

Spiritual headship of a Nation

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Introduction

“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

(Matthew 4.8)

The battle for Ghana’s repentance is a battle for spiritual headship over the Nation. Satan longs to reign on the spiritual throne. Here we see this truth plainly - “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matthew 4.8)

All that stands in his way is the Church. So corrupting, blinding and destroying the church must be his aim. Then nothing stands in his way of achieving his great goal:-

“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:13-14)

Satanic history

Three passages in the Bible have traditionally been seen as an insight into the history of Satan – Ezekiel 28, Revelation 12 and Isaiah 14. Taken together they reveal just what we are up against.

First Ezekiel 28:12-15

¹² You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.

¹⁴ You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

Here we catch a glimpse of what was and could have been for Satan. His place was assured in heaven. He was glorious - an anointed cherub. A “Cherub” (plural “Cherubim”) are angelic beings, guardians of Eden, flanking God's throne, hovering over the Ark of the Covenant. Satan was a supreme spiritual being. So what went wrong?

Rebellion

“Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” (Rev 12:7-12)

Why did rebellion happen?

Back to Ezekiel to learn why:-

¹⁶ Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned.

So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.

¹⁷ Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

¹⁸ By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.

¹⁹ All the nations who knew you are appalled at you: you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.

There is a lot contained in these verses about Satan:-

* **You were filled with violence** - we have seen this already.

* **And you sinned.** Rebellion is sin – one of the worst sins. “For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.” (1 Samuel 15:23)

* **Your heart was proud.** Satan is a proud being, exalting himself and himself alone. Mary makes it clear that this is not God’s way – “He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” (Luke 1:51-52)

* **Corrupted your wisdom.** Satan is corrupt and will corrupt.

* **By the multitude of your iniquities.** Totally corrupt and totally evil without limit and without any morality.

These are the characteristic in his nature – violence, profanity, pride, corruption, iniquity. These would be the marks of his headship if he could get it back, and these are the tools he would use to corrupt. Why could he be so successful here in Ghana? Let's turn to Isaiah next.

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, **“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”** (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Pride and arrogance will bring him success

“I will ascend to the heavens.” Satan is so arrogant that he believes he can get his place back - in fact it is worse than that. He now wants to be God.

This arrogance can be seen in two places – Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and the Temptation narrative. (Matthew 4:1-11) In the first, he motivates God's people to rebel and build up to heaven. “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves.” (Gen 11:4) In Matthew 4, he blatantly lies, but in it we see his ambition – “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matt 4:8-9) Here we see his aim – “Worship me.” This is the headship he seeks – spiritual headship over the world God has made. If successful, he will place it in chains, as we will see later, but he does not reveal this in the presence of the One who already rules.

Complete domination

Satan wants complete domination of the universe. He has an inner arrogance – “I will ascend to the heavens.” His intention is clear – to rule. Rev 13 is a clear demonstration of his tactic where we see Satan humiliating Jesus by copying his every move. In this way he thinks he can pull Christ down. Once he has done that, he can challenge God by saying “I have beaten you. I am now God.” Here is how he works –

The bible teaches “At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10) but the Dragon stole this name with a “blasphemous name” (Rev 12:1)

The Bible teaches “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28:18) but “The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.” (Rev 13:2) Satan claims the authority of Jesus.

The Bible teaches that Jesus “is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” (Col 1:18) The beast claims this same resurrection gift - “One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.” (Rev 13:3) Satan is claiming resurrection.

The Bible teaches that we have one God and we should “**Worship him!**” (Rev 22:9) The beast steals this worship - “People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?’ (Rev 13:4) This Satan desires above all things.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is “The Way, the Truth and the Life.” (John 14:6) but the beast steals the truth - “Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth.” (Rev 13:14) Satan claims to be the only spiritual way to walk.

The Bible teaches that Jesus brings freedom - “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) And the beast? “**The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.**” (Rev 13:15) Here is the truth - the “freedom” Satan offers is bondage – he will chain the human spirit. He can say to God “I have broken your creation. It is mine.”

Headship - A long history

When we come to the headship issue, our enemy has a long history and lots of experience. Through this history we can get a clear understanding of how he works.

1. The serpent - rebellion

The serpent is described as “more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.” (Gen. 3:1) The Bible suggests that it was one of God's creatures. This should not surprise us as Satan was originally one of God's angels. As the narrative progresses, it becomes obvious that behind the Serpent is an evil entity which is at war with God. It challenges God's statements, tries to reveal God as evil and controlling and leads the woman into rebellion.

Satan is a rebel angel and he implants into God's creation the same spirit of rebellion.

2. Baal and Ashtoreth. Idol worship and sexual perversion

God told Israel not to worship idols. (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7) For them, there was only one God and “You shall have no other god but me.” They were not to intermarry with the pagan nations and to avoid pagan worship rites. (Leviticus 20:23; 2 Kings 17:15; Ezekiel 11:12)

But Israel compromises with idolaters. This is where Baal and Ashtoreth appear. Baal and Ashtoreth encouraged illicit sex, and ritual prostitution. Almost inevitably this happened - "the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods" (Numbers 25:1-2).

Satan has always had great success with sex and idols. Sometimes it is overt and sometime it is covert. The Bible is full of it - see Aachen and the rape of Tamar as the "role models." The unreformed human nature loves all kinds of deviant sex, and the pollution of God's creative gift. It also loves its idols - whether stone, wood and rivers, or money sex and power.

3. Moloch. Destroying innocence

Moloch was a Canaanite deity which involved child sacrifice. We learn this from Leviticus and 2 Kings - "You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Moloch, and so profane the name of your God" (Leviticus 18:21). The King of Moab, seeing the battle going against him did this - "Then the king of Moab took his oldest son, who would have been the next king, and sacrificed him as a burnt offering on the wall. (2 Kings 3:27)

But Israel ignored this instruction. Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) worshipped Moloch at Topheth, outside the walls of Jerusalem. This site was destroyed by King Josiah - "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Moloch" (2 Kings 23:10).

Satan's character enjoys the destruction of innocence. Herod makes this abundantly clear. "When he realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi." (Matthew 2:16)

4. Milcom. Occult knowledge

This national god of the Ammonites was associated with divination, seeking knowledge of the future through occult means - all strongly forbidden by God. Child sacrifice was sometimes connected with Milcom. He was among the false gods worshiped by Solomon at the close of his reign. Moloch, Molech, and Molek were variations of this false god.

5. The golden Calf. Idolatry

Golden calves occur twice in the Bible: first at the foot of Mount Sinai, fashioned by Aaron, and second in the reign of King Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:26-30). In both instances, the idols were physical representations of Yahweh and were judged by him as sin, since he commanded that no images should be made of him.

6. Diana of the Ephesians - huge pagan threat

The goddess Diana symbolized the generative and nutritive powers of nature, and so was represented with many breasts. The second temple, built in the reign of Alexander the Great in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, became a renowned center of the worship of Diana and was the idol "whom all Asia and the world worshipped." She had many of the characteristics of Satan - dominating, controlling and demanding. This demonic force was powerfully opposed to the church.

7. People - Jezebel. Herod.

Many times, Satan reveals himself in people. Jezebel was the great controlling influence - controlling men by sexuality. Herod was a manifestation of the violent side of Satan, murdering whoever he felt like murdering to protect himself.

These demonic powers were not confined to the Old Testament period. Demonology experienced a renewal in Christianity. Satan, the archenemy of the Christ; Lucifer, the fallen Light Bearer; and the originally Canaanite Beelzebub, the Lord of Flies (or, perhaps, Beelzebul, the Lord of Dung), mentioned by Jesus, and are all demonic. As a singular demonic force or personification of evil, Satan's chief activity was to tempt humans to act in such a way that they would not achieve their supra terrestrial destiny.

His headship revealed at the cross

If we want to get a true idea of Satan's character, we can see it clearly revealed in the crucifixion.

Arrogance. The arrogance of the golden statue is shown here - "Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." (Luke 22:71)

Deceit. The deceit in the Garden of Eden is shown here - "The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death." Matt 26:59

Abuse and violence. Herod's violence shows itself very clearly here -

* They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" (Lk 26:54)

* Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. (John 19:1)

* When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. (Lk 23:33)

* Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. (Jn. 19:34)

Mocking. The mocking of Jesus is seen when the Assyrians taunt Jerusalem - "Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" (2 Kings 18)

At the crucifixion we see this same mocking arrogance – "Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. (Mark 15:29-32)

Spiritual challenge. During the Temptation story, Satan said "If you are the son of God.." Now this same accusation comes back, but this time in the arrogant negative – "IF you were the Son of God you could save yourself - but you can't! So you are not!" This was the very battle Jesus won in Gethsemane, but Satan brings it back. Jesus had to enter the spiritual darkness of sin and separation hearing all the time the triumphant mocking and goading of Satan.

This is totally in character with the character of Satan as he approaches, he thinks, his final goal. What he wants to be able to say to God is - "Jesus is under my authority and I have killed him. So your authority is broken. I can assume your throne because I have proved myself to be the stronger one."

Destruction of Spirit and body – Not content with his apparent spiritual victory, he destroys the body of Jesus. It was left to Joseph of Arimathea to bring things to an end. "So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock." (Mark 15:46)

This is the true nature of the one who wants to assume spiritual headship over Ghana.

Satan in action - the golden statue

Let' see how Satan works in practice. He want us to accept his headship, and here is one of the way in which he has tried in the past. The things he uses are still very relevant and active today. When it comes to headship, the Bible presents a clear choice – golden statue or the Servant King

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

With the Golden Statue, we begin to see here the essence of satanic hardship:-

1. Size and wealth

Satan wants us to see that he is of a size which is totally beyond us, so any attempt to oppose will be useless. In the 21st Century, he continues to take this line. China is so big, the USA is so big - that whatever we do they will rule with strength and power. The enemy wants us reduced to this first - “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?” (Rev 13:4) and then “The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.” (Ex 2:23)

We are reduced to helpless slaves, only able to gaze in awe at this great power.

2. Religious superiority

Satanic headship is spiritual, even though it shows itself in the physical. He longs for worship, because that will make him god - which is what he believe he is. We see this in Isaiah 14 - “I will make myself like the Most High.”

This will initially be demanded by no more than threat. “As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.”

Underlying this threat is the longing for power. We see this in Matthew 4 – “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matt 4:8-9)

Nebuchadnezzar uses wealth and power to dominate the people. The same weapons are used today, and we see them everywhere – even in the church.

Is there a throne in the church for the Golden Statue? So many leaders want wealth and power. Are they submitting to the headship of the enemy? Many would be shocked to think so, yet the Bible seems to leave no room for doubt.

Most of Nebuchadnezzar's subjects signed up to worship the statue, and thereby exalt him. Bishop Polycarp warned of this in the early days of faith. He had a strong church, but then a Roman persecution broke out. Christians were asked to kiss the statue of the Emperor, who claimed divinity. Many of Polycarp's church kissed. Polycarp, who refused and was in prison said "I had better get out of here fast or I will have no church left."

The truth of history shows that many of the members in our churches will kiss the statue. Many of them are doing very well financially. Many others just don't want any hassle. The reality is that if a Golden Statue arrived on a truck today, combined with the demand for "worship or else", history warns that most will kiss the statue.

3. Violence

Underlying power and wealth we find violence. Satan is violent and always has been. His violence can be emotional or physical. Let's look at this passage:-

"When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Mass murder is one of Satan's great delights. He likes violence in every way. Amos shows us the ugly side of this – "The Lord says, 'The people of Ammon have sinned again and again. So I will judge them. They ripped open the pregnant women in Gilead. They wanted to add land to their territory.'" In the Armenian Genocide of the 1940s, there are many stories like this - women being ripped open and their children impaled. It's not just a biblical thing.

Nebuchadnezzar shows us another side of violence. It isn't just the actual violence. There is the emotional pressure which it generates. Israel shows us this in Egypt – "During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God." (Ex 2:23) This emotional pressure destroys the will, and forces obedience. The threat from Nebuchadnezzar is the fiery furnace. That was enough to force most to obey. Once we obey, the way is open for Satan to assume his headship.

Here is the heart of the issue. One of the national sins of Ghana is arrogance and pride. In all my travels I have never met anything like it. No matter what God says to us, we reply "God will never judge us.' In 30 years here, I have not yet found a way past this arrogance.

Sadly, this same arrogance and pride is well rooted in the National spiritual leadership and the church. This suits Satan very well. He does not have to work too hard to get his headship here in Ghana. By our pride and arrogance we are handing it to him on a silver plate.

His strategy

Satan uses the things of heaven and earth to assume headship.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)

We need to look at the original language to get the full impact of this verse.

* **Rulers** – (Greek - Archie). These are the physical leaders of the world - the Politicians, Governments and community leaderships. History has shown us that when the opportunity comes, religious groups can expect little support from world powers. The Iraq church found this when terrorists were going from house to house beheading Christians. And it is not just Christians who find this. The Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar are finding little protection from the Hindu Burmese government.

* **Authorities/powers** – (Greek - Exousia). The world leaders have power - Satan's favourite weapon as we saw in Nebuchadnezzar's case. History shows us that they will not hesitate to use that power for their own ends when the opportunity arises.

* **Spiritual forces** – (Greek - Kosmokrator). "Lord of the world, prince of this age" is a traditional name for Satan. The battle rages in the heavenly places. We have to face the reality of spiritual oppression.

* **Evil** - (Greek - Poneria). As we have seen, this entity is pure evil at every level. We might ask "Who would ever allow such a force to assume spiritual headship of a Nation?" Sadly, pride and arrogance blind us to this reality which is just what he wants.

There is nothing good in this verse. Physically and spiritually the enemy is fighting for his headship. World governments are just as pliable by him as is the demonic realm. This is a serious battle – to the death. How might he use his skills to get headship over the church?

By Corrupting our worship, because in worship we draw close to heaven and re empowered to serve.

Fill our worship with counterfeit signs, gifts and wonders which do not come from the Spirit.

Exalt personal ministries - putting pride and personal satisfaction at the heart, when the heart should be a free offering to the Lord without any desire for reward.

Dazzle us with big events, big Preachers, big feelings and emotions - worship which does not have the heart, yet we do not see it.

Rob us of our servant hearts. Jesus came to serve, not to be served or to be great. His pattern was this – “Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” (Phil.2: 6-8. NLT) Satan has certainly succeeded in robbing this calling from the Ghanaian church.

He wants the throne

Satan does everything to get onto the throne of Ghana. He does not desire it from love but from arrogance, aggression and a desire to dominate. He will do all he can to hide this truth from us. He will show himself as the voice of reason, of tolerating any and every Faith. He promotes an “Everyone can have his own idea” approach. Or he will blind us to his working, while in secret he builds his strength. He will use deception. He will enter the heart of the church, weakening and enslaving. He will use every avenue open to him and he will persist, especially as he is mostly unopposed.

If Satan can achieve this, then our greatest route to access to Father’s throne will be blocked. It will be said of us - “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Matthew 15:8)

We should ask ourselves why the Lord is allowing Satan such freedom of movement at this time. Something in the church must be wrong for us to see this happening. Sadly, he will puff up the arrogance to prevent anyone asking this question.

Headship. The Lord's response

This is a tough issue and it will not reveal itself easily. We are going to have to pray hard to get full understanding. We will have to dig deep to get good theological understanding. Once we have the theology straight, we can look at how, practically the Lord responded.

Atonement - Christus Victor

The whole issue of headship revolves around a good understanding of the cross. There are at least four different explanations of the cross - all valid and overlapping. For us the teaching called "Christus Victor" is a very good insight. It is very simple and easy to understand. This teaching begins at the point where Adam and Eve made humanity subject to the Devil by their disobedience. God, in order to bring us home, sent Christ as a "ransom" so that the Devil, not knowing Christ couldn't die permanently, would kill him. In doing this he lost all right to humanity following the resurrection. Christus Victor! Christ is the Victor!

It's a very positive view, and very appropriate to the issue of headship. The biblical texts back it up well:-

1. Satan is going to lose

At the very beginning, the Lord makes it clear who the Victor is going to be "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen 3:15)

2. It is going to be a costly fight

Victory is seldom achieved without a lot of struggle. For the victory of the cross to be achieved, Isaiah wans of the cost – "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:3-5) It looks like a tough path is ahead of the Lord - and also a tough path for us.

As we have already learnt from Apostle Paul - "Our struggle" is not against flesh and blood" The word for "Struggle" can be translated as "wrestling." It is going to be a tough mountain to climb.

3. It is total victory

The victory, when it comes, will be total. It will be conquest – “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2:13-15) Christus Victor!

Jesus is the head of his creation. However, in the gap between his ascension and his second coming, Satan has some room to manoeuvre and continues to hinder (See Jericho – dominate. Golden Statue- control and Rev 13 - enslave). We are in that gap, and this is why the struggle continues. Satan has lost, yet is still a dangerous foe, and still believes that he can achieve headship. This foolish view is driven on by his arrogance.

The Lamb of God

Now let's see how we can claim the victory Jesus already has, and be sure his headship is the one we acknowledge.

In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood in sacrifices has a special significance. The sprinkled blood was a “covering” for sin. The life of the animal was poured out in death as a substitute for the people. The animal's life was given up on behalf of and in exchange for the life of the people. Judgement was satisfied by transferring the sin of the people to the animal sacrifice. The Passover lamb and the scapegoat are substitutes for the one offering them. The animal sacrifice was a sign that death had already taken place. It is the termination of life and the sacrificial death that atones.

Exodus 12:1-6

The most well-known sacrifice, and one that is very familiar to Christians, is the Passover sacrifice. It satisfied God's justice and protected the people of God. “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.”

Exodus, atonement and Jesus

Now let's link all this together.

1. "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev 13:8)

God had planned before the foundation of the world to triumph by a sacrificial lamb. In Ex. 12 he outlines what he wants the lamb to do – to atone and to protect Israel from certain death. This would be done by the blood. This process will lead Israel into the freedom of the Exodus. So the lamb for Israel and for us means freedom and new beginnings by the shedding of the blood. For us, Jesus would become the Passover lamb to cleanse and forgive.

* Looking back we can see this -

The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." (Gen 4:10)

Looking forward we can see this –

*** Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:24)**

Between these two verses, we see this -

*** "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:36)**

Hebrews brings it all together.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
(Heb 10:19-22)

A good summary

Satan tries to assume headship, arrogantly believing that he can get it. Before the foundation of the world, Father had prepared an answer - the "lamb who was slain." The Prophets reveal to us exactly what the slaying would involve - servant nature, rejection and death. The New Testament writers see this process clearly. "Behold the lamb of God" opens the New Testament story. This is followed by the slaying.

Revelation the victory – “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Rev 12:11)
Christus Victor! Victory is ours!

Jesus responds

How did Jesus deal with the Satan’s challenge to headship? The Temptation narrative shows us.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matt 4:8-9)

This is a clear challenge to headship. Satan want the position of worship - he wants to be God. The Lord had a way of dealing with this challenge.. Little by little he broke Satan’s claims.

1. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”
(Mark 2:5.)

Satan can only accuse of sin. (Rev 12:10 “For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”) Jesus can forgive sin. The Lord breaks this great rod of iron which Satan has wielded for so long.

2. Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name? “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. (Mark 5:9-10)

Satan exalts himself with many great names and claims to have a hierarchy of demonic at his back. (Ephesians 6:12 - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.) Yet Jesus has all authority. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18) No demonic force can resist him, however much Satan tries to deny it. The Satanic army is under the authority not of its Commander but of our Lord.

3. He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (Mark 4:39)

If we look at the Greek word here, the word for “Rebuke” is “epitimaō”. This is the word Jesus often uses as he throws out demons. The same word is seen here when Jesus was faced with a demon possessed man. “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” (Mark 1:25) Satan cannot use the physical creation to attack and destroy us, because Jesus has shown that whatever happens in the physical, he has the power to overcome it.

4. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (Mark 5:34)

Satan can only destroy, but Jesus has the power to heal and to restore us to the order intended in creation. Satan can no longer afflict us. His claim to be able to do so is broken in this and many other healing stories.

He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). (Mark 5:41-42)

Satan's greatest claim was to be lord over death. "**Talitha koum**" shows that this power has been taken from him. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Hebs 2:14-15)

Intercessors must learn from Jesus

Jesus did not take on Satan in one big event during his life. He broke the chains one by one. He slowly reduced the claims of the enemy - claims to sin, demonic, nature, sickness and death. He weakened Satan daily by working to break each chain one by one. Some needed a repeat performance and he did not hesitate to do that. The final battle at the cross was the one big event, but he had spent 3 years cutting away Satan's power. Perhaps it was a weakened enemy that confronted him at Calvary - we will never know. But we do know that it was a severely damaged enemy that faced him - and lost.

So intercession must concentrate on breaking chains one by one, in order to weaken Satan's challenge to headship. Daily he has to find chains he has imposed being broken - people being healed, forgiven, delivered and growing in faith and hope. This will weaken him, so that when the big push is needed, a weakened enemy will fall before us.

Our response

1. The servant heart

Satan can only be de-throned by a sacrificial living of a "lamb-type" life. The lack of willingness to do this is why he continues to arrogantly claim headship of Ghana. When Jesus set a pattern for our lives and ministries, he said this - **Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.** (Mark 8:34) We need to notice when this statement comes.

Peter has just made his great statement of faith – “Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’” (v.29) But Jesus does not respond with “Alleluia” or “Let’s go and do works of power.” He predicts his Passion, and then lays down the pattern of life for all, including Intercessors

We must have the heart of a servant - the heart of Jesus. Then, when we embrace him and go with him to the Father, we will be able to intercede, because our heart will be his heart. In Africa, the servant heart is often absent. So many leaders want position, power, respect, and honour. This is so destructive of both themselves and the work they do. Many want to be thought of as “great men or women of God.” To be looked up to for their ministries, and to be honoured for what they do. The true man or woman of God wants none of these things. He or she is seeking something far more precious – the heart which is in Jesus, which is the servant heart. What is the servant heart which we are seeking after?

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

“Denies”

Victory over self was what Jesus gained in Gethsemane. **‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.** (Luke 22:42-43) It is the hardest battle to win. We are the centre of our own world. When we surrender to Jesus, he becomes the centre. We have to struggle to ensure that he stays there.

Areas of conflict include:-

Position: (Luke 18:9-14)

Power: (Acts 8:9-25)

Sex: (Matthew 5:27-30)

Control: (Mark 8:33)

Money: (Acts 5:1-2)

Deceit: (2 Samuel 11:14-15)

“Takes up the cross”

We have to live a life based on cross principles of sacrifice, surrender, love, obedience, and endurance. One expression sums it all up - Christ first.

This is a hard road: Jeremiah found it hard – “I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me.” (Jeremiah 20:7)

This is a lonely road: Jesus found it so – “Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.” (Mark 14:37)

This is a suffering road: Paul found it so – “When her owners realised that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, ‘These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.’ The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:19-24)

It is a servant road: Jesus again - So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. (John 13:4-5)

“Follows”

We follow obediently and willingly with no thought of reward. The parable of the servant puts it well and if an intercessor is having a problem with service, here is the perfect answer:-

“Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to his servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat?’ Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper. Get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?’ Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are only unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (Luke 17: 7-10)

This little parable keeps our feet firmly on the ground. We are to serve, not when it is convenient to us, or when we feel like it, but when the Master says so. Some people find this parable hard, but that is because they have short memories! Jesus went to Calvary for us, serving the will of his Father up to the very end, so that we could be free. He has earned our love, our trust and our service. Strangely, when we adopt this attitude, we find ourselves more loved, more cared for and closer to Jesus than we were before. This is one of the miracles of service. We are committed to a lifestyle of repentance and faith, obedience and sacrifice. We are committed walking in the way of Jesus in full knowledge of what it might mean.

- * Like Bartimaeus, (Mark 10:52) we follow him.
- * Like the man at Gate Beautiful, (Acts 3:8) we rejoice.
- * Like the woman bent double (Luke 13:13) we praise God.
- * Like Thomas we are willing to follow him even to death.
- * Like Stephen we embrace that sacrifice.

Our response 2.

Take possession of the gates

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16; 18)

If Satan is standing in the gates of Ghana, to oppose us, then he is refusing us access not just to Ghana but to obediently moving in his promises for Ghana. We have seen this before in the Bible. Balak tried to obstruct the people as they moved in God's promise and so did Jericho. Balak used spiritual power, and Jericho used physical strength. Both had to be broken, because no one or no spiritual entity has any authority over the promise of God or those who stand on them and move in them.

The gate

What is this "gate" of which Jesus speaks? Gates, in the ancient world, were vitally important. They were the centre of control. Justice was administered in the Gates, and the elders of the city could control what went in and what came out - physically and spiritually. Those in the Gates had what Satan most desires - control. So if he can stand there and resist God's people, he has won. He has the control he longs for and can use it to accuse God.

Have God's people even thought of possessing the gates? It's possible that, a Jezebel/political/religious spirit controls the gates within a region. We will know this if we can see manipulation and control being exercised through the leadership within society and the church. Intimidation, slander, gossip, rejection of the apostolic and prophetic gifts, depression, discouragement, sexual immorality, disunity, drug abuse and suicide are some of the manifestations of this Jezebel/political/religious spirit.

Somehow we have to obey the teaching in Genesis –"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. "(Gen 22:17 and 24.60) If we do not take them, then they will remain in places where evil and corruption will flow out into the city and into the Nation. This is not a situation which can be left. Either we take the gates or the enemy remains in them.

What are our weapons?

If we are going to break Satan in the gate, what are our weapons?

1. The Promises. **“The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (Eph. 6:17)

We need to use the promises of God like arrows - firing them into the enemy as often as we can. They are the inviolate word of God, to which he has no answer, though he tries. (Matthew 4:5-6)

Which ones should we use? Any that establish the authority of Jesus. There are many, and here are two examples I use. For example -

* Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matt.28:18)

* At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil.2:10-11)

2. Remembering: **And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”** (Luke 22:19)

Remembering what God has done in the past is a very powerful weapon. It reminds our enemy of his many defeats – Jericho, Goliath, and Mizpah. This establishes that we are the Victors, and always have been. What God has done in the past he will surely do again. Isaiah has it exactly right -

“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’” (Isa 46:9-11)

3. Victors: **“Take heart! I have overcome the world.”** (John 16:33)

We are the conquerors. Jesus fought and won at Calvary, and we are his heirs. No matter how strong Goliath may have appeared, he was lost when faced with a man of faith. The same holds true today. No matter how long we have to struggle and no matter how many obstacles we have to overcome, we are the winners. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37)

4. Worship: The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.
(Rev.5:14)

If we devote ourselves to prayer and worship, we push back the enemy and break open the gate. We have to worship regularly and then the power of him who raised Jesus from the dead will flow in us and through us. (Romans 6:11) Worshipping in the gate is a powerful weapon, which will drive the enemy back and establish his defeat. Worship is what he desperately wants. We will let him see worship - offered to the One who deserves it and has defeated him totally. Within the worship in the gates, we can and should expect prophecy to flow and works of power to be released.

5. Challenge: That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Eph 1:19-21)

We have the power to move into the city's places of power. We can go out into the marketplace. Go out to the places of power, where the decisions of government are made. We can go out into the business community. We can go out into the judicial system and the legislature, the political arena. We can break the gates and take them for the Kingdom of God.

God wants to bless us. He wants to multiply us. He wants our influence to increase by occupying places where we exercise leadership in our society and culture. These are our 'gates'. Though walls may 'surround' our offices, schools, or neighborhoods, by faith we become gatekeepers to keep evil out, and let the presence and purposes of God in.