Útvalning

- Brúður og kirkja, Ísrael og 144þúsundir
- María Mey, Páll Postuli, Jóhannes Skírari

Matteusarguðspjall 22:14

Líkt er um himnaríki og konung einn, sem gjörði brúðkaup sonar síns. -3- Hann sendi þjóna sína að kalla til brúðkaupsins þá, sem boðnir voru, en þeir vildu ekki koma. -4- Aftur sendi hann aðra þjóna og mælti: Segið þeim, sem boðnir voru: Veislu mína hef ég búið, uxum mínum og alifé er slátrað, og allt er tilbúið, komið í brúðkaupið. -5- En þeir skeyttu því ekki. Einn fór á akur sinn, annar til kaupskapar síns, -6- en hinir tóku þjóna hans, misþyrmdu þeim og drápu. -7- Konungur reiddist, sendi út her sinn og lét tortíma morðingjum þessum og brenna borg þeirra. -8- Síðan segir hann við þjóna sína: Brúðkaupsveislan er tilbúin, en hinir boðnu voru ekki verðugir. -9- Farið því út á vegamót, og bjóðið í brúðkaupið hverjum þeim sem þér finnið. -10- Þjónarnir fóru út á vegina og söfnuðu öllum, sem þeir fundu, vondum og góðum, svo að brúðkaupssalurinn varð alskipaður gestum. -11- Konungur gekk þá inn að sjá gestina og leit þar mann, sem var ekki búinn brúðkaupsklæðum. -12- Hann segir við hann: Vinur, hvernig ert þú hér kominn og ert ekki í brúðkaupsklæðum? Maðurinn gat engu svarað. -13- Konungur sagði þá við þjóna sína: Bindið hann á höndum og fótum og varpið honum í ystu myrkur. Þar verður grátur og gnístran tanna. -14- ***Því að margir eru kallaðir, en fáir útvaldir.***

Fyrra Pétursbréf 1:2 & 20

Pétur postuli Jesú Krists heilsar hinum útvöldu, sem eru dreifðir sem útlendingar í Pontus, Galatíu, Kappadókíu, Asíu og Biþýníu, -2- ***en útvaldir samkvæmt fyrirvitund Guðs föður*** *og helgaðir af anda hans til að hlýðnast Jesú Kristi og verða hreinsaðir með blóði hans. Náð og friður margfaldist með yður.*

-20- Hann var útvalinn, áður en veröldin var grundvölluð, en var opinberaður í lok tímanna vegna yðar.

Galatabréfið 1.kafli

Það læt ég yður vita, bræður, að fagnaðarerindið, sem ég hef boðað, er ekki mannaverk. -12- Ekki hef ég tekið við því af manni né látið kenna mér það, heldur fengið það fyrir opinberun Jesú Krists. -13- Þér hafið heyrt um háttsemi mína áður fyrri í Gyðingdóminum, hversu ákaflega ég ofsótti söfnuð Guðs og vildi eyða honum. -14- Ég fór lengra í Gyðingdóminum en margir jafnaldrar mínir meðal þjóðar minnar og var miklu vandlætingasamari um erfikenningu forfeðra minna. -15- ***En þegar Guði, sem hafði útvalið mig frá móðurlífi og af náð sinni kallað,***

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, - ENGLISH STANDARD

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, NKJ

But when God, who had chosen me *and* set me apart before I was born, and called me through His grace, was pleased AMPLIFIED VERSION

Jeremía 1:5

Áður en ég myndaði þig í móðurlífi, útvaldi ég þig, og áður en þú komst af móðurkviði, helgaði ég þig. Ég hefi ákvarðað þig til að vera spámann þjóðanna!

Jóhannes 6:44

Enginn getur komið til mín, nema faðirinn, sem sendi mig, dragi hann, og ég mun reisa hann upp á efsta degi. -45- Hjá spámönnunum er skrifað: Þeir munu allir verða af Guði fræddir. Hver sem hlýðir á föðurinn og lærir af honum, kemur til mín. -46- Ekki er það svo, að nokkur hafi séð föðurinn. Sá einn, sem er frá Guði, hefur séð föðurinn. -47- Sannlega, sannlega segi ég yður: Sá sem trúir, hefur eilíft líf.

Jóhannes 15:16

Þér hafið ekki útvalið mig, heldur hef ég útvalið yður. Ég hef ákvarðað yður til að fara og bera ávöxt, ávöxt, sem varir, svo að faðirinn veiti yður sérhvað það sem þér biðjið hann um í mínu nafni. -17- Þetta býð ég yður, að þér elskið hver annan.

Orðskviðirnir 16:4

Allt hefir Drottinn skapað til síns ákveðna marks, svo og guðleysingjann til óheilladagsins.

Opinberunarbókin 13:8

Og allir þeir, sem á jörðunni búa, munu tilbiðja það, ***hver og einn sá er eigi á nafn sitt ritað frá grundvöllun veraldar í lífsins bók lambsins****, sem slátrað var.*

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. KJ & NKJ

All who live on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been [a]written since the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slaughtered. NAS

Efesus 1. Kalfi

Áður en heimurinn var grundvallaður hefur hann útvalið oss í Kristi, til þess að vér værum heilagir og lýtalausir fyrir honum. Í kærleika sínum -5- ákvað hann fyrirfram að veita oss sonarrétt í Jesú Kristi. Sá var vilji hans og velþóknun -6- til vegsemdar dýrð hans og náð, sem hann lét oss í té í sínum elskaða syni. -7- Í honum, fyrir hans blóð eigum vér endurlausnina og fyrirgefningu afbrota vorra. -8- Svo auðug er náð hans, sem hann gaf oss ríkulega með hvers konar vísdómi og skilningi.

-9- Og hann kunngjörði oss leyndardóm vilja síns, þá ákvörðun, -10- sem hann hafði með sjálfum sér ákveðið að framkvæma, er fylling tímans kæmi: Hann ætlaði að safna öllu því, sem er á himnum, og því, sem er á jörðu, undir eitt höfuð í Kristi. -11- Í honum höfum vér þá líka öðlast arfleifðina, ***eins og oss var fyrirhugað samkvæmt fyrirætlun hans****, er framkvæmir allt eftir ályktun vilja síns, -12- til þess að vér, sem áður höfum sett von vora til Krists, skyldum vera dýrð hans til vegsemdar. -13- Í honum eruð og þér, eftir að hafa heyrt orð sannleikans, fagnaðarerindið um sáluhjálp yðar og tekið trú á hann og verið merktir innsigli heilags anda, sem yður var fyrirheitið.*

Rómverjabréfið 8-:28

Vér vitum, að þeim, sem Guð elska, samverkar allt til góðs, þeim sem kallaðir eru samkvæmt ákvörðun Guðs. -29- Því að þá, sem hann þekkti fyrirfram, hefur hann og fyrirhugað til þess að líkjast mynd sonar síns, svo að hann sé frumburður meðal margra bræðra. -30- Þá sem hann fyrirhugaði, þá hefur hann og kallað, og þá sem hann kallaði, hefur hann og réttlætt, en þá sem hann réttlætti, hefur hann einnig vegsamlega gjört.

Rómverjabréfið 9

Ekki eru heldur allir börn Abrahams, þótt þeir séu niðjar hans, heldur: Afkomendur Ísaks munu taldir verða niðjar þínir. -8- Það merkir: Ekki eru líkamlegir afkomendur hans Guðs börn, heldur teljast fyrirheitsbörnin sannir niðjar. -9- Því að þetta orð er fyrirheit: Í þetta mund mun ég aftur koma, og þá skal Sara hafa son alið. -10- Og ekki nóg með það. Því var líka svo farið með Rebekku. Hún var þunguð að tveim sveinum af eins manns völdum, Ísaks föður vors. -11- Nú, til þess að það stæði stöðugt, að ákvörðun Guðs um útvalningu væri óháð verkunum og öll komin undir vilja þess, er kallar, -12- þá var henni sagt, áður en sveinarnir voru fæddir og áður en þeir höfðu aðhafst gott eða illt: Hinn eldri skal þjóna hinum yngri. -13- Eins og ritað er: Jakob elskaði ég, en Esaú hataði ég.

Róm 11:2-6

Eða vitið þér ekki, hvað Ritningin segir í kaflanum um Elía, hvernig hann kemur fram fyrir Guð með kæru á hendur Ísrael:-3- Drottinn, spámenn þína hafa þeir drepið og rifið niður ölturu þín og ég er einn skilinn eftir, og þeir sitja um líf mitt.-4- En hvaða svar fær hann hjá Guði? ***Sjálfum mér hef ég eftir skilið sjö þúsundir manna****, sem hafa ekki beygt kné fyrir Baal.-5-* ***Svo eru þá líka á vorum tíma leifar orðnar eftir, sem Guð hefur útvalið af náð****. 6- En ef það er af náð, þá er það ekki framar af verkum, annars væri náðin ekki framar náð.*

2. Kor 4:3-4

En ef fagnaðarerindi vort er hulið, þá er það hulið þeim, sem glatast. -4- ***Því guð þessarar aldar?*** *hefur blindað huga hinna vantrúuðu, til þess að þeir sjái ekki ljósið frá fagnaðarerindinu um dýrð Krists, hans, sem er ímynd Guðs.*

Jóhannes 17.kafli – Bæn Jesú

1. Cor 4:4

Question:

Why are Christians dishonest in the way they translate the Bible? For instance, Christendom randomly translate terms such as 'ho theos' and 'ton theon' (both of which mean "the God," the first being in the Greek nominative case with the second in the accusative) per their theological beliefs and whims.

Take 2 Corinthians 4:4 for example. In that verse 'ho theos' is translated as 'the god' with a small 'g' to refer to Satan. In the same verse 'ton theon' is translated as 'God'. And when theos is used for Jesus they will render it as 'God.' Isn't this is a clear 'pick and choose' tactic being practiced by Christendom?(1)

Answer:

Before addressing the use of 2 Corinthians 4:4 it should first be stated that this phenomenon of using capitals or lower cases only works with the English translations of the Holy Bible since this linguistic feature doesn't work in the Hebrew or Greek. As one source puts it:

"One way that English Bibles mark a particular name as a designation of deity is by capitalizing the name. Thus, God and Lord refer to the Supreme Being, whereas god and lord do not. This is a handy feature of the English language, but it does not reflect anything inherent in the biblical languages. The use of uppercase and lowercase lettering arose after biblical times. The two types of lettering do not occur in all languages. And those languages that have two types of lettering do not utilize them in the same way. The original readers of the Bible could understand whether a name in a particular text referred to deity, but they did so based on context, not capitalization." (Robert M. Bowman Jr. & J. Ed Komoszewski, Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ [Kregel Publications, Grand rapids, MI 2007], Chapter 11: Name One, pp. 129-130)

As the above authors indicated, it is the context which will help to determine whether the Hebrew or Greek words for G/god should be translated either with an upper or lower case g. If the context shows that the true God is in view then the translators will indicate this by capitalizing the letter g. If someone other than the true God is in view then the translators will note this by placing the g in lower case. To put this simply, in order to make this distinction clear God will appear with a capital "G" when referring to the true God, and with a small "g" when used of others.

With the foregoing in perspective we can now begin our analysis of the text in question.

In the first place, if Paul was speaking of Satan this wouldn't mean he was calling him god in the same exact sense that he identified the Son as God. After all, neither Paul nor any other NT writer claims that Satan is the Creator/Sustainer/Heir of all creation, the exact imprint of God's essence or being, has all created beings worshiping him etc. Yet all of these things are stated in reference to the Lord Jesus (cf. John 1:1-3, 10, 14, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:13-22; Hebrews 1:1-6, 8-13; Revelation 5:8-14).

This explains why God appears with a capital "G" when it is used in relation to Jesus since the Holy Bible emphatically teaches that Christ is neither a false god nor someone who only represents God to man. The Holy Scriptures expressly proclaim the absolute and perfect Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, Paul plainly and unambiguously teaches that there is only one true God:

"since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith." Romans 3:30

"So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:4-6

"for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," 1 Thessalonians 1:9

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Timothy 2:5

Paul also stated that there is no one else who is God by nature:

"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods." Galatians 4:8

This implies that there is only One who is truly God in nature, namely Yahweh the God of all the earth:

"Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:21-22

The Scriptures further state that demons are not gods, which would naturally include Satan:

"They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded." Deuteronomy 32:16-17

The foregoing plainly demonstrates that Paul was not suggesting that Satan is a god by nature, but that he is the false god of this age who leads people astray from the worship of the one true God. As noted Evangelical scholar and apologist Robert M. Bowman Jr. puts it:

"Before leaving this question, it should be noted in passing that Satan is called "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4 NIV), but clearly in the sense of a false god, one who is wrongly allowed to usurp the place of the true God in the present age. That is the point of 2 Corinthians 4:4, not that Satan is a might one." (Bowman, Why You Should Believe In The Trinity [Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, December 1993], Chapter 4: Will the Real Polytheists Please Stand Up?, p. 54)

More on Paul's teaching on monotheism later.

With the foregoing in perspective, if the text is even referring to Satan then it is not calling him God in the absolute sense but "the god of this age", i.e. in the sense that he rules this current age that is characterized by sin and wickedness. The Scriptures do teach that both the world and sinners are under the Devil's bondage and need to be set free by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 4:5-7; John 8:34-36; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8, 5:19; Revelation 2:13; 13:3).

Yet Satan is still under the complete and sovereign control of the Triune God, and is only ruling because the true God has permitted it for the time being and for a greater purpose (cf. Proverbs 19:21; 20:24; 21:1, 30; Daniel 2:37-38; 4:21-22, 24-26, 34-35; Revelation 1:5; 17:14, 17; 19:16). More on Satan as the ruler of this world later.

This explains why Bible translators rendered theos with a small g (e.g. "god") in this specific text since they were clearly aware that neither the apostle Paul nor any other inspired Bible writer ever teaches that Satan is God in the absolute sense, but is a false god who seeks to usurp the glory of the one true Triune God.

Is Satan really the God of this Age?

The foregoing takes for granted that Paul was actually referring to Satan as the God of this age which isn't at all certain. Needless to say, there are host of problems with this view.

A closer analysis of the passage in its immediate and overall contexts indicates that Paul actually had the true God in view, not Satan. Paul was stating that it is the one true God who blinds the minds of the unbelievers (by withholding regeneration) as a just consequence of their obstinate rebellion and sin.

We quote the passage along with its surrounding context in order to see what we can glean from it:

"Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's (tou theou) word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (tou theou). And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this age (ho theos to aionos toutou) 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 (tou theou). For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with

ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God (ho theos) who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (tou theou) in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God (to theou) and not to us." 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

The first thing to note is the several usages of the noun theos to refer to the same referent, specifically the Father. Notice, also, that Paul uses ho theos twice (once in the genitive case) in 2 Corinthians 4:4. We should further note that neither the words Satan nor Devil appear at all in that entire chapter or the previous one, which is what we would at least expect to find if Paul had the enemy in mind.

Thus, unless we are to assume that Paul decided to change referents all of a sudden in mid-sentence without providing any indication that this is what he was doing, we should take these points as clear indications that the Apostle had the same exact referent in view. The burden of proof rests upon the person who believes otherwise to provide a convincing exegetical case that Paul does have two different subjects in mind even though he has given no indication that he has decided to change referents.

It doesn't stop there. There are other reasons for seeing the Father as the God who has blinded the mind of the unbelievers. For instance, the Scriptures teach that the Lord Jesus actively rules over this age, and the age to come:

"which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age (aioni) but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." Ephesians 1:20-23

And that God is the King of the ages:

"Now to the King ETERNAL (aionon), immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Timothy 1:17

The word for eternal, aionon, is the plural form of the same word for age (aionos) which appears in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Since both God and Christ are said to be ruling over the ages, which would include this age, wouldn't it make more sense that Paul had the one true God in view?

In fact, there are at least two places in the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures (Septuagint [LXX]) and Apocrypha where a similar expression to "the God of this age" is applied to the one true God:

"And they were praising the idols made with their hands and they did not praise the God of the age (ho theos to aionos) ..." Daniel 5:4 (Source)

"Hearken, O Lord, to the prayer of thy servants, according to the blessing of Aaron for thy people, and all who are on the earth will know that thou art the Lord, the God of the ages (ho theos ton aionon)." Sirach 36:17 RSV (Source)

Moreover, Paul mentions that God shines his light in the heart of the believers through the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

With this in mind, are we to assume that Paul believes there are two gods, one who blinds (Satan) and another who enlightens (the Father)? Or should we take this as an indication that Paul believed that it was the same God who both darkens and illuminates? In other words, isn't Paul saying that it is the one true God who both blinds the eyes of people who refuse to believe and who also enlightens the minds of believers through the revelation of Jesus Christ?

This view comports perfectly with the teaching of the Holy Bible that, as a result of a person's stubbornness and refusal to accept the light that has been given to him/her, God then takes away whatever ability a person may have for seeing and believing. In other words, the Holy Scriptures plainly teach that God can and will blind the eyes and harden the hearts of obstinate sinners:

"I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the

scripture says of Eli'jah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 'Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.' But what is God's reply to him? 'I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al.' So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day.' And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever.'" Romans 11:1-10

"When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved. So, as they disagreed among themselves, they departed, after Paul had made one statement: 'The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: "Go to this people, and say, You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them." Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.'" Acts 28:23-28

Paul reiterates this very point in other places when he says that God hands people over to the desires of their wicked hearts:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct." Romans 1:18-28

"The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Both the Old and New Testaments back Paul up on this point since the Bible as a whole teaches that God will blind the eyes and harden the hearts of unbelievers:

"The LORD said to Moses, 'When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.'" Exodus 4:21

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, …Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said." Exodus 7:3, 13; cf. 9:12, 35

"But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done." Deuteronomy 2:30

"For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses." Joshua 11:20

"But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would have none of me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels." Psalm 81:11-12

"And he said, 'Go, and say to this people: "Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive." Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'" Isaiah 6:9-10

"O LORD, why dost thou make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we fear thee not? Return for the sake of thy servants, the tribes of thy heritage." Isaiah 63:17

"And I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I the LORD am your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances, and hallow my sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I the LORD am your God. But the children rebelled against me; they did not walk in my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live; they profaned my sabbaths. Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. But I withheld my hand, and acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers' idols. Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life; and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them; I did it that they might know that I am the LORD." Ezekiel 20:18-26

"And he said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven' … And he said to them, 'Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'" Mark 4:9-12, 24-25

"Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see," your guilt remains.'" John 9:39-41

"Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: 'Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 'He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.' Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him." John 12:37-41

Furthermore, Paul provides an additional clue in 2 Corinthians that it is the true God who blinds the minds of unbelievers:

"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

The Israelites, Paul says, were hardened and had a veil placed over their hearts which prevented them from believing. Now if someone were to ask Paul, "Who veiled their hearts thereby resulting in their being hardened against the Gospel?" His inspired answer would be that it was God who hardened their hearts:

"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I

am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me'? And what was God's answer to him? 'I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, 'GOD gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.' And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.' … I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." Romans 11:1-10, 25

The foregoing supports our position that the God of this age refers to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was stating that God the Father justly blinds the minds of the unbelievers due to their persistent sinful rebellion against him who has clearly revealed his truth to them.

Lest we be accused of coming up with a novel interpretation here are the comments of the late, renowned Bible expositor Adam Clarke who also believed that Paul was identifying the Father as the God of this age:

I must own I feel considerable reluctance to assign the epithet ??e??, THE God, to Satan; and were there not a rooted prejudice in favour of the common opinion, the contrary might be well vindicated, viz. that by the God of this world the supreme Being is meant, who in his judgment gave over the minds of the unbelieving Jews to spiritual darkness, so that destruction came upon them to the uttermost. Satan, it is true, has said that the kingdoms of the world and their glory are his, and that he gives them to whomsoever he will; Matthew 4:8-9. But has God ever said so? and are we to take this assertion of the boasting devil and father of lies for truth? Certainly not. We are not willing to attribute the blinding of men's minds to God, because we sometimes forget that he is the God of justice, and may in judgment remove mercies from those that abuse them; but this is repeatedly attributed to him in the Bible, and the expression before us is quite a parallel to the following, Isaiah 6:9: Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. MAKE the HEART of this PEOPLE FAT, and MAKE their EARS HEAVY, and SHUT their EYES; LEST they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, Matthew 13:14,15; Mark 4:12; John 12:40; and particularly Romans 11:8-10: God HATH GIVEN THEM THE SPIRIT of SLUMBER, EYES that they SHOULD not SEE, and EARS that they SHOULD not HEAR; let their EYES be DARKENED, in the same circumstances of wilful rebellion and obstinate unbelief; and the great God of heaven and earth is he who judicially blinds their eyes; makes their hearts fat, i.e. stupid; gives them the spirit of slumber: and bows down their back, apostle means the true God by the words the god of this world.

And as to the expression this world, a?????t??t??, we are not to imagine that it necessarily means wicked men, or a wicked age; for it is frequently used to express the whole mundane system, and all that is called time: Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither e?t??t?t?a????, in THIS WORLD, nor in the world to come; Matthew 12:32. In Luke 20:34, the children, ????t??a?????t??t??, of THIS WORLD, mean simply mankind at large in their state of probation in this lower world, in opposition to their state in the world to come. The same meaning the word has in several other places, to which l need not refer; it simply implying the present state of things, governed by the Divine providence, in contradistinction from the eternal state: and it is very remarkable that, in 1 Timothy 1:17, God himself is called ßas??e??t??a?????, the King of the WORLD; what we call King eternal; but here it evidently means him who governs both worlds, and rules in time and eternity. This character among the Asiatics is considered essential to God; and therefore in the very first surat of the Koran he is called [Arabic] Rubbi Alalameen, "the Lord of both worlds," an expression perfectly similar to that above. But it is needless to multiply examples; they exist in abundance. Some, and particularly the ancient fathers, have connected t??a?????t??t?? with t??ap?st??, and have read the verse: But God hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world, Theophylact, and Augustine, all plead for the above meaning; and St. Augustine says that it was the opinion of almost all the ancients. (The Adam Clarke Commentary; source; bold and underline emphasis ours)

This next expositor, although adopting the view that the verse refers to Satan, nevertheless admits that:

The god of this world. There can be no doubt that Satan is here designated by this appellation; though some of the Fathers supposed that it means the true Gods and Clarke inclines to this opinion… (Albert Barnes' Notes on the New Testament; source)

With the foregoing in perspective, doesn't it seem more likely that Paul believed that it is the true God who justly blinds and hardens the minds and hearts of the wicked? And doesn't it make more sense that the reason why Paul describes him as the God of this age was to communicate the fact that, even though this current age is characterized by deception and wickedness which Christ came to rescue us from:

"who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father," Galatians 1:4

The one true, supreme God is still in control of this age, he is still the God of it, and therefore has everything under his supreme control even the evil that men do?

"The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations." Psalm 33:10-11

"For the wrath of man shall praise You; With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself." Psalm 76:10

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." Psalm 115:3

"Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps." Psalm 135:6

"The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." Proverbs 16:4

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will," Ephesians 1:11

Satan as the Ruler of this Age

Someone may try to use Jesus' statements in John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11 regarding Satan being the ruler of this world to prove that Paul was referring to the Devil in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

There are a few problems with trying to use Jesus' statements to support one's case. First, the correct way of understanding a specific text is to interpret it in light of its own immediate context or in light of the writings of that particular writer. It is only after this has been done that a person should then see how that specific passage or statement fits in with the theology and writings of the other biblical authors. In other words, we should first interpret Paul's statements in light of his own writings before moving on to see how his views comport with some of the other Bible writers.

Second, Jesus' words actually prove that Paul was not referring to Satan since in all of these examples the Lord never identifies the Devil as god, but rather as the ruler (archon) of this world:

"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the RULER of this world (ho archon tou kosmou toutou) be cast out." John 12:31

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the RULER of this world (ho tou kosmou archon toutou) is coming. He has no claim on me," John 14:30

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the RULER of this world (ho archon tou kosmou) is judged." John 16:7-11

In fact, this is precisely how Paul describes Satan, not as a god but as a ruler:

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the ruler (ton archonta) of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—" Ephesians 2:1-2

He also refers to the (presumably human) rulers of this age, plural, but never to the gods of this age:

"Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age (ton archon tou aionos toutou), who are doomed to pass away... None of the rulers of this age (ton archon tou aionos toutou) understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Corinthians 2:6, 8

Hence, these passages make it all the more unlikely that Paul was referring to Satan in 2 Corinthians 4:4. After all, if Paul wanted to make sure that his readers knew that he was referring to Satan then he could have simply used the same phrase that he uses in the above references, e.g. he could have stated that the ruler of the power of the air or the ruler of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers. At the very least, he could have qualified his statement by saying something like, "the god of this age who is the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience has blinded the mind of the unbelievers." But this is not what Paul said.

Finally, John in his Gospel ascribes the function of blinding and hardening to God, not to Satan or the ruler of this world (cf. John 9:39-41; John 12:37-41). Hence, if John is going to be used to interpret Paul then these statements must also be taken into consideration, i.e. according to John it is God, not the Devil, who blinds the eyes of the unbelievers which actually provides further substantiation that Paul was referring to the true God in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Concluding Remarks

With the foregoing in mind, we need to reiterate the reason why most translations chose to render theos in 2 Corinthians 4:4 as "god," with a lower case g. The translators were convinced that this text refers to Satan and, in light of this assumption, translated theos with the lower case since they correctly reasoned that Paul could not have been identifying Satan as God in the absolute sense. They obviously had studied Paul's theology enough to know that the apostle believed that there is only one true God and that all other so-called gods are by nature false and/or do not exist.

They applied similar logic to the texts which speak of God's agents as G/god, such as Moses, the judges or the angels (cf. Exodus 4:16, 7:1; Psalm 82:6). Seeing that the Bible writers expressly deny that angels or men are God in nature the translators were right on the money for placing the Hebrew or Greek terms for God in the lower case.

Moreover, the translators were absolutely correct to capitalize theos in English whenever it refers to the Lord Jesus. They knew full well that the Holy Bible plainly and unambiguously teaches that Christ is God in the absolute and fullest sense of the term.

Finally, we do want to repeat our position that we are not at all convinced that Paul had Satan in mind and want to emphasize the fact that the burden of proof rests squarely on any individual who thinks that he did. So far we have yet to see any convincing exegetical and/or contextual reasons to show that this is who had in view. All the evidence favors the interpretation that Paul was speaking of the true God blinding the minds of unbelievers. It is the consistent testimony of Paul's writings and the entirety of Holy Scripture that God is the One who justly withholds regeneration and illumination from stiff-necked, obstinate sinners who refuse to come into the light of his truth.