



NEW LIFE

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

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Paradise Regained

*By Chris Donato, Part 4 of 4 of “Paradise Lost and Regained”
Adapted from TABLETALK from Ligonier Ministries – December 2008*

A crowd gathered around Jesus of Nazareth and wondered: Could this person be the son of David, the one who, like David, wreaks havoc upon our enemies? A few of the local leaders standing by did not take too kindly to the clear implications of what they witnessed and accused the man of beating up His own people by the power of the prince of demons. He responded with no ounce of timidity: “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waster. ...How then will his [Satan’s] kingdom stand? ...But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or How can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house” (see Matt. 12:22-29).

What Jesus said in effect here was that paradise was in the process of being regained, that the power of God’s kingdom and thus its presence was the only explanation needed for His dominion over the demons. The crowd wondered as much, and their question showed it. The Pharisees, knowing full well what this kind of ministry meant if it was indeed supported by the one, true God of Israel, decided to accuse Jesus of the only other option: He must really be the enemy, working for Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

As interesting as this story is, it is Jesus’ allusion to the binding of the strong man that must hold our attention for a while. Because by it, He suggests that He has had an initial victory. Indeed, some kind of prior battle must have been won if He was going to wage subsequent battles – like exorcisms – with any success. In short, Jesus was claiming that He had already met the accuser, the prince of demons, and defeated him. But when?

John Milton wrote of it long ago. In 1671, *Paradise Regained* was published four years after his famous epic *Paradise Lost*. It deals with one major event in the life of Jesus, the one major event that Jesus Himself considered His initial victory – His temptation by Satan in the wilderness.

Resting on the robust theology of Saint Paul about the parallels between Adam and the Messiah (Rom. 5:12-21), Milton wrote, “ I who erewhile the happy garden sung. / By one man’s obedience lost, now sing / Recovered Paradise to all mankind / By one man’s firm obedience fully tried / Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled / In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed, / And Eden raised in the waster of wilderness” (*Paradise Regained*, lines 1-7). Thus begins his poetic rendition of the decisive initial victory of Jesus over the accuser.

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Up to this point in this issue of Tabletalk, we've been reading about the origins of evil, God's relationship with Adam, his subsequent fall, and how that fall has affected all of us. Now we get to focus on how all that mess was made right, how what was lost was regained.

The working of miracles, not least exorcisms, were evidences that the future kingdom of God had broken through into the present day. The coming of the kingdom was greatly anticipated by the people of Israel in the first century, and when it did come, it was thought that it would be filled with all the pomp and circumstance a complete overthrow of the world would entail. The whole redefinition that Jesus embodied – around Himself as Israel's representative – was, however, mostly unexpected. But the world was being overthrown nonetheless, and the prince of the world himself (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) was being challenged in the name of God.

At the outset of Jesus' public career we witness this fact (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). During His temptation in the wilderness nothing less than the messianic kingship of God's anointed was at stake. We see this especially with respect to the temptation involving "all the kingdoms of the world." Who was the real prince? Jesus or Satan? Ultimately at stake, then, was victory over Satan's kingdom by the kingdom of God. This victory, however, was not to take place by raw power alone, for the Messiah's obedience to His Father was to be its primary feature. Jesus was not to gain all authority over heaven and earth in a capricious or violent manner (the only kind of authority Satan knew how to wield). Rather, He would have to obtain the authority Satan offered Him in the wilderness only in the way ordained by God.

This He did, and Philippians 2:5-11 contains a good hymn all about it. The obedience of the Messiah figures prominently in the thought of the apostle not only in this passage but in Romans 5:12-21 as well. In Philippians, Jesus is the one who humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on a cross (2:8), and in Romans Jesus is the one whose obedience makes the many righteous (5:19). In contrast to the first Adam, this last Adam perfectly obeyed God's will, and in so doing, undid the disobedience of the first one, defeating sin and death in the process. And this victory was already underway by the time Jesus had rejected Satan's temptations in the wilderness, the event (as described in Matthew 4:1-11) to which we now turn.

After many days and nights of living in the wilderness alone, Jesus is confronted by the tempter. Each of the three temptations the Devil throws at Him is meant to undermine the very task to which He has been called as God's Messiah. He is to be precisely what the nation of Israel had failed to be: a light to the world. In response to the Babylonian judgment, the prophet Isaiah assured the Israelites that they are God's servant whom He has chosen and has not cut off (41:8-9). Is it that servant in whom God will be glorified by restoring the tribes of Jacob and bringing back from exile the preserved of Israel. It is that servant who will be a light for the nations so that God's salvation will reach the ends of the earth (49:3-6). But Satan desired that Jesus, the servant, the true Israel, would doubt this mission and thus avail Himself to become Lord of the world through some other means than the one spoken about by the prophets long ago (in, for example, Isa. 38-55).

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When Jesus was baptised by John, His identity was confirmed by His Father: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). And what were the first words out of Satan’s mouth in the wilderness? “If you are the Son of God...” (4:3). This reminds us right away of the serpent who confronted Adam and Eve in the garden: “Did God actually say...” (Gen. 3:1). In both instances, the tempters call into question the veracity, and thus the faithfulness, of God.

In the first temptation, the Devil takes aim at the hunger pains Jesus undoubtedly feels. Hunger is a cruel taskmaster, and many atrocities have been perpetrated in order to lift its oppressive weight. But Jesus refuses to succumb to the temptation to take by force what is His by right (see Phil. 2:6). His hunger would have to continue to gnaw at Him, choosing as He does to do the will of His Father and endure suffering as His servant. Adam, in contrast, refused to go without, instead judging himself – despite God’s command – what he should and should not eat. So he ate and plunged the world into despair.

The tempter then takes Jesus to Jerusalem, to the very heights of the temple wall. Again, the Devil tempts Him, this time to throw Himself down into the Kidron Valley, knowing full well that the covenant God would not allow His anointed to strike His foot against a stone. If He did so, and God saved Him, then everyone around would immediately know and recognise His status as God’s Son. But this was a shortcut, a cheap and shallow way to grasp at the titles Lord and Christ. Adam, in contrast, seized the moment for his own glory, and instead of going the way of humble obedience, exalted himself. In snatching the forbidden fruit, Adam intended to bypass the path of righteousness. He accepted the very shortcut Jesus refused.

Finally, Satan takes Jesus to the peak of a nearby mountain, where he says, “All these [kingdoms] I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:9). Undaunted, Jesus binds the strong man in a flurry of rebuke: “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (v.10). Contrarily, Adam bound himself in his pathetic attempt to show the world that he was its true lord. Adam’s belly was full; the garden was magnificent and comforting. Jesus, on the other hand, was famished, and the wilderness was as unwelcoming as it was lonely.

There should be no doubt Jesus was tempted here to bring about the kingdom through means other than the way of suffering and obedience to the will and covenant of God. He constantly saw the tyranny of Rome and of all the other empires that trod the Holy Land underfoot. The people wanted action, violent if necessary, to overthrow the yoke of their oppressors. But tempted as He was to answer His calling in that particular way, there was another way to which He was utterly faithful. He saw the temptation for what it was, an end around the plan and purpose of His Father.

Having defeated the accuser in this initial victory and confirming the tone of His mission. Jesus began His public ministry, putting into practice the results of this battle (exorcisms, healings, and so on). In this manner – through the faithfulness of Christ – paradise was beginning to be regained. And in time, all things will be restored (Acts 3:17-21). Until then, being in Christ means that we too have been called to take part in God’s regaining of paradise (see John 15).

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 30/08/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 06/09/2009</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	Who is Jesus?	Travelogue to Pergamos	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Text:</i>	Matthew 16:13-17	Revelations 2:12-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling of Resident Minister: Continue to pray for the Lord's calling for Rev Timothy Ki to serve as our resident minister. Pray for progress with his visa application. • No DHW Bible Study today: Please spend the upcoming week preparing for Lesson 16 (Genesis 22-23). • Pray for those who are sick: - Yetta's mum (upcoming chemotherapy sessions), Constance (ankle), Douglas (knee pain), Barbara (Alzheimer's), Prema (thyroid and skin condition), Eld Jack Ford (old age and knees), Margaret (Asthma, Hay fever, lost her voice), Brian (awaiting appointment for wisdom tooth extraction), Jonathan (Knee). • Pray for those who are on travel: Sophia, Lee-Wei (S'pore), Nicolas (Belgium), Rev & Mrs Ki (Korea), John & Sharon (Belgium), Joey & Family (Budapest) • Pray for those who are still progressing with their studies: Yetta, Hubert, Joshua • Pray for visa applications: Grace, Joshua (Student visa), Joy (Post studies visa) • Pray for the upcoming UK Students meeting in Singapore on the 12th September at New Life BP Church. • Please note that there will be parking restrictions in place around the church for the next few weeks.
<i>Organist:</i>	Joy	Grace	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	-	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	-	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	No Evening Service	Without Compromise	
<i>Text:</i>	-	Daniel 1:1-20	
<i>Pianist:</i>	-	Hubert	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 30/08/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 06/09/2009</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Daniel / Yetta	Joey / Constance	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	No Sunday School	No Sunday School	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Maureen	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	Brian	Jonathan	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 04 Sept	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: No YAF	
Sat 05 Sept	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Jonathan Kim	
<u>Worship Service Collections</u>			
Offering:	£231.00	Lunch: £47.19	
<h2 style="margin: 0;"><u>Trust Better Than Questions</u></h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">We ought not to ask questions about our Father's ways — why he does this, why he does that. Surely it is better to trust our Father than to weary our brain with efforts to solve the mysteries and to find the reasons. Questions indicate fear or doubt; at least perfect trust asks no questions, does not seek to understand. It says, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight," and rests there in perfect peace. Of course we cannot expect always to understand God's ways — he would not be God if we could; but we know that love is the key to them all, and that some time all shall be made clear even to us.</p>			