

Why Many Believers Misunderstand ‘the Prince of This World’

In the pages of the Bible, Satan is portrayed as the “*god of this world*” (2 Corinthians 4:4b) and the “*prince of this world*” (John 12:31).

These commonly cited passages are thought to confirm the fact that Satan rules the Earth. Many of my fellow Christians are genuinely convinced that the world that we live in has become the devil’s sphere of authority.

One of my childhood Sunday School teachers used to say, “*We must turn our eyes to heaven because everything on Earth is under the control of Satan.*”

An indiscriminate, superficial reading of the Bible would lend itself to this interpretation. Nevertheless, this outlook is mistaken. Neither text is actually asserting that Satan is the god of this Earth.

Comprehending these passages comes down to clarifying the meaning of word “world.” Despite popular assumptions, it isn’t referring to God’s creation at all, but to a foreign order superimposed over the beautiful cosmos.

Consider how the term “world” is used in the following passages:

“We were in bondage to the elements of the world” (Gal. 4:3b).

“I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world” (2 Cor. 10:2).

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-2).

“Beware lest anyone captivate you through philosophy and vain deceit, in the tradition of men and the elementary principles of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

The “world” in this syntax isn’t describing God’s creation at all, but something else. Paul was actually referring to a twisted, illegitimate government with its own brutal rules and distortions of reality.

Satan, depicted as the “god of this world,” is an allusion to a dictatorship over a fallen system of corruption and darkness. He is basically at the helm of a leech-like monstrosity that’s sucking life out all that is virtuous and good.

Contrary to popular opinion, Satan has never had full legal jurisdiction in the Earth. In fact, this deceiver has had no legitimate claim to anything in God’s creation.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David once boldly declared that *“The earth belongs to the Lord, and its fullness”* (Ps. 24:1). The created order simply can’t be Satan’s and God’s at the same time.

The wretched darkness is to be cast out, not exalted. Our Creator’s benevolent role in stewarding His vast creation, must not be marginalized in order to fit into some apocalyptic, end-time scenario.

The time has come for us to join with others, singing:

*“This is my Father’s world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the
spheres.”*

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