perform a lot of miracles to deceive us, and so the easy way out would be to say, "Well, I discount all the miracles." But there do seem to be at least some true miracles happening even nowadays. Would you comment a little more on distinguishing? When you see a miracle happen, how do you decide who's the author of it?

Maxwell: Yeah, that is most pertinent, I think. I think we've come to the place where we cannot safely rely on miracles for evidence, though we would be very grateful for miracles, like miracles of healing. Can you think of a few people right now you'd love to see get well? I can. Oh, thank

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God for miracles. But to use the miracles as the basis for faith is what's hazardous.

Now, what's happening all around us now is the dependence on miracles. In fact, without miracles you don't feel very confident if you don't have the miraculous ability to do certain things; or if there aren't miraculous evidences of healing in the group you're not even sure the Lord is working there. Now it's true, the Lord worked largely by means of miracles at first; that's where the people were. But He's the one who inspired the writer of I Kings to say, you know, people can perform miracles and make claims and lie; and Deuteronomy 13. And that's why when Jesus was here and he had those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He didn't use miracles; he didn't even reveal who He was. He took them through the evidence.

My understanding would be that if we need miracles of healing and protection and direction in the last days, God will give them to us, but we will not use them as a basis for trusting Him. We have much better evidence for trusting Him than things that Satan could counterfeit. So I think the way you've said it is right. Maybe more and more miracles, but whereas some will use them for evidence, I'd rather not. Besides, if someone comes, you know, to church and says, "Last night I had a marvelous miracle; I saw an angel at the foot of the bed, and he told me thus and so," you're not going to say, "I think you're hallucinating." You don't know, you weren't there; but you aren't going to say, "My, that greatly strengthens my faith!" because maybe he was hallucinating. I mean, you don't know.

Miracles today are really only a blessing to the people who see them and experience them. People who tell, "I saw this marvelous miracle, and I saw that one," that really does not increase my faith. I wasn't there, I didn't see it, and even if I did, there's better evidence than miracles, it seems to me. Say more, though.

Comment: I agree with you a hundred percent; my problem is when I'm confronted with someone that's really excited about some miracle that has happened to them, and if you respond in an even semi-skeptical way, then, I mean, obviously you don't have any faith.

Maxwell: That's right; that's right, and if you wouldn't want to be seen that way, it would be important then to react in another manner. I don't think the younger prophet was in any position to say to the older prophet who claimed that God had spoken to him but was lying— "I think, old man, you're lying." He didn't know that because God does sometime send another message. Nathan came and said, "Yes, David, build the Temple." Later he came along and said, "God has told me, no, you can't." So the younger prophet could have assumed that maybe God had, but I'd better go and check with Him. He's the one who gave me my orders in the first place, and I'm going to go back. And God could have said, "You know, the old prophet is lying to you."

So I don't think we ever have to say, "You know, I think you're hallucinating; I think that's a fraud; I think you're coming under the influence of Satan." I think we could say, "That's really wonderful! What are you going to do next?" It's like on the matter of speaking in tongues in I Corinthians. Something was happening there which was not Pentecost at all, because at Pentecost there was no need for a translator. Everybody understood in his own language, they said. In Corinth, they needed interpreters and translators, so it was something else entirely. But Paul didn't say, "Shame on you for coming under the influence of somebody else, here." No, he said, "I appreciate your desire to come under the influence of the Spirit. And it's true at Pentecost when the Spirit was manifest people spoke in tongues. But I would make this suggestion to you: It really would be better to say something that the whole church can

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understand. In fact," he says, "if you don't have a translator with you, don't say anything; wait until you get home." And that would have brought the whole thing to an end, unless there were some fake translators in the group.

And then he went a little further and said, "You know, it's much better to preach than to speak in tongues; in fact," he says, "you know, I speak in tongues more than you all." He knew many languages. He said, "I'd rather speak five words with my intelligence than 10,000 words in a tongue." I don't hear our dear friends talking like that; they'd rather speak in a tongue, because they've got a miracle. Paul says, "Not really, because when you speak in a tongue, you don't even really know what's happening yourself. You just say, 'The power has got me, the power has got me!' Do you know what power?" They really don't; it's scary business! It's almost like going to a seance, for me; I'm worried when I'm too close to that kind of thing. But then when it's a dear friend you want to stay close. And you say, "You remember— read the rest of that chapter; that's where you got the idea about speaking in tongues. Paul says, it would be much better to speak in a language all could understand. Would you rather speak five words with your intelligence than 10,000 words in a tongue?"

And in the rest of the chapter, it says when the Spirit takes control, everything is done decently and in order. "Now when I was a child, I was disorderly, and I spoke like a child; but now that I'm grown up, I don't do things like that anymore." I mean, they don't read on far enough.

So I don't think one should ever seem rude, or you've cut off the conversation. Paul says, "I really don't like what they're doing, but I'm going to encourage them to desire the Spirit, and let the Spirit lead them on to something that will be much better than speaking in a tongue that no one can understand. I think he's magnificently tactful in that verse. So I'm trying to do the same, and when we talk to people with other views, it's terrible if they feel they've been affronted, [if] it's suggested they're under a bad influence. Besides, what position are we in to say, anyway? The Lord might be leading someone through that experience to another one. I really think we're in no position to judge someone else. That's his experience.

Venden: Alright.

Maxwell: Don't you find you can do that?

Comment: Some people tend to—what you said—you know, kind of respond in, "Praise the Lord, that's wonderful," kind of thing. I don't find it in my heart to do that.

Maxwell: Well, you might have them read a little further on or back in I Corinthians 13 it says, "Love never insists on having its own way." And some of those folk who claim to be so full of the Spirit, insist on having their own way all the time. Yeah. So, I mean, it's good to read the whole thing, all the way.

Venden: She does describe a situation, though, that I can identify with very easily; it's not easy to know just how to be as tactful as you'd really like to be.

Maxwell: I was labored with for years by a distinguished gentleman whose family name was given to one of the buildings in this institution. And he worried about me so much; he said, "You're always thinking about things instead of letting the Spirit take hold." You know, he really labored with me, prayed with me, brought me books. I said, "You scare me," you know. Well,

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Ellen White says, "I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences to be found in God's word; I am afraid of it, I am afraid of it." So, don't denounce it, but be suitably afraid of it. She says, "We must bring everything within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set things in a disorderly way." Now that has the ring of truth to me, but I would want to say that very politely at the right time, you know.

Comment: You were speaking about the glory of the Lord. When the Israelites were in Babylon in exile, and they were very despondent, the Temple was destroyed, the glory of God had gone; and I just think of Ezekiel, how God gives [?].

Maxwell: Most appropriately, because Ezekiel wrote under those circumstances; very appropriate.

Comment: Ezekiel saw God on the throne, and he saw that was the glory; and [several inaudible words] the same thing to Isaiah, [several inaudible words] Isaiah the prophet [several inaudible words] at that time, and God came to Isaiah and made his lips clean, or . . .

Maxwell: The fact that God could not bless His people didn't mean He'd lost His power; He just couldn't help them at the time. So they got those messages. Yeah, that's right.

Comment: [. . . ?] to Israel and gave them the hope to go back to the homeland to rebuild.

Comment: For societies that [?] did they have their roots in the mysterious beginnings[?]?

Maxwell: Well, that may be in the human tendency to want to do that kind of thing. Not immediately traceable. However— and I have to answer the pastor's question about the Mark of the Beast and the number of the beast a little more next time. You know, some trace that through the name Vicarius Felii Dei; but there's a more interesting line, and that is to trace the number. And that number appears in mysterious religious societies through the years in a most interesting manner. I don't know whether any of you were acquainted with the man who did more research on this than anybody else I know of. And it was Brother Merrill Vance; did any of you know him? Did you know him? Yeah, oh, a number of you did. I have his documents.

Comment: . . . in the [inaudible] down here in Los Angeles he was permitted[?] to photograph.

Maxwell: The Masonic order, even.

Comment: Yes.

Maxwell: I don't know if we should wish for that. But it's incredible what he put together.

Comment: Yes, he's passed on now, but I don't know who has his [?]; that's one of the most valuable [?] that's ever been released.

Maxwell: The material he was preparing for publication— he used to send it to me right along and I read it. He also used to send it to Dr. Thiele who wrote the article in the Review just last week. Did you notice his article? I like Dr. Johnson putting in things like that sometimes; also to honor such a scholar among us now in retirement, as Dr. Thiele. Dr. Thiele encouraged Merrill Vance to get on with his work. As I read it through the years—I watched him do it at PUC before

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I came down here—I said, "If only ten percent of what you've done is right, you've made your point." And he traced the numbers— these mysterious numbers. The ancients loved to play with numbers: numerology, gematria. It just amazes me when Christians play with numbers now, that they should do the same thing.

But he found the number 666 in all kinds of interesting places, extraordinary places. I don't know whether there will be time to show you some of these, but they're really quite unbelievable. He found pictures; he had taken 36,000 photostatic pictures years ago—I don't know what the final total was; he found priests giving the three-fingered blessing with the number six on each digit there. Now, of course, it wouldn't be 6; it might be the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet: aleph, beth, gimel, daleth, he, waw. And he'd see three waw's on there. Well, later on the three waws seemed to turn into three nails, the nails that crucified Christ; and so this was Christianized. This is the way he developed this thing; simply extraordinary.

And it's a temptation to take you through every letter in the alphabet, for the alphabetic symbols were the numbers in those days—either Hebrew or Greek. I think, myself, it was more significant to find this number symbolizing the opposition in the great controversy, particularly the worship of Satan, the worship of fertility, the mysteries of reproduction— it all comes through there. It's absolutely gripping to read his material. I still have most of it in a box at home, that he wrote; it's amazing to read. He never got printed; he couldn't find anybody who was willing to run the risk of doing it, unless he'd put up most of the money himself. And he died before it was put up; so there it is in the file, and it's too bad.

Comment: Do you think that the gift of tongues that was talked about in Corinthians is the same as what is going on now? And if not, how do you think the different tongues that is [sic] being used now will effect us in the [voice faded]?

Maxwell: Yes; the gift of tongues now is not a gift of communication, although they try to explain it that way. Now here's a case where I'd want to be— since this is right now, and we know people who do it, we know individuals who've been here to Loma Linda, even spoken here, who'd do it. And they interpret this in a particular way. For example, in the practice of medicine and the diagnosis of disease, in one great institution, it is suggested that you diagnosis in the language of the spirit. Now, that's your spirit talking to God's Spirit. Now this, of course, is based on the idea that there lives within you an immortal spirit, you understand. It does require that belief, right off. This spirit within you is talking to the other spirit. Then your spirit has the diagnosis; now you pray for the word of knowledge. And in your own language, say English, comes the diagnosis.

And have you watched on television the last few weeks this being done? In fact, one member of that noted family— and I must say, I take my hat off to anybody who could raise a quarter of a billion dollars and build that magnificent place; I hope I'm balancing this off right. But I saw one member of the family talk to God on the platform on television. And he said, "What is that, God? Yes, God? This is what you're saying, God?" Now, when you talk to God and report to the people, you are claiming absolute infallibility: God is talking to you! That's terrifying! What mortal can say, "I'm talking to God, and I'm talking directly to you"? "This is what God says; God says the tumor's in your stomach. Which side, God? On the right side." And then I watch the leader in the family speak in tongues, and nobody knew what it meant until he got the word of knowledge.

Now, I—would I have the nerve to say it to his face? To me, it bears an extraordinary

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resemblance to what was going on in ancient times. It's not a way of thinking clearly about the truth, of weighing the evidence. What it does is to set up certain human beings of having enormous influence with the Lord; you see, they have been empowered. It's scary! I'd want to be polite and leave lots of room and say, as Ellen White did, "I'm afraid of it; I'm afraid of it." It's so different from weighing the evidence in the Scriptures; so they don't spend that much time doing that. They cultivate more the feeling.

And an individual is called up and asked, "Have you been converted?" "I'm not sure." "Well, if you had, you'd really know it." "How would I know it?" "You'd feel a power come up through your feet and up through your legs and through your body, and through your heart, and to your head." That's backwards; better start here down, or you don't know what's coming out. {laughter} But it was done sincerely, and the girl was crying; like someone else was saying, she wanted to be converted, so badly wanted to be reborn. And she was told it could be done for her. And then various things happened to her; just like the mystery religions, she was initiated and she says, "I feel it, I feel it, I feel the power, I feel the power!" He says, "You're converted, you've been reborn." And I've read so much in the mysteries, I found them absolutely fascinating 40 years ago. It has a similarity that's scary.

Comment: [several inaudible words] Satan's overall deception, do you think— is it going to bring all churches together?

Maxwell: Yes, in one way, because what Christianity wants most of all right now is power— to do good things, you know! Look at all the hungry folk— the children that are dying. I mean, the church wants more power to do wonderful things; it's "power, power, wonder-working power" that people want, you know. And the idea of sitting down and weighing the costly evidence through Scripture to learn what God is like— there's an impatience with that. They want a short-cut; everybody wants a short-cut. Eve wanted a short-cut; you know, Satan said, "Wouldn't you like to be like God? You could be it in a minute; try that fruit. I don't know why God is holding it from you; He knows you could be like Him right now."

We've always wanted a short-cut, the short-cut of the saw-dust trail; you know, the instant salvation and perfection. It's been our tendency as humans to want all this kind of thing. The Scriptures do not describe it that way. God has taken thousands of years to clarify things; there are no short-cuts to this. And we've got to be willing to spend the time. The man who says, "I'm too busy to read the Scriptures," is likely to hear the Lord say, "You know, we never were friends." "Yeah, but I sure served you, Lord." "Yeah, but the way you did it, you put me in a bad light." It takes time to establish friendship with the Lord.

Oh, there is the instant moment on the cross— absolutely marvelous. And had the thief lived on he would have pursued it. Well, he went to sleep shortly thereafter, and the next moment of consciousness he arises in the resurrection. Not many friends in the crowd he rises with; he probably robbed the lot of them. Except there's this kind face of the One in the middle; and I'm sure the Lord will make Himself available to that thief. And the Lord will say, "There's lots more to learn." He'll say, "That doesn't bother me; just tell me, I'm willing."

Venden: All right, we have a great deal more to learn, and we're going to call time, now, and be back again next week. Would you lead us in prayer.

Maxwell: Our loving Father in Heaven, it is true in our limitation as human beings, and human

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beings who live just a little while and get old and tired; we have nothing like the energy like Adam and Eve in the beginning, and we do not live as Methuselah did or Noah. How little do we know; surely the mystery of the infinite wisdom that Thou art is, indeed, a great wonder, and we stand in awe before it. We cannot even describe Thy power or fathom the very beginning of what Thou dost know, to be able to keep in touch with this whole universe at one time, even to be in touch with each of us in this room, and know our very thoughts and feelings.

Such wisdom is too much for us, and yet the devil has surely taken advantage of this, to suggest that everything is a mystery. But we hear Jesus say, "I am the truth, I am the light." And the Bible portrays Thee as wanting to be understood, and that Thou art very patient with us, bringing evidence upon evidence, not claims, but demonstration; not one but dozens, hundreds of them, all through Scripture. Surely, the Bible is a monument to Thy desire to be understood—understood enough that we can decide whether or not Thou art worthy of our trust.

As we read this book that makes things so plain that even a child can understand, we see the many warnings of an adversary who desires to make things too complicated, or in many and various ways to confuse us as to the truth. He doesn't even mind whether we keep the Sabbath or pay tithes or practice health reform, so long as we do it for the wrong reason. Forbid that we should allow him to deceive us any more; and if we need correction, may we be willing to accept this correction, discipline, whatever is necessary. For we know that as soon as Thou dost have a group of people who can survive these last events, Thou wilt release those winds of strife and these terrible moments will break on our earth, as the devil has those few moments to do things his way.

We would like to be like Job; surely we don't have to wait until we're old to be mature like that, nor even to be in perfect health—we marvel at his faith when he was sick with boils. Grant that all of us, old or young, no matter whether strong or weak, might come to that place. Because our opportunities are so great: these wonderful translations, all the evidence of history and science. So much evidence all adds up and points in one direction: the truth about Thee, the falsity of Satan's charges, the hazards of being complacent as we face his last attempt to deceive us, but the adequacy of the evidence and the truth to see us through.

We are warned not to be self-confident about this; the truth has come from Thee. We are indeed momentarily dependent on the angels and the Holy Spirit and on Thee for life, for protection from the adversary. If time should be terribly hard, and like Job it should seem that we cry and Thou dost not answer, we know as Job did that Thou art still there, and Thou wouldst not allow us to be tested more than we're able to bear. And when it is all over, Thou indeed will still be there, and we shall share in the final triumph. Forbid that we should take a false step here, but prepare ourselves for what is coming.

In Jesus name, amen.

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CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, #17

A. Graham Maxwell and Louis Venden

"Satan's Final Effort To Deceive"

Venden: Our title this evening, "Satan's Final Effort To Deceive," makes me think of the fact that Satan has been a deceiver all along. That's just his nature. What would lead us to believe that we may even now be into his final effort/campaign? Could we safely say that we're into that period where this is a final time that he's putting on this kind of deception?

AGM: I think that that's so significant, that that's really number nineteen, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" Are we really in the last days? You know, you and I have both had fathers who preached the nearness of the end. My father preached that for fifty-five years, and we're still here. What's the reason for the delay? Are we now in this period?

Venden: Is it an encouraging sign, do you think, that our world does seem to be at least talking more about Satan than in the past, you have some of these "black magic" and even "Satan Worship" churches?

AGM: There's a Church of Satan even.

Venden: Is that something we ought to feel good about, or...?

AGM: They recently interviewed the leader of that church on television. It was something to watch or listen to.

Venden: What do you think that represents, though? Is the world in general becoming more alert to Satan's deception?

AGM: I think the fact that they talk about him so much could not be interpreted to mean we're more ready, that we're more alert. It all depends what we're saying about him. This may all be part of his deception. If he could lead us to think of him as he is not, because he wants to come as Christ.

Venden: So it could figure into a very clever scheme.

AGM: I think so. I think that's also a part of his effort to deceive.

Venden: One of the questions that comes up and I've heard asked before comes up again this evening: "Since Christ is not going to come until after this final effort to deceive on Satan's part, does Satan have some control over when the end is going to come? In other words, if Satan were to work a little harder and be a bit more successful, would that help to bring the second coming of Jesus? What part does he play in the timing here?"

AGM: That seems like a terrible thing to say--that 2 Peter 3:12, "Work to hasten on the coming of the day of God," is really addressed to the adversary. I think as far as he's concerned, he'd like to bring it on immediately, but the Lord knows we're not ready, and so in mercy He holds back (see Revelation 7:1-3) as Peter also says. And that's why next time our subject will be, "God Waits For His Children to Grow Up." If we were ready as Job was, God would allow these closing events to occur, but He's our Heavenly Father, so He waits.

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Venden: So it really isn't that Satan has a controlling power and that he and God are sort of partners in this.

AGM: Well, he's being restrained is the picture in Thessalonians and elsewhere.

Venden: But that does bring up another question: "You say he's being restrained, but that implies that God is allowing, at least in some sense, for Satan to have this opportunity to deceive. How does that serve God's purposes in the great controversy?"

AGM: That's a question that has come up in various ways.

Venden: It's come up again and again.

AGM: If He won the victory on Calvary, why not terminate right afterward? Look what's happened these last two thousand years and happening in the news this week. Everything God does speaks eloquently to His purposes, and so we ask the question, "How does this?" There are things that have to be demonstrated, but not about God and His government. Satan has never been given an entirely free hand to run things his way. And we're going to see this. When the seven angels pour out the seven vials of God's wrath, we understand from Romans 1:18,24,26,28, and Hosea 11:7,8 and the cross (Matthew 27:46) that God's wrath is His giving people up, handing them over. The Spirit ceases to restrain. The four angels no longer hold the four winds of the final events. And Satan will have a free hand. And the universe and his own followers will see how he will run things, and all Hell will break loose at that time.

Venden: So it really is a matter of God's demonstration.

AGM: I think it demonstrates something else also. I wouldn't blame the angels for wondering if we rebels could **really** be convinced of the truth the way they are. They're all ready to see the seven last plagues and not interpret them as vengeance. They're also prepared to see the wicked consumed and not be made afraid of God. They wonder if we are. And so they wonder, would it be possible for a group of us really pygmy rebels that we are, this far from the Garden of Eden, would it be possible for the truth to heal us to the point that like Job, we could pass through that awful time of trouble and not be led away from God or be led to think of Him as vengeful during the seven last plagues and so be ready to see the final destruction without being afraid? See, one generation will be alive to see the Lord come, and that generation can really speak eloquently of God's power to heal, the power of the truth to restore the damage done. This last generation has a great privilege of bringing honor to God. He says, "I can heal with the truth. I can actually restore those people, and they can believe Me just the way you angels do." That would be a high privilege.

Venden: I have the feeling that that may tie in very closely with next week on growing up and what that means.

AGM: That's right.

Venden: You referred to these mystery religions that seem to--I was fascinated with--that seem to have closely counterfeited things with which we are very familiar in the Christian faith. How popular were these?

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AGM: They were very popular right before Christ came and while He was here and for some little time thereafter. So some of them counterfeited before Christ came. Some counterfeited and confused the issues after He came. They were so popular that some people joined several of them, you know, just to make sure. That's like the altar to the "Unknown God" in Athens. If one mystery religion was good, it might be the wrong "god." Join all you can, if you can afford to. One of my teachers at Chicago, Dr. Walter Specht had him too, Dr. Harold Rightout Willowby, a real expert on the mystery religions. So we heard a lot about them. He wrote a long PhD dissertation on rebirth in paganism called "Pagan Regeneration." It is so close, it's so much like the truth, and yet diabolically perverse. That's why I decided forty years ago that the devil really tried to counterfeit the first coming of Christ. He failed with some of us. With those same "some" he will be working in the end, and he has learned something. With his final, ultimate cunning, he will counterfeit the second coming as far as he can.

Venden: So he had these counterfeits already in place.

AGM: In place.

Venden: Before Christ was born in Bethlehem.

AGM: Yes. Yes.

Venden: That's fascinating. Now, you used the word "mystery religion," and I've come across that in historical references, but it reminds me that didn't Paul himself speak of Christianity as, "Great is the mystery of godliness?" (see 1 Timothy 3:16)

AGM: Yes. That's right.

Venden: For example now, what's he doing there? Is Christianity a mystery religion?

AGM: I think he was using it on purpose. It's not that God has kept it a secret. It's true, He hasn't been able to reveal it all. But one of the major differences between a mystery religion and Christianity was this: When you were initiated into one of the mysteries, you were sworn never to tell anybody. Whereas the Christian "mystery" was to be told to everybody. So he loved calling Christianity a mystery and then telling everybody everything about it. So we have a "revealed" mystery. And his hearers would probably understand that and would be rather struck with the contrast. We have the most important information in the universe, and you might think we'd want to keep it secret. No, we want to tell everybody. Go and tell this mystery to the whole world.

Venden: But was the actual Greek word that was used the same way?

AGM: Yes. "Musterion." "Mystery" comes from it.

Venden: Paul is referring to it as something that we wouldn't have figured out on our own, but God gave it to us and we want to tell it to everyone.

AGM: The thing that would strike them the most is that it is not a secret.

Venden: Whereas the others...

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AGM: They would not allow to tell--it's amazing we know anything about them.

Venden: As you talked about this matter of Satan's final effort to deceive, I wondered, do you expect that we're going to see devil worship before the end of time? Some of these blatant things that we tend to associate with other places on earth, more dark as far as knowledge and civilization and so on.

AGM: I don't think so, especially among the Christian nations. These are the people he wants to deceive the most. He wants to be worshiped not as the devil. He wants to be worshiped as Christ. And so he masquerades as an angel of light. He will come in the end as an angel of light. And he will be worshiped (Revelation 13) as he wanted to be worshiped by the angels. He asked Jesus to get down on His knees and worship him. (Matthew 4:9) His great moment will be when the cry goes forth, "Christ has come! Christ has come!" and the world prostrates itself before him - except the few who will say, "No, you not only have a devil; you are the devil." And you could see why it would be hard for them.

Venden: In a way then, that ties in with what you said earlier. He really isn't anxious to be identified as Satan.

AGM: No.

Venden: He really wants to masquerade as Christ.

AGM: That's the deception. If he came with horns and a tail, that wouldn't be any problem. He comes as a gracious redeemer, the great medical missionary and heals the diseases of the people and even appears to raise the dead. And these are the evidences so many people use to test their beliefs. He will so deceive us. Then we remember our discussion on the question of authority. The way he uses his authority and relies on miracles will warn us. Beware! He could be lying to us as that older prophet did in 1 Kings 13.

Venden: As you talk about it that way, that leaves us some very serious questions, I think. When, for instance, Peter in 1 Peter 5:8,9 (see also James 4:7) admonishes us to resist Satan. How can one be able to resist such a clever, intelligent, wily foe?

AGM: We can only resist him with the truth. We will have to be so settled into the truth that we cannot be moved.

Venden: I was wondering, would calling, for instance, on the help of angels - or if you were to sense the presence of Satan - I grew up hearing some stories that used to make me worried about the possibility of Satan perhaps doing something rather scary, and I came to the conclusion that if I said the name of Jesus, I think that was even suggested.

AGM: Yes, I've heard it. * matter of fact.

Venden: If you were to come up against Satan or the fact that his presence was near, then the thing to do would be to say the name of Jesus several times. Even if you just whispered. I remember a story where a person was only able just to whisper His name, and that did it.

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AGM: Yes.

Venden: What do you think of that? Is that a . . .

AGM: If you're using the name for magic, then one had better be informed that Jesus never went by that name. "Jesus" is an English pronunciation of the Greek translation (pronounced Ya sus) of His real name Joshua. If you want to call Him by his real name, it's Joshua, and I've never heard anybody doing that to scare the devil away. So I regret it very much that we use the name of that wonderful Person as a good luck charm. I think it is an insult to Him and does us a lot of damage. But I hear it all the time. We're always singing about those precious two syllables, "Je sus," and He never went by that name. It's the Person, not the name. But if we could remember Christ and call on Him, that would be the only way to go.

Venden: But you could use the name at that point.

AGM: Oh, because we *

Venden: Only because we refer to the Person.

AGM: That's the thing. If I'm thinking of the real Person when I say "Jesus," even though that's an English pronunciation of the Greek translation.

Venden: He will understand that.

AGM: Of course He would, you see. But if I'm just using that Name as a good luck charm, I might as well have garlic there to scare off the vampires and that sort of thing. Oh, I think that too is diabolical to slip into using His name as magic.

Venden: Well, following that line of thought. . .

AGM: I mean, why would the devil be scared of the name? But he knows the power of the One. It's the Person that counts. Always the Person.

Venden: Not just the saying of the word.

AGM: That's right.

Venden: It would have not effect.

AGM: It's the Person that counts.

Venden: Unless the Person meant that much to us.

AGM: If Jesus were there, he certainly would flee, so I would want Him there.

Venden: If the devil, though, could deceive a third of the angels, and we started out with that in our very first meeting really, the war that began in heaven, how, what chance do we have to resist by ourselves?

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AGM: Well, I have to go back and look in the Bible for people who did. And there's Job. And Job even called for help and none seemed to come. And yet he survived.

Venden: Things seemed to get worse.

AGM: And things got worse, that's right. The more he called for help, the more things got worse. He says, "God, I call and You never answer me." That was on our Bible text sheet last week. And yet Job did not let God down. This is extraordinary. Of course, God had brought him to that point. And I believe God wishes to bring us to the point where we can actually stand singly and alone, and the only restraint on the devil is, "You may not take his life." And Job survived. That's incredible! Did you notice Job bragging, though, when it was all over? Oh, he was humbled by it all, and he was hardly prepared for God to say, "You did wonderfully Job! Wonderfully! When you felt you were doing so badly, up here in heaven I would say, 'Now there's a perfect man.'" But that's not conceit. Job was not conceited.

Venden: You used the expression, "to stand singly and alone." You don't mean by that standing without God. You mean standing alone as far as other evidence of the presence of others, perhaps?

AGM: Well, Satan was given a free hand. You remember, Satan said, "Just let me get my hands on him, and he'll curse You to Your face." And so eventually he took everything away from Job. And the only thing Job had to help him, it appeared, was those theologians, and they were all wrong. Miserable help. And I might suggest that Satan's final effort to deceive may come most persuasively through caring theologians. Now, how can we be aware?

Venden: That makes one wonder whether he wants to be a theologian.

AGM: Now Job was certainly protected to the extent that Satan could not kill him.

Venden: But he had to trust in the truth, and Job was very understanding of what that truth was.

AGM: He was. Ah, I can't help but use Ellen White's magnificent words on this. She says, "To be like Job is to be so settled into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, that one cannot be moved." Now the Spirit brought him there, the truth brought him there. His conversations with God, by the way, was all the doing of God, except that Job always said "Yes" to God. And you can say "Yes" to God long enough the Heavenly Physician can heal us and bring us to the place where Job was.

Venden: Now, our Bible Reference Sheet is very encouraging, because it really does appear that there are some saints who are going to succeed.

AGM: That's right.

Venden: And we could be among those if we understand the truth. In Revelation 12:17 it speaks of those who "have the testimony of Jesus." The phrase is a bit different in this translation. I remember that phrase from years back. What is this "testimony of Jesus that the saints will have?"

AGM: Well, it can be translated, "They bear witness to Him," in some versions. But take it either

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way. These are people who hold fast to Jesus' testimony about His Father as true. In other words, they believe what Jesus said about His Father as true. They accept His testimony. Or if they bear witness to Jesus, that means they do bear witness. They believe in Him, and it's their privilege and pleasure to go and bear witness to Him, the One who brought the truth. So either way; not to get into the technicalities of the Greek. It's fifty-fifty either way. Whichever way you take it, it makes sense.

Venden: Well, is that same thing true when we come to Revelation 14:12? Now that's not on our Reference Sheet, but that's a very familiar verse. It speaks "those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus."

AGM: Of Jesus. Which in some versions reads, "Faith in Jesus," or "Remain loyal to Jesus." The Greek technical point is exactly the same. It could go either way. Then which could be better, to have a faith in God as Jesus had, or to have faith in Jesus as bringing the truth about the Father? Have either one, and you're going to arrive at the same place.

Venden: So we need both.

AGM: You need both.

Venden: I like to translate it both ways. You have spoken about Satan not coming with forked tail and hooves and a pitchfork but masquerading as an angel of light. That raises the question, if he comes that way, and certainly the Bible pictures that scene, how are we going to recognize him then? You mentioned these little things we might have tucked away because we think we're going to * for sure. He's going to be cleverer than that, I have an uneasy feeling. How will we recognize? Then, for example, Revelation describes the whole world, all except a handful apparently, not a very large group. The whole world is going to be worshiping him. What are the best ways?

AGM: It has to be the one central issue in the great controversy. It's the question of authority. The way God exercises His authority so as to have peace and freedom throughout the universe. Satan cannot counter with that. That's the one thing he cannot do. I mean, if he uses God's method, he will lose. If he says, "You may investigate me, inquire, ask for evidence"--that's God's way of exercising authority--if we start investigating the devil, he loses. Like Jim Jones; people went to investigate him and he lost. The devil will not invite our inquiry or he loses. And at that point, when we see how he exercises authority, being convinced of the rightness of God's way of exercising authority, we will perceive that he is the adversary.

Venden: Then you're saying that it is not a matter of how well he can perform things that dazzle and catch our attention.

AGM: That he can do easily.

Venden: That he can do superbly.

AGM: Yes.

Venden: But we're going to have to see behind that what is the real meaning here, what are the concepts and how does he go about it?

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AGM: See, this could deceive the very elect if possible. It's not possible, because they are so settled into the truth of God's way of running the universe, they perceive the falsity of his way.

Venden: On the Bible Reference Sheet there's a reference to Revelation 13, and that raises the question about the beast and the mark of the beast which we touched on last week. The question has come up: "Do you think that any have the mark of the beast now?" Do you want to touch on that, or . . .

AGM: Depends on what the mark of the beast is. And I think that the best way to understand the mark of the beast is to consider first the seal of God. And that will come up next time very readily.

Venden: All right.

AGM: So we really will consider what it means to be settled into the truth.

Venden: I want to come to something that you touched on a bit as you came to the conclusion of the presentation. How could it be that Christians could allow the adversary to deceive us regarding the very truths that we hold? For example, what could he possibly do to the faith to distort it, to bend it to where it would be a deception rather than truth?

AGM: If he could lead as he already has, people to understand that faith is religious conviction for which you do not need evidence, then he's got us totally vulnerable to his position. Because the evidence isn't with him. And I believe he has done that. He's led Christians to say that the wonderful thing about faith is you believe it without evidence, without inquiry, without investigation. And so he's turned faith into a vulnerability, a willingness to believe without evidence. He's turned it into a virtue, and he has set us all up to be deceived. And yet how widely that's held. And next time I'd like to touch on more of these.

Venden: But what about the matter of sin?

AGM: To suggest that sin is the violation of an arbitrary command, you know. He can use the misunderstanding of sin to support his charges that God is arbitrary.

Venden: Well, some of these other things that you refer to in our our Reference Sheet such as the atonement, for example, and the cross.

AGM: Particularly on the atonement, that Christ died to reconcile the Father to us. This is widely held by Christians. Or He died to assuage the Father's wrath. Here you have a God, you see, who is vengeful, unforgiving and severe. You don't have the picture that Jesus brought. Who had to die to win Christ to our side? Yet He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." So a very widely held Christian view could be used to support the devil's charges.

Venden: What about some of the other things that you mentioned here, the law?

AGM: Yes, if the law is seen as an arbitrary test of our obedience, you know, like the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of our obedience, by the very word you are saying, "God is arbitrary." But then we try to sanctify that by saying, "Well, He's sovereign." So when He is arbitrary, He really isn't,

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because He has a right to be so, and my mind begins to go around and around when I hear that kind of talk. It isn't logical to talk that way. The trouble is, that religion doesn't have to be logical. And when we say that, that religion doesn't have to be reasonable, doesn't have to be logical, into whose hands are we playing?

Venden: Just believe. Have faith.

AGM: You see, since the truth is not on his side, he has to do this to all these doctrines. But he has us still saying we're Christians.

Venden: What do you see him doing with the word "judgment" or the idea of the judgment?

AGM: I think of how fearsome that can be, or the suggestion that the Father is not as gracious as the Son during the judgment. He hears us saying, "We have a Friend in Court; don't be afraid." Who's the friend? And we all say, "Jesus." And the devil smiles. You mean the Father's not our Friend? The Father is just as friendly as the Son.

Venden: That leads over to the whole idea of Christ's intercession.

AGM: Yes.

Venden: The thought that the Son has to plead with the Father to forgive us.

AGM: I remember the words of my daughter when she was only six: "Does that mean God doesn't love us as much as Jesus does?" Well, we encouraged our children to raise those questions, and to raise them soon, because they still have to pass through this experience. Jesus said, "There is no need for Me to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself." That's the plainest testimony of Jesus in the whole Bible. We say we accept the testimony of Jesus and then picture Him pleading with the Father. The devil must smile when we do this.

Venden: He's been astoundingly successful, it seems to me Graham, in distorting that.

AGM: The most gracious things about God he has twisted to his advantage.

Venden: That's true. But for example, last week we were talking about God's last call to witness people * in the three angels' messages. What about that matter of the destruction of the wicked? He's done a number with that one as well.

AGM: Yes. Now, he manages to cover this by keeping us from discussing religion in simple language. So we use euphemisms and sanctified phrases so it doesn't sound too bad. But the truth of the common position is that God has said to His children, "You either love Me, or I will slowly torture you in the fire. Now do you love me?" The devil smiles when he hears us say that. It's the most diabolical thing he's ever perpetrated on the human race. And even if we say, "No, He won't burn you forever; He'll only burn you as long as you deserve," he's still smiling. Just stop to think of what that means. Our Heavenly Father says, "Children, all I want is your love." He says, "I want peace and freedom up here. But if you don't love Me, I'll burn you as long as you deserve. Now, I hope I didn't make you scared." It doesn't make sense, and religion must pre-eminently make sense. Truth makes sense.

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Venden: When you say it makes sense, is there nothing about it that goes beyond my understanding that so calls me forward?

AGM: It makes sense that the One who created this whole, vast universe is way beyond my understanding, but I understand Him enough to trust Him. I understand Him enough to know He'd never say, "You either love Me, or I'll kill you." If He said that, that would make no elementary sense. It makes no sense to a little child. But we say, "Well, religion doesn't have to make sense. His thoughts are not like ours." His thoughts are at least as good as ours.

Venden: Now, last week when we were talking about the three angels' messages, I think you spent about ninety per cent of the time just talking about the Good News part.

AGM: Yes.

Venden: And I was wondering, shouldn't we have divided the time equally between all three? Why such an overemphasis upon that first one?

AGM: I think there's a great message there. I think we need to know the everlasting Good News before we even look at the other two. You've got to know the truth about our God before you can understand the opposition, before you can understand the awful consequence. The truth is our protection there. And I believe we should go to the world always with the three angels' messages and always start with number one. Never start with number two.

Venden: And understand the other two in the light of number one.

AGM: In the light of number one. So ninety per cent number one.

Venden: All right. Now, next Friday evening in our Number Eighteen, our topic will be. . .

AGM: "God Waits For His Children To Grow Up." And we need to. In mercy, He waits. Of course He would.

Venden: So we invite you to be sure to be here next Friday evening, all of you, for this next chapter in this important sequence of truth that we are examining together.