

Christwas 1 The Gospel of Christmas in the Old Testament

Genesis 3:15

Based on - The Gospel Adam and Eve Heard

By John C. Jeske

In order to celebrate Christmas properly we must review some important facts of history. People differ in their opinions of the value of history. Winston Churchill, said: "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see."

As we look back into Bible history, we should see how God prepared his people for the amazing Gift he had in store for them in Bethlehem. Today we go back to the very beginning of history to hear the Gospel as Adam and Eve heard it.

The Gospel which Adam and Eve heard was not spoken directly to them but to Satan, the sworn enemy of God and man. Picture the scene in the Garden of Eden when these words were first spoken. Adam and Eve stood before God with the blush of the first sin still upon their cheeks. Like stubborn children they had run away from their Father, imagining they could be happier and more complete human beings living on their own. They had looked upon Satan as their friend, as someone who had their best interests at heart. Now God had some shattering news for Satan.

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Satan, there has been friendship between you and the woman. You spoke to her, and she listened. You suggested I was withholding knowledge and wisdom from her, and she believed you. You urged her to turn her back on me, and she listened to you.

Unless I intervene, she and the whole human race with her will forever live with you. And so, Satan, I'm going to change that. I'm going to put enmity, a deep-rooted hatred of an enemy between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers.

The enmity that God announced would extend over three levels. First of all, there would be enmity "between you and the woman," between Satan and Eve.

There would also be enmity between "your offspring," (not only the principalities and powers in heaven above but also those who have chosen to be his agents among mankind) "and hers." (Eve's descendants are all potential believers). No one needs a degree in theology to recognize Satan as our enemy. It's a natural gift God has given us.

The most shattering news God gave Satan was that the enmity would come to a climax in one particular descendant of Eve. "He will crush your head." God would one day send a Champion who would crush the serpent's head, and destroy the power of Satan.

Luther points out that with these words God mocked Satan. Since God didn't identify the particular descendant of Eve, initially Satan had to fear every time a baby was born, never knowing: "Is this the one who is going to destroy me?"

The Gospel Adam and Eve heard had ominous news, however, not only for Satan. The second person of the Holy Trinity, God from all eternity, heard a sobering message in those words originally addressed to Satan. He was going to have to battle mankind's worst enemy. The closing words, "...you will strike his heel," make it quite clear that this battle was going to be a grim and painful business.

If you were to hike in rattlesnake country you would try to avoid being bitten. But Christ knew he couldn't avoid it, nor would he have wanted to. As our Champion set out to crush the serpent's head, the serpent struck his heel and Christ died the most wretched death imaginable—rejected by his own countrymen, deserted by his friends and paying the full price of our sin.

The Gospel Adam and Eve heard is quite different from the slush and sentiment many associate with Christmas; it announced an awesomely difficult and a frightfully painful assignment for the Son of God. God never treats evil as something which can be removed easily with the wave of a magic wand or with some celestial abracadabra. Defeating the prince of hell and rescuing a world of sinners is a miracle far greater than, say, the miracle of creation. Creating the world cost God only a demonstration of his power. Rescuing the world from Satan's power cost him his Son.

It has been said, "Nobody wins a war." But the Gospel Adam and Eve heard announces a very clear-cut victory. And this is good news, indeed, for sinners like Adam and Eve, for sinners like me and you.

The sin of Adam and Eve may not seem terribly serious at first glance. Taking a piece of fruit they shouldn't have seems to be no more than an act of disobedience—something not normally considered a capital crime. A closer look at their action, however, shows that more than disobedience was involved. With their action Adam and Eve had told God: "We can't trust you. You're holding out on us. You don't really love us. Instead of finding our happiness living under you, from now on we'd prefer to find happiness on our own." Satan had managed to break up God's family and to bring the human race under his control.

How satisfying it must therefore have been for Adam and Eve to hear God tell Satan: "The promised Descendant of the woman is going to crush your head." A snake with his head crushed has lost its power to hurt us. How satisfying for us to know that Satan's power over us has been broken. When he talks to us as though he owns us, we need to remember that he's the father of lies. Christ's perfect life and his innocent death have once and for all smashed Satan's power and freed us from his control.

There is another piece of satisfying news here. When Satan succeeded in convincing Adam and Eve to look upon themselves as their own bosses and to look upon God as an unwelcome intruder in their lives, he planted his evil nature in God's children. You and I still have that evil nature; we brought it with us into the world and we'll carry it with us until we leave.

But the Gospel Adam and Eve heard assures us that this evil nature is not our true nature. St. Paul has assured us: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature." (2 Co 5:17). Because Christ has broken Satan's power in us, we are free to live for God now, until we live at his side forever.

When Satan learned that the Saviour was to come from Abraham's descendants he concentrated his efforts to make trouble for the Jewish nation.

When he learned the Saviour was to come from the royal line of David, he managed to overthrow that line, which at Christ's time resembled the rotting stump of a fallen tree. And from the moment the choirs of heaven announced that the Child of Mary is the promised Saviour Satan unleashed his unrelenting hatred — by means of Herod's sword at the beginning of Christ's life, through the 40-day temptations in the desert at the outset of Christ's public ministry, and in the horrors of Gethsemane and Calvary at the close of his ministry. Although the precious truths of this first promise were spoken in a form which partly veiled the full measure of truth, this passage furnished light for the early believers. It furnishes light for us, too. And it gives us good reason for singing our hymns of praise to the Saviour in this Christmas season, until we can sing them in his presence.

Conclusion

The Gospel Adam and Eve Heard

- I. Shattering news for Satan
 - A. God's chosen one will crush him.
- II. Sobering news for the Saviour
 - A. Awesome assignment: defeat the "prince of this world" (Jn 12:31).
 - B. Grim and painful business: terrible price Christ would pay in Gethsemane and on Calvary.
- III. Satisfying news for the sinner
 - A. Satan's grip on us is broken.

We are free to live the life to which God has called us. (Our sinful nature is not our true nature).

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