

**LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #38**  
**"The Serpent's Trail in History"** (Part Three)  
(Scriptures from NKJV)

***And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*** (Genesis 3:15)

***Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*** (Revelation 12:1-6)

**INTRODUCTION:** Today's lesson or message is a continuation of the last two messages. We are in the process of following the trail of the serpent through history, starting in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) to the birth of Christ in the manger of Bethlehem. It involves a warfare between the seed of the serpent (unbelievers) and the Seed of the woman (Christ and His believers). We are looking at Satan's attempt to destroy the seed line through which the Christ is to come. He believes if he can succeed, then God will be defeated and man will have to worship him and serve his kingdom of pride and dominion.

We have already covered the first nine stages in the history of this warfare. They were:

- (1) From Adam to Cain and Abel - Genesis 4:1-26
- (2) From Seth to Noah and the Flood - Genesis 5:6-6:8
- (3) From Noah to the Tower of Babel - Genesis 9-11
- (4) From Abraham to Isaac - Genesis 12:1-20:1-5
- (5) From Isaac to Jacob - Genesis 25:19-27
- (6) From Jacob to Judah - Genesis 35:1-49:10
- (7) From Judah to the Jews at Mt. Sinai-Gen. 49:10-Exodus 32:7-14
- (8) From Judah in the wilderness to King David-Ex. 32:14-II Sam. 7:12
- (9) From David to Queen Athaliah - II Samuel 7-II Kings 11:1-16

We are now ready to proceed in our journey from Queen Athaliah to Christ's birth in Bethlehem.

**A. THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT - Genesis 3:15**

10. FROM Athaliah to King Ahaz - II Kings 11:3-Isaiah 9:21.

a. The story of King Ahaz presents us with another effort by Satan to destroy the dynasty of David and the seed line through which the Seed of the woman was to come. The story of Ahaz is found in II Kings 16:1-20 and II Chronicles 27:9 through 28:27, and in Isaiah chapters 7 through 12.

b. Ahaz came to the throne as a young man in about 735 B.C. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were among the better kings in the Davidic line. His son Hezekiah, is the most noted for godly faith of the entire Davidic dynasty (II Kings 18:5,6), but Ahaz was a spiritual disaster to the whole nation. All three accounts in Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah point out that Ahaz rejected the Mosaic faith and imported the corrupt pagan religious practices of Mesopotamia to Jerusalem. This involved worship of the stars and planets, child sacrifice, and consulting with wizards and Necromancers (II Chronicles 28:22-25; Isaiah 8:19). All of the markings of idolatry and Satanism were present in his reign.

c. One of the major events which is of interest to our study, occurred early in Ahaz's reign. The two nearest northern neighbor kingdoms, Israel under King Pekah and Syria under Rezin of Damascus, formed an alliance for the purpose of conquering Judah and terminating the reign of the Davidic dynasty and establishing a pagan king known as the "son of Tabeel." This is recorded in Isaiah 7:6: **"Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabeel."** Thus, Ahaz and Judah have two enemies against them.

d. God sends Isaiah the Prophet to assure Ahaz that the line of David will not be destroyed, and that Ahaz should trust in the Lord and call on His name. Instead, Ahaz refuses to do so in Isaiah 7:10-13. This displeases the Lord. Ahaz will then enter into an alliance with Assyria to fight against Israel and Syria. While David's line will be preserved, nevertheless, Judah will be sent into captivity and lose its status as a nation.

e. Has Satan won? No, God now gives Ahaz and Judah a sign that He will assure them that the family of David will continue to exist until the Messiah would appear. The sign was that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Thus God will work in a miraculous manner to assure that the Seed of the woman would be preserved. This is set forth in Isaiah 7:14 and 9:7. **"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with**

***judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."***

f. Once again God is able to perform His purpose even though the wrath of angels and men may attempt to stop Him.

11. From King Ahaz to Esther - Isaiah 9:7 to Esther 1 through 10.

a. We now come to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and Judah has been dispersed and carried away into foreign captivity. The setting takes place in the land of Persia.

b. There are five major personages in the book. They are:

- (1) King Ahasuerus - an unprincipled character of low morals.
- (2) Queen Vashti - a woman of beauty and integrity.
- (3) Esther - a young beautiful Jewish woman.
- (4) Mordecai - the cousin of Esther.
- (5) Haman - a leading prince or officer under Ahasuerus.

c. The story shows how closely all the Jews came to become exterminated and cease to exist as a race.

d. NOTE: There is no mention of the name of God in the book of Esther, but the hand of God is seen throughout the book. Once again, we have the invisible God and the invisible serpent both at work.

e. The story unfolds as such:

(1) King Ahasuerus hosts a seven-day feast at Susa for all his chief men. This would consist of thousands being at the feast according to the secular history of the Persians. He was a man of uncertain judgment, wild passions, a weak mind, and a cruel disposition. These feasts turned into drunken orgies. The king had a beautiful wife named Vasti. She was a woman of modesty, dignity, and determination. The king asked her to display her beauty to the gaze of the drunken men. When she refused, she was deposed from her role of queen.

(2) Esther is presented as a young, beautiful and patriotic Jewess who risked her life to save her oppressed people. She is the cousin of a Jew named Mordecai, who had adopted and raised her from that of a child. She is now chosen to be the new

queen, replacing Vashti. Mordecai continues to be very concerned for her welfare. Mordecai discovers a plot to kill the king, and passes on the information to Esther, and the plot is overthrown.

(3) Haman was the King's favorite prince. He hated the Jewish people. He was an Amalekite and a descendent of King Agag. The Amalekites were put under a curse by God for their mistreatment of Israel as they were entering the land of Caanan. They were to be totally eliminated as a people. (Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 25:17-19). King Saul was given orders by God to kill all the Amalekites, including their king, Agag (I Samuel 15:2,3); 1030 B.C.) He disobeyed (I Samuel 15:7-9) and incurred God's displeasure (I Samuel 15:11, 26; 28:18). Samuel finally killed Agag. It is now about 500 years later. Because of his lineage from Agag, Haman carried a deep hostility toward the Jews.

(4) Haman met Mordecai one day and required him to bow down before him. Mordecai refused to do so because he had not forgotten the tribal feud that still existed. This explains why Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman (3:2,3).

(5) Haman plans his revenge by seeking to kill all of the Jews in the empire, and succeeds in getting the king to sign a decree to that effect, even though the king did not fully understand what the decree involved. He sets a date for the execution and sends the orders for the massacre throughout the empire. The date would be eleven months ahead.

(6) Mordecai persuades Esther to intervene, and she explains how dangerous it could be for her to approach the king unbidden. She agrees on the condition that the Jews fast for three days. Esther approaches the king and invites him and Haman to dinner. Haman leaves the dinner happy, but runs into Mordecai who refused to bow down again. Haman's wife tells him that he should build a hangman's gallows and obtain the king's permission to do so the next morning.

(7) The destiny of Mordecai and the Jews is but a few hours away. Will Satan succeed this time, or will God somehow overthrow the plot. The king goes to bed that night, only to not be able to sleep. He calls for the records which contain the events of his reign and discovers that a person named Mordecai had not been rewarded for revealing the plot against him. He then instructs Haman to honor Mordecai by leading him through the city the next day, not being aware of Haman's plot to hang Mordecai.

(8) Esther hosts a second dinner, at which time she reveals the plot

against the Jews and exposes Haman. The king proceeds to hang Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. While the king cannot alter his first decree, he does, however, put Mordecai in Haman's place, and authorizes him to write further decrees allowing the Jews to fight back and resist on the day of the massacre. The Jews take advantage of this and kill any enemies who attack them.

(9) Mordecai then institutes the Feast of Purim on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the month of Adar (the last month of the Hebrew calendar of February-March). The Feast is still observed by the Jews today.

f. The Book of Esther shows the minute accuracy of God's providence in protecting the Seed of the woman. Time after time, Satan has come so close to destroying the line through which the Christ has come. While he has been permitted to nip at the heel of the woman's Seed, he has not been able to bruise His head. Only the sovereign will and power of God has prevented this. No freedom of the wills of angels or men has been enabled to overthrow the free will of God.

g. In the case of Esther, several things demonstrate God's ability to carry out His purposes. Here are some of them.

(1) What or who was it that kept the king from not being able to sleep on the night before the doom of the entire Hebrew race?

(2) What or who impressed upon him to call for the records of his reign so he could read in order to become sleepy once again?

(3) Who or what moved him to open the records to the very place which contained the plot to kill him and to find Mordecai's name and the fact that he had not been rewarded?

(4) Why did this occur at the very moment that Haman arrived to ask permission to hang Mordecai?

(5) Who was behind the scene of how Esther was made the queen at this moment of crisis?

(6) The only answer to these questions, and dozens more, is that there is an foreordained providence of God that is controlling the flow of history and all the events in it! The Book of Esther has been compared to a chess game in which God and

Satan, as the invisible players, moved about real kings, queens, and nobles. When Satan put Haman into his place, it was as if he announced to God, "check." God then positioned Esther and Mordecai in their positions and said to Satan, "checkmate!" The serpent has failed again and the seed marches on.

12. From Esther to Bethlehem - Esther 1 to Luke 2:1-23.

a. We now move to the focus point of Genesis 3:15. Satan has been allowed a long period of time to stop the purpose of God from being fulfilled. He has failed time and time again. His frustration has been building for thousands of years. The scene before us is in Bethlehem. In Luke 2:4-7, it is written: ***"Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."***

b. The appearance of the holy angels suddenly explodes in connection with Christ's birth. And why not, they have also been faithfully waiting for thousands of years. God has successfully shown that He can bring forth the Seed of the woman. He must yet show how He can vindicate His righteousness while pardoning guilty sinners. The angels are desirous in looking into these things.

c. There are numerous appearances of angels surrounding the birth of Christ. Here are their appearances and their assigned roles.

(1) To Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist - Luke 1:11-19, 26. The angel Gabriel was sent to inform Zacharias that he was to be the father of a great son, who was to be named John. This would come about even though Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, were beyond the normal years of childbearing. This is another example of God saying, ***"I will, you shall."***

(2) To Joseph, the husband of Mary - Matthew 1:18-25. The angel was to inform and explain to him the nature of Mary's pregnancy, and his role in supporting her.

(3) To the Virgin Mary who was to give birth to Jesus - Luke 1:26-38. This was again the angel Gabriel. This would fulfill the prophesy of Isaiah 7:14; 9:7. She would be impregnated by the Holy Spirit, rather than Joseph, and give birth to a male child

foretold so many years prior in Genesis 3:15.

(4) To the Shepherds - Luke 2:8-12. The angel of the Lord, (probably Gabriel, though not so stated), brings the good news that the Seed promised to David has been born in Bethlehem. Joseph had been addressed by the angel in this manner, "Joseph, thou son of David," as he was a descendant of David, so the male child would be born in David's city. (I Samuel 17:12).

(5) To the Shepherds - Luke 2:13-20. In verses 13 and 14 we read, **"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"** Up until now there has been but one angel carrying on personal, private conversations with various individuals. Now there is a sudden explosion of holy, heavenly angels appearing in the skies to the shepherds. I can visualize it like the grand finale of a huge fireworks display celebrating some special event. We are not told how many angels appeared, but I can only speculate that God allowed every one of His angels to participate. After waiting so long, I think it would have been a form of punishment if God had left some of them out of the scene. This is a great victory in the invisible war. Satan has suffered his greatest defeat, and God has won His greatest victory up to this point.

(6) But that old serpent, the great red dragon, is not giving up yet. He is also on the scene, ready to devour the infant male child. When the wise men came to inquire of Herod where the newborn King was located, Herod plots to kill the child. He does not know which Jewish baby is to be the new born King, so he orders that all the Jewish infants, under two years of age, who lived in the vicinity of Bethlehem, to be killed. (Cf. Matthew 2:16-18).

(7) Another angel now appears unto Joseph in a dream, warning him to take Mary and the infant child down into Egypt. (Cf. Matthew 2:13-15). Later, after Herod had died, another angel appeared to Joseph and gave him the approval to return to the land of Israel. (Cf. Matthew 2:19-23).

d. We are told in Matthew 1:21-23 that Mary's Son was to be named **"Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."** Also, He was to be given the name, **"Immanuel,"** which means "God with us." This is a preview of how God will vindicate His righteousness, pardon a multitude of Adam's descendants, and elevate His Son to the throne as the moral Governor of the universe. In so doing, He would elevate the creature man to a position of honor and rank over that of the angels.

e. Charles Wesley, in his sanctified imagination, summarized the Person and work of the male Child in his famous song of Christmas, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."*

*Christ, by highest heav'n adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come, Off-spring of the Virgin's womb:  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."*

*Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that men no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."*

## **B. THE SERPENT'S FAILURE**

1. God has now defeated the serpent at every encounter. The serpent's weapons of war now lay in shambles as we look back on his trail in history. But now he will focus his assaults on the Being of Jesus Christ in an effort to separate Him (Christ) from His obedience to the will of His Father. He will have about thirty-three years left to do so.

2. His time is growing short.