

The Conflict of the Ages #5 and #6

By Lloyd Anderson

[Shuffling papers]

Lloyd Anderson:

We are currently studying together the subject of the attacks of Satan upon everything that God attempts to do through our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember in this series which began just several broadcasts ago, and will continue through the month of October until the end of November. We're going to be sharing with you the key verse out of Genesis, chapter three and verse fifteen, wherein the scripture says, "I will put enmity between thee" that is the devil, "and the woman. Between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel." Now, this, as I said, will be the key verse of our study on the subject of the conflict of the ages. You and I realize that across the ages, and on until Jesus Christ comes again, and on until the beginning of eternity, there's going to be a constant conflict between the forces of evil against the forces of righteousness. For the devil, against God; for God's people, against evil people. This will be the constant conflict that has gone on, is going on, and will continue to go on. And this will be the subject of our study. And Genesis 3:15, as I said, will be the key verse that unlocks the mysteries of our study.

You remember with me, we sought to share with you already in our study that began, the first study in September that we see the promise of Jesus Christ, the promise seed who is yet to come. We find that the devil moves out and he attacks every area through which Jesus Christ is to come and have His wonderful ministry. He attacks Adam and Eve. Through Cain, he attacks the line of

Abel, and Seth is raised up. And then the devil attacks Abraham, as we're going to see in our study today. And in a little bit later on, we're going to see he attacks the lines of Jacob and Joseph, the whole Hebrew race, the nation of Israel, the kingly line of Judah. He moves again against the Hebrew people, against the woman Mary, and certainly against the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He attacks the body of Christ, which is the New Testament Church, and he attacks Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of Lords. You'll recall in our study already in this series, we've shared with you the fact that in Genesis chapter 3, you find sin coming into the human race, with its resultant effect, not only of spiritual death, but also physical death as well. And we saw the presence of God before man had sinned, and we saw His presence after man had sinned. Then we listen to the pronouncements of God. In Genesis chapter 3, God placed a curse upon the serpent of the field, and upon Adam and upon Eve, and upon the very soil of the Earth, bringing forth thistles and briars upon the face of the earth.

Then you had the promise of God in our key verse in Genesis three and verse fifteen, where you had the promise that the Lord was making, and He said He would put enmity, here's the conflict of the ages, put enmity between Satan on the one hand and the seed of the woman Christ on the other. And between their seeds there would be a constant continuing conflict, and at the Cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ would crush the serpent's head. And there the victory would be won once and forever over the devil himself, and he would simply bruise the heel of Christ, which is simply one way of saying that Christ would be put to death for the sins of the whole world. Then we came, you remember, to chapter four of the Book of Genesis, and there we saw in chapter 4 and in verse e-chapter eleven as well of the Book of Genesis, how that Satan begins to attack the true worship of the Lord, how the faith in the blood was something that God had said had to be.

And you remember, Cain disdainfully would not listen to the words of God through his father, Adam, who was probably the priest in his own family. And the result was that you had the first murder in the human race.

Then you have the faith and the promises in Genesis chapter 6 before the days of the flood. You had a man like Noah who was willing to live for God in the midst of the crookedness and the perverseness of his own day and generation. And you remember how God moved against the devil there, and He saved the family of Noah, his three sons, and their families from which the human race began literally again. Then when you come to Genesis chapter eleven, you find again that Satan gets in his licks, and the devil tries his best to thwart the purposes of the Lord, and you find a rebellion in Genesis chapter 11. And you have the Tower of Babel erected under the leadership of a man who is mentioned in chapter six of the Book of Genesis and in verse eleven as a man whose name was Nimrod, who probably led the nations of the world in the rebellion against the Lord. Now today we come to Abraham's household, through whom Jesus Christ ultimately was to come. You remember He would be of the seed of David. He would be, according to His father, Abraham. Now, here, we're going to show that God's promises only flow through a channel of God's design, to show that the consequences of wrongdoing cannot be wiped out by any injustice whatsoever. Now, the devil here, in this conflict of the ages, is attempting to keep Jesus Christ from coming into the world. And way back as far as Adam, and way back as far as Nimrod, and way back as far as Abraham, he is already trying to prevent Christ from coming into the world to do what God had wanted Him to do at the cross for you and me.

Now we come to Chapter 16 of the Book of Genesis, that great book of beginnings in the Bible. And beginning with verse one of Genesis, chapter 16. We need to remember, of course, that all men, without exception, have something to learn. Whatever may be the distinguished rank which they happen to hold in societies, said Zimmerman, they can never be truly great, but by personal merit. Now the first truly great character in the Bible is Abraham, and he learned to be great. You remember during the 400 years after the flood, men migrated wherever they chose to go on the face of the earth. In Abraham's day, the leading city of the world was a city called Ur, U-R, a seaport on the Euphrates River in the land of Babylonia, over where Iran and Iraq are at the present time. It had been built by the idolatrous descendants of Ham, most of whom later pushed south into the land of Egypt. Later on, the Shemites also dwelt there, that is the Sons of Shem. And it was there that their faith, though originally pure, became tainted by idolatry. Babylonia, where Iran and Iraq now are, in the map of the world, was long known as the land of Nimrod, because Nimrod was the chief leader and even the deity of those people in idolatry. The people of Ur, from which Abraham came, worshipped the elements of nature, particularly the moon god and goddess.

Now tradition says that an opposing idolatry in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans and Babylonian, young Abraham suffered bitter persecution for his convictions. His father, Terah, was an idolater, as you read in the Book of Genesis. The basis for Abraham's faith was no doubt found in the story of God's dealing with Adam and with Noah. Perhaps it was because Abraham stood so alone in his faith that he could hear the God of glory distinctly say, "Get thee out of the country". Now, when and how God revealed Himself to Abraham is not known, in Ur of the Chaldeans. It is enough to know that God spoke to Abraham, and Abraham listened in those

early days before he left Ur of the Chaldeans and migrated into the land that you and I now know is the land of Israel. The record is that Terah, his father, took them out of the land of Ur. How was he induced to leave? Was he anxious to leave graves that reminded him of sorrow? Was Abraham the favorite son from whom he could not part? Was he curious about Abraham's God? In any event, my friend, though he was an elderly man, Terah, the father of Abraham, he assumed his rightful position at the head of the caravan. He set the pace of march, and he led them out of the land of Babylonia, the city of Ur, and they made their way toward the Promised Land. Now, no mention is made of Nahor leaving, although he is known to have lived in Haren at where tariffs stopped and he refused to go any further. That was north of what we know as the land of Israel.

Now only after his father's death did Abraham continue his journey to the land of Canaan, or the land of Israel as we know it now. For one hundred years he lived dwelling in flimsy tents of camel's hair, as the Bedouins do to this day, which could be erected and struck in an hour, building altars which stood as silent witnesses to the will and the guidance of God. Now, when you come to Genesis chapter 16, you see a picture of despair and discontent. And here the devil is moving now in this conflict of the ages to move into the line from which Jesus ultimately would come, because he was trying to prevent the coming of Christ into the world. And in verses 1 to 14, you have the very sad and bitter story of Hagar and Sarah, of Ishmael and Isaac and Abraham. It's all here in Genesis 16, 1 to 14. In a certain textile factory, there was an instruction plaque that read like this: "If your threads get tangled, always send for the foreman." You see, a busy and diligent worker once got her thread snarled, and she tried to disentangle them by herself, and she only worsen the condition. When asked by the foreman why she had not waited

for him. She said I was doing my best. The foreman said quietly, "Remember that doing your best is waiting for me to come."

Now, I think the same thing is true as this illustration in the life of Abraham. Several times the devil snarled the threads of Abraham's life. And instead of waiting for God, Abraham tried to disentangle those threads himself by doing his best. But his best was so imperfect, and the conditions always worsened, and only God could eventually bring order out of the chaos. Now, these difficulties occurred when Abraham failed to follow God's clear and explicit directions. Today's lesson is a case in point. Abraham's life is not only summed up by the word faith, but it is also summed up by another word as well, and that word is the word separation. It was God's will to separate Abraham for Himself. From the moment of his call to leave his fatherland, until his earthly pilgrimage was ended. Abraham was to be a separated man. He was to be the friend of God. He was to be the father of God's chosen people. He was to be the freeholder of God's land in Canaan. And he was to be the faithful trustee of the oracles and the truths of God. Now, it was the devil's plan to separate Abraham from God permanently if he could. And here you have the conflict of the ages continuing to go on, to bring God's eternal wrath down upon Abraham to prevent the fulfillment of the promise regarding the coming seed Christ. This he felt sure, did the devil, that it would be accomplished if he could break down Abraham's faith in the Lord. In Genesis 16 verses 1 to 6, you find an interesting story. Let me read it to you.

"Now, Sarah Abraham's wife, bear him no children. And she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Sarah-Hagar. And Sarah said unto Abram, "Behold, now the Lord hath restrained me from bearing. I pray thee go in unto my maid. It may be that I may obtain children

by her." And Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarah. And Sarah, Abram's wife took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, after Abraham had dwelt in 10 years on the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abraham, to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarah said unto Abram, "My wrong be upon thee, I have given my maid unto thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between me and thee." And Abram said unto Sarah, "Behold, thy maid is in thy hand, do to her as it pleaseth thee." And when Sarah dealt hardly with her, she fled from before Sarah's face." Now Satan, unsuccessful in his attacks upon Abraham from without, now attacks him from within his own household. The scripture says that Sarah bear him no children. No doubt, as was the custom at the time of marriage, Sarah had signed an agreement to bear Abraham children. As the childish years passed, she was bowed down with disappointment and grief because she did not have a child. She did not share Abraham's advantages, which might have made her happier.

While he was fellowshiping with God, she was quietly pursuing the routine duties of the household. Although she journeyed faithfully with Abraham from place to place, she did not seem to have the faith in God's promises that Abraham had. God's covenant with Abraham pledged, number one, that he should be the father of a great nation, the dust of the Earth, referring to his national posterity in Romans 4:16 and 17. The Stars of Heaven referring, to his spiritual posterity, Jew and Gentile alike Galatians 3 and verse 29. Then secondly, that he should be blessed materially and that spiritually his faith should be counted him for righteousness. Number three, that his name should have universal significance. Number four, that his seed, that is the redeemer Christ, should be a blessing to the whole world, according to Genesis 22, in verse

18. And number five, that either cursed or blessed should be those nations that persecuted or respected the race that was established by Abraham. Then we read that Sarah had an handmaiden, who is an Egyptian by the name of Hagar, Hagar may have been purchased by Abraham at an Egyptian slave market, but it is more likely that she had been a gift from Pharaoh to Abraham when he left Egypt as one of the inducements to leave quickly, you remember.

When Sarah's disappointment in her childless condition changed to discontent, Satan's faintest whisper became audible to her. Satan reminded her of the governing code of laws, which allowed a man, though a monogamist at heart, to receive from his wife a second woman for the purpose of bearing his children. Now this common practice was not seriously considered sooner, probably because Sarah had seemingly fixed a period of 10 years in which she would be willing to wait for a child. From that time on, she seemed to feel that she was justified in obtaining a child according to the prevailing custom, by giving another woman to her husband, and from that woman, her husband would give her a child. Now we're going to close here, because we've covered a lot of ground, but we're going to pick it up where we can in our next study together.

[Shuffling papers, then silence]

We have been seeking in our studies, that began with the first part of September and will continue until the last part of November, on the subject of the conflict of the ages, how that across the ages of human time, the devil has been desperately busy in moving in upon God's purposes in trying to disannul what God attempts to do. He does it in very subtle, and devious, and different kinds of ways. You remember he is ultimately striking at Christ, who is the

promised seed who is to come and die on the cross. And you remember we tried to share with you, of course, across these broadcasts how in the Garden of Eden the devil moved in and a caused man to fall into sin. Then, of course, after man had fallen into sin, we find the line of Abel is disannulled by Cain, when Cain kills his brother at the instigation of the devil. Then you remember we saw the promised redeemer was to come, in Genesis 3:15, which is really the basic verse of our total series of studies together. Then you remember how the devil attacks those who seek to worship the Lord, so that when you come to chapter four, you begin to see that here you have the story of Cain and Abel. In Genesis chapter 6 verses 1 to 8, you have men multiplying on the face of the earth. You have the wickedness of man exceedingly great on the earth. And you have Noah and his family living for the Lord.

Then when you come to Genesis Chapter 11, you find Nimrod, who had been mentioned in Chapter 6 and verse eleven, who seems to be the leader of much of the human race in that day, and was a tremendous hunter of the souls of men, as he leads the people in rebellion against the Lord and they build the tower of Babble. And God destroys the tower, he disperses the human race, and he scatters their language and they cannot understand one another. Then in our last broadcasts together, we saw how the devil is trying to thwart the purposes of God by attacking the household of Abraham. That household of Abraham, through whom Christ ultimately was to come, because Christ would come through Abraham. And in chapter sixteen, as we studied it before, you remember beginning with verse one down to verse 14, we saw the tragedy in Abraham's own household, how that Sarah was barren, she did not have a child. And so as she proposes, I'm sure at the devil's instigation, and here again, you have the conflict of the ages. The devil whispers to Sarah, and he proposes the idea that she should give to Abraham this woman,

Hagar, who was her Egyptian handmaiden, to become the wife of Abraham in order to produce a child. Now, this is done. And the result is that a child is born from Hagar through Abraham, and the child's name became known as Ishmael. But she began to despise Sarah because she was able to have a child and Sarah was not able to have a child.

And the result is that the devil creates discord and chaos in the home of Abraham, through whom the promised seed Christ ultimately was to come, and we see the conflict of the ages as it touches even the household of Abraham. And so you remember that Sarah dealt with this woman, Hagar, who was the mother of the child Ishmael from Abraham. And Satan had changed Sarah. She becomes irreverent toward the Lord, and the treatment of Hagar, the way she roughly treated her and prevailed upon her husband to drive her-Hagar out into the wilderness, was certainly of satanic origin. Then in verses 7 to 14 of Genesis chapter 16, you have God as he encourages Hagar in the wilderness. Hagar could flee from Abraham's tents and Sarah's anger, but she could never get away from God. The Angel of the Lord, you remember, appeared on to Hagar in verse 7 of Genesis 16, "and the Angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by a fountain in the way to Sher. And he said, "Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go?" And she said, "I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarah." And the Angel of the Lord said unto her, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." And the angel of the Lord said unto her, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."

And the angel of the Lord said unto Hagar, "Behold, thou art with child, and thou shall bear a son, and thou shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he

shall be a wild man, his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou God seest me." For she said, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me." And wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi. Behold it is between Kadosh and Vered. And Hagar bear Abraham a son, and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bear Ishmael, and Abraham was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bear Ishmael to Abraham." Now God encourages Hagar in spite of the problem that had appeared in Abraham's home. The Angel of the Lord appears to Hagar in the wilderness, into which he had been driven by Hagar-by Sarah and Abraham, who was simply doing what his wife wanted done. And so the Lord appears to Hagar, and he becomes the help of the helpless and the burden bearer. And this was Christ, of course, this Angel of the Lord, in one of His Old Testament appearances. We call it a theophany. He promised what only God could promise. He foretold what God alone could know. And He called Himself God, did this Angel of the Lord. And certainly He received the worship of Hagar, something no angel would ever dare to do. So this Angel of the Lord in Genesis 16, beginning with verse 14 and beginning with verse 7, must have been an Old Testament appearance of Christ.

And so we see that the devil attempts to bring discord into the family of Abraham by this untoward union of Abraham and Hagar, and the production of a son, Ishmael. And the devil was trying to disannul the line of Isaac through which Jesus Christ would ultimately come. Then you remember, beginning with verse fifteen down to Genesis 17 and verse 1, you have the birth of Ishmael in the home, and Ishmael lives in the home, and you have some of the problem in that home as the result, you remember. He was called Ishmael, which means that "God hears". Hagar,

the mother of Ishmael, and the child, of course, was born from Abraham and Hagar, was an Egyptian. But it is not evident what really and fully happened in every detail of life. Though she was a servant, she was acquainted with the Lord, and the result of her praying was that she was heard. Abraham named the child, which demonstrates that he acknowledged that he was the father of the child. And now he assumed responsibility for his welfare. And the ric-word records, interestingly, that at this time Abraham was 86 years of age, which means that Sarah was 76 years of age. Then when you come to the first verse of Genesis 17, you have this interesting word, "And when Abraham was 90 years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said unto him, 'I am the almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect.'" And God said He would make a covenant with Abraham. It was Abraham, however, who learned the real meaning of discipline, and he learned it from the hand of the Lord.

How his spirit must have suffered under God's silent treatment because of his digression in the coming into his family of another son, Ishmael, by another woman, Hagar. Instead of being obedient to the Lord and having a son, ultimately unto the promise of God through Sarah, his wife. For 13 long years, Abraham awaited and longed and prayed for renewed fellowship with the Lord, but the Lord gave him no sign of recognition, until you come to the first verse of Genesis 17. And then God breaks the silence, and He says, "I am the almighty God." At last, God's voice broke through the silence, bringing assurance to the heart of Abraham that God was supreme. He is greater than circumstances. He was true to His promises, and He promised that Sarah should bear her own son. Now, this is interesting because from Sarah, Abraham would receive a son. And through that son, Isaac, the promise Christ would ultimately come. But you see the conflict of the ages, how the devil is doing everything he can to break up and disannul

and thwart the purposes of God in the coming of Christ into the world. And he works back in the home of Abraham, through whom Christ ultimately was to come.

Now, there are certain things we need to learn from our study today, and last broadcast. First of all, as long as the child of God lives the life of a pilgrim, building the altars of worship for the Lord, Satan has less opportunity to attack him. But Satan's big chance comes when the believer settles down contentedly in this world, and this happened to Abraham. And then it's one thing to commit our ways unto the Lord, and it's another thing to trust Him also. That is, to wait for Him to bring His promises to pass. To obey God is the highest economy of time. And His will and His time always go hand in hand. Then I think we need to remember, thirdly, to walk with God on the path of separation is to cut loose from all creature aid and self-effort, and difficulties of the separated Christian life arise from the persistent manifestation and revelation of the self-life in the believer. The masterpiece of Satan's art is to convince Christians that your self-life, your carnal life, is now dead. And so we see him working in the life of Abraham. We see him as he moves into Abraham's household, because God had promised to Abraham that through him would come the promised seed Christ. And now the devil is trying, in the conflict of the ages, to thwart the purposes of God in every phase and every part of His ministry.

Then we come to another character of the Old Testament, to whom Satan also makes his definite appearance, and pressures are brought to bear in this point by the devil upon Jacob. And we turn quickly to Genesis, chapter 27. For now, we see him working through Jacob, you see, who is one of the sons of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. And again, the devil is trying to keep the Lord Jesus Christ from coming into the world to do what God wanted Him to do at Calvary. And I

think we need to remember that the lesson of Jacob, as the devil moves against him, is to impress everybody with a seriousness of envy and its insidious results, and to show that one sin easily leads to another, to demonstrate that faith in God is greater than the fear of man. Now, in Genesis, Chapter 27, we have still, as I said, another character that Satan attacks in order to thwart and disannul the purposes of God in the ultimate coming of Christ into the world. Now time had marched on. You remember Abraham, and then Isaac, finally came from Abraham and Sarah as their child, and he was the child of God's promise, and he had been miraculously born to Sarah when Ishmael, the other boy, was 13 years old. An increasingly bitter and antagonistic attitude had developed between the two boys in Abraham's home, which had resulted in Hagar and Ishmael being cast out of the tent of Abraham forever. Ishmael, married to an Egyptian, had found a satisfying challenge for a full life in the desert wilderness around the Holy Land, where he became the strong leader and the progenitor of roving Arab bands like himself, enjoying the wild, carefree, fearless life that he had found there.

Sarah had already now died. Abraham had married Kuchera, and he had fathered six sons. Isaac, the shepherd, had remained contentedly by the home tents, and Abraham, anxious to keep his posterity and his children from idolatry, had brought Rebecca, his grandniece, from Haram to become Isaac's wife. You remember all of that in the book of Genesis. Isaac and Rebekah had lived a happy, though childless life, for 20 years. Satan had not invaded their privacy in any outstanding manner during that period. With the birth of twins, however, Jacob and Esau, the devil moved in and became active in the home of Jacob. You see, again, the conflict of the ages trying to thwart the purposes of God in the ultimate coming of Christ through Jacob. He had noted, did the devil, how unlike the twins were in appearance and temperament and character,

and the devil formed at once a plan to disrupt the home's tranquility, the home of Jacob. He had used the possessive affection of Rebecca for Jacob, whose nature and home loving habits were similar to her own, to strike not that Esau, as might be the general opinion as you read the account, but the devil moves in to really strike at Jacob, the father you see. Satan had not been too concerned with a transfer of the birthright from Esau to Jacob, which he knew, as did Isaac, and Rebekah, had been given to Jacob, except as it provided an object of envy, distrust, deceit, lying, and blasphemy.

If, however, the devil could affect a transfer of the blessing from Esau to Jacob, Satan was confident that a motive for hatred and a desire to kill Jacob, you see, which was Satan's real intent and purpose, would then be provided, and Esau would be the devil's weapon to kill Jacob. Because Jacob had received the birthright, and Esau became angered against his twin brother. Now we're going to look at that as we move along in our lesson, but all along the way, from the Garden of Eden, down through the days of Noah, into the valley, and to the Tower of Babel, under the leadership of Nimrod, all the way into all of the intents and purposes of God in the life of Abraham, the devil moves, and he seeks to disannul, and thwart, and nullify the purposes of God. And this, my friend, is the conflict of the ages between the devil and the Lord.

[Silence, then music plays]