

5

**CALLED
TO
CONQUER**

God, Government, and the Supernatural

To this point you have received an initial grounding in supernatural realities, as the Bible reveals them. We have gone, you might say, from a first-grade understanding through high school, with some glances at college-level knowledge.

That may be all you will need, but if you want or need more, it is available beyond the pages of this book, especially in a book called *War on the Saints* by Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, a classic on the Christian's spiritual warfare as it relates to the supernatural.

That book is available in two forms, a condensed edition as well as the original, unabridged text, from two Christian publishers. The shorter version will give any reader a good college-level *survey* course on the subject. The complete text is suited to ministers and missionaries and Christian counselors who come up against particularly resistant and perplexing difficulties in their work. Such matters may yield to the penetrating and precisely defined analyses that these brilliant and faithful writers impart.

There is no escaping the fact that two kingdoms are in conflict on this earth on which we live. That fact has consequences reaching from the individual heart, to the family, to our culture, to the nation and out to the world scene.

That conflict will continue and will intensify as both kingdoms bid for the allegiance of men and clash over the course of history. *Both* will reach their ultimate heights of realization on this earth in the form of *governments* with worldwide authority.

Satan's great thrust against mankind, the Scriptures plainly say, will be by the tyranny of a highly unified, virtually worldwide government under his sway. At its head will stand a counterfeit christ the Bible calls "the Antichrist" and the "man of sin." Energized by satanic power, he will affix himself upon deceived mankind, and will speak and act in utter defiance of God.

By this thrust Satan will say, in effect, to God, "You sent Your Son as the King and men rejected Him, but they will worship my christ and follow him."

Never think that Satan is uninterested in government. It interests him highly. It will be the means by which he finally imposes his will on much of humanity.

He will seek totally to interpose himself between God and mankind by means of that government, and to cut mankind off from God by it. Spiritually, on this earth, that will amount to a nearly total eclipse of God. Like any eclipse, it will be brief.

The Scripture describes the Antichrist as one who "opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

His arrival on the world scene will create a sensation and "will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing" (2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9-10).

If you know the Bible, you undoubtedly are aware of this future prospect. The point here is not that it will happen, but rather *what it tells us about our enemy*. The fact that he will ultimately nearly accomplish this short-term takeover tells us *what he pushes for*.

He is not just waiting for that day. He is straining toward it and seeking to bring it in. Understanding that can help us deal realistically, effectively, and spiritually with the world in which we live.

Satan is always at work to project and advance the interests of his evil kingdom to the maximum obtainable limits; one of the vehicles he seeks to ride is human government as a way of usurping and overthrowing lawful authority.

Never think that God is uninterested in government. Government is His idea. He ordained it for good (Romans 13:1-7). A governing authority is "God's servant to do you good," we are told, and, "He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

A ruler's God-appointed role is to make room for what is good, protect law-abiding citizens and to punish and stop the evildoers. Knowing its power to affect conditions across a whole society, Satan seeks to twist and pervert government so that it does the opposite—actually punishes and persecutes the godly while protecting and elevating evildoers.

The living God has tremendous plans for government through His anointed Son, who was born to save and also born to rule:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and *the government will be upon His shoulders*. . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne . . . with justice and righteousness . . . forever” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

That is assured but we are not there yet. We are living short of the ultimate governmental expressions of these two conflicting kingdoms.

Until the day when “the kingdom of the world . . . become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever,” as Revelation 11:15 portrays it, there will be a continuing dynamic tension between good and evil reaching for government power and wielding its authority. The difference between the two, and the effects they produce, is immense.

It is literally true that, “When the righteous are *in authority*, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan” (Proverbs 29:2, *RSV*). History teaches that conclusively.

Apart from the true church, there is no greater earthly agency for good than government. Without it, crime, thievery, and murder would run rampant, unchecked. There would be little stability, little assurance of life itself, much less property and liberty.

Christians are commanded to be both obedient and honestly submissive to government. A key passage concerning that is Romans 13:1-7, which affirms that the authorities “have been established by God.”

Here is the stated purpose for which they exist:

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is *God's servant to do you good*” (13:3-4).

Though it is hard to understand how they can be so one-eyed and dense in understanding, some Christians flatly apply God's sanctions to all governments in all places at all times—with no regard to the verses that define the God-given role and purpose of government, the very *why* of its existence.

A government is meant to be “God's servant, *an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*” Government is to roughly approximate at earth-level the justice of God. How profoundly perverse it is

when government reverses that function and acts as an agent to advocate, promote, and enforce evil, even to become a terror to those who do what is right.

The parents of Moses pleased God when, after the ruling Pharaoh had decreed that all male Jewish infants be killed, they hid the child by faith and “were not afraid of the king’s edict” (Hebrews 11:23).

When the evil King Herod thought to kill the infant Jesus, whom the wise men told him was “born king of the Jews,” the visitors were warned in a dream not to let Herod know exactly where to find Jesus. Then “an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream” and told him to flee to Egypt, so “he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left” abruptly for Egypt (Matthew 2:2, 12-14).

This fact stands as an historical rebuke to some of the boldest platform overcomers of our day, who mock and belittle the power of Satan and tell God’s people how readily they can defeat him: when God’s own Son—in whose life and body all the authority and purposes of heaven were invested—was endangered, Joseph was not told that the child was supernaturally invulnerable. There is a difference between presumption and faith. In this case, faith fled.

There was supernatural intervention: the wise men were warned in a dream and an angel told Joseph to get up immediately and escape. There was divine protection, but it consisted in obeying the angel’s warning. When Herod lifted the sword of government and killed all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were less than two years old, Jesus was not there to be murdered (Matthew 2:13-18).

Government, when it is evil in what it decrees, is not always to be blindly obeyed. When the apostles were hauled before the Sanhedrin (the supreme court of the Jews with religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction), they were told, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this [Jesus’] name.”

“Peter and the other apostles replied, ‘We must obey God rather than men!’” (Acts 5:27-29) It is only when there is a *direct* contradiction between the law or will of God and the laws of men that believers must choose to obey God above the will of government. Not to do so in that circumstance is to become bound by evil.

We must live under government, and it must possess and *use* the sword of enforcement spoken of in Romans 13:3-5. But *which way* the sword of government cuts makes all the difference.

“When a king sits on his throne to judge,” Proverbs 20:8 says, “he winnows out all evil with his eyes.” He distinguishes between what is evil and what is good and removes or puts away the evil.

King David is seen governing in this biblical cameo: “David reigned

over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people” (2 Samuel 8:15). In Romans 13:6 we encounter this lovely fact: “the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing.”

The worst state of society occurs when evil rises up and takes hold of the very centers of government power and uses them to decree evil and enforce it. That enthrones lawlessness and gives to it all the organized authority and force of law. Evil can then have its way, with none to stop it.

The vocation of Satan is as a deceiver and murderer and destroyer (see John 10:10), and he endeavors to accomplish these very things through the power of government anywhere in the world that he can.

Whole governments, holding power over millions of citizens, have officially declared that there is no God, that the Bible is a deceptive fiction. They systematically indoctrinate children with atheism in state schools, hound believers (Jews also and others) mercilessly, sometimes sending them to slave labor and sometimes to death, breaking up families, ordering armed soldiers to disrupt worship meetings with rifle-butt violence, shutting church buildings and tearing them down.

Sometimes such governments, as with Nazism and Marxism, slaughter people by the millions in pursuit of their evil ends.

Seeing what government is meant to be as a force for good, and what it can become under satanic inspiration and usurpation, can we afford to be indifferent to government, just to let it be whatever it will be? In a free land, it is our privilege as Christian citizens to participate as directly and vigorously in government affairs as the unbelievers constantly do.

Peace by Conquest

The fateful relationship between government and the supernatural is sometimes readily evident, and sometimes not. Moses was given supernatural power by God to overcome the resistant will of a headstrong Pharaoh and also to overcome his wonder-working magicians, whose powers were occultic and set against God’s purpose to liberate His people.

Daniel is a book of the Bible that portrays the life of a godly man who worked at the very touch-points of government and the supernat-

ural. Daniel, a Hebrew exile in Babylon, was a prophet. Yet he spent all of his adult life as a high government official in two great Gentile kingdoms, Babylon and Persia. In each he stood successfully and fearlessly for righteousness and truth.

King Belshazzar of Babylon became wanton and godless and sinned his way to judgment. It was God's man Daniel who stood at the crux of the transition. A wine-drenched banquet was the king's final act. Judgment fell swiftly and by openly supernatural means. Some handwriting appeared on the wall before the king. He called immediately for his pagan advisers, "the enchanters, astrologers and diviners" and wise men but they could not figure it out. Then Daniel was brought in. He pronounced judgment:

"But you . . . O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself. . . . Instead, *you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. . . .* You did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life. . . . Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

A great kingdom was brought to a sudden and irreversible end: "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom" (Daniel 5:22-31). Darius immediately appointed Daniel to be one of three top officers of the new government.

Daniel received remarkable revelations from God concerning a series of future kingdoms and governments all the way forward to the governments of the Antichrist and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can see the transition from the short-lived government of the Antichrist, based totally on presumption and evil, to the everlasting reign of the Messiah Jesus in Daniel 7:8-14.

Daniel shows the rise of the Antichrist, his blasphemous boasting on the earth, events going on in heaven, the sudden death of the Antichrist—then "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations . . . worshiped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Satan is ambitious to rule. He seeks to do so on the earth through a series of evil men, antichrists, leading ultimately to the Antichrist, who will almost as completely embody satanic evil in human form as Jesus Christ embodied divinity and truth.

According to 1 John 2:18, "the Antichrist is coming," yet "even now many antichrists have come." The final Antichrist will be a religious and a political figure, who will also control the world economy (see Revelation 13:16-17).

The powers of darkness gain a measure of control on the earth by