

Christ's Advent, Part I- The Foretelling of the Christ

Call to Worship: Isaiah 9:6-7

1st Scripture: Revelation 12

2nd Scripture: Genesis 3

Hymn #87- *Holy, Holy, Holy*

Hymn #145- *Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus*

Hymn #147- *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Introduction

In keeping with the “Advent” season, I wanted to commit the next four sermons (this morning, being the first), to opening up a summary of the glorious advent of our Blessed Savior.

This morning, we will begin by considering the “foretelling of the Christ,” standing in the shoes of our first parents, looking forward and longing for the promised Savior, who would usher in a kingdom of peace, in the light of their dreadful fall, which has infected the entire world, with a terrible curse of depravity and unrest.

Next week, Lord willing, we will consider the “Coming of the Christ,” carrying us to the glorious fulfillment of that which was foretold all throughout the Old Covenant, concerning the incarnation of our Blessed Savior.

The following week, we will consider the “Death and Resurrection of the Christ,” seeking to hone in, on the central achievement of our Lord’s victory on behalf of cursed sinners.

And then, finally, the week following that, we will consider the “Return of the Christ,” bringing us to the place that we presently stand, eagerly waiting for the return of our blessed Savior, when He will consummate His Kingdom, and complete the work of God with respect to this creation.

Please pray about these next four weeks, that God would be pleased to present the glory of His Beloved Son— the very center and purpose, for which, everything exists— through weak and tainted lips, which are, by far, not worthy of conveying such a wondrous and holy message. That said, let us travel back then, to the beginning. Let us consider the “curse,” which necessitated the desperate need for a divine Savior to rescue this lost and fallen world.

I. The Curse

One thing that is very clear, as you read through the account of creation, given in Genesis 1, is that everything was created good. The repeated phrase, “And God looked and saw that it was good,” accompanied by the closing summary phrase, “God looked and saw that everything was very good,” are certainly meant to convey this reality to us.

It wasn't until our first parents disobeyed God's command (as we just read here in our main text), failing to trust Him, when He had promised Adam that he would die if he ate of the forbidden fruit, that the curse of sin had entered the world. Mankind had committed an act of rebellion and ungodliness, contradicting the holy and just nature of our God, driving a wedge between God and man, which could not be removed apart from the legitimate, legal recompense for his sin. A crime had been committed against our holy and righteous God, and the just penalty for that crime is eternal separation from God (the death of the spirit, as it were) and the physical death of the body. And that eternal separation from God, following the physical death of the body, would include the eternal condemnation of being cast into outer darkness, in the lake of fire, forever.

Adam is the federal, representative head of all mankind. In other words, all of us; every single human being that has ever existed in this world, born of Adam (yes, although we are many ethnicities, we are all one race), bears the curse of our first parents, and this is evidenced both, by the fact that we too, violate God's holy Law, and we die. We are born with no natural desire to know our Creator. We strive to find fulfillment in the material things of our Creator's creation, with no natural desire for the Creator Himself. We are born alienated from our God, amongst a world population of people who are naturally alienated from God. Yes, we create our own imaginary gods that suit our own interests, according to our own fallen likeness, so that we can continue to enjoy the unfulfilling lusts and desires that are offensive to the true and living God. We make our own rules. We live in our own ways, independent of the true and living God, for whom we were created. And although, only He can truly fulfill the inner longing of the soul, which He designed, because of our alienation (because of the curse of Adam's fall), we seek to fulfill it with anything and everything else in the created order. But nothing else can or will fulfill. Everything loses its flavor in but a short time. We spend our whole lives seeking God-

replacements, thinking that the next desire or fulfilled dream, will meet the pangs of our inner longing... but none of it works. And then, we die, and stand before God in the judgment.

Such is the terrible curse that has come upon man, because of the rebellion and disobedience of our first parents. God promised, “In the day you eat of that tree, you will surely die.” And man has died, and continues to die, ever since.

But, God has given mankind another promise; a bright and shining hope, in the midst of what seemed to be a hopeless situation. What man cannot provide, God Himself has provided; a Savior, who would bring about the deliverance of all who are united to Him. An anointed Seed (a “Christ” Seed), who would bring a people out of union with Adam and his curse, and into union with Himself. And by this means, God would restore a broken, fallen, naturally condemned and lost people, to Himself, which brings us to our second main point, and into our main text, here in Genesis 3.

II. The Foretelling of the Christ (vs. 15)

Speaking to the serpent, who has just successfully tempted our first parents to disobey God, leading to the fall of the human race, God states:

“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” (vs. 15).

And so, within this semi-obscure text, upon which, much more light is added throughout all of the Old Testament, leading to the fullness of its intended expression in the New Testament, we find the first “foretelling” of the coming of the Christ. Right from the outset, we are given a sense of hope that God is going to step in, to do something marvelous and glorious, on behalf of fallen mankind. Mankind has indeed incurred the curse of sin and death and alienation from God, but God is going to bring about restoration in some legal way, that will not violate the integrity of His Law or His promise regarding the consequence of eating of the forbidden tree.

And this “foretelling” begins with God’s proclamation of a decreed schism; a sovereignly ordained separation between two groups, the serpent along with his seed, and the woman along with her seed. And in the end, the Seed of the woman would ultimately crush the head of the

serpent, but, not without receiving some form of a painful bite in the heel by the serpent. Let's open this up a bit further then, so as to pull out the essence of the promise here given.

1) Who is the woman here spoken of, when God speaks of putting enmity between the serpent and the woman? I believe that there are three ways, in which, we are to understand the "woman" here, the last of which, represents the fullest expression of who she is.

a- Certainly, in a very real sense, Eve herself, would be represented by this woman. Just prior to the fall, Eve had apparently developed some level of trust with the serpent. There was a bond of some sort between them, even if, for only the short time that her temptation had taken place. And while the serpent's intentions were disingenuous and deceptive, Eve was gullible and trusting of the serpent. But now, enmity would exist between Eve and the serpent, leading to a separation between their offspring, which we will address in a moment.

b- There is probably some allusion to Mary here, the mother of Jesus, represented by the woman, as the one who would bear the great Seed that would crush the head of the serpent. Eve's virginal conception, preventing the infection of sin from harming her firstborn Son (being conceived of the Holy Spirit) is a significant factor in affirming the means, by which, God would provide a pure Man to redeem fallen men.

c- Finally, and I believe most to be accepted (in keeping with what we read in Revelation 12, our first Scripture reading), this woman represents the universal church, from both Covenants. To be sure, there is an indelible connection between all of God's people, from both covenants, which together form one universal church. And beginning with Seth, and then moving through the likes of Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Israel...etc, a remnant of God's chosen people had been separated by God, both, for His glory, and to carry, as it were, the lineage of the Christ, who would be born in due time. And all along, the enemy would attempt to destroy this woman, but God had always preserved a remnant for Himself, the true Israel of God (who share the same faith as Abraham, and not merely the same physical descent), who would serve to bring about the dawning of the Messiah's age. And following the time of Christ, that woman (again, making up the true Israel of God), would continue to exist in the building of Christ's church; a remnant of true children of Abraham, from all nations.

There is so much of the beginning of Genesis, reflected in Revelation, as in Revelation, we see the tables turned, and God bringing about the restoration of all things, in accordance with His glorious plan. What the enemy has started at the fall, God has turned around and restored in the end. [See Revelation 12 again]

And so, right from the outset here, we find God, as a prerequisite to the foretelling of the Christ, ordaining a critical separation that would take place, between His church and her offspring, and the serpent and his offspring. There would be an ongoing enmity between them, from that day forward. And, you see that enmity reflected all throughout history, as satan contends with the people of God; in large scale capacities concerning Israel and the heathen nations (and the church and the world), and in small scale capacities, pictured in such events as the slaying of the giant Goliath by David.

2) Who then are the two seeds that are referred to (the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman)? The seed of the serpent would include all of those who remain condemned in their sins, and who contend with Christ and His universal church. They are all of those who are employed by the devil and his minions (though even in their ignorance in many cases), to stand against God and the building of His glorious Kingdom. From the outset, we find such individuals revealed in the likes of Cain and his offspring, many of the heathen nations, and ultimately all who remain opposed to God and His Kingdom. [Note: the two “marks”]

And the Seed of the woman, while certainly representative of all who are redeemed by God (the individuals who make up the universal church), especially refers to the One, to whom, the church is united, namely, the Christ! As we have seen in the Revelation, it is the woman’s child, who comes into the world to bring about the dragon’s (the serpent’s) utter defeat. And so, the Seed here spoken of in Genesis 3, contains the first glorious indication of the foretelling of the coming of the Christ, who would bring about redemption for God’s people, who have been infected with the curse of sin and are naturally condemned.

3) Finally then, what are we to make of the Seed “crushing the head” of the serpent, while bearing the crushing of His own heel, by the serpent?

Well, amazingly enough, here we have the first revelation of the union of two key roles, which the Christ would fulfill. And it is these two particular roles, which many have

misunderstood in times past, as both are expressed throughout the Old Testament, as seemingly contradictory ideas. They are the roles of a glorious, conquering, reigning King, and of a humiliated, suffering, trampled-upon Servant. While many have thought that the Scriptures were addressing two different individuals in these two distinct roles, we come to find here (that which is consistent with what we later find happening in the New Testament), that, they are both contained within the same Person. The same glorious, conquering King, is somehow to be a humiliated, suffering, trampled-upon Servant. The same One who is to crush the head of the serpent, is to, Himself, suffer a crushing blow to His heel. Both, belong to the same Seed. Both, belong to the same Messiah. A paradox carried throughout the Old Testament, but resolved and clearly understood, when the Christ arrives to usher in the New Covenant, is foretold here in Genesis, Chapter 3.

How then do we explain the paradox?

The Christ must come first as a suffering Servant on behalf of sinners, before He is exalted and given Authority over all things. To this end, the serpent, while being crushed by the foot of the Christ, would lunge his teeth and poisonous venom into the heel of the Christ, as it were. And while it is true that the Christ had to suffer temptation and persecution and oppression, at the hand of the devil, for the duration of His life as a man; while it is true that all of the Christ's human sufferings could be implied by this "heel bruise," most significantly, the powers of darkness were given full access to haunt and afflict the Christ, at the time of His greatest suffering on the cross. When the Lord Jesus Christ was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, we are told in Luke 22:52-53, "Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, *and the power of darkness.*" Jesus would face the most difficult assaults of the devil and his minions, while suffering all that followed His arrest. And His Father would no longer offer Him the comfort of His presence. Indeed, His Father would also turn His own wrath upon His Son, for several hours, while bearing the hellish darkness of the cross. And then, the Christ would experience death. And so, the sting of the serpent would afflict the heel of the Christ for a time; a very painful, agonizing and terrifying sting indeed!

But, at the very same time; and in the very process of experiencing the poisonous bite of the serpent's teeth, the Christ would also, victoriously crush the serpents head. The heel is stung, but only while crushing down on the serpent's head! And how are we to understand this victory of the Christ?

In the very acts of His suffering and crucifixion, the Lord was bearing the weight and guilt of the sins of His people. He was providing a legal atonement, which would extinguish all of the sins of all of His people, forever. At the end of Isaiah 53, Isaiah puts it so well, when he states, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:10-12).

And so, the Christ crushes the head of the serpent, first, by disarming him of all of his power of accusation. He lifts the curse off of sinful men, which the enemy had provoked when he deceived Eve and instigated the sin of Adam. He gagged the accuser, who had, for a time, successfully separated God from mankind, whom He had loved. And He did so, by absorbing the full weight and cost of man's sin, in His own body, which was crucified, and in His own soul, which absorbed the fully weight of God's righteous wrath, that our sins deserved. And then, He sealed His victory, when He was raised from the dead three days later, as death could not hold Him forever. He had single-handedly achieved the salvation of all sinners who would come to believe in Him, by faith. And by this means, the devil was stripped of his power, ultimately defeated, and sealed for certain eternal damnation.

And upon being resurrected from the dead, He had later ascended to the Father, where He reigns until all of His enemies are put under His feet. He is an untouchable, reigning, eternal King, who is continuing to save His people from their sins, until He returns to judge the world in righteousness. And so, the paradox is resolved. The glorious, reigning King, meets the Suffering

Servant in the same Christ, in this way. First, He suffers and dies, to deal with sin and the devil. And then, He is raised up and given authority over all things, in heaven, on earth and under the earth! And this was foretold, right from the beginning, when man had first fallen into sin, necessitating the dire need for a Savior; one with the worth and glory of God, encased in every facet and aspect of our humanity, so that, a sufficient sacrifice could be made, on behalf of ungodly sinners!

III. Closing Charge

The critical question that remains then, for all of us here, is this: Are you in union with the Christ? Have you, by faith in this Christ (and a willingness to turn from your sins), come out from under your natural condemnation in Adam, only to find sonship and eternal blessing in Christ? The natural diagnosis is very clear. The foretold need, is given right here in the beginning. The world is the way it is; mankind is in the sinfully lost condition that he is in, because he is naturally fallen in Adam. We (every last one of us within the human race), are fallen in Adam. We are naturally alienated from God, which is why we have no natural desire to know, love and serve our Creator. But, God has done something about this dilemma of desperation. God has reached into; better yet, God has entered into this creation, so that, He could, by His own suffering, death and resurrection, satisfy the debt that we owe, and bring us back into relation with Him.

But sadly, not everyone will benefit from this blessed offer of reconciliation. Not everyone will hear and respond to the Gospel (the “Good news”). In fact, most will perish in their sins. But, just maybe there are some here, within the sound of my voice, who as of yet, have remained alienated from God, but are desirous to be reconciled to God this day. Maybe some have come to realize that the life that you have been living has been full of empty promises, unfulfilled desires and utter purposelessness? Maybe you sense your desperate need of God. If that is the case, know that the offer is on the table for you, this morning. It may not be offered again. Don’t take God’s patience and grace and long-suffering for granted. You are presently under His wrath! But, you can, by faith, believe into the Lord Jesus Christ, right now; you can be immediately justified in God’s sight, if you would but repent of your sins and come to

the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. Call upon Him now, even in your own silent prayer. Ask Him to save you from your sins. Then, be baptized and join His church, and live your life in subjection to His glorious, righteous reign and will. And you will find peace and rest and joy, like you have never experienced before. Come to Christ, now, before it is too late!

[Encouragement for the brethren]

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25