



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Serpent in the Life of the Son of Man”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we ask Thy blessing upon us as we study again the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the revelation that concerns primarily our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the assurance that we have salvation and the joys of spiritual life come through him. We pray that as we grow in the knowledge of the truth, that he may be seen more clearly in our lives. And so, we commit ourselves to Thee, and we commit this hour of study.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

[Message] Tonight, our subject is the warfare of the ages, second part, or, “The Serpent in the Life of the Son of Man.” And for a Scripture text tonight, I want you to turn with me to John chapter 12, and we're going to read verses 27 through 33. John chapter 12, verse 27 through verse 33.

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke

to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

The important statement for us in the Scripture reading is statement of verse 31: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”

The prince of this world, of course, is a term for Satan. And then, the next verse tells us how this shall happen. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” So, it is by the cross that the prince of this world is cast out.

Now, we have traced the history of Satan, from his first sin in heaven, through his temptation of man into sin, throughout his trail in the Old Testament. And the last Monday night, we concluded with that story of how Satan has been active in the affairs of men through the Old Testament times. We pointed to Revelation chapter 12 and the figure or the sign that was seen by John, the Apostle, in one of his visions; the figure of a woman who was about to bring forth a child and then the great dragon standing by waiting to devour the child. And that is the picture of the Old Testament situation as Satan anticipated the coming of the Son of Man.

Tonight, we’re going to come to the climax of his warfare against God, in his personal confrontation before God’s Son, or of God’s Son. Remember, in Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15, God had said in the judgment of the Garden of Eden, that he was going to put enmity between the woman and the serpent, and between her seed and his seed. In other words, not only would Eve be opposed to the serpent, the instrumentality of Satan, but Eve’s seed would be opposed to the seed of the serpent. So, then we should expect that Satan should have a seed, for he used the serpent and the serpent stands for him in that sense. And we should expect that the woman should have a seed.

Now, not only did the Lord prophesy that the woman would have a seed and the serpent would have a seed, but he also prophesied that they would come into conflict. He said, “The seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent. And the serpent shall crush the heel of the seed of the woman.”

Now, what we learned as we read through the Bible is the figurative way of expressing what, ultimately, came to pass really when Jesus Christ, the Seed of the Woman, hung upon the cross at Calvary. And there, though crushed in his heel by that hanging upon the cross, crushed the head of the serpent by dying for the sin of men. So when we come to the serpent in the life of the Son of Man, we’re really coming to the climax of the story of the revelation of the redemption of God.

Now, the Bible lays a great deal of stress upon the work of Christ, in relation to Satan. The frustration of the evil one and his hosts is a prime purpose of the coming of the Son of God. For example, in 1 John chapter 3 in verse 8, John states that the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Now, that is one of the purposes for which Jesus Christ came. We often speak of the coming of Jesus Christ as if the coming of Jesus Christ has reference only to our sin, as if it only has reference to the way of salvation. But, the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross is related to Satan. And, as a matter of fact, if you read Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15 again, in the light of this, you will discover that, apparently, in the mind of our Lord, that was one of the greatest purposes of his coming, if not the greatest, because it is the purpose that is set forth in that first preaching of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. The seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent. And the serpent, his seed, shall crush the heel of the woman or the seed of the woman.

So, right there, the first preaching of the gospel, the work of Christ is related to Satan and not specifically to our sins. So when we say that the work of Jesus Christ is a prime purpose of the coming of the Son of God, we’re not by any manner of means exaggerating. And then when we think of other texts of the New Testament, such as

Colossians chapter 2 in verse 15, in which (I think we read this last time.) -- in which we read these words from Paul:

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

Our convictions are strengthened that Jesus Christ’s coming has special significance for Satan. Furthermore, we may add to that, Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, in which the writer of the Epistle states:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

So I think that if we just sum this up by saying, the Apostle John, the Apostle Paul, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, each one of them states that Jesus Christ came in order that his death might have special reference to Satan. And I think, without question, we can say that one of the prime purposes of the coming of our Lord, is that he might deal with Satan. So we’re not overstressing things. We are setting forth something that the Bible sets forth very specifically.

Now, at this point, I would like to say a little bit about the background of the theories of the atonement, because it relates to the subject tonight: The Serpent in the Life of the Son of Man. Generally speaking, while there have been many theories of the atonement offered for the consideration of men, there have been three leading theories suggested.

One of the theories is called the Classic Theory, because it is a theory that the church fathers frequently expressed in their writings. And it is the theory that we’ve just been speaking about, that the work of Jesus Christ had specific reference to the work of Satan. And that it was by his coming to die upon the cross that Satan was frustrated, that his works were nullified, as John puts it. Or that the devil, himself, might be nullified. Or as Paul puts it, that he might be overcome; that he might put principalities and powers to flight by his work on the Cross. That has been called the Classic Theory of the atonement because it is one of the earliest that was popular in Christian circles.

There is another theory that gained quite a bit of popularity, and that is the theory of Peter Abelard. Abelard taught that Jesus Christ came to be an example, and that in his death, we have the perfect example of the love of God. And that as we observe the death of Jesus Christ and the love that he has for men and respond to it then we, too, will show love to our fellow men. Now, you, of course, notice that this theory has absent from it any sense of penal satisfaction. But the Abelardian view was quite popular. And, as a matter of fact, if you were to ask most contemporary theologians which theory of the atonement; that is if they pay any attention to what the biblical statements say at all, what theory of the atonement they subscribe to; they probably would express some from of this Abelardian theory, that Jesus Christ came to give us an example of the love of God. And so they often speak of the love of God but speak very little of the righteousness of God; of the holiness of God, the justice of God. Any of these things, they are deemphasized. But the other is stressed.

Then Anselm, a number of centuries ago, popularized a theory which came to be known as the Penal Satisfaction Theory. Anselm stressed the fact that man was a sinner. And he stressed the fact that God was holy. And he stressed the fact that since God was holy, it was impossible for him to receive men if his law was not upheld. And so Jesus Christ came in order to offer a sacrifice. As you can see, this theory is grounded solidly in the revelation that is contained in the Old Testament because the Old Testament is one

great book of sacrifice. And Jesus Christ came to offer a sacrifice. He came to die for men. And God meted out upon him, in a way that we shall never fully comprehend, because we are men and God is infinite, we are finite. In a way that we shall never fully understand, Jesus Christ bore the sins of men.

He bore their penalty; he bore their judgment; he bore their condemnation. He bore the curse of the broken law. And because of this, God’s righteousness is satisfied in the work of Jesus Christ. And so that aspect of the character of God is honored in this theory. And at the same time, now that his righteousness and holiness was satisfied through the offering of the Son of God, his love which is responsible for the sacrifice -- and we must never think of God as an angry God who is waiting to hurl thunderbolts at men -- if that were true, he would never have given us Jesus Christ.

But it is he who has provided the Son and since the Son has died for sin, it has freed his love so that God may express his love toward all and receive all who come to him through Jesus Christ. Who do not insult him by saying, “I do not want anything of that which you have provided. I want to come on the basis of my own merits.” For God has already excluded all of us because the Bible’s fundamental truth is that men are separated from God, rebellious against him. They are independent. They want to be autonomous. They want to be gods themselves, as Nietzsche expressed it.

Now, these three theories obviously contain truth in them. It is certainly true, as I’ve said, that the classic theory that Jesus Christ came to deal with Satan, is surely taught in the Bible. The Abelardian view that Jesus is an example for us is also taught in the Bible. 1 Peter chapter 2 in verse 21, states that he came and left us an example. That we should follow in his steps. The Anselmic theory is one of the great stresses of the New Testament as well as the Old.

And, I think, if I had to choose among these theories, I would like to very definitely choose to have in my theory of the atonement that which is expressed in the Classic view and that which is expressed in the Anselmic view. And I would also like to

have that which is expressed in the Abelardian view, but I would like to point out specifically that the Abelardian view is insufficient to bring a man to God, that it is lacking. It’s lacking in that it does not set for the holiness and righteousness of God. And that’s really something that we need in the 20th Century. That’s something we’ve forgotten, because we’ve forgotten the truths of holy Scripture.

So Jesus Christ did come to be a substitute. He did come to die for us. He did come, also, to deal with Satan. And his death, incidentally, is an example for us. But it is by virtue of his death, under the judgment of God, that we attain, by grace, the gift of eternal life.

Now, this is expressed, of course, all through the New Testament, and Paul’s expression of the gospel, for example, that Jesus Christ came to die and that he was buried; and that he was raised again the third day, according to the Scriptures. That he died for our sins; that is an expression of the Anselmic view.

And, particularly, those passages of the New Testament such as Romans chapter 3 in verse 21 (sic) and following, where we read:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood,”

“That (ultimately) he might be just, (in meeting out the judgment of men upon the Son...) and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.”

So when we think about Satan tonight and when we reach the conclusion and speak about the way in which Satan is dealt with upon the cross, let’s not forget that this theory of the atonement expressed by our Lord’s dealing with Satan does not express all of the truth of the atonement of our Lord. But we must hasten now into our subject.

And first of all, Satan and the birth of Christ, and under this head, I want simply to remind you of what we said last time in the last point of our study of the trail of the serpent in the Old Testament. You remember that in Matthew chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 23, we have an account of how, when the time came for Jesus Christ to be born, Herod was very much troubled. He was very much troubled. And as a result of his troubles, you remember, and the incidents that surrounded it, he had slain all of the infants from two years old and under in the land. He hoped, thereby, to have within his net, so to speak, the Son of God. And, you remember, that in that second chapter of the Book of Matthew, Joseph is warned in a dream to flee into Egypt, and he takes Mary and the child and they go to Egypt. And then when Herod is gone, then he returns. And in this, the Evangelist sees the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture, for he says, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” So, at the birth of Christ, Satan is active in opposing him through one of his emissaries, whose name was Herod.

Now, secondly, since we dealt with that last time, we need not develop it any more. Satan, and the temptation of Christ. And, we’re going to look tonight at the Matthean account of the temptation and it’s in Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 through 11. So, if you have a New Testament or a Bible (You ought not to be here without one if you’re a regular.) Turn to Matthew chapter 4, and let’s read a few verses beginning with the very first verse. Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 through 11.

“Against the background of the desert and the wild beasts, as Mark describes this temptation, two solitary figures, Jesus and the Devil, struggle for a huge stake: the souls of men and the kingdom of God.”

Remember that Augustine said that the entire history of the human race is gathered up in the two men, Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam is our representative man who fell.

Jesus Christ is the last Adam, our representative man who must now regain the paradise that Adam, the first, lost.

Now, when we come to the temptation, it’s very interesting to read our contemporary theologians’ view regarding it. Harvey Branscom, for example, who is a relative of a friend of mine, has said concerning the temptation account, “This is one of the reverent speculations of the early members of the Christian community.” The temptation account.

Now, if there is one thing that this isn’t, it is a reverent speculation of the early Christian community. There is not a single member of the early Christian community who could possibly have thought up an incident such as this. And, furthermore, if the incident ever occurred to them, they would have stifled it immediately. Do you know why? Because it raises great questions concerning Jesus Christ. If he’s really the Son of God, how can he be tempted? Is he temptable? And not only that, is he peccable? Is it possible for him to sin? Is he impeccable? Or is he peccable?

You see, this account raises all of these questions. Now, we’re not going to deal with these right now because we’re going to deal with them when we come to Christology in our study of Systematic Theology. But, you see, it’s obvious that an early -- a member of the early Christian community would never have thought of something like this. He would have -- I say, if he had thought of it, he would have quickly forgotten it and not mentioned it.

The very fact that it is presented for us is an evidence that it is the truth. And, I think that those who say that this is a piece of spiritual autobiography told to the disciples by Jesus himself, because it is something that no later Christian would have or could have invented, those who say that are far nearer the truth.

Now, let’s notice the verse with which the account begins:

“Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. And he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

I wonder why and how Satan derived the idea that Jesus was the Son of God? Well, we have just had the baptismal account, just previous to this. And you’ll remember, that when the Lord Jesus was baptized there was a voice from heaven. And that voice from heaven said: “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” Now, in the eight o’clock hour, when we study the 42nd chapter of the Book of Isaiah, we’ll see the source of that voice that came from heaven. For it has reference to one of the things that is stated in Isaiah 42. But the voice that shook the heavens was the voice that stated: “This is my Beloved Son...” And so now, after the preparation for the temptation, Satan is in the presence of the Son of God and he says... “If thou be the Son of God...”

Now, in Greek there are four classes of conditions. The first class condition is a condition of reality. In the condition of reality, the one who uses a condition of reality expresses a truth in such a way that he assumes, for the sake of argument, that truth. So, we shouldn’t, really, translate this or read it this way, “If you are the Son of God...” But rather, “If you are the Son of God, as the voice from heaven said, then command that these stones be made bread.” Assuming you are...

It has been called the “debaters technique” in which he takes up some statement that a person has made and he argues inferentially from it. If you say that; then this...

Or, if I were to say to [name redacted] here, “Tom, I’m going to town tomorrow.” He might say to me, “Well, if you’re going to town, would you mind doing something for me?” Well, he’s not really doubting my word. But he’s taking me at my word. “If you’re going...” “Since you’re going...” It’s almost equivalent to that. And so, this is a condition

of reality. And what Satan is really saying, then, is, “Since you are the Son of God... If you are the Son of God, as the voice has said, command that these stones be made bread.”

What he wants our Lord to do is to demonstrate his “son ship” by providing a kingdom of bread. The reason is obvious. God has prophesied that for Israel there shall, ultimately, be a great kingdom of God upon the earth. And the figure of speech that he has used in the Old Testament to express the “kingdom” is the banquet. And so, “If you are really the Son of God, then command that these stones be made bread? Show us that you really are the Son of God.” And our Lord answers, “It is written; man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” And he overcomes, because he relies upon God and his word.

Well, that’s not enough for Satan. He wants another try. Three strikes are “out” in baseball. And Satan wants his three cuts, apparently.

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple” -- Well now, if the first temptation is a personal one, this is a national one because it is related to Israel’s position before God as the theocratic nation. “And he saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written” --

By the way, did you notice, Satan’s learned how to quote Scripture? Well, you didn’t think that Satan quoted Scripture? Oh, you’re greatly mistaken. Almost all the heresies that have arisen in the Christian church have arisen on the basis of some isolated text of Scripture taken out of its context. As a matter of fact, in the Western World, at least, it’s very difficult to get a good heresy going if you don’t have some Scriptural reason for it. As a matter of fact, many of our political theories that men throw about in the 20th Century, many of them are supported by their adherence, often, by their appeals to

Scripture. Have you noticed that? And you’ll find those with the most radical political theories will appeal to the word of God, some isolated text of it.

I often hear people say, in support of certain theories that the early church was a church in which there was an active form of socialism at work among them, an appeal to some text of Scripture. I always like to say to someone like that, “Okay. Since you accept the Scripture, then let’s go on to something else.” But they don’t intend to follow me. They just want some support there, because it gives it more credence. You appeal to something that people accept as an authority.

So, Satan attaches: “And it is written,” and he quotes from the Bible.

By the way, I often have people come to me and say, “What do you think about so and so’s teaching over the radio?” You know, for example, Mr. Armstrong. They’ll say, “What do you think about him?” I say, “I don’t think he teaches the word of God. I’ve listened to him often, and I’ve never heard him give the Gospel yet.”

“Oh, but he quotes a lot of Scripture.”

“That’s right, he does. So does Satan.” That’s right. He does.

You see, the closer we are to the truth, the more deceptive error is.

As I’ve often said to you, if I were to reach down in my pocket and pull out a wooden dollar, shaped in the form of a triangle and presented it to you as a silver dollar, you wouldn’t accept it, would you? Of course not. Shaped in the form of a triangle. Made out of wood. Who would accept that? It may have silver dollar on the outside of it, but you know it’s wrong. But if I pull out something from my pocket that is round, the size of a silver dollar, looks like silver, may even sound like it, then you might accept it.

So, here:

“He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

How will Jesus reply to the quotation of Scripture? Well, he will quote another text, which, by the use of it, will prove that Satan has misused his.

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test.”

Demonstrate your son-ship by sensational sign, cast yourself down from the Temple and everybody will believe. Satan, you forgot another passage of Scripture that says, “You shall not put the Lord thy God to the test.”

You know, there is a principle of Biblical interpretation which is this: *Scriptura ex scriptura explicanda est*. Scripture is to be explained by Scripture. *Scriptura ex scriptura explicanda est*. Be very careful how you use the word of God.

Every text of Scripture is ultimately harmonizable with all the other passages of the word of God. Scripture is to be explained by Scripture. And Satan has forgotten that. He has taken the text out of its context and, in so doing, he has tempted, or tested, the Lord, who is God. And, consequently, he has misused the word of God.

Well, Satan’s had two counts, and he’s fanned, so far, the air. Now, the third test and this one is a universal test. If the second one is demonstrated your Messiahship, the third one is, wouldn’t you like to be the king of the world. but apart from the cross.

“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.”

And here is that for which Jesus Christ came, all the kingdoms of the world, and Satan offers them to him.

Wasn’t it Billy Brae who said, “The idea of Satan offering him all the kingdoms of the world, why he didn’t possess as much as a tater skin”? That’s the way he put it, the homely way. But Satan actually, as we have seen, is a much more authoritative being than Billy Brae recognized. Being head of the angelic host and the guardian of the throne of God, originally.

“Then saith Jesus unto him, (My text has “Be gone.”) Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

In other words, “Abraham’s seed must die, Satan. You do not realize that I cannot accept the kingdoms of this world until I pass through the experience of the cross. For if I do not pass through the experience of the cross, I may be king, but I’ll have no subjects. And the subjects are those who have come to know their sin and to know their redemption through the death that I shall die for them upon that cross.” So Abraham’s seed must die.

When I was -- I’ve told some of you this, but a lot of you are not here -- And I’m not going to keep on telling you, I’ve told you this. You just understand that if I have told you this, Well, okay. But there are a lot here who have not...

Many years ago, I was preaching in Nacogdoches, Texas, in a little church and it’s a rather formal little church. Most of the members were former Presbyterians. And you know how us Presbyterians have been. And in the course of the message on the temptation, I referred to the fact that the Lord Jesus, quoted the Scripture three times. He said, “It is written... It is written... It is written...” In each of his answers to Satan. And then I asked the audience, “By the way, now don’t look at your Bibles, but from what books of the Bible did Jesus quote?” And I could tell by the looks upon the faces of the audience that very few of them knew. And then I said, “He quoted three times from the Book of Deuteronomy. And I want to ask you a question.”

I don’t know what came in to me to say this... Some of the old Nick, I guess. But anyway, I said, “Now, I want you -- each one of you -- that can quote one text from the Book of Deuteronomy, aside from the these here. If you can quote one more text from the entire Book of Deuteronomy, raise your hand.” And not a person raised their hand. And I could tell that the great majority could not quote a text, too. They were embarrassed. And I said, “Well, you see, this is why Satan so often defeats you. You don’t know your Bible.”

And after I concluded the message, two ladies came up to me, and they’re still friends of mine. And they said, “Lewis, you might be interested in the little conversation we had after the Benediction. You know, we are rather formal in the church and when you said the Benediction, we turned to each other and said, ‘we have a text.’ ‘I had a text,’ she said. And the other was... ‘I had a text, too.’ But we didn’t want to raise our hands in a public meeting like that.”

And then she went on. I asked her what her text was, then. And she said, “Well, my text is: If my people who are called by my name and humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

And, I can tell by the looks upon some of the faces of you, that you don’t know from whence that text is taken. But, of course, it comes from 2 Chronicles, chapter 7. Not Deuteronomy at all...

And she said, “Lewis, I told her when she said that, ‘It’s a good think you didn’t raise your hand, because Dr. Johnson might have asked you to quote that text and then you’d really would have been embarrassed.’”

And then she said, “She asked me, ‘Well, what was your text?’ And I said, ‘My text was, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’”

And that comes from the Book of Joshua. [Laughter] And so, they come up to make their confession afterwards.

But, you know, one of the reasons that we so often lose the battle with Satan is because we do not know the word of God. The church of Jesus Christ has lost contact with the Scriptures. And, therefore, when we fall into trials and difficulties, we do not know the great truths upon which we may learn to depend and through which God ministers to us, of his salvation. Did you notice the way the temptation concludes?

“Then the devil leaveth him.”

Who would you think won that battle, really?

Now, if you were to look at the history of our Lord and the history of Satan, in the chapters that unfold in the Bible, you probably would say, well, Satan must have won the battle. Because, what happens to our Lord? Well, he comes out of the desert, he ministers among men, but increasingly he suffers the persecution of the religious leaders and others and, finally, he is nailed to a cross in Jerusalem as a blasphemer and criminal. Who won? Well, if you looked at it only outwardly, it’s obvious, Jesus lost. But he did not lose. And there is a hint, in the next part of that verse.

-- “and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”

You see he really won. But we never know until the resurrection morning when Jesus Christ comes forth from the grave, as the sign and the seal of the finished work of redemption.

Now, let’s hasten through the next two or three points. Here, we have Roman three, Satan and the controversies of Christ with the religious leaders. You might expect that a man like Jesus of Nazareth, would be man who would be extremely popular with religious leaders for, after all, would not the average person today say that Jesus was very religious. You surely would call him a religious leader, wouldn’t you? And isn’t it

startling to find that the religious leaders actually opposed our Lord. As a matter of fact, that’s been the history of the Christian church down through the years. It’s own leaders do not understand the founder of Christianity, if we may call him that.

The reason is, of course, that Jesus was not religious. He did not have a system of religion, as you and I think of a system of religion. He did not talk about buildings. He did not talk about ritual. He didn’t talk about service. And what we know as religion, Jesus was separate from.

Now, let’s notice what happens to him. Will you turn with me to John chapter 8, and let’s read a few verses in that chapter. John chapter 8. Verse 33 of John chapter 8.

“They answered him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the son therefore shall make you free, you should be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. (Imagine the leaders in Judaism, and our Lord has come as the flower of Judaism, to confirm the truth made unto the fathers.)

“I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then saith to him, We be not born of fornication; (An evidence that they knew the story of our Lord’s birth through a virgin.) We have one Father, even God.

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do

ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 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. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? (That’s a question that Jesus has asked men, down through the years -- Which of you convinceth me of sin? Imagine, a man who calls upon all other men to repent, but never repents himself. A man who gives prayers that others pray, but never prays that prayer himself.)

He that is of God heareth God's words: (Verse 47) ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

I think it’s obvious that our Lord is not in harmony with the religious leaders because, you see, they think that the way a man comes to God is through ceremony, through good works, through membership in the organization, through religious ordinances. But Jesus knows that salvation comes through faith in him who is to die for them.

You see, what we have in Christianity is not a religion after all, but it’s a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. That is Christianity. And when we think of Christianity as a series of ordinances, or of services, or doing good works, or being a member of this organization, or undergoing this rite or ordinance, we have missed the point. For Christianity is a personal relationship with one who has died for them. And through that personal trust in him we are given life by God. We are born again. We are made new, by God.

Well, Roman four, Satan and the controversy of Christ with his disciples. If the religious leaders are of their father, the devil, what about the disciples? Let’s turn over to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16 in verse 21 through verse 23. Our Lord has just announced that he is going to Jerusalem -- or, here, he is going to announce -- I’m going

to read that verse. He is going to announce that he is going to Jerusalem to die. And, let’s see how the disciples respond to it. You would think that his disciples would surely understand what he is going to do. But verse 21 states (Matthew chapter 16.)

“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him,”

(By the way, the word used in the Greek text is a word that really means, “to take aside” in a rather condescending kind of way. It means to draw him aside as if to protect him. To speak down to him. To assure him that he surely he doesn’t really mean what he’s saying. You know, like yesterday morning in the first message at 8:30 when I was speaking about Jonah and the whale and it slipped out of my mouth the statement that Jonah swallowed the whale. I don’t think my wife heard that because she didn’t say a word, or else she was just having mercy upon me. She said nothing about it. But usually when I say something like that, she takes me aside like this and gives me a little condescending word, like, “Do you know what you said this morning?” [Laughter] But anyway, Peter takes him aside here and began to rebuke him. Imagine it.)

Saying that be far -- be it far from Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. (That you go to Jerusalem and die.) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me,” hope to come.

Now, if you’re a Roman Catholic, I don’t mean anything by that other than the fact that I want you to understand that our Lord did not hesitate to refer to him in a very, very sharp way. He actually called Peter, Satan. “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

Why? Because he recognizes in this remark that Peter has offered, “Oh, Lord, no, don’t go to Jerusalem. Oh, no, you must not do that.” He recognizes that that is a testing

from Satan through one of his own disciples. “Get thee behind me, Satan.” And he finishes, saying: “Thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Peter’s primacy is sometimes of evil and not of good.

Even the misdirected affection of a friend must not seduce our Lord from the cross. So anything that would turn him aside from Calvary is not only sinful, it’s satanic. So not only do the religious leaders misunderstand our Lord, but often his own disciples. And that, too, is one of the features of the history of the Christian church. For, not only has the great religious mass of Christendom misunderstood our Lord, but often even those who really truly belong to him, who know him, who often are upon their knees in thanksgiving to him for what he has done. Often, they, too, are out of harmony with him.

Oh, how we need to turn to God’s word and to know that word. To be sure that we do not walk contrary to the Lord. How would you like for the Lord to say to you someday, “Get thee behind me, Satan”? I surely wouldn’t like that.

Now, Roman 5, Satan and Christ on the verge of the cross. Just before the time of the cross, in John chapter 14, verse 30 and 31, we have another interesting statement, which indicates that Satan is plaguing the steps of our Lord throughout all of his earthly ministry. When Luke closes his temptation account, he says that Satan departed from him for a season. And we’re seeing some of the times when he returns. John chapter 14, verse 30 and 31:

“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”

Did you notice that? “For the prince of this world cometh.” That’s a reference to Satan. “And he hath nothing in me.” The ruler of this world found a man whom he could not remove: Jesus of Nazareth. There was nothing in our Lord upon which Satan

could put his finger and say, “Ah, that is out of harmony with the will of God.” Not a thing.

At the beginning of our Lord’s ministry, the heavens were broken and the voice said, “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Near the end of it, again, “This is my Beloved Son, hear him.” And, finally, the resurrection again is the attestation that God is with his Son, and approves the life and ministry of Jesus, of Nazareth.

Satan, Judas and Christ. Judas, of course, is the instrumentality for the betrayal of Jesus and turn back to John chapter 13. We’ll just read a couple of verses here. We don’t have time to develop this, because, really, our time is just about up for this hour. Let me read a couple of texts. Verse 2:

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;”

Judas, you see, is a tool of Satan. He is called the son of perdition in the 17th chapter. Verse 27, after Jesus has said that the one “who betrays me is the one to whom I shall give the sop when I have dipped it.” And after he has given it to Judas, we read in the 27th verse:

“And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly.”

And the victim commands the victor, apparently, to carry out the work of sacrifice. But even as our Lord commands Judas to get on with the business that will lead to his death, it is he who is in tremendous control of the events.

And now Satan and the cross, Roman 7. Let’s turn to the Hebrews account, Hebrews chapter 2 in verse 14 and 15. We could turn to the Colossians 2:15 passage. Or the 1 John 3:8 passage. Each of them teaches much the same thing.

Hebrews chapter 2 in verse 14 and verse 15. Remember the promise in the Garden of Eden, “The heel of the woman’s seed is to be crushed.” But the head of the serpent’s seed is to be crushed. Verse 14:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

And so, at the cross of Jesus Christ, when our Lord hung upon that cross, he was the seed of the woman -- seed of the woman, of course, because born of a virgin. Seed of the woman, and there he bore our sins. And it was our sins that were the means whereby Satan had control of us. And so he bore our sins and there the head of the serpent was crushed.

Now, of course, when you crush a serpents head, that’s a mortal wound. If you ever have any dealings with snakes. That’s one of the things you want to do, isn’t it? Either crush the serpent’s head or cut it off, preferably, at least, as far as I’m concerned...

Now, if you chop off a part of his tail, that really doesn’t mean a whole lot, does it? I wouldn’t want to play with a rattlesnake that just had a little part of its tail off. But I wouldn’t mind picking up one whose head was crushed. So that’s a mortal wound.

The seed of the woman shall crush the serpent’s head. And there, when Jesus died for sin, that which held us in prison is now paid for and the prison doors are open. And all may go free. We shall read in Isaiah chapter 42, tonight, afterwards: all shall go free. For the Lord, Jesus, has died for the sin whereby Satan had us under his control.

Now, of course, in the process, his heel was crushed. He was wounded at the cross. As a matter of fact, he died. But his death was on the way to resurrection. And so, in glorious resurrection, he overcomes death. And thus, though his heel is crushed, it’s not a mortal wound for him, one that keeps him in the tomb. And so, as a result of that, Satan is defeated.

The Lord, Jesus, is no Docetic Christ. He is no individual who seemed to be a man. He was really a man. But he also possessed a genuine, divine nature: a divine person with two natures. And as a man he dies for men, and as a divine person, the Father raises him from the grave in token of his victory.

And so the Devil’s power is taken from him legally. It’s almost as if Satan were the jailer. If you want to get someone out of jail you, first of all, have to secure a legal release. Now, after you secure a legal release, you present the legal release to the jailer and he is bound to open the prison doors. And the work of Jesus Christ is the legal release that has been provided, because he has borne man’s sins. The prison doors are flown open, and we may go free.

When we began this series on Satan, I mentioned to you that Von Ranke, the great German historian, said that when he studied human history, after he had studied it all as well as he could, he came to the conviction that there was something subtle in the history of the human race, that you could not put your finger on. He said, in fact, it was an occult force at work in the history of men. And in the midst of the apparent confusion that exists -- and surely there exists confusion among men today -- this historian saw something thought could not be explained rationally or only rationally.

It was the evidence of a spiritual force at work that could only be called evil. And, frankly, I do not think that we can understand human history, if we do not understand, first of all, Jesus Christ. Nor can we understand history if we do not also understand that there is a Satan or a devil.

“The Serpent in the Life of the Son of Man” by S. Lewis Johnson
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When we do understand these things and the relationship between them, then history falls into place and we understand ourselves. For, what we really are down deep within, we also have the opportunity to respond to the God who has made us and who offers to restore us to himself through Jesus Christ. Then, we shall know why we are here. Where we’re going, what we’re to do while we’re here, and so on, but not until.

Time’s up. We’re going to have about a ten-minute break, so let’s close with a brief word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful truth, and we pray that Thou wilt keep us from the evil one. For Jesus’ name. Amen.