

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 71

To say the world is struggling with *conflict* is to say the obvious. And in one way or another we're all caught-up in that *conflict*. The 3rd chapter of Genesis shows that this *conflict* was the next step after the *division* created by Adam and Eve listening to the serpent rather than to the Lord. The Bible, going to the root of the matter, pin-points the cause of this *conflict*: *'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'* (Genesis 3.15) God speaks of *conflict* between 'the offspring of the Woman' and 'the offspring of the serpent'; the 'Woman's offspring' will destroy the serpent.

There is *conflict* between man and the devil – because there is *conflict* between God and the devil – *conflict* as old as time. It breaks out in violence between Cain and Abel. It continued through the Old and New Testaments and comes to a climax in the book of Revelation. This *conflict* explains the state of our world; the explanation fits the facts; it is God's explanation – it is seen in the birth, life and death of Jesus – in the Cross and Resurrection.

Every part of life on earth is caught-up in this *conflict*. It is the ultimate cause of *conflict* in nature, of climate change, of chaos in relationships – whether personal, national or international. It brings pain to childbirth, chaos to sexual relationships, the repression of women, the very ground is cursed because of it, work is toil, thorns and thistles choke the soil.

This *conflict* brings sickness, disease, famine and death; tragedy and disorder to the world. It breeds violence and deceit; pride and arrogant ambition; falsehood and duplicity in government, chaotic scheming, the sinister complexity and concealment, their agility in off-loading blame and disowning failure: *The man said, 'The woman you gave me told me to eat'; the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'*

The devil ... was a murderer from the beginning; he does not stand in the truth, there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8.44)

This conflict shapes world history. The Apostle John put it like this: *'We are God's children, and the whole world lies under the power of the evil one'*. (1 John 5.19) *'They are from the world; what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, whoever is not from God does not listen to us'*. (1 John 4.5-6)

St Paul puts it like this: *'...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God'*. (2 Corinthians 4.4)

The Lord Jesus explains this same conflict: *'If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.'* (John 15.18-19)

Unless we grasp the nature of this conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world we'll never understand the world, ourselves or the gospel. Jesus explained his death in these terms: *'Now is the judgment of this world: the prince of this world is cast out'*. (John 12.31). Paul tells us, *'Christ blotted out the sentence that was against us, he dealt with it by nailing it to his cross. He disarmed principalities and powers; made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross.'* (Colossians 2.14-15)

The battleground of the conflict moved from the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane, and then to the hill outside the city walls. There the serpent was defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But the conflict is not over yet. The devil is a defeated foe but not yet a destroyed foe. He is defeated but determined to bring havoc and destruction to the world and to men and women. *It's a real conflict!* The outcome is certain – Satan defeated. But, for now, the conflict continues.

The tragedy is men and women are blind to these truths. *'They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of ignorance and hardness of heart. Their consciences are dead; they live for licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.'* (Ephesians 4.17-18)

Blind to the real conflict, men and women are side-tracked by concerns that ultimately don't matter. Governments speak of 'change' – but the only real change is the problems become deeper: social problems, international problems, economical problems, environmental problems; sickness, disease and hunger. Events mock their bold promises. The explanation? *'The world lies in the evil one'*. (1 John 5.19) Who has the answer?

David Attenborough doesn't have the answer. Professor Brian Cox doesn't have the answer. Greta Thunberg doesn't have the answer. Science doesn't have the answer. Religion, philosophy, politicians don't have the answer.

There is one – **he** is the answer! *Those who overcome the world are those who believe that **Jesus** is the Son of God.* (1 John 5.5) *'We do not struggle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'* (Ephesians 6.12-13)

The ship is sinking; this weary, battered world is tottering, the conflict is raging. Now is time to call on the name of the Lord, as Peter did: *'when he noticed the tempest, he was terrified and as he began to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!"'*