

Destruction of the Serpent

“And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

—*Luke 10:18*

ONCE KNOWN AS LUCIFER, this beautiful spirit being fell from high glory, privilege, and position to his present status as chief

Adversary of the Heavenly Father. Originally created sinless and perfect, this former son of God has been in open, defiant rebellion against the Almighty and viciously engaged in inciting lawlessness and wickedness throughout the earthly and spiritual realms for well over six thousand years.

LUCIFER’S PERFECTION ENDED

It is rather startling to realize this lofty spiritual being would relinquish the privilege of occupying such an exalted estate because of pride. Isaiah wrote, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the

north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”—Isa. 14:12-14

In the opening verses of the Bible, we note the following dialogue between Satan through the serpent with mother Eve. “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”—Gen. 3:1-5

Satan, the accuser, the serpent, the devil or the evil one, is crafty. He uses deception and attempts to overwhelm and beguile those who are in covenant relationship with God, as Adam and Eve were prior to their fall. This is further attested to by Paul. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” (II Cor. 11:3) Heeding his sophistry will lead to death, and we have the authority of Jesus to assert this. Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, he said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”—John 8:44

SATAN VERSUS JOB

The sterling character of Job is chronicled in the New Testament among other places in Scripture. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ... Ye have heard of the patience of Job." (James 5:10,11) Additionally, we note the following dialogue concerning devoted Job between Satan and God.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."—Job 1:6-12

The *Rotherham Emphasized Bible* substitutes the word "accuser" in the aforementioned verses where it is rendered Satan. A very prominent characteristic of an accuser is that of finding fault with

another individual. In the above text, the Adversary seems to imply that Job only heeded the Creator because he was protected from all of life's problems. However, the following extraordinary commendation concerning this godly individual is found elsewhere in the Bible. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it [the land that had sinned], they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezek. 14:14) Job's name was included along with righteous Noah and Daniel, so we can be confident that contrary to Satan's insinuations the prophet was not merely paying lip service to the Heavenly Father but was indeed a devoted servant.

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

Let us recall these words spoken to the serpent after our first parents sinned. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen. 3:15, *New International Version*) Satan probably did not fully know the meaning of that passage when it was uttered. Nevertheless, following his abortive efforts to create a vibrant race of intelligent beings who would pay him homage, with the destruction of the Nephilim in the Flood, he may have pondered further the meaning of what God had in mind in these words spoken subsequently to Abram: "The Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be

a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 12:1-3

Under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, consecrated Christians have come to appreciate these explanatory words of the Apostle Paul: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ... For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:16,27-29) Serious believers who are fully focused upon what these verses imply are special targets of the evil one, since he has observed their lives being transformed following spirit begettal.

“YOUR ADVERSARY”

Here is another scripture which Christ’s footstep followers should heed: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (I Pet. 5:8,9) Here Peter identifies Satan as “your adversary.” This does not refer to the world in general and is substantiated by another scripture which reads in part, “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

At the present time, the Adversary owns all who are not being sanctified. Therefore, the world at large is blind to the great hope that we share, not only for ourselves but for “all families of the earth.” During Old Testament times, Satan may have suspected the seed that was destined to crush his head would probably come through Abraham’s son Isaac, then Jacob or his posterity, the nation of Israel, since we read, “God said unto Abraham, let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”—Gen. 21:12

With that in mind, Satan attempted to kill off this seed through starvation when a famine arose and the only place that food could be obtained was in Egypt. (Gen. 41:29-31) Providentially, however, Joseph was raised to prominence, being second in command next to Pharaoh. He was the instrument used by God to rescue Jacob’s family from starvation as the following exchange between Joseph and his siblings testifies: “When Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.” Joseph replied, however, “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”—Gen. 50:15,20

OTHER EXPERIENCES IN EGYPT

Sometime later, the children of Israel proved to be exceedingly fruitful. The Pharaoh on the throne at that time, “which knew not Joseph,” determined that every Jewish male that was born should be

drowned. (Exod. 1:8-22) Divine intervention allowed the infant Moses to escape this fate and ultimately, he was God's instrument to deliver the nation from servitude. Although a series of nine chastisements came upon the Egyptians, it took the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, before Pharaoh hearkened to God and consented to send the Israelites out of the land. Yet even after doing this, he had a change of heart and sent his armies in pursuit.—Exod. 12:33-42; 14:5-9

This is the picture we thus have set before us in the 14th chapter of Exodus. Israel was departing from Egypt, about two and one half million in number, but the Red Sea blocked their escape and Pharaoh's army was about to overtake them. "Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."—Exod. 14:13-16

SATAN'S PERSISTENCE

During New Testament times, the Adversary continued to be engaged in trying to locate the "seed of the woman" that God said would destroy him. Undoubtedly he was aware of the announcement of Jesus' birth made by an angel along with

glorious tidings of his presence as the world's Savior. (Luke 1:26,27; 2:8-15) When news that wise men from the east had followed a star which would lead them to the place where Jesus was born reached the royal court, King Herod pretended to be interested in worshiping him, while secretly planning to have him killed. It would seem that Satan influenced the king that it would be in his best interest that anyone who might replace him should be destroyed. The Adversary was absolutely relentless in attempting to thwart the declaration at the time of Adam's fall that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

The account reads, "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people, Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."—Matt. 2:3-8

Upon departing from Herod, the wise men again saw the star and rejoiced, because it would lead them to the place "where the young child was." Upon reaching the house, they saw Jesus with his mother Mary. They "fell (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matt. 2:9-11) These gifts also have special significance, and point out to us how we should present our hearts to him, our Savior and Redeemer. (Luke 12:34) Later, Joseph was told by an angel to “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word.” (Matt. 2:13) Joseph obeyed, following the angel’s warning and escaped from the jealous power of Herod, thus preventing harm to Jesus, which was Satan’s design.

SATAN AND JESUS

Following his baptism at Jordan and being led of the Holy Spirit to commence his ministry, Jesus was tempted three times of the Adversary. Here we will make reference to only the third of these temptations, all of which the Master rejected by quoting the commandments of God. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”—Matt. 4:8-11

This was a figurative temptation, since no mountain on earth is high enough to see “all the kingdoms of the world.” Nevertheless, Satan tried to show Jesus an easier way to inherit earthly power and

authority. Jesus responded firmly, “God ... only shalt thou serve.” Jesus was supremely loyal to the Heavenly Father and final in his words, “Get thee hence, Satan.” Thus the tempter saw it was futile to continue. Later, however, there were other attempts by Satan to deter Christ from fulfilling his stated purpose during his earthly ministry. This was manifested especially through the efforts of the religious leaders who, through envy owing to his popularity with the common people, sought to discredit and destroy him. (John 11:45-53) Finally, Satan perhaps thought he had been victorious when Jesus was condemned to death and was crucified.

PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

Those who nailed Jesus to the cross were not satisfied in merely doing this alone. Under the influence of Satan, they also desired to publicly humiliate him. First, the Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of his garments and cast lots to see who would gain possession of them. Little did they realize that they were once again doing that which had been foretold. “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” (Ps. 22:18; John 19:23,24) Then the chief priests, along with the scribes and elders, proceeded to verbally mock him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” —Luke 23:35-38; Matt. 27:41-43

Jesus was unfazed by this humiliation. He indeed knew that if it was his Father's will, his mighty power could be used to stop the proceedings, but because the hour of his suffering and death had come, Jesus humbly and obediently acquiesced to the experiences as they came. He was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter."—Isa. 53:7

Jesus had no intention of not being faithful to his covenant of sacrifice with the Heavenly Father. He had agreed to do all that had been written of him in the "volume of the book." (Heb. 10:7) He knew he must die, that he would be led as a lamb to the slaughter; so without hesitation he reaffirmed his willingness to carry through to the end, to be faithful even unto death. What an example of devotion this is for us!

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit." (John 19:28-30) At that point, Satan may have thought the seed of the woman had been destroyed. However, on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, a divine being who had all power "in heaven and in earth," second only to God himself. (Matt. 28:18) Thus, the seed, the resurrected Jesus, was not only alive but also highly exalted, with the promise then given to his footstep followers, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:29

CONCLUDING LESSONS

1. The church is part of the seed class that will destroy Satan. (Rev. 20:10) “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” (Rom. 16:20, *English Standard Version*) If God truly is first in our hearts, we must arrange our lives so that we can commune with him and receive the strength required to participate in this promise that will bring evil to an end.

2. All true followers of Christ must lead a life of sacrifice to be more than conquerors. (Rom. 12:1,2; 8:35-39) The “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” must be overcome through the influence of the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Heavenly Father by striving to walk even as the Master walked.—I John 2:16

3. Engagement in frequent, focused prayer is critical. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9) Those who have been called to be part of the divine family should so revere God that they would do anything to please as well as honor him, and to sanctify his name.

4. At no stage of their Christian career should the saints spend time thinking or imagining things that could make them weary in well doing or impatient with their present state. (Gal. 6:9) Neither should they become involved spending valuable consecrated time discussing current affairs in terms of which side is correct or incorrect in the political discussions that are so prevalent among those not in covenant relationship with God. The Bible is the ultimate textbook for the Lord’s people with sage counsel that should

continually be applied in the lives of all who are running “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

5. In addition to prayer, meditation, study, and fellowship with others of like precious faith, New Creatures should exercise their thought process consistently in keeping with the following exhortation: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”—Phil. 4:8,9

6. Paul realized that consecrated Christians would profit from admonitions provided for the benefit of those living during the days of the Early Church, but lessons from these same words are applicable today at the end of the Gospel Age. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”—Heb. 10:35,36

May none under the influence of the Holy Spirit become faint because of present wickedness in this world and the seeming delay in the fulfillment of kingdom blessings. We have a faithful God whose promises will all come to fruition in his own time and manner. The evil one, “that old serpent,” Satan, surely will be destroyed by the seed of promise!—Rev. 20:1-3,10 ■