

CHURCH.

LESSON 45

1	PRAYER
----------	---------------

Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] REVELATION 8 - 11
----------	--

Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Revelation 8 -11).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN JOHN] (18) JOHN 16:14
----------	---

Review two by two.

(18) John 16:14. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) [CHURCH RESTORING MINISTRY] SATAN AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE
----------	---

Introduce. This teaching is about Satan and spiritual warfare. God normally works through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible and the Christians of the Church. But in special circumstances, God also works through circumstances and his angels. Not everybody is happy with God's work. The devil and his demons oppose God and his work and try to destroy it. Also many evil people in the world reject Jesus Christ and oppose God and his work.

We will learn what the Bible teaches about Satan and his fall, his goal and strategy, and his limitation. Finally we will learn what Christians should do in the spiritual warfare against Satan. Also see manual 8, supplement 1 and 2.

The Bible clearly teaches that Satan has already been "bound" and his demons have been "disarmed" during the first coming of Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago. The binding of Satan or putting a limitation on him is clearly taught in the Gospels in Matthew 12:28-30, Luke 10:17-20 and John 12:31-32 and also in the Letters in Colossians 1:13, Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14 and 1 John 3:8. The book of Revelation describes this "binding" of Satan in apocalyptic pictures in Revelation 12:7-9 and Revelation 20:1-3.

A. SATAN AND HIS FALL

1. Who is Satan?

Read Revelation 12:1-9. **Discover and discuss.** Who is Satan?

Notes. The Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know. In Revelation chapter 12, Satan is described in the picture of an enormous red dragon. He is very strong. He is the ancient deceiver in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-5). He is called "the devil", which means *slanderer* of God and God's people. He is also called "Satan", which means *adversary* of God and God's people.

His purpose is twofold. In verse 4-5, he is pictured as trying to hinder the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, from the beginning of history (Genesis 3:15) up to the time he came and was snatched up to God and his throne (Acts 1:9).

In verse 9, Satan is described as the *one who leads the whole world astray*. That is, not the Christians, but the whole evil world that opposes God and his Messiah (cf. 1 John 5:18-19).

2. The fall of Satan.

(1) How Satan fell.

Read Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-14; 1 Timothy 3:6. **Discover and discuss.** How did Satan fall?

Notes. The Bible does not directly relate the fall of Satan. It only describes the fall of two mighty kings in history in terms of the fall of Satan.

In Isaiah 14:12-14 the fall of the wicked king of Babylon is described in terms of the fall of Satan. Babylon was the capitol of a mighty empire, which is situated in modern Iraq. For centuries the kings of Babylon had great aspirations to

rule the whole world. The fall of the king of Babylon and his empire is described in terms of what the prophet Isaiah knew about the fall of Satan.

Like the king of Babylon, Satan was called “Morningstar”, because this star shines so beautifully in the morning and attracts the attention of everybody. However, he arrogantly desired to be enthroned in heaven over everybody on earth and make himself like the Almighty God. Because of his self-deification and desire to grab and possess what belonged to God alone, God cast him out of the highest heaven onto the earth. The wicked king of Babylon followed in the footsteps of Satan. He was humiliated and fell from his throne. The wicked king of Babylon also became a type or illustration of the future Antichrist.

In Ezekiel 28:11-19 the fall of the wicked king of Tyre is described in terms of the fall of Satan. Tyre was for centuries the most renowned merchant city of the Phoenicians, which is situated in modern Lebanon. It was built on several islands and well fortified. It had a great fleet of merchant ships. The final fall of the king of Tyre and his kingdom is described in terms of what the prophet Ezekiel knew about the fall of Satan. Tyre fell because of its corruption in commerce and its violence in war. The king of Tyre fell because he became proud and corrupted his wisdom.

Like the king of Tyre, Satan was originally created by God to be a guardian angel. He was wise and very beautiful. He dwelt in the presence of God and was also present in the Garden of Eden. He was blameless in his ways until wickedness was found in him. He became *proud* on account of his beauty and *corrupted* his wisdom on account of his splendour. In 1 Timothy 3:6 we read that the devil fell under God’s judgement because he became *conceited*. God opposes the proud (1 Peter 5:5) and drove him in disgrace out of his presence. He expelled him from being an angel in the highest heaven and threw him to the earth.

(2) When Satan fell.

Read Genesis 1:31; 3:1. **Discover and discuss.** When did Satan fall?

Notes. At the end of Genesis chapter 1, we read that “God saw all that he had made and it was very good.” However, in Genesis 3, before the fall of the man and the woman into sin, we read that Satan appeared to them as a snake and tempted them to distrust and disobey God. At that time Satan was already a fallen creature and opposed to God and his work. Therefore we must conclude that the fall of Satan must have happened somewhere between the completion of creation and the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. More than this we do not know about the origin and fall of Satan.

B. THE GOAL AND STRATEGY OF SATAN

1. Satan opposes God and his people.

(1) Satan opposes God.

Discover and discuss. How does Satan oppose God? **Read** Genesis 3:1-5.

Notes. Satan is *the adversary* of God and God’s people. Satan *accused* God of being a liar. His purpose was that Adam and Eve would not trust and obey God any longer.

(2) Satan opposes Jesus Christ.

Discover and discuss. In which three ways did Satan try to tempt Jesus? **Read** Luke 4:1-13.

Notes. Satan *tempted* Jesus in his human nature to turn his back on God. Satan is very real and very cunning.

In his first temptation, Satan tempted Jesus to distrust God. He tempted Jesus in the area of basic human needs, namely food. After 40 days of fasting, Jesus was hungry. Satan tempted Jesus to distrust God and no longer have confidence in God’s plan and ability to sustain him when he was hungry. He tried to tempt Jesus to take matters into his own hands, turn some stones into bread and thus quickly satisfy his material needs. He tried to tempt Jesus to act independently from God. But Jesus overcame this temptation.

In his second temptation, Satan tempted Jesus to by-pass God and trust Satan. He tempted Jesus in the area of power. Probably through a vision, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Satan claimed that he owned and ruled all the kingdoms on earth and that if Jesus worshipped him, he would make Jesus the owner and ruler of all these kingdoms and Jesus would quickly be acknowledged as the king of this world. However, Satan is a liar (John 8:44), because he never owned or ruled this world at any time. God owns and rules this world from beginning to end (Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 145:13; 146:10; Isaiah 14:24-27). By offering all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, to have authority over them and to enjoy their splendour, Satan tried to tempt Jesus in his human nature to obtain the crown without enduring the cross. God’s plan in and through Jesus Christ was to destroy the work of Satan (1 John 3:8), to save the world (John 3:17) and to reign over everyone and everything (Matthew 28:18; Revelation 1:5). Satan tried to tempt Jesus to take a short-cut and bypass God’s plan. But Jesus also overcame this temptation.

In his third temptation, Satan tempted Jesus to have a false trust in God and his Word. He tempted Jesus in the area of the super-natural. He tried to tempt Jesus to do something spectacular and sensational, namely to jump off a high building and allow angels to catch him in a spectacular way. Satan even quoted a passage from the Bible (Psalm 91:11-12), but completely out of context, in order to persuade Jesus to have a misplaced trust in God. He tried to tempt Jesus to substitute presumption for faith and shameless arrogance for submission to God’s guidance. He wanted Jesus to make an experiment with respect to God and test God to see whether God really was God and whether God’s Word (the

Bible) really could be trusted. Satan argued that by jumping off a high building, Jesus would prove that God existed and did what he promised in his Word. He tried to tempt Jesus to have a misplaced confidence in God and his Word. But Jesus also overcame this temptation!

Matthew closes this passage with the remark that Satan left Jesus, but kept waiting for another opportunity to tempt Jesus.

(3) Satan opposes all people.

Discover and discuss. Why is Satan so opposed to the Bible and its message? **Read** Luke 8:11-12. **Notes.** In the parable in Luke 8:11-12, Jesus Christ describes the main goal of Satan. He says, “The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may *not believe and be saved.*” Satan’s main purpose is to keep all the words of the Bible away from the people in this world! Satan does not want the people in this world to believe in the Bible and thus to be saved. He does not want them to be born again and become the best people they could be. He does not want them to serve and glorify the God of the Bible! Satan will work together with every science, philosophy and religion in the world that opposes the Bible! He will do everything in his power to destroy the Bible or to keep people from hearing, reading, studying and obeying the Bible! He will inspire false prophets to twist the Bible and to discredit the Bible. He will inspire evil leaders to prohibit the possession of a Bible or to confiscate the Bible.

Why does Satan (and his followers) hate the Bible so much? Because the Bible is the only Book in the world that exposes who Satan really is and predicts and describes his ultimate doom! Therefore, when a Christian reads, studies and obeys the Bible in spite of every political and religious opposition, he resists Satan! Then the God of the Bible is very pleased with him!

2. Satan attacks the mind and heart of people.

Introduce. “Satan” means “adversary, opponent” of God and his people. “Devil” means “slanderer, malicious false reporter” of God and his people. Satan’s strategy is to attack the inward being and outward circumstances of people. According to Ephesians 6:16, “the flaming arrows” of Satan are symbols of his attacks on the body, mind and spirit of Christians. He sets all kinds of traps, into which people can fall if they are not careful (2 Timothy 2:26).

Discover and discuss. Which particular inward areas of people does Satan attack? Why does he do this?

(1) Satan is a liar – he attacks the mind of people.

Read John 8:44. Satan is a liar and the father of all the lies in the world. He attacks *the mind* of people. Satan is behind every single lie that people tell or believe in this world! Think of the many lies that are propagated through educational books, through the mass media and through certain political leaders, lawyers and religious leaders. The only way to counter lies is by knowing the truth and by submitting yourself to the truth (John 8:31-36; 17:17). “The truth will set you free!”

(2) Satan is a tempter – he attacks the will of people.

Read Genesis 3:1-7. Satan is a tempter. He attacks *the will* of people. Satan undermines obedience to God’s will and tempts people to disobey God and his Word, which is the Bible. Once people open their minds to the false suggestions of Satan, they become vulnerable in their will to make the wrong decision or choice. The only way to counter the temptations of Satan is to submit yourself to God (James 4:7) and his Word and to answer Satan’s false suggestions with the truth of God’s Word as recorded in the Bible (Matthew 4:1-11). “It is written!”

(3) Satan is an accuser – he attacks the conscience of people.

Read Revelation 12:10. Satan is an accuser. He attacks *the conscience* of people. The strategy of Satan is to first tempt people to sin and then to immediately turn against them and accuse them before God. Because Jesus died for all the sins of true Christians, Satan’s accusation against them are no longer valid (Hebrews 8:12). Nevertheless, Satan will continue to accuse true Christians, because he wants them to be plagued by a sense of false guilt, feelings of false shame or the fear of punishment. The only way to resist Satan’s false accusations is to re-affirm that Jesus died for your sins and to continue to serve Jesus Christ with your testimony and your life (Revelation 12:11). “They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.”

(4) Satan is a slave-master – he attacks the emotions of people.

Read Hebrews 2:14-15. Satan is a slave-master. He attacks *the emotions* of people. He holds people in this world in the grip of slavery to *fear of death*. Because people live in fear of death or fear dead people, they dedicate themselves to everything that can cause them to live longer. Some Christians venerate so-called saints in the church. Some non-Christians venerate the spirits of their dead ancestors or perform ceremonies at graves or make pilgrims journeys to the tombs of their spiritual leaders. Only the perfect love for Jesus Christ drives away fear (1 John 4:17-18). “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”

(5) Satan is a seducer – he seduces people to sexual immorality.

Read Revelation 2:20-24; 1 Corinthians 7:5. Satan is immoral. He attacks *the moral values* of people. He tries to tempt people to commit *sexual immorality*, especially when they lack self-control. Sexual immorality always begins with the eyes and the mind and at certain kinds of feasts.

In Revelation 2:20-24 Jezebel drew Christians away from Christ and seduced them to abominable idolatry. Her immorality (Greek: porneia) could have been spiritual, moral or sexual. She functioned as a prophetess and motivated people to follow her false teaching. She taught them “Satan’s so-called deep secrets.” She argued, “In order to conquer Satan you must first experience Satan.” So she spurred Christians on to attend the godless feasts of the guilds, where people committed idolatry and gross sexual immorality in order to continue being “a Christian” or even to become “a better Christian”. This false teaching reflected the Gnostic (Hindu) dualistic view of life in which “the soul of man (the essential part) is imprisoned in his body (the non essential part)” and need to be freed. The method of setting the soul free was to indulge in every possible form of evil (especially sexual immorality). Every religion or cult that believes this dualism, leads to contempt of ethics within religion.

The only way to counter sexual immorality is not to look at sexual immorality and immediately cut off the immoral thoughts in your mind and allow Jesus Christ “to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” and his Word (2 Corinthians 10:5).

(6) Satan is a false prophet – he attacks the faith of people.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:2-4; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Satan is a deceiver. He attacks *the faith* of Christians. He tries very hard to keep the non-Christians away from the Christian faith. Satan tries to lead the minds of Christians away from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ by preaching another Jesus, another Holy Spirit and another gospel¹. Satan is the author of false teachings and false religions. He causes nominal Christian, worldly philosophers and other religions to speak about Jesus in a way he did not reveal himself in the Bible! The only way to overcome this is to “demolish every argument against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Although Satan is the instigator of much evil, every human being remains responsible how he reacts towards Satan’s attacks, the evil in the world or and the evil in his own heart!

3. Satan attacks people through outward circumstances.

Discover and discuss. Which particular outward circumstances does Satan use to attack people?

Notes. Satan makes use of different methods to attack people.

(1) Satan sets traps.

Read 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:23-26. Satan *sets traps* so that people may fall into his traps, that is, into his power. If a young and immature Christian is appointed to become an elder, he might get proud, conceited and even think that he can hide his immaturity behind his position of authority. Satan also sets traps especially in the area of science (evolution), philosophy (Marxism) and religion (non-Christian religions, cults and occultism) in order to capture people to do his evil will.

(2) Satan counterfeits miracles.

Read Exodus 7:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 13:13. Satan *counterfeits* miracles in order to deceive the unbelievers to believe his lies. He enables some false prophets and prophetesses to perform counterfeit miracles. In this way he keeps many non-Christians away from Jesus Christ.

(3) Satan pretends to be an angel.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Satan *masquerades* as an angel of light and pretends to be a servant of righteousness. It is therefore not surprising that his servants (false prophets of false religions) also masquerade as servants of righteousness and do good works to prove to people that they do not need Jesus Christ. They do so-called “good works” (usually to counter the example of Christians) in order to prove that people do not need Christ.

(4) Satan infiltrates the Christian Church.

Read Matthew 13:37-41. Satan *infiltrates* the Christian Church. He plants counterfeit Christians as well as people who do evil among the Christians in the Church. The judgement day will clearly show which people were genuine Christians and who were false Christians.

(5) Satan hinders Christian workers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:5. Satan *hinders* the true messengers of Jesus Christ for some length of time from entering certain towns and countries in order to proclaim the gospel. Or they forbid Christians to send money, means and workers to help the poor, the handicapped and the uneducated in their country. But ultimately Satan cannot keep Christians out of any place on earth to proclaim the gospel! Satan also tries to make the efforts of Christian workers useless. He either instigates people to persecute Christians and force them to give up their faith in Jesus Christ. Or he instigates political and religious leaders to bribe people with luxurious gifts to stay away from the Christian Church and join their religion.

¹ Another Jesus is preached in:

The Gnostic Gospel of Jude (2nd century A.D.)

The Islamic Qur’an (8th century A.D.)

The Islamic Gospel of Barnabas (14th century A.D.)

The Book of Mormon (1830) – cf. “Understanding the cults”, Josh Mc Dowell and Don Stewart.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses (since 1870) – cf. “Understanding the cults.”

(6) Satan persecutes Christians.

Read Luke 22:31-32; Revelation 2:10. Satan *persecutes* Christians or subjects them to serious trials: throws the breadwinner into jail or kills him, rapes women, abducts girls to become slaves, murders thousands of children on schools and drives away whole villages into the forest.

(7) Satan instigates lawlessness.

Read John 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:8-11. Satan opposes peace and order in every society in the world by introducing, promoting and forcing lawlessness. He is called a murderer, because he delights in setting people up to hate and murder each other. He instigates every kind of lawlessness among political leaders, lawyers, judges, the police and other leaders in society. And he causes parents and social workers to depart from God's laws in the Bible. He will make every effort to wipe the Ten Commandments from the memories of people. Satan opposes God's moral laws, which he revealed in the Bible, because these laws are against lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for murderers, sexual immoral people and perverts (male homosexuals), for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound Christian doctrine that is revealed in the gospel and in the Bible (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

(8) Satan looks for opportunities to attack and destroy.

Read 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:16. These passages summarise Satan's strategy. Satan continuously prowls around Christians as a roaring lion looking for an opportunity to attack and destroy them. He is a coward and especially attacks young Christians who are not yet firm in their faith or who are not self-controlled or alert. Satan constantly fires flaming arrows at all Christians. These "flaming arrows" represent persecutions and all kinds of destruction from the outside, but especially all kinds of attacks on the soul of Christians. These burning arrows represent all kinds of negative thoughts and feelings, like doubts, anguish and self-accusation on the one hand and all kinds of evil thoughts and feelings, like lust, greed, vanity, pride and envy on the other hand. Paul therefore urges Christians to put on the full armour of God so that they can stand against Satan's schemes and attacks. Every Christian remains responsible how he responds to Satan's flaming arrows!

C. THE LIMITATIONS OF SATAN

1. Satan is limited.

Discover and discuss. What are the limitations of Satan?

Notes. Satan is *a created being* and is therefore completely under the authority and power of God!

(1) Satan is limited to what he has been permitted to do.

Read Job 1:6-22; 2:1-10; Revelation 20:1-3. During the whole Old Testament period, Satan was always limited in power to what the sovereign God of the Bible *permitted* him to do. For example, in the book of Job, Satan was permitted to have power to incite people to kill Job's children and servants and to destroy all his possessions, but he was not permitted to kill Job! These events clearly revealed Satan's real intentions and character. Satan is a murderer and destroyer. But during the Old Testament period Satan was not allowed to do more harm than God permitted him to do. At the first coming of Christ 2000 years ago, Satan was bound so that he could no longer deceive the nations. He will remain bound until just before the second coming of Christ.

(2) Satan is limited to what he possesses and influences.

Read Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2; Matthew 11:27; 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23. On the basis of Luke 4:5-6 and 1 John 5:19, some Christians say that Satan is the possessor of this whole present world and that he controls it to such an extent that he can offer it to anyone he wishes. Although Satan claims that he is the rightful owner of this world and the ruler over everything in this world, Jesus says that Satan is a liar (John 8:44). Such Bible references certainly do not prove that Satan is the ultimate owner and ruler of the nations, with the right and the might to dispose of them and of their wealth as he pleases, so that Jesus Christ himself, at least during this present period of time, would have to take a back seat to him.

The contrary is the truth, as is proved abundantly by the Bible. Not Satan, but the God of the Bible reigns forever and his kingdom is everlasting (Psalm 145:13; 146:10)! Not Satan, but Jesus Christ is the real Owner and Ruler of this world (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3; Revelation 1:5)!

Although "the whole world² is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19), "the evil one cannot harm anyone born of God (that is, born-again Christians)", because "the One born of God (that is, Jesus Christ) keeps him safe" (1 John 5:18)! The "world" is here not a reference to the whole earth, but a reference to only the world of evil, the sphere of influence of Satan. Only the world that opposes God and Christ and persecutes Christians is under the control of the evil one. Satan only has power over non-Christians and disobedient Christians. He has no control over born-again (obedient) Christians!

² See the meaning of the word "world" in John 1:10, manual 5. Here the "world" is the realm of evil. It is the world of lost people who do evil and are hostile towards God, Christ and Christians (John 7:7; 8:23; 12:31; 14:17,30,31; 15:18; 17:9,14-16,25; 1 John 5:19).

(3) Satan is limited in power.

Read Matthew 8:16; Acts 16:16-18; Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:7-9; 20:1-3. Although Satan still exercises a very powerful influence for evil over the lives of all non-Christians, unbelievers and evil people in the world and over all evil spirits, he is not omnipotent. His demons are continually driven out by Christ and Christians. The Bible says that he has already been driven out of heaven (the air) by the archangel Michael and he has already been bound on earth by an angel (a symbol of Jesus Christ in Revelation 20:1-3), so that he can no longer deceive the nations.

God is completely different to Satan. He is incomparably higher than Satan. While God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, Satan is not. Furthermore, Satan's stranglehold on the nations on earth has been broken by Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ robs people out of his dominion and brings them into his kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

But, although Satan is already a beaten enemy in principle, it is clear that God has not yet removed him from the earthly scene. Satan still exercises a very powerful influence for evil. He will only be removed from the earthly scene on the final judgement day at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:10).

2. Satan is bound.

(1) Jesus Christ began to bind Satan by his incarnation.

Discover and discuss. What does the New Testament teach about the binding of Satan during the incarnation of Jesus?

Notes. Jesus Christ began to bind Satan by his incarnation at his first coming 2000 years ago.

Matthew 12:28; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8. The reason Jesus Christ appeared on earth in his human nature was to:

- bind Satan (Greek: deó) (Matthew 12:28)
- destroy Satan (make him powerless, remove him)(Greek: katargeó) (Hebrews 2;14)
- destroy (bring to an end) the work of Satan (Greek: luó) (1 John 3:8).

During the whole period that Jesus Christ lived as a human being among people on earth (his incarnation), he had authority over all the power of Satan and his demons and he drove out demons by the Spirit of God. Satan was able to do no more than Christ suffered him to do.

Read Luke 10:18-20. Jesus also gave that authority to his workers. In Luke 10:18-20, Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the (evil) spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Jesus meant that while the disciples were casting out demons from people, Christ saw their master, Satan, fall from his position of power within this world. Satan's fall was "like lightning", sudden, startling and shocking. The disciples had probably not expected this victory and perhaps even Satan had not anticipated his defeat. What began to happen at the first coming of Jesus Christ will continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ, when Satan will be finally defeated in hell!

(2) Jesus Christ completed the binding of Satan by his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement.

Discover and discuss. What does the New Testament teach about the binding of Satan by the death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus?

Notes. Jesus Christ completed the binding of Satan by his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven.

Read Revelation 12:1-9. John describes the triumph of Jesus Christ over Satan *in apocalyptic language*.

- Throughout the Old Testament period, Satan had tried to destroy the messianic line and thus prevent the birth of the Messiah (Revelation 12:1-4).
- When the Messiah, Jesus Christ was finally born, he was snatched up to God and to his throne (Revelation 12:5). This snatching up is an apocalyptic picture of the death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven at the end of the first coming of Jesus Christ. In the apocalyptic picture, the dragon and his army of evil angels stormed after him towards heaven in order to grab him.
- But the archangel, Michael and the army of good angels attacked them and hurled them out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). This war between the angels and the demons took place "in heaven", that is, not in the heaven where God dwells, but high in the sky or atmosphere. Since there can be more than one "heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2), angels dwell in the highest heaven, where God dwells (cf. Matthew 22:30; Revelation 18:1), and demons dwell in the lowest heaven, in the sky or atmosphere around the earth (cf. Luke 10:18; 1 Corinthians 8:5; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12).

Nevertheless, this battle in heaven and the hurling down of the dragon and his demons are not to be understood literally, but figuratively. Satan literally lost his place in heaven as the accuser of the Christians (cf. Job 1:6-12). Because the sins of Christians have been atoned for and Christians have been redeemed from the dominion of Satan (Colossians 1:13), Satan has lost every semblance of justice for his accusations against Christians. Although he continues to accuse Christians, he is no longer able to point to the unaccomplished work of Jesus Christ!

Read Revelation 20:1-3. This passage describes the same event as in Revelation 12:7-9 as "a binding of Satan". The exact same Greek word for "binding" (tying up) (Greek: deó) is used in Matthew 12:29. The binding of Satan is not reducing Satan to a state of total impotence, but to a state in which Satan is no longer able "to deceive the nations".

Satan is no longer able to keep the Gentile nations from hearing the gospel and turning to Christ! Satan is also not able to gather the nations for battle against God's people (the Christians)!

The Book of Revelation uses figurative language: “the binding of Satan” means that Satan’s influence has been curbed (curtailed, limited). It does not imply that Satan is absolutely unable to harm people, because the rest of the New Testament (after Matthew 12:29) shows that he still has great evil influence. For example, Revelation chapters 13 and 17 (after Revelation 12:7-9) show that Satan still has great influence of evil through his agents, the antichrist, the false prophet and the great prostitute.

Throughout whole New Testament period from the first to the second coming of Christ:

- Satan remains bound
- the gospel is being proclaimed throughout the world (Matthew 24:14)
- all Christians who have died reign together with Christ in heaven (Revelation 20:4-6; cf. Philippians 1:23).

Just before the second coming of Christ, Satan will be released from his prison. After the final battle (Revelation 16:14,16; 17:14; 19:17-21; 20:7-10) between Christ and Satan at Christ’s second coming, Satan will be hurled into hell, where he will be tormented forever (Revelation 20:7-10).

3. Satan remains bound.

(1) Jesus Christ continually applies the tying up of Satan by the missionary and evangelistic work of Christians.

Discover and discuss. What does the New Testament teach about keeping Satan bound?

Read Matthew 12:29-30. Jesus Christ says, “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.” Jesus views Satan as “the strong man”. Jesus Christ not only refers to his own work of binding Satan, but also to his continuing work of keeping Satan bound through his Christian co-workers. By their prayers, preaching of the gospel and teaching (2 Timothy 2:24-26), Christians are keeping Satan (and his demons) bound (tied up) and are robbing him of people that he previously controlled. In this struggle between Christ and Satan, neutrality is impossible. All Christians who gather people through missionary and evangelistic work into the kingdom of God are *with Christ*. And all people who leave others in their lost condition as an easy prey for Satan are *against Christ* (Matthew 12:30).

Read John 12:31-32. Jesus says, “Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Jesus views Satan as “the prince of this world”. “The world” in this passage does not refer to the whole earth together with every single individual on it, but only to the whole society of evil people, who are alienated from God and who opposed, rejected, betrayed and condemned Jesus Christ (John 15:18-25; cf. 1 John 5:18-19). “The prince” implies that Satan exercises certain power, but because he is not the King of kings, his power is limited to those evil people and evil spirits who give their allegiance to him. When Jesus speaks of his being “lifted up”, he is referring to the historic events of his crucifixion on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven and his enthronement at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. In Revelation 12:5 this “lifting up” is pictured as a “snatching up”.

Read Revelation 12:10-17. Jesus views Satan as “the dragon”. Satan pursues “the woman”.

- In Revelation 12:1-5, the woman is *a picture of God’s Old Testament people* (Israel, called “the Church” in Psalm 107:32). The task of Israel was to bring forth the Messiah!
- In Revelation 12:6,13-18 the woman is *a picture of God’s New Testament people* (the Church which is also called “Israel” in Galatians 6:16) and “who holds to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). After the first coming of Christ, the Church is protected from his most direct and deadly attacks (Revelation 12:6,13-14). Satan tries to engulf the Church with his never ending stream of lies, but the Church is not fooled and Christ helps the Church (Revelation 12:15-16). Therefore Satan concentrates his attacks on “the offspring of the woman”, that is, on the individual Christians (Revelation 12:17). But these individual Christians overcome Satan “by the blood of the Lamb”. That is, they believe that the death and resurrection of Jesus had not only set them free from the sin and power of Satan, but had also bound Satan. Christians overcome Satan “by the word of their testimony”. That is, they overcome him by their missionary and evangelistic work, which robs Satan of people that he previously controlled (Colossians 1:13). And Christians overcome Satan by the fact that they do not fear to die for the cause of Christ (Revelation 12:11).

The death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ are historic events. First they result in “the judgement of the evil world” over which Satan rules. Secondly they result in “driving out of Satan as the prince of this world”. The relative high position Satan might have had before the first coming of Christ is forever lost. Satan has been driven out of his grip on the nations of the world (cf. Daniel 10:13,20) by the completed salvation work of Jesus Christ and by the witnessing of the Christians. That is why the drawing of people from all the nations in the world towards Christ (John 12:32) is at the same time the way in which Satan is driven out of his grip on these nations (John 12:31)!

(2) Jesus Christ will finally remove Satan from the earthly scene.

Discover and discuss. What does the New Testament teach about the final removal of Satan from the earthly scene?

Read Revelation 20:7-15. Although Satan is already a beaten enemy in principle, it is clear that God has not yet removed him from the earthly scene. Revelation 20:7-15 says that this will happen on the final judgement day at the second coming of Christ. Then Jesus Christ will throw Satan forever in hell.

D. THE WARFARE AGAINST SATAN

Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

1. Christians fight a spiritual warfare.

Teach. What is spiritual warfare?

(1) Spiritual warfare is not fought against people.

The Bible says that the struggle of Christians is not against people of flesh and blood, but really against evil spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). Christians do not fight holy wars against people, but spiritual wars against evil spirits. The rulers, authorities and powers are different kinds of evil spirits who are under the control of Satan and who work through evil people in this world.

Like Satan himself, these evil spirits are fallen angels. That is why Satan and his evil spirits oppose the living God and try to destroy his work in people today. That is also why the evil political forces in the world often cooperate with other religions, while they remain very hostile to the Christian faith. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36). That is why true Christians never fight holy wars against any people.

(2) Spiritual warfare is not fought with human weapons.

Spiritual warfare is to actively fight against the schemes and activities of Satan and his evil spirits (2 Corinthians 2:11). Spiritual warfare can never be fought with human weapons, but only with spiritual weapons. The Bible teaches, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)! Christians fight spiritual warfare by putting on the spiritual armour (Ephesians 6:10-18).

(3) Spiritual warfare is not fought in reliance on people.

Spiritual warfare can never be fought like the religious warfare of non-Christian religions by relying on the power, money and schemes of some evil spiritual and political leaders. Spiritual warfare can only be fought by relying completely on the God of the Bible, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

- The aim of spiritual warfare is never to conquer more territory or control on this earth, but always to remain standing after the attacks of Satan and his evil spirits (Ephesians 6:13).
- The aim of spiritual warfare is also to snatch people away from the control of Satan, evil spirits and evil people (Colossians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:26).

2. Christians must prepare well for this spiritual warfare.

Discover and discuss. What does each piece of the spiritual armour represent?

Notes.

(1) The belt of truth.

It is the soldier's sincere determination to fight spiritual warfare. It represents his sincerity with regard to spiritual warfare and God's truth with which he counters lies. The Christian says, "I am sincerely determined to fight spiritual battles against Satan and his demons and to fight with the truth against their lies." Like Gideon and his three hundred soldiers, a sincere and truthful person is far more likely to influence other people than a hypocrite.

(2) The breastplate of righteousness.

It is the soldier's ability to fight spiritual warfare. It represents his effectiveness in spiritual warfare. The Christian says, "I am determined to live a righteous life that will enable me to effectively engage in spiritual warfare." To be righteous means to stand in the right relationship with God and to live in the right way, that is, to live according to the way God revealed in the Bible. Only a righteous person can have lasting good influence. Like Noah, a righteous person continues to walk with God amidst an evil generation.

(3) The shoes of readiness.

They are the soldier's ability to act immediately in spiritual warfare. They represent his preparedness and readiness for spiritual warfare. The Christian says, "I am completely prepared and immediately ready to fight battles in spiritual warfare." He is determined not to be caught sleeping. Like the faithful and wise manager whom the master put in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time, his master finds him doing so when he returns (Luke 12:42-43).

(4) The shield of faith.

It is the soldier's ability to defend himself in spiritual warfare. It represents his faith in the promises of God when he is engaged in spiritual warfare. The Christian says, "I am determined to defend myself against Satan's attacks by faith in God's Word." Satan's flaming arrows represent his persecutions and troubles and they are designed to cause doubt, suspicion, fear, anguish, greed, vanity, hatred, envy or lust in the minds and hearts of Christians. The Christian's faith in action trusts that God's words and promises are true and he acts on the basis of this assurance.

(5) The helmet of salvation.

It is the soldier's ability to protect his thoughts and feelings in spiritual warfare. It represents his assurance of God's salvation in spiritual warfare and his assurance of the final victory. The Christian says, "I am determined to protect my mind and thoughts with God's promises against Satan's attacks." The knowledge that God himself is fighting for him (Exodus 14:14), that God will be with him when he passes through water and fire (Isaiah 43:2) and that God will rescue him from persecutions and sufferings (2 Timothy 3:11), makes the Christian soldier strong enough to continue the fight. The assurance that God who began a good work in the Christian, will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6), makes him strong to persevere in the fight.

(6) The sword of the Spirit.

It is the soldier's means to conquer the temptations and traps of Satan during spiritual warfare. It represents his power to conquer in spiritual warfare. The sword of the Spirit is the words of the Bible as they are used in the various situations of life. The Christian says, "I am determined to use God's words in all my battles in spiritual warfare." As long as the Christian uses God's words correctly, the Holy Spirit will use the Bible words to expose people's sin (Ephesians 5:11), to convict them of guilt (John 16:8), to refute their arguments against the truth (Titus 1:9), to convince them of God's truth (Acts 17:2-4), to dispel their doubts (John 20:27-31), to drive away their fears (Matthew 14:27-30), to put Satan to flight (Matthew 4:1-11) and to light up the path in which they should walk (Psalm 119:105).

(7) Prayer is a part of spiritual warfare.

Prayer is the soldier's ability to stay in direct contact with God during spiritual warfare. It represents his dependence on God throughout spiritual warfare. The Christian says, "I am determined to remain dependent on God through prayer throughout spiritual warfare." Through prayer, God turns man's problems into God's opportunities!

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
----------	---------------------------	---

Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
----------	--------------------------------	---

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the teaching of "Satan and spiritual warfare" together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of **Revelation 12 - 14** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method or question method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (19) **John 17:15**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. **John 21**. Make use of the five steps method.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.