



"I believe Satan to exist for two reasons: first, the Bible says so, and second, I've done business with him."
—Dwight L. Moody

21-Mar-03

Cutting Off the Snake's Head

As anyone can see on television, the war is on and progressing to the Bush administration's satisfaction. It opened on Wednesday night (early Thursday morning Baghdad time) with a "surgical strike" on one of Saddam Hussein's palaces and his intelligence headquarters. The attack came as a result of opportunistic intelligence that Hussein and possibly others of the highest-ranking Iraqi officials were gathered in one place. At this time, it is not known if Hussein is dead, hurt, or unscathed by the attack. At least one report says his eldest son Uday Hussein was killed by it.

Defense Department officials explained this initial strike as "cutting off the head of the snake." This is a legitimate strategy in war: to remove or disable the enemy's leadership to shorten or lessen hostilities. It has been used since the beginning of warfare, though it is a difficult stratagem to perform successfully, since the leadership of a nation or army is most closely guarded. However, when it is successful, swift victory is usually assured.

Militarily, this was a risk well worth taking for the American decision-makers. If they could decapitate the Iraqi regime, the thinking goes, the war would be shorter, casualties—both military and civilian—would be fewer on both sides, and damage would be minimized, making reconstruction far less costly. With the vaunted American precision bombing, it was an opportunity, even with late-breaking intelligence, that could not be resisted.

So far, it seems to have been successful. At the least, it has forced Saddam Hussein to go deeper into hiding, effectively suppressing his ability to command the defense of his

nation. At "best," the strike has removed him completely from the scene, and a confused and disorganized Republican Guard is managing as well as it can. It may have been directly responsible for many of the Iraqi surrenders and surrender negotiations now taking place. If this is the case, it has indeed been successful.

This strategy should not be relegated to physical war. The apostle Paul tells us that our warfare is spiritual ([II Corinthians 10:3-6](#)), and we have a great spiritual adversary, "the [god](#) of this world" ([II Corinthians 4:4](#); [Ephesians 6:11](#); [Revelation 12:9-12](#)), and his minions, the demons, known as "principalities, . . . powers, . . . rulers of the darkness of this age, . . . hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Though many in this secular age, even those who call themselves religious, discount the existence of [Satan](#) and demons, the Bible does not flinch in saying that they are the true enemies of mankind, especially Christians.

The apostles give clear instructions about what we are to do in fighting these spiritual enemies. Paul says we should have nothing to do with them ([II Corinthians 6:15](#), 17; [Ephesians 5:11](#)), "nor give place to the devil" ([Ephesians 4:27](#)). James tells us, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" ([James 4:7](#)). Peter echoes this: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the [faith](#), knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in [the world](#)" ([I Peter 5:8-9](#)).

How do we resist the enemy? Paul instructs us, "Abstain from every form of evil" ([I Thessalonians 5:22](#)). We need to follow the example of [Jesus Christ](#), who, when confronted by the temptations of the devil, fought him with Scripture and firm determination to obey only God ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)). In [Romans 16:19-20](#), the apostle Paul says, "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple [pure] concerning evil. And the God of [peace](#) will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

The Bible's first prophecy takes this spiritual fight into consideration. In His curse on the serpent in the [Garden of Eden](#), God predicts, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed [those who follow him] and her Seed [Christ]; He shall bruise your head [a destructive blow], and you shall bruise His heel" ([Genesis 3:15](#)). Ultimately, God Himself will employ this strategy of striking at the snake's head to make a swift end to the hostility between us and our spiritual enemies.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Satan \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh explains the origins of our foremost adversary, Satan the Devil. And his host of fallen angels or demons (Revelation 12:3-12; Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-19). In our precarious situation of sharing a prison cell with these formidable wicked spirits, we need to take heart in: 1) the tremendous numerical advantage of the good over the evil angels; 2) the hopeless division in the demon world, preventing them from "getting their act together"; 3) as with Job, God has set limits on Satan's ability to harass us (Job 2:6); and 4) God has provided us with adequate spiritual armor to withstand the wiles of the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-12). Even though with our own limited strength, we could be easily annihilated, God has promised us protection if we yield to Him and keep His commandments.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The First Prophecy \(Part One\)](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Genesis is a book of beginnings, and in that theme, it also contains the first prophecy. In the first part of this three-part series, Richard Ritenbaugh explains God's curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:14-15.

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