May the Lord shower you with grace!

*“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”*

 Luke 13:24

Jesus Himself is, of course, the narrow door. He is the only door for anyone to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The sad truth is that many will seek to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by some other way. But there is no other way.

And there are also many who will claim to use the narrow door, but they will want to go through the door in their own way; according to their own desires. This will not work either. This is akin to trying to unlock a door using the wrong key. It won’t work.

Using the narrow door properly is basically simple: Believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

But notice that first word in our Scripture: *strive*. Evidently, there is work to be done. We must be careful here; this does not mean saving ourselves by our works. But there need to be works to demonstrate that our faith is real. The works are the evidence of our faith.

Believing on Christ means accepting Him as Saviour; He saves us because we can’t save ourselves; we will never be good enough and we must be redeemed. It also means accepting Him as Lord; if He is our Lord, then we strive to be obedient to Him and give Him charge of our life.

Jesus reminded anyone who would be His follower to count the cost. But although the cost is high, it is a pittance compared to what is received.

In Christ’s love

John

 2-27-22

Genesis 3:1-24 (4)

When last we stopped our look at Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve were standing before Almighty God, partially clothed in a silly leafy garment, and totally covered in shame. They stood obviously condemned in the sight of God, yet they still tried to shift blame for their sin elsewhere. Their spirits were separated from their Creator and so, in a state of death. Their bodies, designed by Yahweh to live forever, now began the slow degradation into physical death. In this state, they had hidden from the only One who was able to help them; in fact, able to completely save them. Thankfully, God, in His great mercy, chose to save them anyway.

All these traits born in the Garden of Eden, would now be a permanent part of the makeup of the human race. We naturally hate God and consider Him an enemy. We believe His loving commandments to be restraints to our freedom. The honor that should go to Him alone, we want for ourselves. We are drawn to sin, hide from God, and when caught try to blame something else. Thankfully, God, in His great mercy, chose to save us anyway.

The temptation has taken place and been successful; the man and the woman have disobeyed God; they have sinned and tried to hide and tried to shift blame. They have already begun to experience the natural consequences of their sin; but now, they hear from God what He will bring about.

God begins by addressing the serpent and satan at the same time. Throughout Scripture, this is a mark of divinity in prophecy. The prophecy is accurate and applies to something that is natural and current, but it also applies to something spiritual and in the future. The Old Testament is full of these types of duel foretellings: Prophecies that apply to David or Israel or other kings or peoples; but at the same time apply to Christ, to salvation, or to the future Kingdom of God.

What God tells the serpent definitely pertains to snakes today and throughout history. They crawl on their belly. This may mean that they had legs at one time, but the Bible doesn’t tell us. They eat dust. Because they have no limbs, they can’t clean off their food so they have to eat whatever comes along with it. Being down on one’s belly and eating dust are both signs of defeat and humiliation.

When God had made the animals, He deemed them good; now the snake is cursed. God brought about enmity between the woman’s seed and the seed of the snake. Now, the word seed has several connotations. In reference to the relationship between the woman and the serpent, it means natural offspring. And so, down through the centuries, no animal has been more universally feared and hated than the snake. Many snake-bites are low on a person’s body; around the heel. Many snakes receive a death-blow to the head from people.

Many times in the Bible, we see God use another nation to punish His people, Israel. Be it Assyria or Babylon or Rome, God uses these pagan nations as a rod to bring His people back to Him. We also see that afterward, God will break that rod for their hostility to His people. The nations of Assyria and Babylon and Rome are nothing like what they were, if they still exist at all. It is the same type of idea with the snake; satan used the snake to tempt God’s people so the snake is also punished for its part.

The snake groans under its curse just as all the rest of creation groans. (That’s Romans 8:22.) But just as the redemption offered in Christ is available to the descendants of the pagan nations, serpents will once again be blessed when Jesus comes back to reign during the millennium.

Isaiah 11:8 tells us, “*The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den*.” Again, God is merciful.

Now, what God has said to the serpent, applies to the devil. He is the one who used the serpent and actually performed the deed of tempting, that resulted in the downfall of mankind. Satan is cursed. For satan, there is a metaphorical crawling on his belly and licking dust. It applies to him as a symbol of his defeat and his humiliation. Although it did not take place immediately, we all know that it took place with the work of Jesus on the cross. His defeat is accomplished and his humiliation is continuing. Although he is still active, he can do nothing God doesn’t allow him to do and God uses everything satan does to bring about His own plan.

Verse 15 is a very important verse in the Bible. Although the existence of the tree of life was an indication that God had plans to restore life once mankind lost it; verse 15 is the embryonic form of the Gospel. We see the promise of the destruction of satan by a man.

As we look at this verse, we must be careful and remember that this is prophecy. Prophecy is often written in a partially veiled language and it requires the insight provided by the Holy Spirit to understand it. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 2:8 when he speaks of “*the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*.” The human rulers of the time, such as Herod and Pilate, didn’t understand who Jesus was; but neither did the spiritual rulers, satan and his demons.

They had a basic knowledge of who Jesus was, but they didn’t understand the prophecies about Him, they didn’t understand His significance and what He was doing on earth. If they had, satan wouldn’t have had Him crucified, because that is what brought about satan’s defeat. Satan has a knowledge of the Bible; he quoted from it when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. But to understand the Bible requires the Holy Spirit and satan certainly doesn’t have the Holy Spirit.

God said He would put enmity between satan and the woman. That one’s easy. Satan hates everyone; he hates all of God’s creation. And it is easy to imagine that Eve now wants nothing to do with the one that caused her and her husband to be thrown out of the garden and separated from God.

Considering the seed is a little trickier. When considering the serpent, it was definitely offspring; children. But what does it mean by seed of satan? First, I want to warn you about an incorrect teaching that is out there; it has different forms but basically it goes like this: It says that back in verse 6 when we are told that Eve saw that the tree was desirable, it really means that she was looking at satan. Some will even say that the verse reads “she saw that he was good”; it does not say “he”, it says “the tree”.

From this comes the statement that Eve actually had sex with satan and that her first child, Cain, was his. Thus, Cain was satan’s seed or his offspring. Some other Bible verses are used to support this such as satan appearing as an angel of light. And the story of Jesus partially healing the blind man who saw people looking like trees walking. The idea being that satan was the tree in the garden.

This teaching is a twisting of Scripture and one we must be careful not to fall for. The Bible is clear that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was real and in the garden. It is clear that satan’s work was to simply tempt Eve to disobey God. The later evil that was in Cain was just the natural consequence of separation from God. The other Scriptures used to support this theory have completely different meanings.

The Bible does make reference to satan having children, but this is not in a physical sense. It is in the sense that these people follow the will of satan. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and the tares. The owner of the field, God, sows good seed; his enemy, satan, comes in and sows bad seed. This is a picture of the church which is where God has placed His children, His legitimately adopted children, who are in Christ Jesus. And satan has placed some of his children, people who do the will of satan, in the church order to cause trouble. The two are allowed to remain together until harvest.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus called the Pharisees “children of the devil”. Again, not physical offspring, but people who are doing satan’s will. We can come back to Cain. Cain was the biological offspring of Adam and Eve, yet because he chose evil over good, in 1 John 3:12 he is noted as he “*who was of the evil one*”.

From the Garden of Eden on, any who followed satan would be an enemy of those who followed God. It is the same today as Christians are persecuted to varying degrees throughout the world.

Now, the word “seed” can be either plural or singular. Up to this point in our discussion it has been plural. But the full impact of the prophecy comes when we take the seed as singular. There is one particular seed of satan and one particular descendant of Eve who is meant here. The one particular seed of satan is satan himself; the seed of Eve is, of course, Jesus.

This is verified in the next line, “*He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel*.” God is speaking to satan so the pronoun “you” refers to him. “He” is definitely singular and is referring to a specific man. The devil will bruise him on the heel; in other words, he will hurt him but it will not be a death blow. The devil will in turn be bruised on the head; in other words, a death blow. This is exactly what happened with Jesus: He was wounded for our transgressions and satan was defeated.

We mentioned earlier that the snake would be blessed again during the millennium and we know that Jesus brought about the redemption of any man or woman who will believe on Him for salvation. Satan, however, is done for. There is no redemption for him and his eternity has been determined. Revelation 20:10, “*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*.”

We must not miss the tender mercies of God displayed here in Genesis 3:15. The man and woman have just rebelled against their Creator and He is necessarily pronouncing judgement on them; but right in the middle of it He is promising them a way of salvation. God makes it clear that He already has a plan to save the eternal lives of His people.

And look at how He lifts up the woman, even though she played her part in this fall. God lets her know that salvation is going to come through her. Notice that it is the seed of the woman, not the seed of the man, that will crush the head of satan. This is why the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is so necessary to Christianity. Belief in the virgin birth is not optional; Christianity doesn’t work without it. If Jesus had a human biological father, then He is the seed of man. He is nothing different from any other man and He is not divine.

God used the prophet Isaiah to strengthen His own prophecy from the Garden. Isaiah 7:14, “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*”

Immanuel means “God with us.” And that’s what we have in Jesus. It is mysterious to us how Jesus could be fully God and fully man at the same time; yet this is what has taken place. Jesus is God, yet He dwelt with us as a man. So, He became “God with us.”

As we have seen in the creation account, the Holy Spirit has the power to create life. This is why in Luke 1:35 the angel tells Mary, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God*.” In the same way that God used a rib from Adam to create a woman, He used the seed of Mary to create the man Jesus. With this, Jesus had the dual nature of God and man.

This doctrine of the dual nature of Jesus is also critical to Christianity. In order to accept the full judgement for our sins, Jesus had to die. Since God can’t die, Jesus had to be a man. But at the same time, if Jesus were just a man, He wouldn’t be able to live a perfect life; and God required a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. So, Jesus had to be God.

It seems that God went to a lot more trouble to save us than it took to create us. But that is to God’s glory. He made a way to fully satisfy His justice; at the same time, He acted on His great love and mercy to give us a chance for eternal life. Eternal life where we can spend time enjoying God just as Adam and Eve did before the fall.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, open our eyes to a deeper understanding of what the Father has done for us through Jesus Christ, that our hearts may be drawn to giving Him praise. May praise and adoration well up in us like the living water from Jesus. Help us to comprehend the mercies of the Father, so that we will more eagerly follow Him.

Continually give us the strength and desire to resist the temptations of satan. In this way, we can show our love for Christ by joyously following His commands; and at the same time give glory to God by increasing satan’s humiliation.

You are glorious Lord; Your love for the people You created is beyond us, yet we are grateful for it. We praise Your only begotten Son, Jesus, for both His obedience to You and for His love for us. Without Him, we would be lost in our sin for eternity. With Him, we have blessed eternal life in fellowship with You. Thank You for all these things.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen