

Satan conquered at the cross.

HOW THE CONFLICT BEGAN.

The devil's connection with the cross of our Lord Jesus goes back a very long way. It begins, of course, right back in the garden of Eden, when the Lord God notifies the serpent, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between *your seed* and *her Seed*',¹ when the Lord God serves the tempter clear notice that, '*He* (the Seed of the woman, that is) shall bruise (shall 'crush') *your head*, and *you* shall bruise (shall crush) *His² heel*'.

And I note that God's declaration does not take the form of a *promise* to Adam or to Eve³ but that of a *curse* and judgement pronounced on the serpent.⁴

And with those words the battle lines are drawn for the great conflict of the ages. Understandably, from that moment on, the devil's strategy is, at all costs, to frustrate God's programme and thereby to prevent his own defeat. This he attempts to do by launching a series of pre-emptive strikes against 'the Seed of the woman'.

Although, inevitably, much was unclear to Satan then, this at least was certain, that, at some time, One was to come who, though suffering injury at his, the devil's, hand (this injury being spoken of figuratively as the crushing of His heel) would succeed in defeating and, effectively, in destroying him—for this fatal blow is clearly implied by the reference to the crushing of the serpent's head.

SATAN'S PREEMPTIVE STRIKES THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT.

And the obvious way for the devil to avoid this most unwelcome outcome was, of course, for him, one way or another, to destroy the awaited Seed before that Seed could destroy him.⁵

The Bible doesn't actually identify Satan's early attempts in this direction (indeed, we read very little of the devil in the Old Testament) but it is not difficult, without, I trust, being too fanciful, for us to spot at least some of these attempts.

Throughout the Old Testament period, God reveals more and more of the ancestry of the woman's 'Seed', each fresh revelation narrowing the field; from (a) the Seed of the woman⁶ to (b) the Seed of Abraham,⁷ to (c) the Seed of Isaac⁸ and of Jacob,⁹ to (d) one from the royal tribe of Judah¹⁰ and, finally, to (e) one of the 'offspring' of King David—to the 'Seed of David'.¹¹

And it is not difficult for us to detect some of Satan's efforts to destroy the Seed, as he attempts to keep pace with God's unfolding revelation ... as God's word gradually homes in on the coming deliverer.

We might think, for example:

(i) of Cain's murder of Abel;¹²

(ii) of the corruption which led to the world-wide flood and to the near extinction of the entire human race;¹³

(iii) of the planned slaughter of all the Jewish *male* (note that word) children in Egypt.¹⁴ Remember God's word to the serpent in the garden, '*He shall bruise/crush your head*';¹⁵

(iv) of the attempt by Queen Athaliah of Judah to slay all the seed of David,¹⁶ through whom (according to God's promise) one was to come whose throne and kingdom would be established for ever;¹⁷ and

(v) of the cunning plan of Haman the Agagite to exterminate the entire Jewish nation in the days of Esther.¹⁸ At this point there was no king on the throne of Israel (and, therefore, no evident seed of David) and Satan, having likely lost track of the line through which the Seed of the woman was to come and with the nation scattered throughout the whole Persian empire, had no choice, therefore, but to adopt a 'blunderbuss' approach and target the whole nation of Israel.¹⁹

Yet, as we would expect (God's being who He is), in each and every case, the serpent's very best endeavours are doomed to failure, being frustrated and thwarted by the sovereign Lord.

For, (i) if Cain murdered his brother Abel, God responded with a Seth;²⁰

and, (ii) if the wickedness of man was great in the earth, causing the Lord to announce that He would destroy man, God responded with a Noah;²¹

and, (iii) if Pharaoh planned the slaughter of all the Jewish male children in Egypt, God responded by using the two chief Hebrew midwives (who feared the Lord more than they did Pharaoh²²) and by sheltering and preserving baby Moses in the most remarkable way;²³

and, (iv) if Queen Athaliah of Judah attempted to wipe out the entire seed of David, God responded by using Jehosheba,²⁴ the late King Ahaziah's sister, to save the life of one of Ahaziah's sons, Joash;²⁵

and, (v) if Haman the Agagite planned to exterminate the entire Jewish race, God responded through the faith and courage of young Queen Esther²⁶ and by denying the King of Persia a night's sleep;²⁷

yet—in each and every case—the serpent's best endeavour was frustrated and thwarted by the all-wise God.

'IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH': SATAN'S TWO TACTICS.

But all came to a head, of course, when our Lord Jesus Himself entered the world.

I said above that 'the obvious way' for the devil to avoid the Seed's 'defeating and effectively destroying him' was 'for him, one way or another, to destroy the awaited Seed before that Seed could destroy him'.

But once the Seed of the woman 'was manifested' on earth,²⁸ with His identity then well known to the devil,²⁹ there were, in fact, not one but two courses of action open to Satan to neutralize the threat posed by Him:

(a) somehow to persuade Him to change sides and to join his (the devil's) ranks;

and/or

(b) to continue with his original plan of destroying Him.

And we discover that, during our Lord's life on earth, Satan employs both of these *very different tactics* to eliminate the threat posed by the long-awaited Seed.

(1) Tactic one: to entice and to enrol Him.

On the one hand, the devil attempts to win the Lord Jesus over to his side.

(i) Satan's first attempt: in the wilderness of Judea.

In the wilderness, Satan offers Him all the kingdoms of the world³⁰ (kingdoms destined to be given to Him by God³¹ in God's time, following, as we know, the suffering of the cross³²) in exchange for His worship³³—together with, as our Lord observes, His service!³⁴

In this, his third and final recorded temptation,³⁵ the tempter drops his mask. Having previously been careful to avoid any reference to himself, now, in one daring bid, he openly draws attention to himself with his three-fold '*I*' and his repeated '*me*': 'To you *I* will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to *me*, and *I* give it to whom *I* will. If you, then, will worship *me*, it will all be yours'.³⁶

Now, he shows his hand, revealing that which was his real goal: namely, that Jesus should 'worship' him.

With a sideways glance at Revelation 13, I suspect that Satan (whose invariable ambition is to displace God as the object of men's worship) covets, not only our Lord's personal worship but also the worship of all who ever come to know that he gave His 'authority' to Him. I have

in mind that which is said of a coming day, 'the whole earth ... worshipped the dragon which gave authority to the beast'.³⁷

Nothing less than His worship is the price which the devil/dragon demands of Jesus in exchange for being given 'all the kingdoms of the world' without having first to endure the cross.³⁸

(ii) Satan's second attempt: in the region of Caesarea Philippi.

As I understand it, it is, in effect, the same Satanic proposal which lies behind Simon Peter's outburst at Caesarea Philippi, when he objects most violently to any suggestion that the Christ should suffer and die at Jerusalem.³⁹

In Peter's well-intentioned 'rebuke',⁴⁰ the Lord detects the same 'hiss' which He had heard earlier in the wilderness. He can read the devil's 'small print'. He knows that *for Him to bypass the cross on the devil's terms will require Him to pay homage to the great usurper!*⁴¹

But on both occasions, the enemy's ploy signally fails as witness the commands of Jesus: **(i)** 'Get hence', Satan';⁴² **(ii)** 'Get behind me, Satan'.⁴³

(2) Tactic two: to vanquish and to destroy Him.

Generally speaking, the devil concentrates his efforts on orchestrating numerous attempts to *destroy* the Seed.

(i) When Jesus was a very young child.

The opening verses of Revelation 12⁴⁴ speak of a 'great red dragon', whose identity as 'the devil and Satan' is soon made explicit:⁴⁵ 'The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth (a reference to the nation of Israel, if I understand the imagery correctly), that he might devour her child (who was destined, we learn, 'to shepherd all nations with a rod of iron'⁴⁶) as soon as it was born'.⁴⁷

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to read that when, after four hundred years or so of silence following the close of the Old Testament, God speaks again,⁴⁸ Satan's ears prick up.

Alerted by **(i)** the declarations of the angel Gabriel,⁴⁹ **(ii)** the rejoicing of the angelic host,⁵⁰ and **(iii)** the visit of the wise men from the East,⁵¹ the devil attempts (through the insane jealousy of Herod the Great) to kill the young child.⁵²

I note with interest the word which the angel of the Lord uses when speaking to Joseph, the husband of Mary, in a dream, 'Herod will seek the young child to *destroy* Him'.⁵³ There can be no doubt who stood behind that attempt!

(ii) When Jesus was an adult.⁵⁴

In John 8, which ends with the Jews taking up stones to cast at Jesus,⁵⁵ our Lord twice tells them, 'You seek to kill me'.⁵⁶ Pulling back the curtain on their murderous designs, he adds, 'You are of your father, the devil, and *the desires of your father you want to do*. He was a murderer from the beginning'.⁵⁷ Danger, devil at work!

And can we not detect the same sinister (albeit unseen) hand behind:

(a) the *earlier* attempt by the men of Nazareth to cast our Lord headlong down the nearby cliff, recorded in Luke 4?⁵⁸ This is a case then, perhaps, of the devil saying, 'Well, if you won't "throw yourself down", as I suggested earlier on the pinnacle of the Temple,⁵⁹ let me help you!'

(b) the *later* attempt by the Jews to stone our Lord at the Feast of Dedication, recorded towards the end of John 10?⁶⁰

But, in each and every case, the serpent's strategy of destroying the Seed of the woman proves no more successful than his strategy of winning Him over to his side.⁶¹

'No more successful', that is, until—finally—the dragon sees (and readily grasps) his opportunity.

(iii) The cross.

Luke records that, in the runup to the feast of Unleavened Bread (effectively, the Passover⁶²), 'the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might *destroy* Him ... Then *Satan entered Judas* ... and he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them'.⁶³

This is, in fact, the *first* of two stages at which, we are told, the devil 'entered' into Judas—the *second* being in the upper room, when, after our Lord dips the morsel of bread and gives it to him and 'Satan entered into him',⁶⁴ Judas immediately leaves the room to bring the band of soldiers and others to arrest Jesus.⁶⁵

These are the only instances of which I am aware where the devil actually 'entered' into a man.⁶⁶ These instances are altogether unique—unprecedented and not to be repeated. But, clearly, to the serpent, his goal of destroying the Seed of the woman is of sufficient importance to him as to warrant his direct and personal involvement.

Not that this is the only contribution made by Satan to our Lord's crucifixion ... not by a long way.

Listen to our Lord's chilling words in the Garden of Gethsemane, addressed to those who (led by the guiding hand of 'the betrayer', into whom Satan has entered) come to arrest Him: 'When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not attempt to take me. But this is your hour, and *the power of darkness*'.⁶⁷

I conclude from His words that Jesus detects the hosts of evil mustering for their final assault ... with, so to speak, their every banner unfurled!⁶⁸

And, certainly, it is not difficult to believe that it is the serpent-dragon himself who incites (a) the envy⁶⁹ and the hatred⁷⁰ of the Jewish religious leaders, (b) the demand of the multitude, 'Crucify, crucify Him'⁷¹ and (c) the taunts and jeers of those who stand around our Lord's cross.⁷²

Admittedly, we do not read of the devil at the cross—nor at Joseph's tomb, for that matter. But surely, we can take it for granted that the mighty Overlord of Evil is elated—jubilant—positively ecstatic—at Jesus' death and burial.

Having been frustrated and foiled time after time, at long last, the devil has succeeded! The long-awaited Seed of the woman is dead ... is *unquestionably* dead! Apart from anything else, the soldier's spear proves that!⁷³

There is nothing now for Satan to fear—he has triumphed. With his head unscathed,⁷⁴ the serpent has 'destroyed'⁷⁵ the Seed of the woman!⁷⁶ ... 'Crush my head indeed'!

It is all over!

OR IS IT?

'LITTLE DID THEY KNOW'.

Ah, but little did Satan and his demonic host know!

(i) *Little did they know* that, in our Lord's death—in that very cross—lies their ultimate defeat!

(ii) *Little did they know* that what they believe to be their *finest* hour⁷⁷ is, in a very real sense, their *final* hour!

(iii) *Little did they know* that it is not only the Lord Jesus who has been 'cast out' and 'judged' ('cast out'⁷⁸ and 'judged'⁷⁹ by His own nation, that is) but it is also—in a far deeper sense—their Satanic Majesty ('the ruler of this world') who has, as our Lord foretold, been 'cast out',⁸⁰ and who has been 'judged'.⁸¹

For the verdict is in! 'The ruler of this world' stands 'judged' ('condemned'). He is under sentence, awaiting only, in God's time, the execution of his sentence.⁸²

(iv) *Little did they know* that "through death He (the Lord Jesus) destroyed⁸³ ('reduced to inactivity',⁸⁴ 'put out of use',⁸⁵ 'brought to nothing',⁸⁶ 'annulled'⁸⁷) him who had the power (the 'force, strength, might'⁸⁸) of death, that is, the devil'.⁸⁹

Just as young David slew the stunned Philistine champion with *his own* sword,⁹⁰ so it is that, 'through death', our Lord vanquishes him who had 'the power of death', wresting from his hands his most terrifying weapon.

Truly:

*He Satan's pow'r laid low;
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.
Bless, bless the Conqueror slain ...*⁹¹

(v) Little did they know that He 'disarmed (the evil) principalities and authorities,⁹² making a public spectacle of them ('exposing them to open ridicule'⁹³), triumphing over them in it ('in the cross', that is)'.⁹⁴

We can 'view the principalities and powers here as the defeated foes, driven in front of the triumphal chariot as involuntary and impotent witnesses to their conqueror's superior might'.⁹⁵ Yes, the cross, which the powers of evil herald as the symbol of their victory, proves, to their cost, to be our Lord's triumphal chariot!

(v) Little did they know that 'Satan, who by a tree overcame our first parents in Eden, was himself overcome by a tree—the tree of the cross on which Jesus died'.⁹⁶

'Little did they know'. But ...

THEY WERE SHORTLY TO FIND OUT!

For then dawns the morning of the dragon's nightmare, when 'very early on the first day of the week',⁹⁷ Joseph's tomb is found to be empty. The tomb's short-term Tenant has vacated the premises! He has risen—gloriously triumphant!

Make no mistake, this 'first day of the week' is Satan's gloomiest day.

And, ironically, Satan has done much to seal his own doom. For it is as a result of (metaphorically speaking) 'crushing the heel' of the woman's Seed that his own head has been crushed.⁹⁸

And so we view the cross of Jesus, not as the place of His defeat but as the place of His decisive and spectacular victory, where the devil's doom was settled—where the devil met his Waterloo—where the despot of death received what was, in one sense, *his* death-blow—at the hand of 'the Great Dragon Slayer'.

Paradoxically, the devil's master-plan of seeking to destroy the Saviour of the world and of thereby thwarting God's purpose, backfires on him and plays an all-important role in bringing about that which he was most determined to prevent, namely, his own destruction!⁹⁹ And the cross (the instrument of shame and death by which he thought to have achieved his greatest victory) became the instrument of his own defeat.¹⁰⁰

We can rest assured that, if the devil and his host had had so much as an inkling what God in His wisdom¹⁰¹ was doing at the cross, then (together with the religious and political 'rulers of this age') 'they would not', in the words of the apostle Paul, have 'crucified the Lord of glory'!¹⁰²

'NOT WHAT THEY SEEM'

'Never did there seem such triumph of the powers of darkness as when Christ was crucified and laid in the tomb. Thank God, things are not what they seem. It was the hour of God's victory; it was the overthrow of Satan's kingdom; it gave to the world a risen Christ, who lives for evermore'.¹⁰³

D-DAY and V-DAY

'D-Day was when the Allied forces landed in Normandy and established a beachhead. The strategizing generals on both sides recognized that the outcome of the war was decided on that fateful day in June 1944. They understood that if the Nazis had driven the Allies back into the sea, they would have won the war. But because the Allied armies prevailed at Normandy, they sealed the eventual doom of the Nazi cause ... Between D-Day and V-Day, there would be many months of suffering and struggle. There would be horrendous battles as

the Allied armies, little by little, pushed back the Nazi forces. These ensuing struggles culminated in the V-Day that marked the complete surrender of the enemy and the Allies' liberation of all of Europe'.¹⁰⁴

That which the Lord Jesus accomplished at Golgotha represents the decisive battle of the great war between God and the devil.¹⁰⁵ The cross and the resurrection are God's 'D-Day'.

As yet, God's 'V-Day' hasn't dawned. But because of Jesus' triumph on 'D-Day', we know how it will all end: 'the devil ... thrown into the lake of fire'.¹⁰⁶

I said above that, at the cross of Jesus, Satan 'met his Waterloo'. And so he did.

The battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815 between the British under the Duke of Wellington and the French under Napoleon.¹⁰⁷ I have read¹⁰⁸ (but seriously doubt any historical basis for the story¹⁰⁹) that a series of stations, each one in sight of the next, had been set up all the way to the coast by the British to send visible coded messages from the battlefield in Belgium to be relayed across the Channel to England.

Eventually, so the story runs, the awaited message arrived: 'Wellington defeated'.

The anecdote continues that those who first received the message were devastated at the news: their commander and his army had apparently been defeated.

But, so the (likely apocryphal) story goes, only part of the message had been received. For, as the message was being spelled out at one of the stations, a sudden blanket of fog obscured the signal. And when the fog cleared, the full message was sent—which message read 'Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo'. The outcome of the battle had been the exact opposite to that which the people had originally thought. Wellington had not lost the battle – he had won the battle.

But, whether that story is true or not, I can tell you that, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of that first Good Friday, the message broadcast loudly from the cross of Jesus seems to say, 'Jesus defeated'. If ever a cause seems lost, this is it. If ever the powers of darkness seem victorious, it is then.

It wasn't until early on Easter Sunday that 'the fog lifts', so to speak, and the full message is received, 'Jesus defeated Satan at Golgotha'

Oh yes, most certainly

Jesus conquered Satan at Golgotha.

Notes

¹ Gen. 3. 15.

² For the interpretation that the 'seed' of the woman can be viewed both as an individual and collectively, see, for example, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/seed-woman-individual-collective/>.

³ Although God's words were addressed to the serpent, they were there for man to lay hold on.

⁴ 'People talk of promise to Adam, but there was no promise to Adam. God made a statement upon which Adam could rest, but that was not a promise made to Adam', J. N. Darby, '*Lecture on Colossians 1*', Notes and Jottings, page 227; 'There was no promise to fallen Adam', J. N. Darby, '*Notes of Readings on 2 Corinthians*', Collected Writings, Volume 26, page 305.

⁵ At this stage, Satan knows only that his appointed conqueror will be human.

⁶ Gen. 3. 15.

⁷ Gen. 22. 18; Gal. 3. 16.

⁸ Gen. 26. 4.

⁹ Gen. 28. 14.

¹⁰ Gen. 49. 10.

¹¹ 2 Sam. 7. 12-13; John 7. 42; Acts 2. 30-31; 13. 22-23; Rom. 1. 3; Rev. 22. 16.

¹² Gen. 4. 1; 'Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother', 1 John 3. 12.

¹³ Gen. 6. 5-7; in effect, the 'wicked one' behind the universal 'wickedness' attempts to lead mankind into sufficient evil to cause God to destroy them,

¹⁴ 'If it is a son', Exod. 1. 13-16.

¹⁵ We might possibly add the incident of the golden calf. *If* the serpent did motivate Aaron and the people to their act of blatant idolatry, he likely aimed to provoke the Lord to destroy the whole existing nation in His 'hot wrath'.

Had the Lord done so (even if He had then made of Moses a replacement nation, Exod. 32. 10, which would, therefore, have descended from Levi and not from Judah, Heb. 7. 14—from whose descendants the promised Seed was to come), the serpent would have succeeded in extinguishing the Messianic line and would, therefore, have avoided having his head crushed. Ah, but ... Moses prayed effectively for the sinning people and God spared them, Exod. 32. 11-14. How much rested on that intercessory prayer of Moses!

¹⁶ 2 Chron. 22. 10.

¹⁷ 2 Sam. 7. 4-5, 12-13.

¹⁸ 'A certain people ... that they be destroyed', Esth. 3. 8-9: 'to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews', Esth. 3. 13.

¹⁹ On these, as possibly on other occasions, we are inclined to say (with our eye on 2 Sam. 14. 19), 'Is not the hand of Satan in all this?' Truly, the devil is a master at working, undetected, behind the scenes; see, for example, his clandestine activity in the days of Job through the Sabeans, the Chaldeans and a series of 'natural' calamities, Job 1. 12-19; 2. 7.

²⁰ Gen. 4. 25.

²¹ Gen. 6. 8; Noah (together with his family) became the channel through whom the human race survived, 1 Pet. 3. 20.

²² Exod. 1. 17-21.

²³ Exod. 2. 2-9.

²⁴ 'Jehoshabeath', 2 Chron. 22. 11.

²⁵ 2 Kings 11. 2-3.

²⁶ Esther 4. 15-16.

²⁷ Esther 6. 1.

²⁸ The Son of God was 'manifested', not only 'to take away our sins', 1 John 3. 5, but also 'to destroy the works of the devil', 1 John 3. 8.

²⁹ Compare: (i) 'a man with an unclean spirit ... cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? *I know who you are*--the Holy One of God"', Mark 1. 23-24; (ii) 'He would not permit the demons to speak, because *they knew Him*', Mark 1. 34. See also Mark 5. 7.

³⁰ Matt. 4. 8-9; Luke 4. 5-7.

'The amazing feature of this revelation is the declaration by Satan, which declaration Christ did not brand as an untruth, that the kingdoms of this cosmos are delivered unto Satan and to whomsoever he wills he gives them. It is predicted that at some future time the world-rule will be conferred by Satan on the man of sin, which fact tends to strengthen Satan's claim to the disposition of these kingdoms ...

'The revelation that Satan is in authority over the cosmos does not rest alone upon his own claim. Christ referred to Satan as the prince of this cosmos, John 12. 31; 14. 30; 16. 11', L. S. Chafer, '*Satan's Authority over the Cosmos*', Systematic Theology, Volume 2, page 84.

³¹ Psa. 2. 8.

³² Luke 24. 26; 1 Pet. 1. 11. This temptation involved taking a short cut, thereby avoiding any suffering and sacrifice, to the possession of the kingdoms of this world.

³³ 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me', Matt. 4. 9.

³⁴ 'Jesus says too him, "Get hence, Satan: for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve'", Matt. 4. 10; Luke 4. 8.

³⁵ In the order recorded by Matthew, Matt. 4. 3-9.

³⁶ Luke 4. 6-7.

³⁷ Rev. 13. 4.

³⁸ The Lord swiftly rebuffed and dismissed the tempter with words from the wilderness book of the Law: 'it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve"', Deut. 6. 13.

It has been well said that 'the first Adam was overcome by Satan; the last Adam drove Satan from the field', L. S. Chafer, *ibid.*, page 65.

³⁹ Matt. 16. 21-23. It is no surprise that the crowning temptation in the wilderness should surface again later because Luke points out that, following the Lord's encounter with the devil there, 'when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him *for a season*'. Luke 4. 13. Those closing words sounded a clear and ominous warning that the Overlord of evil would be back! 'The temptations are rejected, but the reader is warned that we have not seen the last of Satan', N. Richardson, '*The Panorama of Luke*', page 19.

⁴⁰ Matt. 16. 22; Mark 8. 32.

⁴¹ Our Lord knew that it wasn't an option for Him, as the incarnate Son, simply to *take* 'the kingdoms of the world' and to make them His. He must be *given* them, either by God, Psa. 2. 8, or by the usurper, Luke 4. 6-7.

⁴² Matt. 4. 10.

⁴³ Matt. 16. 23.

⁴⁴ Rev. 12. 1-6.

⁴⁵ Rev. 12. 9; cf. Rev. 20. 2.

⁴⁶ Rev. 12. 5.

⁴⁷ Rev. 12. 3-5.

⁴⁸ God spoke *through angels*: Matt. 1. 20-21; Luke 1. 11-20 (note especially Gabriel's words, 'I was *sent* to speak to you', Luke 1. 19), 26-37; 2. 9-14.

⁴⁹ Matt. 1. 20-21; Luke 1. 11-20, 23-27.

⁵⁰ Luke 2. 9-14.

⁵¹ Matt. 2. 1-6. 'The Old Testament not only predicted *how* Messiah would be born (Matt. 1. 18-25) but *where* He would be born (Matt. 2. 1-12)', T. E. Constable, '*Expository Notes*', comment on Matt. 2. 1-12.

⁵² Matt. 2. 16.

⁵³ Matt. 2. 13.

⁵⁴ 'Jesus, when He began His ministry, was about thirty years of age', Luke 3. 23.

⁵⁵ John 8. 59.

⁵⁶ John 8. 37, 40.

⁵⁷ John 8. 44.

⁵⁸ 'All those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down', Luke 4. 28-29.

⁵⁹ Luke 4. 9.

⁶⁰ John 10. 31.

⁶¹ 'The powers of evil gathered about Him. Again and again, they assailed Him; but each fresh assault ended in a new defeat. In the wilderness, He was tempted by Satan; but Satan retired for the time baffled and defeated', J. B. Lightfoot, '*Colossians and Philemon*', page 188.

⁶² Mark 14. 1-2.

⁶³ Luke 22. 1-3.

Given that the Lord Jesus had repeatedly spoken of His resurrection following His death, Matt. 16. 21; 17. 23; 20. 19, I can only assume that Satan was so arrogantly confident in his own power that he convinced himself that, if he was able to slay the Seed of the woman, he would be able to retain Him in the realm of the dead.

If this was so, it was a classic case of seriously misplaced confidence on the part of one who left out of account both (i) the sinlessness of Jesus (which exempted Him from death as 'the wages of sin', Rom. 6. 23), and (ii) 'the working of the strength of (God's) might, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from among the dead', Eph. 1. 19-20. Courtesy of Luke and the apostle Peter, we know what the devil didn't, that 'it was not possible for Him to be held by' death, Acts 2. 24.

⁶⁴ John 13. 26-27.

⁶⁵ John 13. 30.

⁶⁶ This is to be distinguished from:

(i) the devil's putting something into someone's heart (John 13. 2; Acts 5. 3) and
(ii) unclean spirits' taking up their abode in somebody (e.g. Mark 1. 23; 5. 2-13). I note that the same Greek word ('εἰσέρχονται') is used of a *demon's* 'entering' a human being, Mark 9. 25; cf. Matt. 12. 45, as is used of *Satan's* 'entering' Judas. (It seems clear that 'unclean spirits' and 'demons' are one and the same: (a) Mark 5. 2, 12; (b) Luke 9. 42, (c) 'three unclean spirits ... they are the spirits of demons', Rev. 16. 13-14.)

Nor 'is there any analogy in later Judaism' for the statement that 'Satan entered into Judas', W. Foerster, '*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', Volume VII, page 162 (article 'σατανᾶς').

⁶⁷ Luke 22. 53.

⁶⁸ There is evidence that at least some of the demons had given up hope that they could ever win the war, for they said to the Lord Jesus, 'What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God? Have you come here to torment us *before the time?*', Matt. 8. 29. They appear, that is, to recognize the inevitability of their defeat. But this is not to say that all of the devil's angels (still less, his Satanic Majesty himself) shared their bleak view of their future prospects.

⁶⁹ Matt. 27. 18.

⁷⁰ John 15. 24-25.

⁷¹ Luke 23. 21.

⁷² Matt. 27. 39-42.

⁷³ John 19. 34.

See also, (i) 'they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already', John 19. 33, (ii) 'the centurion, who stood facing Him, saw that He breathed His last', Mark 15. 39; (iii) 'Pilate was surprised to hear that He should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether He was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that He was dead, he granted the body to Joseph', Mark 15. 44-45.

⁷⁴ A deliberate allusion to Gen. 3. 15.

⁷⁵ To no small degree, the issue had been 'who will destroy who first?'

⁷⁶ I imagine that Satan positively gleamed with pleasure and that the demonic host raised the equivalent of one mighty cheer. No doubt they were elated by the sight of the stone, seal and soldiers which men had placed at the only entrance to the rock tomb where Joseph of Arimathea had laid 'the body of Jesus', Matt. 27. 57- 66.

(The first sentence of this note echoes words written and sung publicly by Ron Kenoly in 1994.)

⁷⁷ With due acknowledgement to Winston Churchill: 'Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: "*This was their finest hour*". These words were addressed by Mr Churchill to the House of Commons on 18 June 1940, the day after the French signed an armistice with the Germans, thereby effectively surrendering.

⁷⁸ Matt. 21. 39.

⁷⁹ 'Judging Him', Acts 13. 27.

⁸⁰ Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out', John 12. 31.

The various divine judgements upon Satan, by means of which he has been (or is to be) 'cast down' or 'cast out', can be summarised as follows:

(i) from his original exalted station, Luke 10. 18: 'The Lord Jesus is informing the disciples of an event that He saw before Adam's creation', N. Crawford, '*Luke: What the Bible Teaches*', page 183. This is unless the Lord Jesus spoke prophetically: (a) 'Christ saw what was happening in this mission to Israel as the early successes in a war which would end in Satan's being cast out of heaven completely ... His vision was prophetic', David Gooding, '*According to Luke*', page 199; (b) 'In vision He has seen the coming triumph of the kingdom of God over the rule of Satan', J. Nolland, '*Luke: WBC*', Volume 2, page 564; (c) 'The decisive fall of Satan is anticipated in the future, but it is already becoming manifest through the mission of Jesus and, by extension, through the ministry of His envoys', J. B. Green, '*Luke: NICNT*', comment on Luke 10. 18.)

(ii) when his power was broken at the cross, Heb. 2. 14—assuring his ultimate fate;

(iii) at the time of the 'Great Tribulation', Rev. 12. 7-9;

(iv) when cast into the Abyss, Rev. 20. 1-3; and

(v) finally, when cast into the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 10.

⁸¹ 'The ruler of this world is judged', John 16. 11.

⁸² 'The devil ... was cast into the lake of fire', Rev. 20. 10.

Note L. S. Chafer's explanation:

(i) 'A distinction must be drawn between a judgment gained which is in the nature of a legal sentence not yet executed, and the final administering of the penalty. The evidence is conclusive that the sentence is not yet executed since throughout this age following the cross Satan is, by divine authority, given the designations "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2. 2), and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4. 4). He evidently is permitted to continue as a usurper until the time of his execution', L. S. Chafer, '*Satan Judged in the Cross*', Systematic Theology, Volume 2, page 66.

(ii) 'A sentence may be pronounced and made known some time before the sentence is actually executed. During such an interval a criminal is said to be under sentence awaiting his execution which some higher authority has decreed. This period of sentence is that in which Satan appears in the present age, which age had its beginning with the cross. Execution of this sentence would have banished him forever', L. S. Chafer, '*Satan, his Motives and Methods*', page 15

⁸³ The words translated 'destroyed' ('καταργέω'), which occurs 27 times in the Greek New Testament, is very different in meaning from the usual word for 'destroying' ('ἀπόλλυμι'), which occurs 92 times—including Matt. 2. 13, 'Herod is about to seek the young child to *destroy* Him'.

⁸⁴ W. E. Vine, '*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*', article 'Abolish'.

⁸⁵ G. Delling, '*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', Volume I, page 452 (article 'καταργέω').

⁸⁶ W. Barclay, '*Hebrews*', page 25.

⁸⁷ '*Morrish's New and Concise Bible Dictionary*', page 695, article 'Satan'.

⁸⁸ W. E. Vine, *ibid*, article 'Dominion A. Nouns. 1'.

⁸⁹ Heb. 2. 14.

Our Lord entered the devil's own province and territory—namely, death—and defeated him there. 'He conquered Satan in the very place where he exercised his sad dominion over men, and where the judgment of God lay heavily upon men', A. W. Pink, '*An Exposition of Hebrews*', page 134 (attributed to J. N. Darby, but I have been unable to trace the quotation).

At the very least, the serpent/devil was largely responsible for the presence of death in God's creation.

Ponder the following four quotations:

(i) 'Death, originally announced, Gen. 2. 17, as the penalty of transgression, is regarded in the New Testament (notably by Paul) as the sign of the continual dominion of sin over the human race. Thus, in

Rom. 5. 12, 15, the mere fact that all men "from Adam to Moses" had died is adduced as sufficient proof that all were under condemnation as sinners. The devil, through whom it was that sin first entered, and death through sin, is revealed to us generally as the representative of evil, and, as such, the primeval manslayer, John 8. 44, with power given him over death, the penalty of sin, as long as man remains in his dominion, unredeemed. Till redemption cast a new light upon the gloom of death, man was all his life-long in fear of it; its shadow was upon him from his birth', J. Barmby, '*Hebrews: Pulpit Commentary*', page 51.

(ii) 'In what sense did Satan have the power of death? The final authority of death is in the hands of our God (Deut. 32. 39; Matt. 10. 28; Rev. 1. 18). Satan can do only that which is permitted by God (Job 1. 12; 2. 6). But because Satan is the author of sin and sin brings death (Rom. 6. 23), in this sense Satan exercises power in the realm of death. Jesus called him a murderer (John 8. 44). Satan uses the fear of death as a terrible weapon to gain control over the lives of people. His kingdom is one of darkness and death (Col. 1. 13). We who trust in Jesus Christ have once and for all been delivered from Satan's authority and from the terrible fear of death. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ have given us victory (1 Cor. 15. 55-58)', W. Wiersbe, '*Be Confident*', page 31.

(iii) 'How is it that the devil is "rendered powerless" by Jesus' death? Satan seems to be "alive and well on planet earth", continuing to empower death in its many forms. The evil one was not eliminated, annihilated or obliterated at the time of the crucifixion, but the victory has been won by Christ ... Satan's "power of death" in man has been annulled and incapacitated by Jesus taking the death of mankind. The devil's derived legal right to enact death in man has been disenfranchised ... Christians have been delivered "from the dominion of Satan unto God", Acts 26. 18 ... Though our physical bodies are still mortal, that remnant of the devil's "power of death" will be removed when we receive an "imperishable body", I Cor. 15. 42, and "the last enemy that will be abolished is death", (I Cor. 15. 26, when Satan, Rev. 20. 10, and his death power are thrown into the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 14', J. A. Fowler, '*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*', pages 69-70.

(iv) 'Satan's ultimate weapon against us is our own sin. If the death of Jesus takes it away, the chief weapon the devil has is taken out of his hand. In that sense, he is rendered powerless', J. Piper, '*Afraid of Death No More*', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/afraid-of-death-no-more>.

⁹⁰ 1 Sam. 17. 51.

⁹¹ Stanza 3 and the first line of stanza 4 of S. W. Gandy's hymn, '*His be the Victor's name*', slightly adapted in 'Spiritual Songs', accessed at <https://www.stempublishing.com/hymns/ss/24>. Concerning the adaptation, William Kelly wrote, 'The hymn stumbles not a few in the beginning of stanza 2. It has been sought to express the truth guardedly, as well as stanza 3', '*On Hymns*', The Bible Treasury, Volume 20.

⁹² Compare another reference by Paul to *evil* principalities and authorities: 'our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but *against principalities, against authorities*, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies', Eph. 6. 12.

⁹³ 'To expose one to disgrace', Grimm-Thayer, '*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*', page 126.

This and Matt. 1. 19 are the only two occurrences of the word ('*δειγματίζω*') in the Greek Bible. 'The substantive '*δειγματισμός*' occurs on the Rosetta Stone in the sense of "verification". There are a few instances of the verb in the papyri though the meaning is not clear (Moulton and Milligan's Vocabulary)', A.T. Robertson, '*Word Pictures in the New Testament*', comment on Matt. 1. 19.

⁹⁴ 'Having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross; having disarmed principalities and authorities, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it', Col. 2. 13-15.

'Colossians 2. 15 isn't talking about some war in the underworld, then, but of Christ's victorious work on the cross. In the prior verses, Paul speaks about the "legal debt" sinners were under. Christ has now "set this aside" by "nailing it to the cross" ... He has taken away Satan's power to hold sinners to the debt of their sins and trespasses'.

S. Wedgeworth, '*How Jesus Disarmed the Devil*', accessed at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-jesus-disarmed-devil/>.

⁹⁵ F. F. Bruce, '*Colossian Problems: Part 4: Christ as Conqueror and Reconciler*', Bibliotheca Sacra 141, page 299.

The word picture seems to be that of a conquering general whose triumphal chariot leads his defeated foes during the parade of victory; 'making a public spectacle' ... 'as a victor displays his captives or trophies in a triumphal procession', J. B. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, page 189.

⁹⁶ R. F. Norden, '*With Jesus Every Day*', page 163.

⁹⁷ Mark 16. 2.

Interestingly, the Gospel of Mark more or less opens with the expression. 'at even, when the sun did set', Mark 1. 32, and more or less closes with the expression, 'the sun had risen', Mark 16. 2.

⁹⁸ What does Paul mean when he says, 'The God of peace shall bruise ('crush') Satan under your feet shortly' (Rom. 16. 20)?

With an eye on the context of false teachers who were causing division among the saints, Rom. 16. 17-18, consider the following suggested explanations:

(i) 'The assurance that the God of peace shall bruise Satan is obviously set against the effects of those who promote false teaching. They were messengers of Satan, doing his work of causing disharmony amongst the saints. The apostle recognised that the Judaisers were emissaries of Satan ... However, in God's good time He will crush Satan, bringing him under the feet of the saints ... It is probably victory in the present that Paul is advocating here', F. Stallan, '*Romans: What the Bible Teaches*', page 364.

(ii) 'Paul meant that the Roman Christians would frustrate Satan's work among them soon as they rejected the false Teachers', T. E. Constable. *Ibid.*, comment on Rom. 16. 20..

(iii) 'Divisions in the church are Satan's work, and the suppression of them by the God of peace is a victory over Satan ... The false teachers may come and cause dissension, but it will not be long till peace is restored', J. Denney, '*Romans: The Expositor's Greek Testament*', pages 722-723.

(iv) 'This promise would seem to have immediate reference to the efforts of those who were antagonistic to the peace and harmony of the saints (Rom. 16. 17-18). Such efforts are put forth by Satan unremittingly and are continued till the promise is fulfilled by God. Compare what is said about the Judaizing opponents in 2 Cor. 11. 12-15, where they are spoken of as ministers of Satan', W. E. Vine, '*Romans*', page 221.

⁹⁹ The devil and the demons 'were ignorant of the great work which God had in hand; And whilst they thought they were destroying Christ, God was, in and by Him, destroying them and their power', John Owen, 'Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews', 1668, page 273.

Compare the experiences of both Joseph and Jonah:

(i) Joseph's brothers saw their scheme of selling their young brother into slavery (first to the Midianite/Ishmaelite traders and, thence, to Egypt) as a sure-fire way to frustrate his provocative dreams from fulfilment. But, in the event, their selling of Joseph played an early, all-important role in bringing about the fulfilment of his dreams.

(ii) Jonah fled to Tarshish (in all likelihood, on the coast of Spain) that he might frustrate God's purpose of delivering Nineveh from His judgement (Jon. 4. 2). But, in the event, Jonah's subsequent experience in the stomach of the great fish resulted in his being a 'sign' to the Ninevites, Luke 11. 30, which played a critical role in their faith in his message, their repentance and their salvation.

Jonah enjoyed the fish's hospitality as a direct result of his own disobedience. It follows, therefore, that the Lord overruled Jonah's very waywardness and disobedience to bring about the repentance of Nineveh and, therefore, its deliverance. At the outset, Jonah had suspected that God planned to use him as His appointed means of sparing Nineveh from its well-deserved destruction. But what Jonah never imagined in his wildest dreams was just how God was going to bring this about.

In both cases, measures taken by men to frustrate God's revealed purpose backfired on them and played a critical role in bringing about that which they sought to prevent.

¹⁰⁰ In reality, Satan's apparent victory sounded his own death-knell. And he found out too late that he had sawn off the branch on which he was sitting.

'Jesus' crucifixion was the purposed and intentional attempt by the archenemy of God to defeat God's sovereign purposes in history. The resurrection is the power of God to take the devices and strategies by which His Enemy has sought to destroy His purposes and to use those very strategies to accomplish His purposes'.

<https://gutenberg.edu/satan-and-the-significance-of-easter/>

The battle Jesus fought on the cross against the powers of darkness wasn't a minor skirmish; it was a major assault that ended in complete victory for the Saviour.

¹⁰¹ 1 Cor. 2. 7.

¹⁰² 1 Cor. 2. 8.

¹⁰³ M. E. C, '*It is I: be not Afraid*', Help and Food, 1887, page 325.

¹⁰⁴ Tony Campolo, '*Speaking My Mind*', page 120.

'The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war, and yet the war still continues. Although the decisive effect of that battle is perhaps not recognized by all, it nevertheless already means victory. But the war must still be carried on for an undefined time, until " Victory Day" ... there exists a tension between the present (the already accomplished) and the future (the not yet fulfilled). I used the analogy of D-Day and V-Day in order to demonstrate this tension'. O Cullman, '*Christ and Time*', pages 84 and 3.

¹⁰⁵ 'The decisive victory has been won already', G. Aulén, '*Christus Victor*', page 87.

¹⁰⁶ Rev. 20. 10.

¹⁰⁷ 18 June 1815. It, too, was a crucial battle, in that it finally shattered the power of Napoleon.

It is said (but traced to no historical source) that Napoleon once took a map and pointing to the British Isles remarked: 'If it were not for that red spot, I would have conquered the world'. If there is any truth in that anecdote, I suppose that, throughout the coming ages, Satan could say much the same of what our Lord accomplished at Golgotha: '*If it were not for that cross, I would have conquered the world*'.

¹⁰⁸ For example, Roy Zuck, '*The Speaker's Quote Book*', pages 63-64, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/history/modern-history/signal-failure>, and <https://ministriesworldwide.net/when-the-fog-lifted/>.

¹⁰⁹ B. Cathcart, *The News from Waterloo*, has done a very good job of documenting the truth of what happened with the Duke of Wellington's despatch and of how news of his victory reached London and, in so doing, has debunked the 'Wellington defeated' myth.

I quote, 'More widely known, and repeated to this day, is a story that the victory signal was transmitted to London along a line of semaphores, with unfortunate consequences. Signallers atop Winchester Cathedral, it is said, had passed on only the first words of the message, "Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo", when a sudden fog descended. The next semaphore station in line faithfully relayed what it had received, and so ministers were given the wholly wrong bulletin: "Wellington defeated" ... The tale of the Winchester semaphore has no foundation in evidence. Winchester was not a telegraph station, nor does it lie on any sensible news route between Belgium and London', pages xii and 318. See, also, pages 37, 41-43.