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SATAN'S WAR AGAINST GOD

Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

In order to make sense out of end-times Bible prophecy one must first understand what happened at the beginning in order to know where we are headed and why. Although mankind is intricately involved in history, one cannot understand the purpose and goal of history without God's revelation of the angelic dimensions. The starting point begins with Satan's declaration of independence from God shortly after the creation.

THE BATTLE FOR PLANET EARTH BEGINS

Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 are the two major biblical passages that reveal the entrance of sin in the universe when Satan fell. Ezekiel 28 begins with a pronouncement of judgment upon the prince of Tyre, who turns out to be a reference to Lucifer or Satan who is behind the human king (28:11–19). "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there, you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you," says verses 14–15. Even though created beautiful and good, Satan, the top angel of God fell into sin and took a third of the other angels with him (Rev. 12:4, 9).

Isaiah 14 is the other major passage that teaches us about the fall of Satan. Verses 13 and 14 record Satan's famous declaration of rebellion when he said, "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" The Lord's response to this declaration: "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit" (14:15). Satan became God's opponent, His adversary who set out to dethrone God and obstruct His plan for history.

After Satan's fall into sin he now sets out to expand his influence by tempting the newly created Adam and Eve to join his rebellion against God who created them all. This he succeeded in doing as he tempted Eve and got Adam to join them in rebellion against God. As a result of Satan's roll of deceiving the woman into joining his revolt against God, the Lord cursed the serpent and the woman as follows: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15). The outworking of this great conflict between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman commences.

SATAN SLANDERS GOD

The book of Job is the first book of the Bible given to man from God and it is the oldest book in the Biblical canon. I believe that it functions as a prolegomena¹ for the Bible. We have played out in the life of the pre-Abrahamic character of Job the general theme of history. We see that God is demonstrating something to the angelic counsel² through the life and events of Job. In spite of the great trials that Job endures, at the end of his life God blesses him even more than at the first and demonstrates that Satan's basic claim that God does not know what He is doing is proven wrong. The rest of the Bible and history demonstrates this same thesis in much greater detail involving Israel but also the church and other redeemed peoples.

At the beginning of the story, when the angels (fallen and unfallen) came to present themselves before the LORD, the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." (Job 1:7). As we follow the development of Satan's dialogue with the LORD we find that even though the evil one *can* attack human beings it does not mean that he *may*. Satan needs God's permission to bring chaos in the life of a human being.

We see that the Lord initiated the conversation with Satan by asking him if he had "considered My servant Job." Satan then asked permission from the Lord if he could harm Job. Surely Satan would not be asking permission on a matter like this if it were not necessary. Satan recognized that the Lord had put a hedge (fence) around Job and his house that prevented him from stalking Job without God's permission. After the Lord granted Satan permission, He limited the extent of suffering which he would be permitted to inflict (1:12; 2:6).

In the conversations between the Lord and Satan we see that the Devil charges God with not being a good God, Who doesn't know what He is doing, and One who can only gain loyalty from a person if He buys the off. We see that Satan's goal is to obstruct the plan of God from unfolding so that he will be able to demonstrate that God does not know how to run the universe, in fact, Satan believes that he could do a better job. Therefore, the struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman has played out in history and will come to a culmination in the last days, during the seven-year tribulation.

SATAN ATTACKS ISRAEL

The conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is becomes focused upon Israel since the Messiah will come forth from God's elect nation. Therefore, if Satan can obstruct God's plan at any point and prevent it from unfolding in history, then he believes that he will have obstructed God's plan and will have proven his initial claim that the Lord does not deserve to be God, the Most High One.

Revelation 12 is an entire chapter that explains why Satan attacks Israel in the middle of the tribulation and attempts to wipe her out. It is because the Devil knows that he only has a short while to finally obstruct God's plan and now his only hope is to prevent the second coming of Christ. How can he do that? He believes he can accomplish that by destroying the Jews, since the second coming will occur when Israel is converted to Jesus as their Messiah and then calls upon Him to come and rescue them at Armageddon or else Israel will be wiped out. Thus, Revelation 12 provides insight into this age long conflict that has been going on from the beginning of history, throughout history and will be an important issue at the climax of history.

Revelation 12 tells us that a third of the angels fell and followed Satan in his original revolt. We learn this when we realize that the stars in this passage are symbolic of angels (compare Rev. 9:1; 12:7, 9). "This is a war in heaven that resulted in the casting of Satan and his angels to earth before the birth of the woman's child, so it belongs to the past. A second war in 12:7-9 is Satan's final attempt to storm heaven, bringing about the child's overthrow after his birth."³

The second half of the verse is a clear reference to Satan (the dragon) who stood before the woman (Israel) in anticipation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah, who is the child that the woman gave birth to in the past. Satan did not know the exact moment of the birth of Messiah and so he waited expectantly for the seed of woman to come forth. His attempt to devour the woman's child is seen in the New Testament as Satan inspires King Herod to develop a plot to find and kill Jesus (Matt. 2). Because the historical

events surrounding the birth of Jesus were part of the angelic conflict, the Lord warns the magi from the east in a dream to avoid Herod, “they departed for their own country by another way” (Matt. 2:12). Since Satan was about to inspired Herod to kill all male babies in the Bethlehem area who were in the age-range of Jesus, “an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying ‘Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him’” (Matt. 2:13). God is always at least one step ahead of Satan.

These kinds of events down through history are part of the angelic conflict, the war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Thomas summaries some of the key events from history as follows:

The dragon’s evil intentions toward the woman’s unborn child evidenced themselves throughout OT history. Instances of his hostility surfaced in Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen. 4:8), the corrupting of the line of Seth (Gen. 6:1–12), attempted rapes of Sarah (Gen. 12:10–20; 20:1–18) and Rebekah (Gen. 26:1–18), Rebekah’s plan to cheat Esau out of his birthright and the consequent enmity of Esau against Jacob (Gen. 27), the murder of the male children in Egypt (Ex. 1:15–22), attempted murders of David (e.g., 1 Sam. 18:10–11), Queen Athaliah’s attempt to destroy the royal seed (2 Chron. 22:10), Haman’s attempt to slaughter the Jews (Esther 3—9), and consistent attempts of the Israelites to murder their own children for sacrificial purposes (cf. Lev. 18:21; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3; Ps. 106:37–38; Ezek. 16:20).

The attack of Herod against the children of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16) and many other incidents during Jesus’ earthly life, including His temptation, typify the ongoing attempt of the dragon to “devour” the woman’s child once he was born. The most direct attempt was, of course, in the crucifixion of Christ.⁴

Prophecy is needed for God to demonstrate in history that Jesus Christ has the right to rule over planet earth and Satan is nothing more than a liar concerning anything that he speaks about, especially concerning God. This is why God has designed future prophetic events to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the hero of history. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Prolegomena means a critical or discursive introduction to a book.

² The angelic counsel are those angels, both fallen and elect that appear before God’s Throne in heaven as depicted in Job 1:6; 2:1.

³ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), p. 124.

⁴ Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, p. 125.