

THE FIRST GOSPEL.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen.3:15.

When the first man appeared as the crowning work of God's creation we believe that physically he was mature and perfect, not a babe, nor a weakling, and that socially he was civilized, not a savage in the forest. He was made in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. He was made the representative head of the human race. In this capacity he was under covenant with God, and with his wife lived in the beautiful garden of Eden.

Then came the fall, that tragedy which was most colossal in its character and consequences. This first man is found in a state of sin, shame, sorrow, condemnation, death. While in this estate of sin and misery, the Scriptures present him as the hearer of the first gospel. As God was pronouncing his three-fold curse as a result of the first sin there sounds out the first gospel. In the midst of wrath mercy is remembered.

In this first gospel, Genesis 3:15, we have the germ of the apostolic message which we find in its flower and fruitage in the New Testament.

"As the oak perfect and entire is in the acorn that buries itself in the soil, and expands and extends an ever perfect life 'til it becomes the gigantic monarch of the forest; so the entire gospel of redemption was in that germinal promise concerning the seed of the woman which, buried in the clods of a wasted Eden, shot forth its life parallel with the growth of humanity. Now it appears as the tender twig of promise to Enoch and Noah; now the vigorous sapling to the faith of Abraham; now the refreshing shade tree leafing out in the gorgeous ritual of Moses; now the well-known pilot's signal tree guiding the course of David and Isaiah; now putting forth its blossom of plenteous promise in the gospel of John the Baptist; and now bearing the rich harvest of ripe fruit in the preaching of the Apostles under the ministration of the Spirit. Thus thru all the ages in all divers manners of its communication, it is one and the same gospel, embodying the great truths in its various stages of development."
-Stuart Robinson.

Although Genesis 3:15 contains the apostolic message in germ, that germ was perfect from the first. Its apostolic expansion is pictured in the book of Revelation, chapter 12, under the figure of the woman, the dragon and the child. And the whole Bible is largely an exposition of this message. This verse has been called "A little history of humanity." Considered in the light of the whole range of scripture we see here

- 1) The Conflict Continued,
- 2) The Conquest Certain,
- 3) The Cross Contemplated.

Here is a picture of the conflict of the ages,—"enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed." It was begun in Eden. It has been continued throughout all the generations, and will continue on to the end, when "These shall war against the Lamb." (Rev.17:14a) On the one side are Satan and all the forces of sin in all their grim reality, and on the other side Christ and His church militant.

From the time of the prophecy, "He shall bruise thy head", sinful man has been assured that the victory over Satan is sure—the conquest certain. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus partook of flesh and blood "that thru death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The apostle John joins his witness to the same effect that

(See 1642-14-75)

(John 3:18)

Rev. 17:14

"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Again he tells us in the book of Revelation that "The Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings and they also shall overcome that are with Him, called and chosen and faithful." What a grand view that is of Christ and His Church triumphant!

In the very first gospel the reason for this victory is given. The Cross is contemplated. "Thou shalt bruise his heel," is the simple prophecy suggesting the sufferings and death of Christ. Victory comes only by way of the Cross, through Him that loved us. Here is the heart of the gospel proclaimed to our first parents. It is the heart of that complete, absolute, final gospel expounded in the epistle of Romans by the apostle to the Gentiles.

What followed the preaching of this gospel in Eden? Did it result in the salvation of the lost? Did Adam and Eve believe in a Savior to come? There are a number of suggestions which seem to indicate that our first parents were saved. One is the significance of the name Eve—"the mother of all living!" Then there seems to be a suggestion of sacrifice at the very gates of Eden. Then we have Eve's exclamation at the birth of her first-born, "I have gotten a man, even Jehovah." Did she have the hope that this son might be the fulfillment of the first gospel promise? Again in the naming of Seth—"The appointed seed", was there evidence of faith? Of this we are sure, as witnessed by the New Testament record, that Abel did exercise faith, he being the first one mentioned by name in the roll of heroes of faith in the epistle to the Hebrews, who "Being dead, yet speaketh."

We are left to wonder what was the immediate effect of the witness of Abel, the first martyr of faith, upon his own parents. It may have been used of God to give to Adam and Eve just that inspiration and challenge they needed for faithfully witnessing to their posterity. I can imagine that the Spirit of God may have used Adam as an effective witness in those early days. Adam lived all told 930 years, and was evidently a contemporary of Enoch for 143 years. Did he tell Enoch the first gospel, and did he tell him of Abel as a witness to the power of faith? And did Enoch tell Methuselah, and did Methuselah pass it on to Noah?

You and I have the full revelation of the gospel. Is our witness continuing all the more? Are we faithful in "telling to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah?" (See Psalm 78:4,6-7)