

Introduction

It was a delight to get together last Lord's Day evening for our December Christmas Event. The season is in full swing, and we barely have 10 more days until Christmas Eve. So today and next week I intend to set our focus on the real reason for a Christmas celebration: the Son of God came into the world to save sinners.

One of the profound aspects of the arrival of Christ is prophecy. The birth of Jesus was well-publicized in advance of its occurrence. We think especially of passages like Isaiah 7 and 9 and Micah 5. But for the next two weeks I want to turn to the book of Genesis to look at two separate prophecies of the coming of Jesus. The first will highlight his birth and death. The second will highlight his birth and reign in royalty.

Please stand as we read God's holy, inerrant, and life-giving word.
[Read Genesis 3:1-15 and Pray]

This is an extraordinary text for many reasons. One of the stunning features appears in verse 1 of chapter 3. Here seemingly out of nowhere appears a talking serpent. When I was a kid I liked to watch the old television show called "Mr. Ed." Mr. Ed was a talking horse. He was successfully portrayed as having conversations with his owner Wilbur. It was a funny show, but of course everyone knows horses can't really talk. It was just to fun imagine what it would be like if one of them could. So from the moment the serpent in Genesis 3 opens his mouth to talk, our eyebrows are raised. It may even seem we are reading a fairy tale.

But we are not reading a fairy tale; it is completely real. The serpent that came into the garden to tempt Eve was more than your ordinary serpent. Revelation 12:9 identifies the great dragon that was thrown down from heaven as "that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." He is a supernatural being. He is real. We understand that in the same way that Satan entered into Judas, he had entered into the serpent. That's why the serpent could supernaturally speak as he did. With his words he disputed what God had said. The first couple listened to him and transgressed the command God had given. Death had been threatened if they sinned. And the behavior the pair displayed after they sinned exhibited symptoms of spiritual death. Indeed, the fall of man was catastrophic. It did not merely damage humanity, it plunged humanity into spiritual death, separation from God, darkness of mind, wickedness of behavior, selfishness of pursuit, and eternal punishment for its prospect.

The message of this text, however, is that despite the damage that the devil initiated, his attempts to nullify the purposes of God are certain to fail. He will face resistance and defeat through the very woman he thought was his path to success. Clearly the plan of the devil was to thwart the goodness and glory of God's creation. He would turn humanity against God and take them all to hell with him. It would wreck the sweet fellowship God designed to be enjoyed between himself and the creatures he had made in his own image. This turning away would deny God worshipers from among humanity. It would prevent his kingdom from being established. God's glory would be defiled, besmirched, and tarnished.

Therefore, the devil designed to beguile the woman and thereby draw the man into sin as well. His plan demonstrated the cunning he possessed. For he was successful in deceiving her and she was

also able to lead her husband with her into disobedience against the command of the Lord. The woman was key to Satan's plan. But now in Genesis 3:14-15 the Lord speaks judgment. He unveils his plan for dealing with these circumstances. In fact, the woman would be instrumental in thwarting the devil, executing justice, and accomplishing a magnificent deliverance of humans plunged into spiritual death. The tables would be turned upon the devil, and the one he thought was the pivotal point for his success would turn out to play a significant role in his defeat. This message of defeat to the devil is for us who believe the message of hope that anchors itself on the baby whose birth we celebrate during this season.

The devil had set himself against the purpose of God. He thought himself successful. But in our text we see four expressions of enmity toward the devil which will result in his ultimate defeat. These four expressions of enmity are what present the message that despite the damage that the devil initiated, his attempts to nullify the purposes of God are certain to fail. It is a message of doom for Satan and for all who remain with him, but it is a message full of hope for those who join the seed of the woman, the serpent slayer, Jesus.

At the outset I want you to see ...

I. Enmity Between God and the Devil.

It jumps out at us in verse 14. The LORD God spoke. He had been speaking to the man and the woman and getting to the bottom of how the disobedience came about. But at this point, he turns his attention to the serpent and the one who had entered him. What follows in verses 14 and 15 is a curse delivered from God.

The serpent itself as an animal received a curse. He would be brought low. He would be a ground-dwelling beast. He would move around down on the level at which the feet of man would move. It was a curse of humiliation but it also put the snake in a vulnerable position. Down low it is easiest to bring a deadly blow to a snake.

A memory that is indelibly fixed in my mind involves the killing of a snake. I was probably seven or eight years old. A big family group was camping together in Oklahoma. The tranquility of sitting around the campfire was suddenly disturbed by the startling news that a snake had been seen slithering outside the tent where a younger cousin was sleeping. But not to fear, my great grandfather grabbed his ax and went into battle. The copperhead was quickly eliminated as a threat. It is hard for a snake to escape a deadly blow because they are generally relegated to the ground for movement. The serpent received a curse of humiliation and vulnerability. This curse also seems to depict the restriction of Satan's realm only to the lower levels of creation. It is humiliating for one who once served in the presence of God.

The main point to keep in mind at this time is the fact that God is the one passing sentence on the serpent and on Satan. The utterance of the curse reveals that the enmity prophesied in this announcement is ordained by God. And hence, the enmity with the serpent, with the devil, starts in the first place with God himself. God is against the devil. And the announcement of the curse here is delivered from the mouth of God to the ears and the being of the devil. Yes, Adam and Eve along with us are privy to what the Lord said, but keep in mind he was speaking to the devil. And that impacts how we understand the nature of the curse he uttered.

In the first place we need to realize the root of the enmity which was here established by God. The root enmity is between God and Satan. The significance of this fact is that on the highest level it is God who is acting against the devil. It is God in the role of judge who brings about justice for the

wicked and evil foe of his. The implication is that the action God is taking here is primarily action to defend his own glory, his own purpose, and his own name. What is supreme in God's affections and his defense and his loyalty is his own being and purposes, indeed his own glory.

What God loves most, what God defends most ardently, what God is most committed to is the beauty and magnificence of his own self. He is worthy of worship and praise because he is. And it is good that God's actions first and foremost always protect and display the excellencies of his majesty. Our salvation itself is not first and foremost in the mind of God. And it is a good thing. The salvation of humankind is first and foremost not because God thinks of US above all. It is because he thinks of himself and his purposes above all. This commitment is a better and more dependable one because he never changes and he never fails and he is never wrong. God does not save because any of us matter to him more than he matters to himself. God saves because he matters most to himself. His purposes WILL be fulfilled and that includes his determination to save unworthy sinners. All glory and praise be to God!

The night of the birth of Jesus angels appeared to shepherds. A single angel announced to them the good news that a Savior was born who is the Messiah and Lord. And suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host appeared. They praised God saying, "Glory to God in the highest." Certainly it was also great news for human beings, but of first importance the birth of Jesus was an occasion for glory to be given to God! Let us always have that frame of mind and particularly so as we marvel afresh at the incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ this Christmas.

Next, I want you to see ...

II. Enmity Between the Woman and the Devil.

Speaking to the serpent, the LORD God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." Again it is important that we keep in mind that God is not speaking to Adam and Eve. He is speaking to the serpent. And it is a word of curse upon the serpent. And what he is saying NOT "Oh, people are going to be afraid of snakes." Now it is true that people have a peculiar fear of snakes. But that is not what is going on here. The woman of whom God speaks is named at the end of this chapter. The name Adam gives her is Eve. God is saying that as part of the curse against the serpent, he is putting enmity between Eve and him. Eve is not going to be his friend. Nor will she be a willing accomplice in Satan's effort to topple the kingdom of heaven and tarnish the glory of God. No, she is going to be the enemy of Satan. She is a threat to Satan's plan. Somehow some way, the woman is going to play a key role in the complete downfall of the devil.

Now, hear what God is saying to Satan. "Satan, in your wicked and cunning scheme, you determined that the most effective spot for an attack that would thwart my purpose was the woman. So you went to her. You deceived her. Yes, she ate and yes, her husband ate with her. And yes, they have fallen into sin and shame and death. But now hear this: that very woman is going to turn the tables on you." Oh, my friends, God is so amazing! He uses the what is seen as the weakest and most vulnerable tools by the world and the devil to do the greatest things. Now I am getting ahead of myself, but here is what the Lord is announcing: "You see this woman that you have used against me, I am going to use against you. You see, she is going to have children. And those children are going to be against you and one of them is going to put his heel on your head and completely debilitate you."

History reveals a line of efforts on the part of the devil to fight against the woman to keep her from being God's tool of defeat. Through Cain Satan took down godly Abel, but God provided baby Seth. Through Pharaoh he tried to eliminate the male children, but the baby Moses was saved. It was a

woman who drew him out of the water. Through Herod the serpent tried to kill baby Jesus, but the Lord protected him in Egypt. That woman, Eve, becomes a type of all women, any one of whom could be part of Satan's destruction.

The point I would like to make here is that God has so ordered things that his power is displayed in human weakness. And he turns the wisest most cunning plots of the wicked against them. It was first evident with Satan's temptation of Eve. His plan to trap humanity in sin and bring them after him was to aim a fiery dart at the woman. And while he achieved his short term goal, God determined to use the woman as part of Satan's ultimate destruction. This is what God does to the wicked. They dig a hole to entrap another, but they fall into it themselves. Let everyone beware of trying to circumvent the plans and purposes of God. The very thing you think will accomplish your purpose will be hung around your own neck.

God uses the weak to shame the strong. God displays his power through weak vessels. He uses the seeming weakness of the gospel message, but through it lives are turned right-side up. He uses our own personal weaknesses to display his strength. Remember Paul and his thorn? Paul wanted it gone, but God said no. He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." So what did Paul say? Paul declared, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, for when I am weak, then I am strong." Brothers and sisters, don't despise your weaknesses, your insults, and hardships. God works through the weak to accomplish his purpose so that glory will go to the one to whom it actually belongs. God gets glory by making the woman an enemy of the devil. And he will get glory through you as you wage war against him too. And by the way it is not a battle you go out and look for. He will be looking for you. What you and I do is simply live out life by faith in Jesus and obedience to his commands.

That brings us to the next phrase in the curse which promises ...

III. Enmity Between Her Offspring and His.

Again, remember, this is a curse spoken against the devil. This woman is going to bear children—plural. At least some of them are going to be enemies of the devil. In other words, Satan, you may have taken humanity down under into the depths of depravity as though to make them your allies and accomplices. But not all of them will remain bound under your power and in the throes of spiritual darkness. Again, we do not have here an explanation of why people are afraid of snakes. We have an explanation of why the devil is afraid of people—namely, it is the people who are the descendants of the woman who pose a threat to the purposes of the devil. He is against them because they are hostile to his cause of defying God and attempting to thwart his purpose.

Revelation 12 intersects with this curse. I haven't time to get into the depths of the imagery here, but I want you to marvel at and learn from the connection between the first pages of the scripture and the last pages of the scripture. In Revelation 12, the devil is depicted as a serpent and a dragon who has swept from heaven a third of the stars thereof. He is relentless in pursuing a woman who is about to give birth so that he can devour her child. He continues to pursue her but she is delivered and protected and the baby is caught up to heaven. Finally verse 17 states that "the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

See, if you hold to the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God, you are an enemy of the devil. And he will make war on you. We can learn that from hearing what the Lord told the

devil. But the message for the devil was that his purposes would not stand because God would put enmity between his people and hers.

The point for us to take from this enmity is that so long as you remain in the condition in which you were born—and by the way that condition is dead in sins and a child of wrath— as long as you remain in that condition, you are basically the offspring of the devil and an opponent of God. However, if by the grace of God you turn from sin and turn to God and put your trust in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, you are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. And you become an enemy of the devil. And as a threat to him, he will come after you. He will tempt. He will allure through the flesh. He will plant seeds of doubt about the word of God. He will appeal to your desire for comfort and pleasure by way of the things of this world.

But you remember, greater is he who is in you than he that is in the world. You remember his doom is sure. Remember, he is against you because of whose you are. Remember, he is always seeking someone to devour. Remember to resist him firm in your faith knowing that God will strengthen you. Stand firm in your faith in Christ. I go back to Revelation 12 which tells how the seed of the woman overcomes the dragon. Verse 11 says, "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." In other words they loved Jesus more than living in this world. That love enabled them to stand against His enemy and remain faithful to Him.

Finally, I want you to see ...

IV. Enmity Between One of Her Offspring and Him.

The enmity here is depicted as a deadly encounter between a man and a snake. Previously the offspring of the woman referred to a collective group. Now one of those is singled out. One of her offspring is HE who will bruise the serpent's head while receiving from the serpent a mere blow to his heel.

So the curse against the serpent reaches its apex. There will be enmity with the woman and there will be enmity with the serpent from her descendants, the children of God's grace. But at last one would arise who legitimately would be considered NOT the seed of a man but the seed of the woman. He would deliver a devastating blow to the head of the serpent while receiving an injury from the serpent. That wound would be painful, but it would not be able to nullify God's purpose. It would be the cost of slaying the serpent.

Now, we know that the seed of the woman is Jesus. And it becomes clear in the earliest narratives surrounding the birth of Jesus. Upon learning that his betrothed, Mary, was with child before they came together, Joseph had determined to be merciful and divorce her quietly. But then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew explained that "all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us)."

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is the seed of the woman. He was not born of man. His coming to save his people from their sins is the devastating blow he delivered to Satan. Now think about how Satan attempted to thwart the work of Jesus. He struck at Jesus as early as the slaughter of babies by Herod shortly after Christ was born. He engaged with Jesus in intense temptations in the wilderness. He moved a crowd in Nazareth to attempt to throw Jesus off a cliff. What appeared to have been

Satan's greatest day, however, was the real Black Friday. He had entered Judas who betrayed Jesus. He fueled the hostility of the Pharisees and Saducees who cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus. So on that day, the fangs of the serpent penetrated the flesh of Jesus, so to speak. Nails pierced him like fangs. Jesus suffered agonizingly on the cross and died. Satan was celebrating what he had helped bring about from as far back as Genesis 3.

But while Jesus did die. It was not a death from which he could not return. Having satisfied the requirements of justice, the Son of God rose from the dead. His heel came down on the head of the serpent and rendered him defeated. The accuser of the brethren has been cast down. Colossians 2 says that God canceled the record of debt that stood against his people with its legal demands by nailing it to the cross. And in this act "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in [Christ Jesus]." Hebrews 2:14 declares of Jesus that "Through death" he destroyed "the one who has the power of death, that is the devil." 1 John 3:8 asserts that "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

This is gospel. This is why the birth of Christ is an occasion to remember and celebrate. The long-promised seed of the woman has come. And he has slain the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is Satan and the devil. He has brought his works to nothing. The determination of the devil to thwart the purposes of God has been brought to nothing—except to be used to glorify God in the magnificence of his grace and power and wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Therefore we ought to praise God with exuberance and joy and relief and celebration. And yet we cannot let down our guard just yet. The lethal blow has been administered. But Satan has not been annihilated. He has not been eradicated. He is still on the loose. Therefore, we must be alert, knowing that he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him. And so will there ever be a day when he will be completely put down? The Apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with this assurance: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20). The future crushing is based upon the past deadly blow. Rejoice in hope, brothers and sisters. The virgin conceived and bore a Son who is Immanuel, God WITH us. His name is Jesus. He is the Savior for all who will trust in Him. And he is the Serpent Slayer. Amen.