

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #78

"The Ascension: God's Manifold Wisdom"
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Ephesians 3:9-11:

And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 2:14-15:

having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

INTRODUCTION: In the last several lessons, we have been looking at the ascension of Christ and its significance for Himself, His people and His holy angels. We are now ready to start to bring this segment of God's sovereign predestination of all things to a conclusion. The subsection has been called "The Election of the Angels." We have covered the fall of the angels and man. We looked at God's announcement in Genesis 3:15 of His intention to defeat Lucifer's plot to take over the throne of God. We have followed the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan throughout the Old Testament into the New Testament era beginning with Christ's birth through His life, death, resurrection and finally with His ascension. In the last lesson we looked at the confirmation of the angels unto eternal life as occurring at the time of His ascension. We now begin to expand upon the topic of God's Manifold Wisdom in achieving His preordained eternal purpose.

The word, "manifold" is found only in Ephesians 3:10. Its basic meaning is "many-colored" referring to a collection of flowers and a robe. In essence it consists of many parts or a variety of forms. The first part of God's wisdom is seen in "His Defeat of Satan's Wisdom."

A. SATAN'S WISDOM.

1. Seen in his creation.

Our study has taken us through Satan's creation by God in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. We found that he was created perfect in wisdom and beauty, meaning that he was sinless. He occupied the highest of all offices assigned to the angels. He was the "anointed cherub" closest to the throne of God. We have taken the position that he, along with the rest of the angels, was placed under a probationary time of testing. The test consisted of them being willing to humble themselves and submit to the role of serving the

lower creature man, out of which One would come who would be exalted to the right hand of God. If they abode faithful until this was achieved, then they would be confirmed in eternal life.

2. Satan's wisdom corrupted.

We have seen that his wisdom became corrupted by his own pride, whereby he sought to ascend higher than what God had created him to be. We saw how a sinless creature has the potential to defile itself by aspiring to cast off its limitations and ascend to a higher position than that which it formerly held. In essence, Satan felt like God had short-changed him by not giving him God-like powers. So he devised a plan to de-throne the Most High God and assume His position.

His method of doing so was to demonstrate that God was but a creature also, possessing wisdom and power like that of a creature. If he could show that God's wisdom was capable of coming short of reaching His goal of putting a man on His throne to share in the moral government of the universe, then God would not be worthy of holding the title of the "Most High God."

3. Satan's plan unfolds.

God has now created man and placed him in a garden paradise. Man is also placed under a time of probation. He is given life but does not possess eternal life in that he is capable of falling. He was to eat of the trees of the Garden. At some unspecified time, he would be permitted to eat of the tree of life and be confirmed in eternal life. However if he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would lose his life and experience death in both soul and body.

At this point, Satan devises his plan. If he can get man to sin by aspiring to advance his wisdom to be like God, then God would be forced to destroy this lowly creature, thereby preventing Him from elevating man above the angels to the throne itself. This would reveal that God did not possess the wisdom to foresee what could happen to His plan. God's wisdom would then be inadequate and limited. On the other hand, if God does not destroy man, then His justice would be defiled and He would prove to be unholy. Satan believes he would have God in a quandary whereby He could not escape having one or more of His attributes corrupted. This would allow Satan to take control of the throne and establish his own kingdom built upon pride and dominion.

It is self-evident that throughout the Old Testament, the angels were God's

ministering spirits to men. Thus they served as teachers sent from God to man revealing God and His will for them. Satan would head up this ministry. When he appeared to man in the garden, neither Adam or Eve were afraid of him. He was their teacher whom they could trust, having been sent by God to meet their educational needs among other things. He then persuaded them to believe that God did not have their best interests at heart by making them lowly beings. He said, "surely you are worthy of more dignity than serving as lowly servants to care for and work in a garden!" They both ate of the tree and fell from their standing before God.

God proceeded to keep His word and cursed them for their actions. He also pronounced a curse upon Satan for his role in destroying man.

B. GOD'S WISDOM.

1. God's infinite wisdom.

While Satan was wise, God will prove to be all-wise. Satan thought he had God in a vice. God must either choose to forfeit His justice or His holiness. In either case, His plan to elevate man to the throne of God appears to have been destroyed. But unknown to Satan, God has not yet revealed all of His attributes. He now reveals that He is a God of grace and mercy as well as love and purity. In Genesis 3:15 He announces that He will bring forth a man out of Adam's fallen race who would sit on His right hand on high. This man would be called the "seed of the woman" and would bruise the head of Satan's kingdom, while Satan would bruise Christ's heel. The first would lead to Satan's destruction. The second would inflict severe suffering upon Christ.

2. God must yet prove that He has both the wisdom and power to achieve this task. How will He be able to remain just and justify guilty sinners? How would this Person be able to avoid inheriting Adam's fallen nature? These questions and many more are yet unanswered at the time of God's prophetic utterance given in Genesis 3:15. Satan again calls God's bluff, and challenges Him to a dual. God says He can get the job done. Satan says He can't. God appears to have already stained His justice by not destroying man on the spot. How can a holy Creator take an unholy creature into His presence and remain holy?

3. It is probable that at this point Satan addresses all the angels and boasts how He had deceived man, as well as God. He then would say. "God says He can yet establish man, the lower creature, over us, the higher creature. I say He can't. All of you who think I can yet defeat the Most High from achieving His purpose, come over to my side and join me,

and we shall maintain our honor and dignity.” Revelation 12:4 tells us that one-third of the angels left the service of God to serve Satan and themselves.

4. In order for God to defeat the wisdom of Satan, He must send His Christ into the world of humanity on a mission. This Person will be none other than the eternal Son of God in human nature - one Person, two natures, one Divine, one human. His name will be revealed over the course of time to be that of Jesus Christ. His mission will consist of four elements. They are:

- a. One: To live the life of a sinless Servant like God required out of the first Adam.
- b. Two: To demonstrate that humility and servanthood both honor God’s glory and secure inward peace and happiness.
- c. Three: To demonstrate how God can harmonize His attributes of justice and mercy in saving an elect portion of Adam’s fallen race.
- d. Four: To merit a place of honor above that of the angels for Himself and His redeemed children.

Satan must conquer Christ in but one of these elements to win his purpose. Christ must succeed in all four of these to win His mission.

5. The battle unfolds through the Old Testament, into the New Testament era. Christ is born, lives a sinless life as God’s Servant, dies a substitutionary death, rises from the dead, and ascends to the throne at God’s right hand. Satan’s wisdom is conquered by the wisdom of the all wise God!

6. The wisdom of God appears so great by confounding all the wisdom of the old serpent. NOTE: Power appears most clearly when it encounters a strong opposition. The same thing can be said of wisdom. It never shines so brightly as when opposed by the wisdom of a crafty enemy. God, in the work of redemption, has confounded all of Satan’s designs to frustrate God’s eternal purpose to glorify Himself and secure the happiness of His chosen people.

7. The instruments which God used to overthrow Satan reveals how far superior is God’s wisdom to that of Satan’s. Instead of crushing Satan by His power, Christ chose to do battle with him by appearing on the battle field in His human nature, that is, in a poor frail state of affliction. The weapons which Christ chose to use were His poverty, afflictions, reproaches, sufferings, and death. His main weapon was His cross, the emblem of suffering and shame. Those were seemingly weak and lowly instruments to do battle with such a giant as Satan.

An illustration of this battle can be given in young David's battle with the stronger and more experienced giant by the name of Goliath. Goliath came dressed in a mighty coat of metal, with a huge sword and spear in his hands. David refused to take Saul's armor and went out to meet Goliath without anything to protect himself. Neither did he carry a sword, but only used a slingshot and a few small stones. Mighty Goliath laughed and mocked young David. But with one well placed shot, a stone penetrated the head of Goliath and he fell to the ground in defeat. David then proceeded to use Goliath's sword to cut off the head of Goliath and carried it into Jerusalem at which time the people rejoiced with singing and praises.

8. In a far greater battle in the realm of the spiritual, God staked out His little innocent, helpless Lamb on the cross, and exposed Him to the rage of the roaring lion who goes about to destroy men. In his rage, Satan inflicts a painful blow to the Lamb resulting in His death. The proud lion gloats over his victory. His kingdom of pride and dominion appears to have won, so that there will be no man that shall ever sit on the throne of God! But wait, there is more to come in this warfare.

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Saviour!
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!
Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Saviour!
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus my Saviour!
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign,
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!
- "Christ Arose" (Robert Lowry)

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Him rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!
– “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” (Charles Wesley)

9. It must have been a glorious sight in Israel to see David carrying the head of Goliath in triumph into Jerusalem. But how much more glorious was it in heaven as the angelic hosts, along with the Old Testament saints who have died, see the Son of David, the Son of God carrying the head of the spiritual Goliath, the champion of the armies of hell, in triumph into the heavenly Jerusalem! Satan, that great enemy of God, has now been made to bow before the footstool of a Man - a Man of God's own choosing! Alleluia! Let the Hallelujah chorus begin! The proud rebel has now been brought down to the dust of the earth. Now we better understand the text in Colossians 2:14-15 which reads, ***"having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."***

10. Here we see the deceiver's wisdom being deceived and turned against him. What Satan did in deceiving man to fall, is made to turn contrary to what he intended, in that it gave God the occasion to glorify Himself even more, as well as elevating the elect to a higher degree of happiness than that originally possessed man before the fall. When Satan said, ***"You shall be as gods,"*** it was a lie to deceive man. Little did he think that through the incarnation of the Son of God, the elect of mankind would be united to the divine Person so that they become one with Christ. Believers are as members and parts of Christ. Believers are now not merely "gods," they are members of Christ the Son of God!

It was Satan's design to make man his captive and slave forever. But now man in Christ shall be Satan's judge. The elect, instead of being his captives to be forever tormented and ruled over by him, shall now sit as judges to sentence him to everlasting torment. God's wisdom would have it so, that One in man's nature should be the supreme Judge. It was man's nature that Satan so envied, and sought to destroy. But at the last day, Jesus Christ shall come in man's nature, and all the devils will be made to stand trembling at His judgment seat, and He shall judge and execute the wrath of God upon them. But not only shall Christ in His human nature judge the devils, but all the saints shall judge them with Christ. This is the meaning of Paul's words in I Corinthians 6:3 where he says, ***"Do you not know that we shall judge angels?"***

C. SATAN'S JUDGMENT AND MISERY.

1. It is evident that Satan's pride will not allow him to be content and happy as long as he sees others who are more happy than he. Whenever and wherever he sees this occurring, he goes about as a roaring lion seeking to destroy the creatures' happiness. Job is a great example of this. When Satan is unsuccessful, his nature rages like a fire internally within him. This internal misery comes from God as a form of punishment. It is a withholding of any comfort from God or that found in the creation. This punishment was initiated by God at the time of Satan's fall as described in Ezekiel 28:17-19 -

***Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you.***

***You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It
devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all
who saw you.***

***All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;
You have become a horror, and shall be no more forever.***

2. This internal misery shall be confirmed in an eternal state of misery at the last judgment day when he is said to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Revelation 20:10 - ***"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*** The phrase "fire and brimstone" is the most expressive way of describing the utter horror of God's wrath on the evil beings which are made up of angels and men. While the lake of fire is the eternal place and state of being for the wicked, it does not require that the flames be physical. The question emerges, "How can a physical flame harm a non-physical being like that of an angel?" Time will not permit the question to be given an enlarged answer.

3. We can only say that Satan's ultimate misery will be in seeing a man on the throne where he once aspired to be, and to know that God's wisdom has defeated his own wisdom once and for all!