



The promised One (the context of Christmas)

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 24th December 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 Peter 1:20-21

Introduction

What do you think of when someone mentions battles? With the tragic events we see unfolding on our TV screens of late, we might think of the wars going on around this world. Closer to home, we might think of the battles that go on with our health, our finances, or even within our families, friendships, and relationships. Perhaps we're inclined to think of the more benign tussles in the playground or workplace, or the bun-fights we see on social media as keyboard warriors are let loose and attack others with a few quick taps on their phone or laptop.

But whatever battles come to mind, no matter how big those battles, there is one that has and will cost more lives, and has destroyed more families, relationships, careers and churches than any other. And that is the battle over our souls. I think, if we're honest, we seldom think about the battle we're in. And we all too easily forget about all that has taken place before. And so this morning we're going to take a look at some of the reality of that battle.

The fall

The backdrop to all of this, of course, is that God created the world, and all we see in it. And He created mankind in His image, with free choice, and with a special relationship with Him. We read how Adam walked with God, in the Garden of Eden. However, Satan — one of the angels that God had created — was full of pride and jealousy, declaring “I will be like the Most High” (as we read in Isaiah chapter 14). That is, He wanted at least the position mankind had (being made in God’s image), but more, Satan wanted to be like the Most High.

And therefore position wasn’t enough — he also had to see Adam and Eve stumble in order to be satisfied. And the one way he could do that, was to entice them to disobey God. So what did he do? He questioned God’s word. He said “*are you sure God said that?*” — he didn’t outright say God lied, or that Adam misheard, or even that Adam didn’t pass what God had said onto Eve correctly. He simply sows doubt. What follows is the worst event in human history, as Adam and Eve both disobeyed God and ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil – the *one* thing that God had told them not to do. And thus, mankind — and the world — was plunged into chaos. Our relationship with God was broken. Sin had entered the world.

Now, at this point, God, in His sovereign right as our Creator, could have destroyed Adam and Eve. He could have destroyed the world. He could have destroyed Satan. But, because of His wonderful love for us, He did something else. We read in Genesis chapter 3:

Genesis 3:14-15

So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. 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.”

This, of course, is more than only about the serpent that Satan used. Indeed, this verse explains many of the struggles and battles of the Old Testament, as well as showing us — remarkably — that even from this moment, God had a plan to save us; for this verse is the first of many prophecies of the coming Messiah, the Saviour, into the world.

Notice how in the text, the woman’s *Seed* is capitalised. That’s because this is speaking of Jesus. From this point on, God would establish a pure line through to Jesus being born. And Satan would do everything, and I mean *everything* he could, to destroy that line to prevent Jesus being born.

The promised One

This explains much of what we read in the Old Testament, for Satan didn’t want Christ to come to restore mankind’s relationship with God. He didn’t want to ever see the day that the promised One arrived. He didn’t want Jesus, this promised Seed, to be born.

And so we read in Genesis chapter 6:

Genesis 6:1-8

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

So then, the offspring of these fallen angels and the women on the earth, were the first of the wicked giants that Bible speaks of. And Satan's purpose was for them to corrupt all mankind that there would be no pure line through to Jesus. But God, in His mercy, saved Noah and his family, who were pure in their generations — that is they had not married into the offspring of these giants — and He saved them in the Ark, while He judged the world through the flood.

Following the flood, we then saw how God chose Abraham — calling him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to move to Canaan — and through the promised son God gave him, Isaac, continued the line through his son, Jacob and beyond, as God established the nation of Israel, through whom the Messiah would come. But Satan saw another opportunity, and we read in Exodus how, while the Israelites were living in Egypt, there came a Pharaoh who saw them as a threat, and persecuted them. And we read in chapter 1:

Exodus 1:15-22

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?"

And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them."

Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

Essentially, he was trying to wipe them out, and with them, the line through to Christ. But again, we see how God intervened and Moses was not only protected, but placed within Pharaoh's household where he was trained. And in time God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, miraculously through the Red Sea, and into what we call Saudi Arabia today. But soon after they had entered the wilderness there, we see Satan tries once more to destroy them, as the Amalekites attack Israel at a place called Rephidim, as recorded in Exodus 17. But God granted Israel victory.

More battles followed, however, as Satan used other giant tribes, beyond the Amalekites, to try and destroy Israel, and with them, any hope that we could be saved. This is recorded as Joshua led Israel into the land promised-to-them, with the battle of Jericho being one of the most famous, followed soon by the battle of Ai. We then read of Gideon battling against the Midianites, and Samson against the Philistines. God granting victories to each.

Then later we read of the most famous of those Philistine giants, Goliath, who taunted the armies of Israel, and threatened to take all Israel captive. But God used a young man called David to stand against him. We read in 1 Samuel 17:

1 Samuel 17:45-47

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."

And this wasn't just talk, for we read a few verses later:

1 Samuel 17:50-51

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

And then a seemingly small detail that Samuel records, but one which we'll come back to, is this:

1 Samuel 17:54

And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armour in his tent.

So God had spared Israel once again, and the line through to Christ was preserved. Did Satan give up at this point? Not at all, for just one of the situations we later read of was how Israel were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, and while captive a certain event took place at the time of a young lady called Esther, who God used to save the entire nation from the genocide proposed by Haman, himself an Amalekite — one of the giant tribes we've already been talking about. Once again, the line through the Jesus was preserved.

And given this backdrop of Satan's attempts to destroy the line through to Christ, plus the prophecies found throughout the Old Testament that foretold His coming, what joy it was when Christ *finally* came to earth! So, picture the significance of what the angels declared to the Shepherds, as we read of in Luke chapter 2:

Luke 2:8-14

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Finally, there was a going to be A way for mankind to be reconciled to God. And we see the response of the shepherds:

Luke 2:15-20

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

At last, the promised One had come. But is that then end of the story? No, there was more God did, and more Satan did too.

The gospel

You see, with Jesus now born — Satan now had a direct target that he would focus on. First, through Herod's insecurities, as he ordered the murder of all the boys under two in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. We read in Matthew 2:

Matthew 2:16

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

However, this attempt failed, for we read just a couple of verses prior:

Matthew 2:13-15

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Once again, God had intervened to ensure that we could be saved. And naturally, being God, there was no way he could be outsmarted by Satan, who was and is *merely* a created being. But Satan was still not finished, and next he would try and tempt Christ to sin while He was in the wilderness, using his usual three plays of appealing to a sense of entitlement, offering a shortcut, and saying God is OK with sin. But Jesus did not yield, He did not sin. And Satan's attempts had failed once more.

But now, Satan had another plan — a way he thought he could finally destroy Jesus, and thwart His attempt to save us. And he worked in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who then stirred up the people to demand that Jesus be crucified at the hands of the Romans authorities. What was God going to do? Nothing.

I can imagine with quite some shock to Satan, Jesus died on the cross. And, in fact, He went there willingly, for we read Jesus' words in John chapter 10, before His crucifixion:

John 10:17-18

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

However, not only did Jesus die on the cross, but He rose again three days later — not simply as a personal victory, but so that *we* might be saved. How? Because Jesus, who had no sin, died in *our* place for *our* sin. The innocent for the guilty, that the guilty might be seen as innocent.

It is this *great* news that Paul writes of in the book of Romans. We read there in chapter 5:

Romans 5:6-11

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

That is, though we had fallen horribly short of God's standards, though we had offended Him so much through our sin, Jesus had now paid for it all. Not just some, but all. And thus the promised One, God's Son, had done what He came to earth to do.

And remember, back in the book of Genesis how we read immediately after the fall of mankind, that God said to Satan *"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."* Again, Jesus was *that* Seed that was spoken of. And now this was the moment that had been promised.

Thinking back to what we read about David and Goliath, you'll remember that David brought Goliath's head to Jerusalem. What did he do with it? He buried it. Where? Well, Goliath was from a place called *Gath*. He was *Goliath of Gath*. And now, upon *Golgotha* — the place of the skull — Jesus had been crucified. Such an illustration what God had spoken of back in Genesis, as Satan's head was indeed now bruised, figuratively speaking.

And, there was nothing Satan could any longer do to prevent our salvation... or was there?

The risen One

Well, there was *certainly* nothing Satan could do to prevent Jesus dying on the cross or rising from the dead. The work of Christ had been completed, once and for all. But while Christ had come for us, we now needed to turn to Him. Not through our own strength, or by our own works, but by faith in what He has already done.

And so one of the things that Satan has now turned to, is doing all he can to prevent anyone he can from coming to Christ. In Mark 16, we read the great commission, that Jesus gave to His disciples, and to us. We read:

Mark 16:15-16

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

That is, the good news of what Jesus has done needs to be shared with everyone. And it needs to be shared by us. But what we read happens, is that the enemy loves to interfere as much as he can. When Jesus was explaining *The Parable of the Sower*, He said:

Matthew 13:18-19

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

And Satan will do all he can to turn people's hearts, minds, and attention away from the gospel as soon as they hear it. Furthermore, he'll do all he can to destroy the church, that it's mission may not succeed in sharing the gospel. Or at least, that the church may be ineffective. That's why Paul warned the Ephesian elders, as recorded in Acts 20:

Acts 20:29-30

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

And then, in writing to the church in Corinth he noted:

2 Corinthians 11:12-15

But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

That is, we'll even find folks inside churches who try and tear it apart, who try and pervert the truth. Who turn the gospel of Christ into something they can use for personal gain. Or to excuse personal pleasures. Why? Because they are ministers of Satan, and not God. Serving their own purposes, and not God's purposes. And so we must be very careful.

Furthermore, among us who are truly believers, Satan will try and wreck havoc — causing us to slow down, struggle and even go backwards in our walk with the Lord. Peter wrote in his first letter:

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Should we be vigilant?! Yes!! Should we be worried, or even paranoid? No!! For we read in 1 John that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." And Jude concludes his letter, writing:

Jude 1:24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

That's comforting, right?! But, we must note that the battle is real. We need to press on in our walk with the Lord, not get sidetracked. Paul wrote this to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:3-4

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

There are a thousand distractions that would pull us away from Christ, from serving Him, and from sharing the gospel. But, if we are to be obedient to that command of Christ to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature", then we need to have the same resolve, the same conviction that the Apostle Paul did, who wrote:

1 Corinthians 9:15-16

But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

The next time we're presented with an opportunity to share the gospel — let us do it!

The coming One

Now, we should reflect on all that God has done for us! And we will spend a few moments doing that in a short while. But God also wants to save the Jews just as much as the gentiles, and Satan knows that too. In fact, *Israel* is the very reason that Christ will come again. Yes, the church will be raptured, but when Jesus sets foot on the Earth for the second time, we'll be returning from Heaven with Him, having already been raptured ahead of that time.

And so, just as Satan did all he could to prevent Christ's first coming, so he'll do all he can to prevent his second coming. And that means the attempted destruction of Israel. This is a reality that is clear to see from history. On one hand, no group of people has retained their national identity without a homeland for almost 1900 years, except the Jews — a clear mark of God's hand on them. Yet no group of people has been as persecuted as the Jews — clear evidence of Satan's attempt to eradicate them by whatever means necessary... Whether the wickedness that took place during the crusades, where the Jews were blamed for Christ's death (when in fact we all were guilty). Or the six million Jews that were slaughtered during the Holocaust. Or this year where Hamas killed more than 1000 Jews (including women and children) in an unprovoked attack.

And there will be more to follow, for it is reasonable to conclude from Bible prophecy that Russia will yet play a big part in the end times, attacking Israel directly. Indeed, it will be as the nations (plural) gather together against Israel, that Israel will finally cry out for their Messiah, at which point Jesus will return as their Saviour.

So in other words, Jesus is *still* the promised One. And not only will Jesus return for Israel, but we — the church, His bride — will spend eternity with Him, in His presence, without tears, without pain, without death. What a wonderful day that will be!

In Revelation 22, the final chapter of the Bible, we read these words of encouragement, and warning:

Revelation 22:12-17

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Let us share that living water with all we know.

Conclusion: Our response

God has done so much for us. No sooner had mankind sinned, than He stated His intent to save us. And remarkably, we read in Ephesians that He determined His plans before He even created the world, because He knew in *advance* that we'd sin. And throughout history we see Him working His purpose out, for our good, and His glory. Furthermore, knowing also how we would respond to His grace, He even chose us in Him before He created us! We read:

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

What an incredible story of grace, that you and I are the beneficiaries of!

We need to be aware of the seriousness of the battle that has raged since the fall, and that still rages today. Yet we must also remember that God has never been caught off guard. He was the One who gave us free choice, knowing we would choose to sin. And He knew everything that Satan would try to do, and not once has God's plan of salvation for us been in doubt.

Application questions

So as we conclude our study this morning, let me ask you a few questions:

- Given all God has done, what will you do in response?
- Are you being vigilant in battle?
- How will you fight a good fight?
- How will you share the good news?

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