

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #47
"The Battle of the Cross" (Part One)
(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: We have now arrived on the final battlefield in which the battle shall be settled once and for all as to who shall be victorious and given the honor of being the moral governor of the universe. The two opponents are Jesus Christ, the God-man, and Satan, the prince of darkness. We have followed this conflict from the Garden of Eden down to the birth of Christ, and watched the many attempts of Satan to destroy the seed-line through which the promised Messiah would come. His two-fold strategy has been to destroy or murder those in this line, or else to deceive them and produce an apostate seed. He failed at the time of the flood and at the tower of Babel. He failed with Athaliah and the infant Joash. He failed with Esther and Haman, along with the many other examples we have given.

In our previous lesson, we looked at Satan's twofold strategy by which he felt He could defeat Christ. One method was to tempt Him to abandon His commitment to obey the will of His Father in sending Him into this world on a mission. This mission contains at least four segments or parts. They are:

- ◆ First: To live the life of a sinless and obedient Servant like God required.
- ◆ Second: To demonstrate that humility and serving others is what constitutes greatness in the kingdom of heaven.
- ◆ Third: To demonstrate how God can retain His justice and yet show mercy to guilty sinners.
- ◆ Fourth: To merit a place of honor above that of the angels for Himself and His redeemed children.

Satan will follow Him throughout His life looking for opportunities to tempt Him to forsake His obedience to His mission, and thus bring down the curse of His Father upon Him.

"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (Cf. Galatians 3:10).

The second method Satan will use is to try to have Him killed. He believed this would defeat Christ from accomplishing His mission. He would make several attempts to bring this about, the final one would be through the means of crucifixion. He believed this method of death would also bring about the curse of His Father in that, ***"Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree."*** (Cf. Galatians 3:13). These two weapons will be the ones which will be directed at Christ and His mission.

We also learned from the previous lesson that Satan does not know for certain the future. He can only learn by observation and speculation, and from these he is forced to be continually adjusting his plans as new developments occur. He is a reactive warrior, while Christ is a pro-active warrior in that He knows the certainty of future events. We will now follow the time line of the battle beginning with the birth of Christ.

A. THE TIME LINE OF THE BATTLE

1. The birth of Jesus Christ - Matthew 2:1-23 - Herod tries to kill Him by slaying all the male children two years old and under who lived in the region of Bethlehem. This was Satan's work behind the scene in the invisible war. This was his first attempt to take the life of Jesus. He will work through the lives of human instruments.

2. The temptation of Christ - Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

a. Christ's earthly ministry began with His baptism at approximately thirty years old.

b. This was quickly followed by His temptation in the wilderness by Satan. There were three specific temptations or testings. They were: (1) to turn the stones into bread; (2) to test God by jumping off the temple; and (3) by embracing the worship of Satan and his kingdom of power and dominion. The first involved the principle of "Serving Self Interests" by using miraculous powers. The second involves the "Testing of God" through the use of sensationalism. The third involved the "Worship of Satan" and the nature of the kingdom which Jesus had come to inaugurate. All of the temptations were attempts to distract Jesus from His earthly mission and bring Him under the curse of God for being disobedient to God.

c. In order to understand the temptations, one must understand the awareness which Jesus had of His mission, and the methods He would use to accomplish it.

d. The three temptations recorded in Matthew and Luke are not to be regarded as exhaustive, but as examples. They are also not to be restricted to the period of forty days. Luke makes this clear when he mentions that when Satan ended his temptations, it was only until a more convenient season would occur. Luke 4:13 says, **"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."** During the course of Christ's ministry, there would frequently be occasions in which the temptations would be repeated.

e. In light of this, I have chosen not to follow these occasions due to the time element. In all of the accounts, the idea of a supernatural conflict is inescapable, and clearly forms a basic introduction to the Passion Week accounts, in which the climax of the conflict on the cross occurs.

3. Attempts upon Jesus' life.

a. While Satan is tempting Jesus to abandon His life of submission to the will of His Father and take the easy way out of hardship and suffering, he will try to kill Him on several occasions.

b. There were three more attempts after Herod's attempt to take Jesus' life as a child.

(1) The second attempt came not long after His temptation. It occurred in the synagogue in Nazareth where He was raised as a child. He preached a sermon on His own identity as the Messiah and the doctrine of God's sovereign election. The response was such that in Luke 4:28-30 we read, **"So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way."** We might say this came from those who knew Him as a child, and from His home "church" or synagogue. This was an act of rage and passion, not a premeditated act. He escaped.

(2) The third attempt came in response to a sermon He preached in the temple. It came from those who said they believed in Him during the first part of the

sermon, only to turn against Him in the latter part. We read in John 8:59, **"Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."** This was another act of rage and anger as opposed to a premeditated act. This was an attempt to stone Him.

(3) The fourth attempt occurred in John 10:30, 31 when Jesus claimed to be equal with God. We read in verse 31, **"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him."** This was another fit of rage resulting in another attempt to stone Him.

4. The response to the ministry of Jesus.

a. His earthly ministry was diverse and covered many things. He preached and taught on many topics. He spoke to large multitudes and to individuals by themselves. He performed great miracles and healed many people of all kinds of diseases. He even raised the dead on three occasions. Multitudes followed Him around the land and on occasion sought to make Him king, believing He was the Messiah, the Son of David. His popularity and fame spread throughout the land.

b. Not everyone was pleased with Him. The Jewish leaders were greatly offended at His teachings because it exposed their religious hypocrisy. They believed that if He was allowed to continue to live, they would lose their reputations along with their jobs. Thus, He must be killed. But how could this be done, since the multitudes held Him in such high esteem? We are told in Luke 19:47, 48 that **"He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him."** Since they were yet unable to devise a way to take His life, they continually tried to discredit His teachings and ruin His reputation in the eyes of the people. But He was able to answer all their questions and stump them with questions of His own.

c. The Gospel records reveal that time after time the Jewish council met to discuss how to dispose of Jesus. The tension continues to mount, but no solution has yet been found. From the divine side, the answer is given as to why they can't yet get rid of Jesus. In John 8:20 we read, **"These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come."**

5. Jesus' foreknowledge of the events, which were to occur in His life.

a. Jesus had perfect foreknowledge of what was to occur in His life, because all the events in His life had been foreordained to occur. In order for one to foreknow something future, the future must first be certain. This is seen in Acts 15:18 (KJV), **"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (eternity NKJV)."** Thus in John 18:4 we read, **"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?'"** (cf. Also John 6:64; 13:1; 19:28.

b. As time went on, Jesus began to reveal to His disciples His coming death. In Luke 9:21,22 we read, **"And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.'"**

c. NOTE: The events in the life of Jesus had to be concealed from men until the time would come when it could be revealed to them, otherwise they would be aware of them in advance. The secret will of God must be kept hidden until it is time for it to become the revealed will of God.

d. NOTE: While Jesus foretold His disciples of His impending death, it was nevertheless hidden from their understanding until at a future time. On the morning of His resurrection, two angels spoke these words to the women who came to the tomb. Luke 24:6-8, **"He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And they remembered His words."** Therefore, neither did the disciples comprehend the plan laid out for the life of Jesus, and neither did His enemies. This would also include Satan as he must learn by observation and revelation as well! So while God is working out His plans, men and angels are working out their plans, and both sets of plans would meet at the cross!

e. Peter was shocked when Jesus informed him of how He must suffer and die. In Matthew 16:22, 23, we have his confrontation with Jesus over the matter, **"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"** The words, **"far be it from You, Lord,"** could literally and correctly be translated, **"God be propitious or favorable to you, Lord."** In essence, it means, **"Pity yourself."** This reveals that at this moment in time, neither Peter, nor the disciples understood that the Messiah must suffer. They were consumed with the Jewish idea that

the kingdom which the Messiah would set up would be modeled after the political kingdom of David which would overthrow the power of Rome and establish Israel as the world power.

f. The manner in which Jesus rebuked Peter is most revealing. While His words were spoken to Peter, they were directed to Satan. They were the same words spoken to Satan in the temptation in the wilderness. (Cf. Luke 4:8). In the plan of God, Jesus must suffer as a humble and obedient servant. Satan was again tempting Christ to take the easy way out. He was saying, "just worship me and I will make you a king who does not have to suffer to be great." Thus, at that moment, Peter had not become THE adversary of Christ (Satan) but was being used by Satan as AN adversary of Christ. He meant well, but spoke in ignorance. This can happen in the lives of the strongest and most committed Christians.

g. A major mistake that is made by the majority of Bible teachers now occurs. They assume that Satan is well acquainted with the meaning of the cross, and is attempting to persuade Jesus not to go to the cross. If He does, then Satan will meet his doom. This view is wrong for two reasons.

(1) Satan put it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus, and this would lead to the crucifixion. Satan is too shrewd to make that blunder if he was trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross.

(2) The Jewish and Roman rulers would plot the crucifixion. This could only be achieved through Satanic deception. Satan was the instigator and mover of this greatest of all conspiracies. If he was not, surely he would be working in some manner to prevent this conspiracy from ever occurring. Satan will not be working against himself, else he would be contributing to the destruction of his own kingdom.

h. What then is the solution? It is by recognizing Satan's two-fold strategy to conquer and defeat Jesus. This will occur by either getting Jesus to disobey the Father's will, or else to be put to death in the form of crucifixion. It does not make any difference as to what way Jesus is cursed, just as long as He is cursed!

i. Our scholars tell us that the conversation with Peter occurs about six months before the crucifixion.

6. The preparations for the final battle are now being put in place. Jesus knows that the end is near, and expands the number of His predictions about His

impending death. At the same time, the Jewish leaders will devise a way to dispose of Him without losing the support of the Jewish people. They will go to the Roman authorities and have them put Jesus to death by crucifixion. Thus the blame would be on the Romans, and not themselves.

a. Jesus predicts His manner of death. Up until now when Jesus would predict His death, He would do so in general terms, now He would begin to describe the manner in which He would die.

(1) In Matthew 26:1,2 we read, **"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'"**

(2) In John 12:31-33 Jesus further states, **"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die."**

(3) In Matthew 20:17-19, As Jesus and His disciples make their way up to Jerusalem to begin what would become known as His Passion Week, He again repeats His description of His coming death. Only this time, He will not only include the involvement of the Jewish leaders, but the Roman rulers as well. **NOTE: "Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.'"**

b. The Jewish plot to kill Jesus.

(1) Mark 11:15-18. Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and drove out the money changers for the second time. He had done the same thing at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-17). This was the final straw that broke the camel's back. Now they must come up with a way to dispose of Jesus in such a way that the people do not blame them. In Mark 11:18 we read, **"And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching."**

(2) In Mark 12:1-44 they try to trick Jesus with their questions, but

failed.

(3) In Matthew 26:1-30 their plot begins to unfold. ***"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.' Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas."***

(4) Matthew 26:4-16 - This is soon followed by the betrayal of Judas. Judas was offended by the event in which Jesus allowed Mary of Bethany to anoint Him with oil. At that point, he goes to the chief priests to bargain with them in delivering up Jesus to them. We read in verses 14-16 - ***"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."***

(5) It is soon after when Jesus and His disciples gather to eat the Passover feast, that Jesus said in Matthew 26:20-25, ***"When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?' He answered and said, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.' Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Rabbi, is it I?' He said to him, 'You have said it.'"***

B. THE JEWISH PLOT CONTINUES

1. Jesus will soon be taken captive by the Jewish leaders in Gethsemane, after which He will appear before Caiaphas, the High Priest in the Jewish council.

2. He will then be sent to the Roman ruler named Pilate who would send Him on to Herod, who would in turn send Him back to Pilate. Pilate would attempt to set Him free, but the Jews insisted that He be crucified.

3. We will pick up there in the next lesson as the "Battle of the Cross" continues.