Blessings to you in the name of Jesus

*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

 Isaiah 7:14

The Lord assigned Himself an impossible task; but it only goes to show that He is the Lord God and able to do all things.

This is, of course, the prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Mary became pregnant with the baby Jesus even though she had not been intimate with any man. By the power of the Holy Spirit, life was created in her; a life that was fully human and at the same time fully God.

This doctrine, this Biblical truth has come under attack more and more in recent decades. It is written off as being myth and many who profess Christianity have believed it to be myth.

But this is a false teaching. The virgin birth is critical to everything about Jesus and His being able to atone for our sin and deliver us from hell. If Jesus had a human father, then He is not divine. Only divinity could atone for our sins; only divinity could live a perfect life in compliance with all of God’s laws and become the sacrifice that would be sufficient to take our place in facing God’s wrath. And divinity is immortal, so He had to be a human in order to die.

To deny the virgin birth of Jesus is to deny His atoning sacrifice. If Jesus were nothing more than a man, we are still lost.

Praise be to God that Jesus is His only begotten Son!

In Christ’s love

John

 2-6-22

Genesis 3:1-24

In this chapter we have an account of the saddest day in all of human history. This is an account of mankind turning its back on their sovereign and all good creator, in an attempt to take full control of their own lives and their own destiny. This is the rejection of the One who loves them perfectly; the rejection of the One who will gladly meet all their needs; this is the rejection of the One who formed them and breathed the breath of life into their bodies. There are times we feel a pang of heartbreak over the nation of Israel rejecting their Saviour Jesus; but we must not forget that it began with a rejection of the Father long before by our first parents. And that spirit of rejection lives in us today.

One of the main things for us to keep in mind is that none of this took God by surprise. He was not left scrambling for some way to salvage what was left. In fact, here is good reason to worship Him: He will use the results of this sin to make things turn out even better for those who accept Christ. When all is said and done, the Christian’s eternal life will be better than if we had stayed in the garden.

Additionally, think about the love of our God. It would have been so much easier to have just wiped-out Adam and Eve and started over. But He chose not to do that. As the tree of life in the garden indicated, He had a plan to give us eternal life. And this is the story of the Bible. It is the unfolding of that plan in God’s timing. It is God’s plan of redemption.

Redemption is so very important for us. To redeem us means to get us out of the debt we are in. It means to pay our debt for us. Once our debt is paid, we no longer owe it and we are free of the burden of the debt. The debt we owe is to God’s justice. Because God is just, sin must be punished: He can’t just let it slide. To do so would be completely against His character; if He let sin go unpunished, He would cease to be the holy God of the Bible. And that’s not going to happen.

Story after story occurs in the Bible of God rescuing His people from trouble. Untold numbers of animal sacrifices took place to cover the sin of the people. All of this pointed to the ultimate redemption found in Jesus Christ. He paid the debt for our sins so that God’s justice was satisfied; thereby, we may be forgiven.

As we go through this account of the fall into sin and from God’s presence, it is very natural for us to try to assign blame. As we will see, this tendency began right here in the garden. This blaming of others and refusal to accept responsibility has cascaded to the present and has become worse over the years.

So, what is the Christian to do with this? First, we must admit that there was plenty of blame to go around. Satan, Adam, and Eve were all at fault; each had their part to play in evil entering God’s good creation. The effects of this evil are still equally prevalent in men and women. The seeds of evil that were planted in the hearts of Adam and Eve have found good soil in the hearts of men and women ever since.

Obviously, satan desires only evil and is beyond redemption. Our task is to resist him and to share the Gospel with others so they might be rescued from his kingdom of darkness and become a new creation in Christ’s Kingdom of light. We can never compromise with him or treat him mercifully; he will turn it against us. As Jude tells us in his letter, we must be careful not to revile him either; he is an angelic majesty even if he is darkness; we must leave him for God to deal with.

Human-beings are different. While we never compromise on the word of God, we constantly show mercy and love to others as Jesus told us to. We must recognize that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and that “all” includes ourselves. The Christian must look in the mirror first and recognize their own sin. We can each take blame ourselves rather than looking for someone else to blame. Remember that Jesus warns us to remove the log from our own eye.

As we consider this chapter in Genesis, we will see that Eve did things wrong and we will see that Adam did things wrong. We will see that the effects of their actions affect men and women still today. There are things that tend to affect women specifically and there are things that tend to affect men specifically. One’s not worse than the other. But to recognize these specifics will help each of us in our own battle against satan and the tendencies of our flesh.

The problem of sin for mankind began right back in the Garden of Eden. One of God’s creatures was the serpent or what we might call the snake. Now, God made the snake and everything God made was very good, so the snake itself was not an evil being. This was the work of satan. Either he entered a snake and possessed it, or he took the form of a serpent. It is interesting to see that by the book of Revelation he has grown into a dragon.

We learn many of satan’s tactics here, and he is using these very same tactics today. We also see the immediate results of sin once it had been committed, and we see those same results continuing today. The human race is mired in evil and unable to escape. Picture the chariots of Egypt who pursued the Israelites into the Red Sea. Once in the midst of the sea, their chariot wheels began to swerve and they drove with difficulty. In other words, once there, they could not escape. And so it is with human-beings; we are held within the walls of sin and there is no way for us to get ourselves out. At least the Egyptians knew they were in trouble; most people have no idea. Here again, we are only saved by God’s redemption.

The first thing satan did was speak to the woman, not the man. In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter speaks to husbands, “*live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker*.” This is not a slur against women, it is instruction to men to treat their wives with honor and to protect them. Adam was given dominion and authority over God’s creation and Eve was to be his helper. They were equal in God’s sight yet with different roles. Satan went after the helper, not the one given authority.

Here is our first lesson; satan will concentrate on attacking any weakness we have. Our areas of weakness are precisely where he will provide temptation. That is why all of us need to know where our weaknesses lie. It is our nature to ignore our weaknesses; we don’t like to admit we have them. But we ignore our weaknesses to our peril. It is godly wisdom to take stock of ourselves and make honest note of what is most likely to entice us into sin.

Once we have identified our weaknesses, our best defense is to avoid them. It is another tendency of ours to play games with whatever entices us, to see how close we can get without getting caught by it. Our pride causes us to think we can walk away when ever we choose. If we play with the sin, sooner or later it will catch us. The man who has trouble with alcohol may decide to enter a bar simply to have conversation with friends; eventually he will convince himself that he can handle just one drink. We all know how this will end up for him. It is the same for any weakness we have; for any besetting sin. There is no shame in running away from a sin. Remember Joseph when he ran from Potiphar’s wife. Yes, it caused trouble for him, but ultimately God worked it for good; and regardless, Joseph’s conscience was clear.

Notice how satan began, “*Indeed, has God said* …” God had made a very clear command. It didn’t require any thought, just obedience. But the question was phrased this way to get Eve thinking about God’s command. Satan even brought it down from a command to simply being something God said. Satan got Eve rolling God’s clear command around in her head, which opens up the possibility of making it less clear. He does this all the time. We see it today and it’s gotten much worse. For example: how much clearer can you be than men are men and women are women. Yet that has been confused in our world today.

Satan has Eve thinking about what God said and then he confuses the issue by misquoting God. Satan asked if God had said, “*You shall not eat from any tree of the garden*.” See, God didn’t say that. What God said was, “*From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you will surely die*.” There was one tree that God had forbidden to partake of; but the overall command was one of freedom and generosity. Satan turned it into a restrictive command.

A statement can be full of truth, but if one part of it is false, then the whole statement is a lie. This is another of satan’s tactics: he confuses the truth and makes it a lie. This is a primary reason that we must know our Bible. If we don’t know it, we can’t tell when part of it has been twisted. When satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he quoted Scripture to Jesus. Matthew 4:5-6.

*Then the devil \*took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and \*said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,*

*‘He will command His angels concerning You’;*

*and*

*‘On their hands they will bear You up,
So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”*

Satan quoted Scripture and there is nothing truer than the word of God. But he pulled it out of context and misapplied it. Jesus knew the Bible and He was able to resist the temptation offered by the devil because He recognized the falseness and corrected it in His response. *Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* This is why it’s so important to know the word of God; and because we aren’t perfect like Jesus, we also need Christian fellowship. We need to discuss things we hear with other Christians because together we are more likely to see a misrepresentation.

Jesus warned us there would be a proliferation of false teachers in the last days. He also warns that they will be deceptive enough to almost fool the elect. We see this today. Attacks come from secular entities who twist Scripture to try to make Christians conform. There are many false teachers who claim to be Christian but their objective is their own gain. Sadly, many churches have fallen into the trap of thinking that the Bible can be taken or left, depending on how its ideas fit with the culture. We must be armed against these attacks by knowing the Bible. God’s word tells us not to be deceived; we can only accomplish that by knowing what it says.

We’ll skip Eve’s response for now and look at what satan says next. Remember that God had told Adam that if he ate from the tree he would die. Eve’s response indicated the same answer. But satan said, “*You surely will not die*.” This is a blatant lie. Here satan is willing to contradict Yahweh who is truth. There is no darkness in God, yet satan accuses Him of falsehood.

This leads us to something very important Jesus said of satan in John 8:44, “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies*.” The lying part here is obvious. Satan told Eve a lie.

But what did the lie lead to? Adam and Eve believed satan and disobeyed God. The consequence was that death came into the world; Adam and Eve died. Now, so does everybody else. Satan’s lie brought death to all humanity; satan murdered everyone. He is a liar and a murder; and he is right from the beginning.

Satan’s deception continued by insinuating that God was holding out on the people; that there was goodness that God didn’t want them to have. Satan’s line of questioning had brought Eve’s focus away from all the good things God had provided for them and all the kindness He had shown them and even the fellowship they had with God; and made her think she could do better.

He still does this today. We are made to feel like God is trying to restrict us so we can’t enjoy life. Even seasoned Christians can sometimes feel the call of the world and begin to think they are missing something. This is where we need to step back for a moment and refocus on God, and what He has done for us in Jesus. He’s not holding out on us; He has made us coheirs with His very own Son.

Prayer

All of us, Lord, have stood before You guilty. We were children of wrath, rightly deserving Your anger poured out on us. We lived in the kingdom of darkness, following the prince of the power of the air, rejecting our creator.

But You, Lord God, loved us and in grace offered us salvation. The price of our redemption was paid in the blood of Your Son. Instead of wrath, You poured out mercy. Now, we stand before You declared “Not Guilty”; You look upon us and see the righteousness of Jesus. We are made alive again where we were in the darkness of death.

We praise You for all these things; it is only by Your great power and mercy that we have been cleansed. We owe You all and everything. May our lives be useful to You in the building of Your Kingdom and in bringing You glory.

We praise You in Jesus’ name

Amen