

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #46
"Satan's Strategy for Defeating Christ"
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Galatians 3:10-13:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").

Deuteronomy 21:22,23:

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

INTRODUCTION: In the previous lessons, we have analyzed the statement made by God to Satan in Genesis 3:15. We have followed the invisible warfare which ensued thereafter. It has given us an insight into the eternal purpose of God in creating the world and its inhabitants. We have observed it both from the standpoints of the Creator and the creature; namely, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. We have seen the development of warfare between two kingdoms; namely the kingdom of Christ promoting humility and service to others, and the kingdom of Satan promoting pride and dominion or self advancement.

In the last lesson, we looked at the topic of Christ's active and passive obedience. In His birth, Christ began the final stage of the warfare, which would climax with His death on the cross. The cross will be the battleground on which the war between humility and pride will be waged. It is at the cross that Satan will think He has won his greatest victory only to discover that he has suffered his greatest defeat. God will be doing His work, and Satan will be doing his work. It is at the cross that the doctrine of predestination shines forth in its brilliance to the glory of God. Follow with me as we see the battle reenacted before our very eyes. Let us first consider:

A. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S MISSION DOWN TO EARTH

1. A summary given: Philippians 2:1-11 -

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit,

but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. His fourfold mission:
 - a. To live the life of a sinless Servant like God required out of the first Adam.
 - b. To demonstrate that humility and serving others honors God's glory and secures inward peace and happiness.
 - c. To demonstrate how God can harmonize His attributes of justice and mercy in saving an elect race of fallen men.
 - d. To merit a place of honor above that of the angels for Himself and His redeemed children.

2. First, Christ came on a mission to live the life of a sinless and obedient Servant like God required out of the first Adam.

- a. This He must do if He is to be the Savior of sinful men.
- b. He came into the world of mankind to perform the will of God. In Hebrews 10:7 we read, ***"Then I said, 'Behold I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do you will, O God.'"***
- c. Jesus continually made this clear to His followers.

(1) In John 6:38 He stated, ***"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*** Jesus is not suggesting that His will might be different from that of the Father, but that He, as a servant, always seeks to serve the will of the Father who sent Him.

(2) In John 4:34 Jesus explains that His life on earth was consumed

in doing the Father's will. He says, **"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."**

(3) He understood this from His early childhood years. At age twelve, He was conversing with adult teachers in the temple. When He became separated from His parents, He replied to them in Luke 2:49, **"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"**

(4) Satan will follow Him throughout His life, seeking to tempt Him to forsake His obedience to the doing of His Father's will.

3. Secondly, He came to demonstrate that humility and serving others honors God's glory, and brings inward peace and happiness.

a. On three occasions, Jesus taught this leading principle.

(1) In Matthew 23:1-12, we have Him criticizing the pride of the scribes and the Pharisees because they wanted the praise of men. In verses 11 and 12 He said, **"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

(2) In Luke 14:8-12, we have another occasion in which Jesus was invited to eat in the home of a Pharisee. There were many guests and He watched how they crowded to obtain the seats of honor. The Lord said in verses 8-11, **"When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

(3) In Luke 18:10-14, we have yet another occasion in which Jesus gives the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee prided himself on his self-righteousness, while the publican pleaded with God for mercy and forgiveness of his sins. Jesus said in verse 14, **"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

b. Many skip through these passages and seek to go on to the so called "higher teachings" of Jesus. In doing so, they miss out in seeing that humility and service are what characterizes those who have entered the kingdom of heaven. These are not side issues, but are heaven or hell issues. In Matthew 18:1-5 it is stated, **"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'"**

c. Satan will try to destroy this teaching of Christ and replace it with His kingdom of pride and self-exaltation.

4. Thirdly, Christ came to demonstrate how God can harmonize His attributes of justice and mercy in saving an elect race of fallen men.

a. This is accomplished by the principles of substitution and imputation. It is set forth in our text in Galatians 3:13 - **"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."**

b. Also in Romans 3:21-26.

5. Fourthly, to merit a place of honor above that of the angels for Himself and His redeemed children.

a. In order to achieve this, He must conquer Satan and be enthroned in his place. This He did as described by Paul in Ephesians 1:20-23, **"which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."**

b. It is also described by Paul in our text in Philippians 2:9-11, **"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should**

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

6. Satan must conquer Christ in all four elements of Christ’s earthly mission. What then is his strategy?

B. THE NATURE OF SATAN’S STRATEGY TO CONQUER CHRIST

1. Satan will seek to conquer Christ in either one of two ways so as to develop a two-pronged attack.

a. First, by tempting and oppressing Him so as to distract Him from His life of **ACTIVE OBEDIENCE** to the mission which He had undertaken. This would occur by trying to convince Christ to take the easy way out, and avoid the hardships which come with the life of being a servant. He could then bring about an apostasy in Christ, like he had accomplished in Adam. He knew that God would then be forced to put a curse on Christ as He had placed on Adam, and God could not place a cursed being on the throne of the universe!

b. Second, by attempting to destroy His life by means of suffering death. This he would do on several occasions leading up to Christ’s death on the cross. This would involve Christ’s **PASSIVE OBEDIENCE**.

2. Things which we must understand about Satan’s abilities:

- a. One, while he is powerful, he is not all powerful.
- b. Two, while he is wise, he is not all wise.

3. This means that he is yet but a finite creature, but due to his self-pride, he is blinded into thinking he possesses sufficient powers to prove that God is but a creature like himself.

4. Satan’s only knowledge of the future, is what is revealed to him by means of observation and inquiry. Only God knows the certainty of the future because He alone has foreordained all the events of the future.

5. Question: a question now emerges. Did Satan know what the outcome of the cross was going to be? In looking back to what happened to him and his kingdom by the cross, would he have gone ahead and conspired with wicked men to crucify Jesus? To state the question in another manner: Did Satan want Jesus to die on the cross, or did he seek to prevent Christ from dying on the cross? Stanley Horton, in his *Commentary on*

Matthew, takes this position when he says,

Satan hated and feared the cross, for he knew it meant his own doom.
Satan still hates it and tempts people to avoid it, reject it, or make it an empty symbol that has no effect on their lives. (Horton, *Commentary on Matthew, The Complete Biblical Library*, p. 65).

Is Dr. Horton right? No! Why? Satan did not foresee what the outcome of the cross would be! How do we know that? We have Scripture which tells us.

a. In I Corinthians 2:7-10 we are informed that the very rulers which conspired to crucify Christ would not have done so if they had understood what they were doing. And why did they not understand? God did not reveal it to them. In fact, it was concealed from them! Thus we read, ***"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."***

b. The rulers or princes as they are called, are the evil forces of darkness, both visible and invisible, namely, fallen angels and men.

(1) This would include those who actually conspired to crucify Christ. This is confirmed in Acts 4:24-28 - ***"So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ. For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.'"***

(2) This would include Satan as seen when he entered the heart of Judas, leading to Christ's betrayal and crucifixion. In John 13:2 we are told, ***"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. . ."***

c. Thus Satan, along with the wicked Jews and Gentiles, conspired to crucify

Jesus, and none knew what the result of the outcome was going to be. This would include Satan. He thought He could defeat Jesus by putting Him on the cross, but instead Jesus defeated him by giving away His life on the cross. The deceiver would be deceived! If Satan had it to do over, He would not have worked to bring about the crucifixion of Christ.

5. The point is, that beginning with Christ's birth, Satan is having to continually adjust his strategy as he observes new elements occurring in the life of Jesus. All of his wiles or schemes will be to get Jesus either to depart from a life of obedience to the Father, or else see that He is destroyed through some means of death. Much more will be said about this in the next lesson.

6. Satan's ability to either influence or control the minds and bodies of men. While we cannot enlarge upon the topic of Biblical demonology, here are some things to consider:

a. This ability is seen in the Bible as he afflicts the bodies of men with physical ailments. (Cf. Luke 13:16) Likewise, we have ample examples of him controlling the minds of men through demon possession (cf. Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-21) Note verses 6-15.

b. Satan can place thoughts into the minds of men, as he did in the case of Judas. In John 13:2, we are told, ***"the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him."***

c. Satan can take away thoughts from the minds of men. In Luke 8:5, 11, 12, Jesus gives the parable of the sower. ***"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. . . . Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."***

d. Satan can sift and try the faith of believers. This he did with Peter in Luke 22:31 - ***"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.'"***

e. Satan can hinder the efforts of believers in doing the work of God. In I Thessalonians 2:18, Paul says, ***"Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but Satan hindered us."*** One of the ways Satan can hinder is by using other people to oppose our plans. But even this is included in God's plan.

f. Satan can “buffet” believers. Paul uses this term to describe his “thorn” in the flesh in II Corinthians 12:7, **“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”** The word “buffet” literally means to “beat or strike with the fist.” Speaking of Christ in Matthew 26:67, 68 - **“Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘prophesy to us, Christ, who is the one who struck you?’”** In the case of Paul, the word is used in a figurative sense to describe a thorn, referring to some physical illness, perhaps being brought on by a messenger of Satan. It was God’s means of humbling him after he had been given his spiritual experience of being caught up into heaven.

7. Satan energizes the sinful life of unbelievers like the Spirit of God energizes the holy life of believers.

a. This is seen in Ephesians 2:1-3: **“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”**

b. In verse 2, the word translated “works” comes from the word meaning “energy.” It is the same word used in Ephesians 1:19, 20 which speaks of how God energizes life into His saints (set apart ones), and the same energy He used to raise Christ from the dead. **“And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.”**

c. All those, who are unregenerate, are members of Satan’s kingdom. They are in bondage to him and love their pride and self-exaltation. They are said to be **“taken captive by him at his will.”** (II Timothy 2:26).

d. This is why they are said to be **“dead in trespasses and sins,”** and only Christ can release a soul from Satan’s kingdom. This He does by the Spirit’s power to regenerate. Thus man’s will is not free from his nature and his nature is not free from Satan’s energy to enslave him. What is the convicted sinner’s hope? **“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we**

were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved.) (Ephesians 2:4,5).

8. Summary: We have now been exposed to the contents of Christ's mission on earth. We have also been informed of the strategy of Satan to defeat that mission. The final stage of the warfare of the ages has now begun. In our next lesson, we will see the two princes, Christ and Satan, engage in this warfare as we look at the topic, "The Battle of the Cross."