

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST (Then and Now)

DISCUSSION

There has always been enmity between God and Satan. God has always been, and has always been good. He is the good God of the universe. The word “good” includes the word GOD (G-O-D). Satan has always been evil, and the word “devil” includes the word “evil” (e-v-i-l). Some say Satan was once an angel of God, but lifted up with pride, he fell from heaven and became the devil. Such a concept is very unprovable from the scripture, but at any rate Satan exists, and can be viewed as God's eternal enemy. His first major battle with God was in the garden of Eden. God gave a command to Adam and Eve to not eat of the forbidden fruit, but Satan appeared on the scene and lied to Eve, telling her she would NOT die if she partook of the fruit. God immediately dealt with the situation, and faced the devil, and gave him warning that the seed or offspring of woman would ultimately take him down, while Satan thought he would be killing the seed of woman. (Explain Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4).

There have always been and will always be, enemies of God. Our lesson will deal with “enemies of the cross of Christ.” God not only alluded to the cross in Gen. 3:15, but also foretold the ultimate cross for His Son, even before the practice of crucifying ON the cross was begun by the Romans. (Tie in Gal. 3:13; John 19:31-37; and Deut. 21:22-23).

DISCUSSION

I. 1st, let's look at ENEMIES OF THE CROSS IN THE FIRST CENTURY.

- A. An appropriate question is, “What is the cross?”
1. Literally, the cross was made of wood from a tree, but shaped in the form of a cross, with a cross member on a pole, used for the hanging of criminals in the Roman empire.
 2. Figuratively or spiritually, the cross stands for the action of putting the Son of God to death for the sins of the world.
 - a. Now, the Jewish leaders were actually friends of the cross, in that they **wanted** it for Jesus, but they were enemies of Christ, and His ultimate death increased their enmity.
 - b. God's people **glory** in the cross, in that we are “friends” of the One who died on it, and rejoice in its benefits of salvation because of it. Gal. 6:14
 - c. Those who are “enemies of the cross” are those who go against the power and teachings of the One who died on the cross.
- B. The first “enemies of the cross” in the first century were the Jewish leaders (made up of the Scribes and Pharisees and High Priests) who were **behind** the crucifying of Jesus ON the cross.
1. This was done with the foreknowledge of God, who worked His plan of redemption around the actions of these murderers. Matt. 16:21; Acts 2:22, 23, 36...
 2. Their actions were unjustified, for He was **not a criminal**, but was willing to go to the cross to redeem fallen man by shedding His blood that could save. Matt. 26:56; 27:1, 23-26, 35-37 (Explain)

II. 2nd, who ARE the ENEMIES OF THE CROSS TODAY?

- A. One time in the New Testament reference is made specifically about “enemies of the cross.” Phil. 3:18
- B. Who **were** and **are** these enemies?

1. The context shows that **these** enemies were, and are, those who refuse to walk by the **rule of God** as given in the scripture, the written word of God through the apostles. 1 Cor. 14:37; 11:1-3; Phil. 3:15-18
 - a. The original Greek word for “rule” is **kanon**, (the word that scholars of biblical translations use to identify the *inspired scriptures* that belong in the Bible. Cf 2 Cor. 10:13-15; Gal. 6:16
 - b. God's written word is the **kanon** for our lives today. Jude 3; John 12:48; 2 John 9; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11
2. The **kanon** or “rule” is not followed in the world when human churches not named or identified of the New Testament are established, OR when false doctrines are taught, such as salvation by “faith only”, or by the “sinner's prayer”, or **any effort** to avoid contacting the saving blood of Jesus in *baptism*, as required by the Lord.

III. 3Rd, HOW ARE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS IDENTIFIED?

- A. First, they are identified **by their own indulgence in the works of the flesh while teaching the cross**. Phil. 3:19; Rom. 8:5-6
 1. Do some, even religious leaders, glory in their practice of “living together” instead of marriage, or in open or legalized “adultery” through divorce and remarriage not granted for fornication? Mat. 19:9
 2. Do some today glory in their “homosexual lifestyle”, and so-called “same-sex marriages?”
- B. Second, they are identified **by the fact that their teachings and faith are NOT** based on the ***rule of God's law***, but by their own opinions, creeds and doctrines of men.

CONCLUSION

- I. What will be the **destiny** of the enemies of Christ? Phil. 3:19
- II. Are you a friend or an enemy of Christ?
 - A. His friends are those who obey and follow Jesus in this life.
 - B. His enemies oppose His will to their own destruction. Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41

Don Tarbet