The BATTLE of the Ages



WHO WERE THE SONS OF GOD IN JOB?

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

WHO WERE THE ANGELS JESUS PREACHED TO IN PRISON?

Lester Sumrall

CONTENTS

Introduction
1. The Battle of the Ages
2. The Antagonists
3. The Sons of God
4. The Seed is Planted
5. Darkness Before Dawn
6. The Seed Triumphant
7. Transferred Power

INTRODUCTION

This is a book of pertinent truth, truth that will change your life.

This book deals with such truths as:

- The angels who fell before Adam was created.
- The story of the first priesthood to guide mankind.
- The true cause of the flood in the days of Noah.
- Who are the angels that Christ preached to in prison, and what is today's greatest challenge?

1

THE BATTLE OF THE AGES

There has been a bloody battle roaring in three dimensions since time immemorial. It began in heaven; it continued on this globe; it culminated in the bowels of hell when Christ defeated Lucifer and strode forth through the gates of Hades with the keys of the kingdom rattling at His girdle.

The battleground of *The Battle of the Ages* has been cosmic, earthly and netherworld. The warriors have been deity, angels, devils, and men. The cause of the battle was jealousy, hatred and pride in the heart of Lucifer, the fallen archangel. The results of the battle are the salvation or damnation of the immortal souls of all mankind. No war chronicle lists such a blazing array of events or persons. To understand the world in which we live in this last hour of world history, we must have an understanding of *The Battle of the Ages.*

Describing this battle, the Lord Jesus gave a striking parable in Matthew 21:33-44. Jesus said,

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country; and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you,

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation

bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

This very remarkable story describes the actual history of mankind. Jesus said God had planted a vineyard —that is this earth—and that God sent His prophets as stewards or servants to bring back a report to Him, but they were badly treated by the inhabitants. Finally God sent His own Son to correct the anarchy. When they saw the Son they rose up in anger and killed Him.

This parable given by Jesus constitutes *The Battle of the Ages,* of the millennia, of generations. This struggle lasted for 4,000 continuous years on planet Earth. It became the sensation of all ages. It is the most dreadful and actually the only real battle of all history.

Describing this battle brings into sharp focus some very penetrating truths which have stymied many. Some of the questions to be answered are:

1. Who were the sons of God in Job 1-2 and in Genesis 6?
2. Who was Melchizedek, the priest, to whom Abraham paid tithes in Genesis 12 and Hebrews 7?
3. How was our globe divided into continents and when?
4. Why and how are there over 2,000 languages on this earth?
5. Who were the spirits in prison to whom Christ preached?

THE SUPREME BATTLE

In the New Testament, Paul the apostle, said in Ephesians 6:10-18,

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Paul in this scripture shows us that in *The Battle of the Ages* there is more than the natural eye can see. There are "principalities" or kingdoms of evil that have "rulers of darkness."

As Christians, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against strange powers. The true battle of the ages is a spiritual warfare...a battle that cannot always be observed with our five senses.

2

THE ANTAGONISTS

It is very strange, but the Bible teaches us that *The Battle of the Ages* actually began in heaven. The prophet Ezekiel gives us an insight into this tremendous truth.

In Ezekiel 28:11-19 we read,

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee,

O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more."

This is dreadful language. Any person can understand that this was not Tyrus, a human being. Tyrus might have been filled with this evil person which is the devil and Satan, but Tyrus had no relationship with "old times." Therefore, from the reading of this scripture one can very quickly understand that this battle began before man was created. Adam became involved in the Garden of Eden

through transgression. This brought the battle to this earth with the sadness that is recorded in human history.

The great prophet Isaiah takes us a step further in understanding the origin of this awful war. The great prophet, speaking under holy anointing said, *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"* (Isaiah 14:12)

It is the devil who has weakened the nations from the beginning. He was named "the son of the morning." He fell from heaven by divine expulsion.

Reading verses 13-17:

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?"

Now we can see very quickly that Lucifer was an archangel in heaven. He possessed tremendous power. He not only weakened nations, but boasted: *"I will ascend into heaven, I exalt my throne above the stars of God..."*

Verses 16-17 say that he made the earth to tremble, shook kingdoms and made the world into a wilderness. Only a creature of great power could do such things. Anyone who has seen the devastation of war knows what it means for the earth to tremble. I have seen bombed-out cities from the last war, where a city became a wilderness.

God further said of Satan, verse 17: *"...That opened not the house of his prisoners."* There are millions of prisoners in this world today bound by every evil thing that you can imagine, and the devil won't open the prison houses. He won't let them go free. Jesus Christ must set them free.

These scriptures offer us an insight into *The Battle of the Ages.* They reveal a warfare that began before recorded time, somewhere in heaven, and has continued on every continent of this earth. In the Bible we can follow this tremendous war from Genesis to Revelation.

Genesis 3:14,

"The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity

between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We can see from this that a challenge was laid down in the Garden of Eden. Man and woman deliberately sinned against the revealed will and purpose of God, obeyed the serpent and followed his lying tongue, eating of the forbidden fruit. So God told Satan, standing there in the garden, that the woman whom he had deceived would bring forth a child that would bruise his head! When a man's head is bruised he is out of commission. When a man's head is bruised he has no ability to do anything. Satan would be completely discomfited by the seed of woman who would bruise his head, but during the battle, Satan would bruise his heel. So battle lines were set up in the Garden of Eden. The devil, who is Lucifer, was a prince and an archangel who stood before the throne of God, and he swore "I will not have my head to be bruised." From that hour Satan began to scheme, determined to battle until the last page of history, not to have his head bruised.

Adam and Eve marched out of the garden together. God blessed them and gave them two children, Cain and Abel. When Lucifer looked at these two, he said, "Which one of them will be the redeemer and rise up to bruise my head?" He thought the bruising would occur immediately.

His wicked mind worked fast. "Well," he said, "I know what I will do. I'll put murder in the heart of one. He will kill the other—that will neutralize both of them because no murderer could ever bruise my head."

Therefore, Satan put murder (because the Bible says that he is a murderer and was one from the beginning— John 8:44) in Cain's heart to slay his brother Abel.

Why?

So that there could be no redeemer. So there could be no seed which could bruise his head.

Lucifer stood in the shadows and laughed, mocking God. If you listen carefully you can hear him laughing like a hyena under the bushes saying, "Now, God, who is going to bruise my head? I have liquidated this redeemer of yours. I have put murder in Cain's heart and he killed Abel." It seemed that the fallen archangel had won round two of *The Battle of the Ages.*

In time, according to Genesis 4:25, God visited Adam and Eve and gave them another son whom they named Seth, because the name means "appointed" for God.

Mother Eve, weeping for joy, said: "Now I know I have a redeemer. Seeing

that Cain forfeited his position by slaying his brother Abel, God has given me Seth, the appointed one."

Of course Mother Eve did not have foreknowledge. She did not know when the redeemer would come. Neither does the devil have foreknowledge! He did not know when God would send His redeemer. All Satan could do was listen when something was announced and operate through the known facts.

It is simply thrilling that the promise of a redeemer brightly shines on these very first pages of human history. Though man fell into the ditch of sin, God picked him up, washed and cleansed him, draped him in new garments, and gave him a new hope with the promise of a redeemer and restorer right from the first page of human history!

The devil, standing guard in the shadows, watched diligently for the one who would destroy him. He knew it must be the seed of the woman, pure and unadulterated. He would go over and over again the words God had spoken... *"the seed of the woman"* and he would watch every new child that was born to see if this could be a redeemer, and if this would be the one who would bruise his head.

3

THE SONS OF GOD

At last Satan conceived a master scheme to forever destroy the possibility of his destruction by the "seed of the woman," as God had decreed. He beheld the operation of the Melchizedek "sons of God" priesthood and determined to destroy both the priesthood and the pure seed of the woman.

In this light, we discover some tremendous truths in the Bible. Genesis 6:2 reads:

"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

The original language would read like this: "The sons of Elohim saw the daughters of Adam, or "Red Earth," that they were fair, or beautiful, and they took them wives all of which they lustfully chose."

Some have taught that in Genesis 6 the seed of Seth intermarried with the seed of Cain. But the Word reads,

"the sons of Elohim took the daughters of Red Earth." Also, the record says in verse 3 that God, being highly displeased, said, *"My spirit shall not always strive with man."* Of course, God is still speaking of the redeemer He wants to bring into the world to save mankind. Because of this dreadful sin, God said, *"I will reduce the days of man." At that time men lived almost 1,000 years. God said, "I will reduce his life span to 120 years in order that man cannot learn sin for so many years."*

The unholy union of the sons of God and human women caused freaks to be born. Verse 4 says *"and there were giants in the earth in those days."* We can see that the marriage of the seed of Cain to Seth's seed would not produce giants. There had to be something phenomenal to produce giants. The record further states when the sons of God came into the daughters of men they bare children unto them—*"the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."*

Their offspring were more than human. They were prodigies—strange creatures with heads too big and legs too long and feet too long and a bad spirit inside. Genesis

6:5 says: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*

continually." God was grieved that He had made man.

Now we see the heat of the battle. It is getting exciting! Just who were these sons of God? First, in Job 2:1-3, it says:

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?..."

Who were the sons of God? One can determine that these men were priests, because priests are the only ones who can present man to God. What kind of priests were they? How can we find out about their ministry? I believe we have an answer in the first book of the Bible.

MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

In Genesis 14:18-20,

"Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said; Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Who was this great and wonderful priest called Melchizedek? Shall we read from Hebrews 5, 6 and 7? We have recorded here God's story of who Melchizedek was. Through knowing who Melchizedek was, we will understand who were the sons of God.

The Word states in Hebrews 7:1-3 that Melchizedek was (1) priest of the most high God; (2) King of righteousness; (3) King of Salem or King of peace, which is Jerusalem; (4) without father, without mother, which means he had to be a created being like an angel: (5) no beginning of days or end of life. He was not a human that lived on this earth, but was like an angel; (6) like the Son of God, he had lived before men lived. He was a priest that abideth continually. This is God's description of

Melchizedek.

THE THREE PRIESTHOODS

Most Bible scholars teach that there have been three priesthoods since the beginning of time. The *Melchizedek priesthood* concluded its ministry at the time the *Aaronic priesthood* was instituted. The second priesthood culminated

when Jesus Christ inaugurated the *Christian priesthood.*

We do not possess a great amount of material on the Melchizedek priesthood, but we do know that God placed them here. They were like men, but were created beings. Genesis 6 and Job 2 disclose that these priests were those who helped the people in the time of the flood.

It is easy to see the devil's master plan when he says: "If I cause these creatures to have intercourse with the women of Adam, their children will become strange beings and there will be no pure seed of the woman. With no pure seed of the woman, my head will never be bruised and I will have won the battle of the ages."

WHO BROUGHT THE FLOOD?

This master stroke wrought the destruction of the first priesthood and finally brought the flood to destroy these giants and mighty men of renown. What happened to this primal priesthood? Let us read some scriptures—Jude 6; II Peter 2:4-5 and I Peter 3:19. In these scriptures we will receive insight as to who Christ preached to when He preached to the spirits in prison. This has been a mystery to some.

We read in Jude 6,

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Who were these angels or these spirits? You say they were the devils that fell with Lucifer from heaven. No, they are not, because those are still with Lucifer. They are the ones who are tormenting human beings on the earth today and will be working with the devil right through the tribulation period. One of the evil spirits told Jesus not to torment him before his time. His time had not yet come.

These spirits in prison are a different group. II Peter 2:4-5, *"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."* Then I Peter 3:19-20, *"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water."*

You may ask, why did Christ preach to these spirits in prison, and who

were they?

To begin with, we must stress that nobody has a second chance, and therefore, these could not be human. If they were, then there should be a second chance of salvation for other people.

These spirits in prison were the priests after the order of Melchizedek who had sinned. They had sinned but had never had a preacher, because there was no one on earth capable of preaching to them. There was no one on earth who had the authority to preach to them, because they were the priests. No one was higher or greater than they. Therefore, because of their sin, these creatures were put in chains and bound. But they had to have an opportunity of salvation, so during the time Christ was in the bowels of the earth, our Lord and Saviour went and preached to them.

God is good and just, even when we sin. If these creatures were preached to, that means that they positively had an opportunity of salvation, because Jesus Christ would never preach to anyone in mockery. He preached about salvation to give them an opportunity to be saved. We can very well believe that those who were disobedient before Noah's time, though they were chained in hell in blackest darkness, believed when Christ preached to them. Many of them were sorry for their illegal marriage which created giants and wicked men called "mighty men" which actually brought on the flood. God had to cleanse the earth in order to keep the seed pure—it was the seed of woman that was to fatally bruise Satan's head. This is *The Battle of the Ages.*

It is thrilling to me that Christ held a revival campaign between the crucifixion and the resurrection in order that He might reconcile all things in heaven, earth and hell unto the Father before He went back to stand before God's throne. This is one of the most glorious truths in the Bible, that Jesus Christ actually did preach to every creature in the universe who needed salvation during the time He was here upon this earth.

Genesis 6 gives the sad story of the sons of God. Chapter 7 describes the story of Noah and the flood— showing the continual running battle between the devil and God. It was through Noah and his family that God was able to have a pure seed. Through this seed He could bring salvation to the world. God actually started over again with Noah to show that He was determined to bring salvation to the world. Thus the promise of a redeemer rested with Noah and his seed (Genesis 9:18-19).

THE CONTINENTS

After the flood, the devil tempted Noah to become intoxicated and caused

one of his sons, Ham, to wickedly discover his father's nakedness. God placed a curse upon him for his sin (Genesis 9:21-22). He and his two brothers, Shem and Japheth, forged post-deluvian history.

In Genesis 11:10, when Shem was 100 years old, he begat Arphaxad. This was two years after the flood.

In Genesis 11:12, when Arphaxad was 35 years old, he begat Salah.

In Genesis 11:14 when Salah was 30 years old, he begat Eber.

In Genesis 11:16 when Eber was 34 years old, he begat Peleg.

In Genesis 11:18-19 it says that Peleg lived a total of 239 years.

Add these years together and you have 338 years, or about four generations.

This is very interesting because in Genesis 10:25, we find that in the days of Peleg, *God divided the earth.* This is the day of the breaking up of continents and islands which God did in order to again salvage mankind by segregating and separating wicked men from the good. God was determined to bring the promised seed to the earth and save the world. Scientists call the former earth Gond-wanaland. However, they do not know how this "Gondwanaland," or united earth, became separated into continents like our globe is today. If you will take a map of the world—the round world—and cut it like a jigsaw puzzle, you can piece Africa right into South America, and Japan fits over against America. In fact, you can piece the whole world together in a jigsaw puzzle showing that it does belong as a unit. God separated it with tremendous explosive power in order that He might bring a redeemer to this world! Further mention of this is found in I Chronicles 1:19. What a tremendous effort God was making in order to defeat the devil and to bring a redeemer to mankind.

TOWER AND TONGUES

The next development in this *Battle of the Ages* is found at the place called the Tower of Babel. It follows in Genesis 11. God saw that men were congregating even though He had made the continents. He saw they were able to accomplish many amazing things, even trying to build their own way to heaven. Their great unity was a common language. So God decided that in order to bring the redeemer, He would bring confusion of tongues. The reason there are over 2,000 languages in the world today is again the mercy of God seeking to separate wicked men from good men—in order that He might ultimately fulfill His first promise to mankind. This forever upholds the truth of the Bible that light has no relationship with the unbeliever and that righteous people should not intermarry with sinners; that godly people should not marry heathen. God has

done this through the entire history of man, separating in every generation His people from the devil's people.

The colossal phenomenon performed at the Tower of Babel was a complete surprise. One morning the people woke up and went to work and there were 2,000 languages rather than the one they had the night before! Work on the Tower of Babel ceased and the workers scattered to all parts of the earth. They crossed oceans, deserts and mountains. They went everywhere in order to be separated one from another. This was again God's way of defeating Satan and proving to him that one day the promised redeemer would come, who would bruise the head of the serpent.

The greatest and deepest sins were first committed in Babel, or Babylon. For this reason God has always been against enormous concentrations of humanity. There is first rebellion against God; next, rebellion against law and order in government; and then rebellion against one's fellowman. In order words, there is murder, assault, thieving, etc. in great evidence. Also, big cities create antisocial situations where men and women get divorces and their children suffer as juvenile delinquents. Great cities can become social cancers that destroy humanity.

The great cities of the world today are literal cesspools of iniquity and crime out of which every evil and filthy thing comes which destroys happiness and causes rebellion against God. In the first great metropolitan area in the history of the world, which was Babylon, God had to confuse the language of men to move them back to the farm, to simple living, that through this He might bring a redeemer to the world.

Possibly the same night that all the languages were created, God also changed the likeness of the physical person and created the races. This was a further separation of mankind because of sin.

4

THE SEED IS PLANTED

In the very next chapter in Genesis 12, God finds a man! For the first time God indicated that through a certain man the redeemer would come. God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 12:2,

"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

This is the first promise to an individual that the great honor of bringing the world redeemer was his. That is the reason the devil rose up in fury to fight Abraham and his seed for nearly 4,000 years. That is the reason the devil bitterly hates the people of Abraham and the land of Israel. Satan very well knew that it would be a seed of this people who would bruise his head. He released his hottest fury against Abraham.

BARREN WIVES

When God found Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, the first thing He wished to do was bring him out from among those heathen people. God always separates His people from the devil's people. God told Abraham in order to be His man he must leave Ur of the Chaldees. He could not live in the midst of spiritual bondage, idol worshipers and satanic superstitions. God's man must be alone to commune with God, so that He could lead and guide and converse with him.

As soon as God chose Abraham to be the forebearer of the Messiah, his wife Sarah was barren. She could not give birth to a child. This was not a physical problem—it was not something that just happened. Before God could bring about the promise to Abraham and produce a son through whom a redeemer would come to bruise the serpent's head, He had to cause a miracle of conception to take place.

Abraham was 100 years old and his wife was 90 years old before a male child was born to them who could be the emancipator of the human race. And so the devil lost his struggle. Though Sarah for fifty, sixty, or seventy-five years had desired a son, the devil stood off and tormented her, causing Ishmael to be born through a handmaiden who could have no part in bringing the Messiah. Here again the struggle seemed hopeless. Then God prevailed through a supernatural means and Isaac was born (Genesis 21).

In Genesis 25 we find the next development. Isaac married Rebecca who could not have a son. Rebecca was barren for twenty years. This was not a natural situation. Again the devil said, "I will stop the promised seed who will destroy my power from coming."

These scriptures reveal there was an unseen battle in the heavens raging in fury from generation to generation.

Again a miracle had to take place before Rebecca could bear a son, and through this son the redeemer could come to this world.

In the following generation, Jacob was chosen as the one through whom the redeemer would come.

Immediately his wife Rachel was barren (Genesis 30:1). She, as his mother and grandmother, suffered agony and torment. The devil attacked every time there were other humans to bring the promised seed.

For the third generation God performed a miracle that He might bring to this world the redeemer.

Man's torturous and crooked path from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation takes on some strange movements.

FALL OF FIRST SON

The oldest of Jacob's sons was Reuben. In I Chronicles 5:1 the record says the devil tempted Reuben to commit adultery with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine—his father's wife. This terrible sin eliminated him from being in direct lineage of the Messiah. The devil was working in every satanic way. He thought surely the first born would be the one through whom the Messiah would come. Therefore, he tempted him to fall into deep immorality, knowing that if he fell he would not be able to bring the holy redeemer to the world.

DREAMS OF DESTINY

Later, God appointed Joseph, that through him he would preserve and succor the chosen nation. As soon as He did, all hell was turned loose against Joseph. When he was 17 years old, he dreamed his destiny. Immediately his brothers hated him with satanic fury and threw him in a pit to destroy him. Then they sold him to a roving caravan as a slave to be sure that they would never see him again. When he was sold again in Egypt to Potiphar, his brilliance and loyalty merited him high position. The devil tempted him to commit adultery with his master's wife. He refused and the devil had Joseph thrown into prison, seeking to destroy this man that God had chosen through whom a redeemer would come.

Finally, God triumphed through the miraculous interpretation of King

Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph was dramatically elevated from a dungeon cell to the palace courts, from shackles of iron to rings of gold, from a prisoner to the prime minister of Egypt. When famine, which was probably caused by Satan, came to the chosen race living in Canaan, Joseph brought his entire family to Egypt and kept them, succoring them all the days of his life. In Egypt, God kept the chosen nation for 400 years. During that time, pharaohs came to the throne who did not know of Joseph, and these jealous kings subjected Israel to abject slavery.

Don't believe for a moment that this was an accident. The devil caused this slavery to come upon the children of Israel. He felt a deliverer was at hand. Israel had been free in Egypt. Their forebearer was a prime minister in Egypt and was a timely savior of the country. Yet the devil twisted their relationship to Egypt, creating hatred and malicious jealousy, which led the king to reduce Israel to a race of slaves that he might destroy them. At this time Israel had no prophet, they had no king, they had no leader; they were slaves working day and night for their Egyptian masters. The devil thought for sure that the seed could never come—not from a nation of slaves!

Can you now see this amazing story? Can you now hold onto the rope as it weaves on from generation to generation?

The children of Israel were floundering in Egypt's bondage with Pharaoh trying to destroy them, even murdering their little children to keep them from multiplying. Pharaoh worked them so hard they could not hope to become a great people. The Bible says in Exodus 2:24, *"...God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob."* Here we have the continuity of *The Battle of the Ages.* God was ready to step back upon the stage and tell the devil he had to move aside. These people who were the chosen of God had to come out of bondage.

BABY IN THE BULRUSHES

In the next episode, God spoke prophetically to the parents of Moses. When Moses was born, he was placed among the bulrushes of the Nile River; it would take a miracle to save his life from wicked King Pharaoh. The king's daughter found the child and accepted him as her own son to be reared in Pharaoh's house. The devil thought this would spoil Moses and he would not love a nation of slaves. Then, the day Moses stepped out to do the will of God, his own brethren turned against him. He had to run away for 40 years into the desert where he communed with God. The devil thought Moses was defeated. When he returned as God's prophet to liberate Israel, Pharaoh stood against him. Only by supernatural powers throughout his life was Moses able to accomplish his

mission to set the people of the Messiah free. Moses lived under tremendous pressures from within and without. He constantly had problems, troubles and sorrows because he was God's chosen man to lead Israel back to the land of promise where the promised Messiah to this world would be born.

This same pattern followed on from generation to generation. It is amazing what happened to David when God ordained that through his seed He would bring the redeemer. The devil tried in many ways to destroy him. He brought a lion against him and God gave him power to kill the beast with his naked hands. He brought a bear against him—God gave him power to kill the bear. Then the devil brought Goliath against him. When David stepped out before the huge giant, the devil said, "Now I'll surely take care of this little one and stop this redeemer again." God, through a miracle, caused that mighty giant to fall with a small round stone imbedded in the top of his head. As Goliath fell dead, God again said, "This is *The Battle of the Ages* and My redeemer shall come. He will come through my servant David."

SLAYING THE SEED

On through the story of the kings, for succeeding centuries the devil persistently tried to destroy Jerusalem where the temple of God was, and to destroy the royal seed, hoping to destroy the Promised Seed. At one dark moment, Athaliah, a wicked queen and usurper of power, decided that she should slay all the king's sons. This was a master stroke of the devil through this temptress, a wicked, sinful woman. He was certain that now the Messiah would not be able to come through David. What God did is recorded in II Kings 11:1-2,

"But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain."

God called Jehosheba to hide little Joash and save him. It was through Joash that a continuation of the seed of David was to sit upon the throne of Israel.

5

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

A new turn of events in this battle is very sad. It is what we call the dark period—or the period of silence of 400 years before Jesus was born. It seemed to be a waiting period between the devil and God. It was a time when God was not speaking and the devil was lurking everywhere to see where God would strike next and what would happen. He felt the world was on the verge of something. He knew that the sun would rise in brilliance and the Messiah would rise in dazzling strength to "bruise his head."

That deadly silence was broken one starry night when the herald angels proclaimed in no uncertain words,

"Peace on earth, good will toward men."

The devil heard this angelic message to the shepherds. He heard the proclamation that a Messiah was born in Bethlehem. It startled him into action more than he had been for 4,000 years. He observed what was happening and instantly marshaled all his forces together.

With all his devilish cunning, Satan entered into King Herod's heart and said, "Herod, there's going to be a king over you. You must destroy this usurper. He is born in Bethlehem!"

In Matthew 2:16, Herod's diabolical orders for his soldiers to slay all the children under 2 years of age in Bethlehem and the border towns were carried out. The world still remembers the atrocity of that Satan-inspired act.

Lucifer was frightened. The Seed had come to give the fatal blow on his head. He felt impending doom. Now his authority and power to hurt men by disease and demon possession would be challenged.

God saw fit to do His wonders also. He caused three wise men to rise up out of the Orient and travel in haste to Bethlehem where they rendered unto Jesus gold for his journey to safety; frankincense because He was the true temple of God, offering worship to the Messiah; and myrrh, which is the perfume, that He would go forth with the aroma of a king.

God won again in this 4,000 year struggle and Jesus was taken into Egypt. There He was nestled in safety because God said He would bring Him up out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1)

This was *The Battle of the Ages*—which began in the book of Genesis—on the first page of human history, when God said, *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* (Genesis 3:15) It was a running battle for 4,000 years.

Now the Messiah is on the human stage. This man has come, the seed of the woman but not the seed of man, who will bruise Satan's head. How will he do it?

Jesus Christ returned to His own land from Egypt only to discover all hell turned loose against Him. At the opening of His ministry there was a great confrontation at a specific meeting place where Lucifer offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world if He would give up the battle and not bruise his head. Christ boldly responded, *"Get thee hence, Satan."* The hour was dramatically approaching; the deadly blow was about to descend on Satan's wicked head. He battled from without with scheming sinners and from within with weak disciples.

In Nazareth where He grew up, as soon as Jesus announced He was the true Seed and the promised Messiah, performing miracles to prove it, His own fellow citizens of Nazareth pushed Him to the edge of town, to a steep precipice, and tried in vain to throw Him bodily into the valley below. They wanted to destroy the Messiah. This was the daily battle with the devil. He inspired politicians and religious leaders to conspire against Jesus.

It is interesting that even the demons, or fallen angels, when He faced them, would scream: *"We know who you are, thou holy one of God."* No wonder they did. They had been at the devil's conference table when it was discussed that He was born and they had heard their supreme commander, Lucifer say, "This is the one who will bruise my head and destroy our work." Therefore the evil spirits did know Him. When they met Him face to face they knew they were not equal to Him—that He could cast them forth by His own mighty power.

This battle continued blow by blow right to the death of Christ. First was the betrayal by Judas, then the denial by Peter. Peter would never have wanted to deny Jesus, but the devil put it in his heart during a moment of frustration.

Then Judas sold Christ for only 30 pieces of silver. He betrayed his own master, One he loved more than his own father. Judas did love Jesus. It was the devil who filled his heart and mind with covetousness and jealousy.

Judas was almost an insane man the moment he bargained off his Saviour and redeemer. It was the devil moving in all the fury of hell, with pent-up wrath of 4,000 years, knowing his time had come. He had to make a master stroke now

or never. He thought it ingenious to cause one of Christ's own disciples to betray Him and sell Him for the price of a slave! Then Satan boasted: "I've won. I've won! My head is not bruised!"

However, he did not know the plan of God. He had not won. He did inspire a Roman ruler named Pilate to stand up before the people and, like a child, wash his hands in water and say: *"This man—His blood is not on me."*

Pilate knew better than this. He was a magistrate; he knew jurisprudence. Yet that day he stood vacillating like a weakling because he was full of Satan's fear. He would not listen to his own wife who had dreamed of the innocence of Christ.

Not only the political powers were under the sway of the devil, but the High Priest was deceived also. He did not want to pass an evil verdict against a righteous man, but suddenly he was part of a screaming crowd. They were yelling like maniacs: *"His blood be upon us and our children!"* They did not want such a thing to happen! They were full of the devil at that moment and the devil thought he was winning in this terrible drama of 4,000 years of battle!

When Christ was being led out to His crucifixion with His back bleeding from the cat-o'-nine-tails, with His brow bleeding from the cruel thorns piercing His head, the devil said, "Now I am winning, there will never be a redeemer; there will never be a Saviour; there will never be a promised seed to deliver humanity. I am going to forever win this battle. I will damn every human being. I will again exalt myself!" In fact, all hell held a carnival as the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross. It was the darkest moment of all recorded history. No wonder the clouds covered the earth and lightning swept through the skies with its brilliant blade in cosmic fury!

Again Satan did not know the divine way of victory. Jesus had to offer Himself as the Lamb of God. His cross became an altar. Jesus was obligated to shed His blood as a propitiation for our sins. He had to die as a sacrifice, not just die. There were creatures down below in chains—the first priesthood that had to be redeemed. He had to go preach to them but the devil did not know this part of the battle. Therefore, when Jesus left the battlefield on top of Mount Calvary, He quickly descended into the bowels of the earth and found those bound in chains of darkness who had fallen in the time of Noah (II Peter 2). He preached to those sinful creatures in prison who had been members of the great Melchizedek priesthood, that they might hear the Gospel and be redeemed from their sins if they would receive Him as their Saviour.

6

THE SEED TRIUMPHANT

The greatest and most exciting moment of all history came three days after the death of Christ. Up through the caverns of hell, up through the blackness and darkness of the inferno of Hades, we see a bright light approaching. We see One striding forward who is glorious and majestic! IT IS JESUS! Behind him is the devil lying flat with a bleeding head. His head had been bruised. His head had been broken. The Messiah hit him a deadly blow!

We see keys dangling at the Messiah's girdle. They are the keys of death and hell. (Revelation 1:18) He is the winner!

He is the Saviour! As He comes triumphantly back up through the caverns of the dead, He walks back through the grave He had entered and into the golden sunlight of Jerusalem while angels proclaim, "He is not here, He is risen!"

The glorious resurrection story was in action. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the True Seed, had now paid the full price and purchased man by His own blood.

Mankind was now set free from every power, from every disease, from every sin that Satan had placed on him. He possessed freedom through the Lord Jesus Christ and only through Him.

By His resurrection the Lord Jesus assumed the primacy of rulership of the whole world. He is now the

Lord of lords and the King of kings!

7

TRANSFERRED POWER

At the moment of His ascendancy to dwell at the right hand of God, Christ spoke these final words to His evangelists:

"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe;

In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15-18).

He was placing His robe of divine authority around the shoulders of Christian soldiers.

They were to exert the power He had gained when He bruised the head of the devil.

Through the centuries those who have believed in Christ's power have obeyed the injunction: *"...Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7). They have cast out devils from those possessed because of the deadly wound Christ inflicted upon Satan at Calvary!

In the near future the Lord Jesus Christ will receive His coronation. He will be crowned with many crowns upon His head! He will be proclaimed by the entire universe as King of kings and Lord of lords! He will ride in majesty as He reigns for 1,000 years! The devil will be bound with fetters for the same 1,000 years. While He is bound in the bottomless pit, the King of kings will rule over all the earth and rule over all mankind.

What a glorious day it will be! At that time every redeemed one will sing the song of the Lamb and shout Hosannah! The sin and rebellion which began in the garden of Eden has been made right in the new Jerusalem of God.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be

fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3).

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

Satan is first bound and ultimately cast into the lake of fire! *The Battle of the Ages* comes to a dramatic finale. The bloody war which lasted for 6,000 continuous years is over!

GOD IS NOW ALL IN ALL!

MY CHALLENGE TO YOU

If you are not a Christian, I invite you to receive the hope and peace in your heart that only Jesus gives.

To become a Christian, you must deal with Christ Jesus directly. In a quiet moment, bow your head and talk to Him. In your own words say something like this:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose from the dead to save me from my sins. I want to be with you in heaven forever. God forgive me of all my sins that I have committed against you. I here and now open my heart to you and ask you to come into my heart and life and be my personal Saviour. Amen."

If you say that to Christ and mean it, He will come in instantly. At once you will sense you have been transferred from the devil's dominion to the kingdom of God.

Read I John 1:9 and Colossians 1:13. A wonderful peace and joy will fill your soul.

The BATTLE of the Ages

There has been a bloody battle roaring in three dimensions since time immemorial. It began in heaven; it continued on this globe; it culminated in the bowels of hell when Christ defeated Lucifer and strode forth through the gates of Hades with the keys of the kingdom rattling at His girdle.

The battleground of the battle of the ages has been cosmic, earthly and netherworld. The results of the battle are the salvation or damnation of the immortal souls of all mankind.

To understand what is happening in this last hour of world history, we must nave an understanding of *The Battle of the Ages*.



Since the age of 17, Lester Sumrall has ministered for over 50 years in more than 100 nations of the world. He is a pioneer in Christian broadcasting, a prolific writer, teacher, missionary, evangelist, and pastor. He founded LeSEA, a multifaceted evangelistic outreach whose goal is to win a million immortal souls to Jesus.