

GENESIS 3:14, 15

DOES THE VIRGIN BIRTH MATTER?

“The LORD God said to the serpent,

‘Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.’”¹

On one occasion, a leader of a major evangelical school scoffed at people he identified as “naïve literalists.” He meant this as a slur against those he saw as benighted individuals who believe the Bible to be true and authoritative. I responded to his slur by identifying myself as a “naïve literalist.” I accept that there were six days in which God created all things. I believe there was a literal Garden identified as Eden. In that Garden a literal man named Adam was placed by God Himself; and from Adam’s side, God crafted a literal woman, Eve. On the authority of God’s Word, I believe there this first man and first woman plunged the creation into ruin. Eve, our first mother, was deceived; and Adam, our first father, chose to rebel against the divine command to avoid eating from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Go back to the beginning, when God created all things, including the animals. However, there were no humans yet. In the first chapter of the Book, we read, “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’

“So, God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.”

[GENESIS 1:26, 27]

The second chapter of the Book provides us a more detailed view of the creation of mankind. The LORD God had placed the man in the Garden of Eden, assigning him responsibility to work the Garden, watching over it. When He placed Adam in the Garden, God commanded him, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” [GENESIS 2:16, 17]. So, Adam received specific responsibilities—Paradise, though idyllic, was not a place of idleness. Work, responsibilities, preceded the fall of mankind!

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God knew something Adam didn't know—Adam was alone. He didn't recognise his deficit, but God knew. So, the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" [GENESIS 2:18]. From the side of the man, God crafted a woman. Adam recognised that she was a complement; now, he was whole. Eve was God's final creative act during the Creation Week.

Clearly, Adam was thrilled with God's handiwork. When he was awakened, Adam exclaimed:

"At last! This is
bone from my bones
and flesh from my flesh.
This one will be called 'Woman,'
because she was taken from Man."

[GENESIS 2:23 ISV]

At some point after this, no one really knows how long, the serpent approached our first mother with the sly suggestion, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'" [GENESIS 3:1]?

Eve responded with a partially true statement. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" [GENESIS 3:2, 3]. God had said nothing against "touching" the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. A small addition to God's command had opened the woman to temptation. The serpent, seeing opportunity to strengthen temptation, responded, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" [GENESIS 3:4, 5]. Therefore, we read, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" [GENESIS 3:6].

Immediately, Adam and his wife, Eve, realised what they had done. The Word tells us, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" [GENESIS 3:7]. They were exposed before the Living God. There was no way they could conceal their sin, any more than we can conceal our own sin. They learned in dreadful fashion, "Your sin will find you out" [NUMBERS 32:23b]!

When God confronted them, He pronounced sentence on each of them, and on the serpent who had seduced our first mother. The consequence of sin was dreadful, for it plunged the entire creation into ruin. Now, the whole creation groans in the pains of childbirth, waiting to be set free from its bondage to corruption [see ROMANS 8:20-22].

CURSED —

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life."

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A curse is almost unrecognised in this contemporary age. Usually, when someone speaks of cursing, they may just as easily be speaking of obscene speech, of swearing, of blasphemous speech or of actual cursing. There are distinctions, however. Obscene speech is simply using words to describe intimate acts in a coarse fashion. It is reducing the act of marriage to an adjective, an adverb or even as a noun. To be certain, the act of love between married couples should be thought sacred. To reduce this to a common word to emphasise a point is to degrade what is sacred and good into something tawdry and dirty.

Swearing is invoking divine agreement with what an individual is saying. It is an appeal to deity for verification of the veracity of what is said.

Blasphemous speech is invoking the Name of the Living God in an unwarranted fashion. It is appeal to the highest Name possible for an unjust or frivolous purpose. It is a crass attempt to misappropriate God for one's own selfish reason.

Cursing, in the literal sense, is pronouncement of a negative sentence. Cursing implies divine right since God alone can carry out sentence involving condemnation of an individual. Judges may condemn an action or speech, but only God can condemn a person. Cursing, therefore, implies that one has called on God to pronounce divine censure of an individual.

I recall an incident from my days in the medical school when a colleague engaged in crass language. Dave was a conservative Jew. We had become acquainted when I had gone to the Einstein College of Medicine. Later, Dave and his family moved to Dallas where he was conducting post-doctoral studies during the period I was pursuing my doctorate. I knew that Dave was an observant Jew—he was careful to observe Shabbat, reciting the appropriate prayers at the appropriate times. He kept kosher and sought to fulfil the expectations of a conscientious Jew. Yet, Dave's language was marked by a coarseness that could be breath-taking.

One morning, Dave had been exceptionally profane, cursing and swearing at something so trivial that it was likely forgotten even moments after his repeated explosive statements of disgust. After some minutes of hearing his expressions of rage, I casually commented, "Dave, I'm really embarrassed."

"Why are you embarrassed," he smirked.

"Dave, you've prayed more in the last five minutes than I did during the entire morning," I responded.

"What? Prayed! I haven't prayed," he sputtered.

"Well, not once have I heard you say, 'O Abraham! O Isaac! O Jacob!' it is true. However, you have repeatedly called on the Name of Jesus. You have called on the highest Name you can imagine, which is an act of prayer," I offered.

I never again heard Dave speak of Jesus Christ—certainly not in an expression of profanity.

It was like an incident reported by a young seaman who attended a Bible study I conducted while we were living in San Francisco. The seaman worked under the supervision of a chief petty officer who was profane, even blasphemous in his speech. One day the young seaman had heard enough after his chief had especially cursed an IBM Selectric typewriter. "Chief," the seaman said to the petty officer, "I hope we aren't hit by the scatter when God answers that prayer!" It was one of those moments when the heavens parted and light shone down from on high. The chief's eyes widened in recognition and a look of pure astonishment marked his visage as he realised what had just taken place. He had been praying for God to do something that God wasn't likely to do!

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In our text, God Himself pronounced a curse. What He says is what shall be—He is God, He is the Creator. This is the Living God who now speaks! He will pronounce sentence on the woman—she will henceforth experience pain in childbirth. It is essential to note that, contrary to popular mythology, childbirth is not a curse. However, the pain that accompanies childbirth is a result of the Fall. Childbirth is a blessing and children are a precious gift from the True and Living God. One need but recall the words of the Psalmist to verify this truth.

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.”

[PSALM 127:3]

God’s sentence states that woman will be conflicted, struggling for mastery over the man, yet knowing that he shall rule. Only when the effects of the fall are lifted can this sentence be reversed; only in Christ will man and woman be equal, working together to reflect the harmony intended in the creation. Outside of the redemption found in Christ Jesus the Lord, competition and struggle will inevitably mark the relationship of man and woman. Even among the organisational congregations, when Christ does not reign, women and men compete for mastery. However, in Christ, man will see woman as a complement, ensuring that each achieves the heights that God intended. Only in Christ will woman cease from her struggle for mastery over man; only in Christ has she hope of assuming the position of a true co-regnant with man; only in Christ will man welcome woman as his equal to exercise dominion over the creation.

After the rebellion, the LORD God sentenced the man to earn his livelihood through toil and labour. The ground is cursed because of the man’s rebellion—the creation will no longer readily yield its fruit to the man; henceforth he must labour to earn his way in the world. Moreover, his rebellion introduced death into the Creation. Recall the sobering statement from the Apostle: “Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned” [ROMANS 5:12]. This statement is nothing less than the logical application of the divine sentence the LORD God pronounced against the man:

“By the sweat of your brow you will eat food
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you will return.”

[GENESIS 3:19]

Before ever addressing the man’s rebellion or the woman’s deception, God spoke to the source of all sin. God addressed a real serpent, a snake, but behind that creature was a malevolent creature of inestimable evil. In the Apocalypse, God addresses the devil, Satan, identifying him as “the great dragon” and “that ancient serpent” [REVELATION 12:9; 20:2]. That ancient serpent is identified as “the devil and Satan.” This is that angel who once stood next to God, until he rebelled, plunging the world of the angels into chaos and ruin.

Does it seem strange to you for me to speak of the devil in an Advent message? Had there been no rebellion, there would be no need for a Saviour. Had there been no incitement to rebellion, there would never have been a fall. Had there been no fall, there would be no need for redemption. Thus, it is impossible to speak of Christ’s birth without speaking of the sin that necessitated His coming to earth.

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The curse is pronounced on the serpent—both the physical entity and the malignant entity behind the physical entity. The serpent will crawl on its belly, licking dust all the days of its life. It will forever be abhorred by all livestock and by all the other beasts of the field. One need but watch a nature documentary to realise the reality of this. Horses and cattle shy from serpents. Dogs and cats are natural enemies of snakes. All creation recoils when snakes appear.

One would think that people would shrink at the thought of wickedness. That such is not the case is evidence of our fallen condition. We read an astounding statement as Paul writes the Corinthian Christians. “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:14b]. Satan was created to serve God, functioning in the privileged position as “the anointed guardian cherub.” Ezekiel reveals this when God, speaking through him, says,

“You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
sardius, topaz, and diamond,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;
and crafted in gold were your settings
and your engravings.
On the day that you were created
they were prepared.
You were an anointed guardian cherub.
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.
You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.”

[EZEKIEL 28:11-15]

“Till unrighteousness was found in you.” That is the dark story behind the Christmas observance. The anointed guardian cherub exalted himself. Isaiah exposes the pride that brought Satan down, pride that even contaminated and destroyed a third of the angels.

“You said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’”

[ISAIAH 14:13, 14]

Alas, the wicked rebellion contaminates even the heart of God’s perfect creation. The woman is deceived and the man rebels against God. So, the evil one must be cursed.

ENMITY —

“I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring”

Having cursed the snake, God pronounced a curse on the evil spirit behind the snake. It is not likely that even Satan fully comprehended the curse when it was pronounced. He heard the words, and though they were no doubt ominous if only because of Him who pronounced the curse, not even one who had been an anointed guardian cherub could have known all that would be entailed in those words. What was evident was that from this point the Satan would know that there was a limit to his time before he would be judged.

The serpent had deceived the woman. However, God cursed the serpent by appointing his downfall through the offspring of the woman. Resident within the divine pronouncement is a suggestion of the basis for the universal enmity people have for reptiles such as snakes. Perhaps the words spoken by God serve in a general fashion to account for what is commonly witnessed throughout our world. Whatever else may be true, the conclusion of the animosity between mankind and the ancient serpent is made explicit—the serpent has a limited life expectancy that will come to a violent end.

The text speaks of “enmity.” An announcement of enmity doesn’t seem all that great, especially when it points to a continuing conflict between the devil and our first mother that would continue up to the Advent of the Christ and beyond. However, this enmity must be seen as good since it is announced by God. God is good; and what God does is good. Therefore, we should recognise that the enmity announced here must be good. Our responsibility is to search out the good, seizing the reality of what God has done for mankind.

We just saw that Satan, that ancient serpent, is a fallen angel. In fact, he was the highest of all the angels—he was “the anointed guardian cherub.” Satan was set apart by God Himself to watch over the throne of God. The ultimate evil is exaltation of the creature to a position equal to or greater than that of God.

Go back in your memory to what is written in the opening verses of the Letter to Roman Christians. There, the Apostle has written, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” [ROMANS 1:18-23].

As result of ingratitude toward the Creator, “God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever” [ROMANS 1:24, 25]! Having “exchanged the truth about God for a lie,” fallen mankind “served the creature rather than the Creator.” In the passage from Isaiah which I read a short time ago, we saw Satan exalt himself, pushing himself forward to usurp the place of God. His desire is that he be worshipped in the place of the Most High God.

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Satan appeared on earth specifically to accomplish through the created humans what he could not accomplish among the angels—that is to receive worship for himself. Satan had endeavoured to seduce our first parents to worship him. He sought to gain allegiance of the new creatures God had created by breaking fellowship between them and the Living God. Satan did succeed in breaking this fellowship, and since that time man is estranged from God. The Psalmist confessed:

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

[PSALM 51:5]

Satan was partially successful in his wicked design, but his success is not complete. Though Satan did break fellowship between God and man, he could not exalt himself to the position of being worshipped by mankind. To ensure that he could not do so, God announced that He was putting enmity between mankind and Satan. Yes, fellowship with God was severed; but people do not automatically worship Satan. Lacking fellowship with God, man exalts himself.

James Montgomery Boice is correct when he observed, “We think many times of the love, joy, and happiness that the coming of Jesus Christ brought us, and we thank God rightly for those things. But we should not forget to thank him for a corresponding hatred of sin, sorrow at sin’s ways, and increasing misery when we find ourselves ensnared in sin’s tentacles. When we sin, we often find that we like the sin but want to escape sin’s consequences. We would like to destroy ourselves in comfort, like the addict destroying himself in the dreamlike stupor of debilitating drugs or booze. We would like to go to hell happy. But it is one aspect of grace that God does not allow that to happen. God makes sin miserable and sets up an antagonism between ourselves and Satan that modifies the hold of sin and makes it possible for us to hear God’s loving voice, even in our misery.”²

The enmity God established was not restricted to being between Satan and mankind; this would be personal. Enmity would be between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of Satan. Don’t fall into the trap of imagining that Satan is producing little demons—he cannot. The demons are fallen angels, angels who joined Satan in rebellion against the True and Living God. They fell from their position in the heavens, becoming the malevolent beings that torment the race and whom we identify as demons.

Enmity? Between God’s offspring and Satan’s offspring? This is nothing less than the ongoing conflict between the wicked and the righteous. Genesis continues by revealing two lineages in chapters four and five. Of course, we read of Cain and Abel, learning of the descendants of Cain. And after Cain killed his brother Abel, we see the lineage of Cain, a talented lineage, to be sure, but descendants who moved progressively away from godliness. The lineage of the righteous is provided in chapter five.

What isn’t immediately apparent from reading these two chapters is that the descendants of the godly were becoming a decided minority in the earth with the passage of time. At last we read of the LORD God’s displeasure with mankind. “The LORD said, My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown”

[GENESIS 6:1-4].

² James Montgomery Boice, **Genesis: An Expository Commentary** (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 200-201

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Then, the dark assessment is provided, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart” [GENESIS 6:5, 6].

After the Flood that destroyed mankind, God called out Israel as a chosen nation through whom He would work. From that point, the call of Abraham and onward, we see Satan focused on destroying Israel. He understood the significance of God’s work in Israel was fulfilment of the prophecy given to Eve. When the Revelator drafts his summary of the history of salvation, he writes, “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne” [REVELATION 12:1-5]. We see Satan portrayed as “the dragon” and Israel is seen as the woman. Her child is Jesus, who is the Lord of Glory. Satan’s strategy has been to destroy the Christ. This is the reason for the anti-Semitism that continues to this day. Let me give an aside and say that no Christian should ever have a part in anti-Semitism. To adopt such anti-Semitic attitudes is to work with Satan and against the cause of the True and Living God.

WAR —

“He shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

Dr. Boice says, “There is always something unexpected about Christmas, even when you have been expecting it for months.”³ His is an astute observation. Perhaps we forget that for us as Christians, it is not just the idea of presents that we are expecting—we anticipate the grace that attends God sending His Son. Especially as we draw near the passage into the presence of the Lord God, presents become less important as we remember the grace of Christ our Lord. Just so, the announcement revealed in this text is unexpected—it is in the midst of an announcement concerning war. We don’t expect war at Christmas! We certainly don’t expect grace arising out of an announcement of war! Grace seems always to be found in unexpected places.

Throughout the history of Israel, Satan endeavoured to destroy God’s chosen people. Time and again, Israel was attacked. Abraham was incited by his own wife to sire a child in the way of all flesh. The conflict arising as descendants of Ishmael rage against descendants of Isaac continue to this day. Isaac came near death when he deceived Abimelech, king of the Philistines. The sons of Jacob sold their younger brother into slavery, but God worked in the midst of his servitude to prepare a place for His people to dwell. Pharaoh endeavoured to kill off the Jews, but God intervened. Balaam directed Balak to dilute the holy lineage through intermarriage; again, God intervened. Repeatedly surrounding nations attempted to destroy Israel, but God delivered them. Satan incited David to number the people, bringing down judgement on the nation. Through all these misadventures, God was at work.

³ Boice, op. cit., 199

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The chosen lineage narrowed and narrowed until at last it came to a young Jewish girl of perhaps no more than twelve years of age. Mary was chosen to bring the Messiah into this life. The Saviour was obedient to his family, growing in grace, becoming strong and filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was on Him. Then, at about thirty years of age, Jesus was revealed to Israel. His cousin testified in the presence of many people. On a given day, John “saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.” I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.’ And John bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God”’ [JOHN 1:29-34].

“The next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God”’ [JOHN 1:35, 36]!

Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil [see ACTS 10:38]. According to the testimony of witnesses who were with Him, the leaders of the nation in collusion with the Roman authorities put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. Satan had, at last, achieved what he must surely have thought was victory. He had, indeed, bruised the heel of the woman’s offspring. Jesus had been nailed to a tree. Satan had won a Pyrrhic victory in the death of Christ. I suppose that he imagined he had conquered God by destroying God’s Messiah, the promised offspring of the woman.

Had Satan forgotten the prophecy? Had he not realised the final portion of that prophecy? Though evil would bruise the heel of the woman’s offspring, that One would crush the head of the serpent. Satan imagined that he had triumphed over the Son of God; yet, the full weight of the Atonement that was secured by the Crucifixion came down on that ancient serpent. Rather than proving successful in his battle with the Almighty, Satan had actually been carrying out the purposes of God all the while. This is the meaning of the testimony given to the Colossians. “You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” [COLOSSIANS 2:13-15].

Paul speaks of Christ the Lord as “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” [ROMANS 3: 26]. Satan’s only power comes from the thralldom of fear that holds us in bondage. We know God’s righteous decree that sin must be punished, and we shrink from that knowledge because we know we are sinful people. Satan imagined that by destroying the Son of God, he could destroy the means by which people would turn to God for forgiveness and freedom from sin. He had failed to understand that the Christ would be just and the justifier.

The Christ had taken the place of sinners, offering Himself as a sacrifice because of sin. In presenting Himself as the perfect sacrifice, Jesus had borne the punishment that sinners so richly deserved. In doing this, the power of Satan was broken. This accounts for what is written in the Word: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” [HEBREWS 2:14, 15].

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We have victory in Christ the Lord. However, because our Master was faithful, we anticipate another victory that shall shortly be won by all who follow the Christ. I am speaking of a victory that is assured for all who are saved. It is a victory that is still in process, so far as we are concerned. We live in time, and thus, this victory is being won. However, because we are secure in the Saviour, this victory is certain. As the Apostle is drawing to a close his missive written to the Christians of Rome, he makes a most encouraging statement. It is worth looking at this statement. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” [**ROMANS 16:20**]. This is the promise of God.

The Revelator referred to this victory when he wrote, “War arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony’” [**REVELATION 12:7-11**].

Child of God, what a wonderful time to look forward to what is given us in our Saviour. Christmas reminds us that Satan is a conquered foe. We are assured that victory is ours in Christ the Lord. Hold fast to your confidence and to the Word of our Master. “Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,

‘Yet a little while,
and the coming one will come and will not delay;
but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him.’

“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls” [**HEBREWS 10:35-39**].