

THE DEVIL'S "BACK STORY"

- A. Introduction: For the past few weeks we've been talking about how the devil works as part of a larger discussion on the importance of learning to praise God in the face of life's hardships. Heb 13:15; Ps 34:1
1. We live in a world that has been damaged by sin. The challenges of life don't come from God nor are they orchestrated by the devil. They are simply part of life in a sin cursed earth.
 - a. The devil attempts to take advantage of us in the midst of life's trials. He comes to steal the Word of God from us by enticing us to disbelieve or disobey the Lord. Mark 4:14-17; Matt 13:18-21
 1. The devil's tactics are mental. He presents us with thoughts (lies) about God, ourselves, and our circumstances in an attempt to influence our beliefs and our actions. Eph 6:11
 2. Our protection and defense against the devil's strategies and deceptions is God's Word. His written Word, the Bible, is our armor. Eph 6:10-18
 - b. Heb 12:3--Paul was concerned that a group of Christians who were undergoing affliction and persecution would grow weary in their minds and lose heart. His admonition to them was: Consider (contemplate, put your mind on) Jesus. Life's battles are won or lost in our mind.
 1. It's not the trials of life that defeat us. It's our response to the storm that makes the difference. Those who hear and do God's Word are still standing when the storm is over. Matt 7:24-27
 2. God's Word to us in the midst of the storm is: Count it all joy or Consider it an occasion to praise the Lord by acknowledging Him by talking about who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. James 1:2-4
 3. Praise helps us put and keep our focus on Jesus in the midst of life's trials. Praise stops the enemy and still the avenger because it helps us shut down the mental attacks of the devil. Ps 8:2; Matt 21:16
 2. Before we continue our discussion of dealing with thoughts in our minds we need to look at the "back story" in regard to Satan. So much of our information has come from Hollywood movies combined with poor teaching in the church in regard to the devil's place and power.
 - a. If we don't understand who the devil is and what he can and can't do, we won't be able to deal with his mental influences effectively in the midst of life's trials.
 - b. This is what we want to address in this lesson. We could (but aren't going to) do entire lessons on each point. We simply want to clear up some areas of possible confusion.
- B. Hollywood and horror films put the devil on a par with God in terms of strength and power, but that is inaccurate. The devil is a created being. He's not bigger than or equal to God.
1. In eternity past, before God created the physical material world, He created an invisible kingdom populated by a host of beings known as angels. Col 1:16
 - a. Angels were created to be subjects of and administrators in God's kingdom. They were meant to be servants and worshippers of God. Ps 103:20,21; Ps 104:4; Isa 6:1-3; etc.
 - b. The angels have wisdom, strength and beauty. II Sam 14:20; Ezek 28:12; Ps 103:20; etc.
 2. At some point in the past there was an angelic uprising in the unseen realm led by an archangel named Lucifer. Ezek 28:1-19; Isa 14:12-14
 - a. Lucifer challenged God's right to rule and enticed one-third of the angels to join him in this rebellion. The Bible does not give a lot of details about why and how all this came about.
 1. He set up a counterfeit kingdom in the invisible realm or dimension. It is a kingdom of death and darkness. There is rank and structure in this kingdom. Eph 6:12; Matt 12:26
 2. Lucifer is now known as Satan (from a word meaning adversary). He's neither omniscient (all-knowing) or omnipotent (all-powerful). He's a created being who opposes God.
 - b. Satan did not lose his created characteristics when he sinned. He is still strong and intelligent. However, because sin corrupts, there was a change in his nature.
 1. Consider these titles given to him in scripture: Subtle (Gen 3:1); beguiler (II Cor 11:3);

adversary (I Pet 5:8); thief (John 10:10); murder and liar (John 8:44); deceiver (Rev 12:9); accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10).

2. Satan has worked on human beings for thousands and thousands of years and is highly developed in his ability to influence and deceive men and women. In and of ourselves we are no match for him.
3. Sometime after this angelic rebellion God created human beings in His image to become His sons and daughters. He made the earth to be home for His family.
 - a. God gave men and women dominion or authority in the earth intending that His human family serve as His under rulers on earth. God would reign in and through them. Gen 1:26,27
 - b. Satan enticed and deceived Eve into disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit (I Tim 2:14). She gave it to her husband. He also ate, choosing independence from God through sin.
 1. In doing so, Adam turned his God-given authority over to the devil. Satan's kingdom which, up to that time, had only existed in the unseen realm was established on earth.
 2. When the devil tempted Jesus he offered Him the authority of the kingdoms of this world. It was a real temptation because all that power had been delivered to him by Adam. Luke 4:6
 3. Jesus referred to the devil as the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and Paul called him the god or leader of this world (II Cor 4:4).
 - c. God had warned Adam and Eve that disobedience would result in death for them (Gen 2:17). There are many aspects to what that means, but consider these points.
 1. Since Adam's fall in the Garden all human beings are born into a sin damaged world, into Satan's kingdom of darkness and death, and are under his dominion.
 2. Paul reminded Christians what they were before they were saved: Eph 2:1-3--And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience...and (you) were by nature children of wrath even as others. (NASB)
 3. This condition showed itself in the first generation of humans born through natural processes. Adam's first born son murdered his second born and lied about it (Gen 4:1-10). Beings made in the image of God were exhibiting traits of the devil.
4. Following Adam's sin God promised the coming of the Redeemer, the Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary) who would bruise the serpent's head (break the devil's power). Gen 3:15
 - a. Jesus came to earth and went to the Cross to pay the price for sin so that men could be delivered out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and death and have their nature cleansed and transformed.
 - b. Jesus joined us in death to bring us out. Heb 2:14--That by [going through] death he might bring to naught and make of no effect him who had the power of death, that is the devil. (Amp)
 1. Col 2:15--[God] disarmed the principalities and powers ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, triumphing over them in Him and in it [the Cross](Amp).
 2. Col 1:13--Who has rescued us from the authority of darkness (Rotherham) and transplanted us into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Conybeare).
 - c. What happened to Jesus happened to us because He went to the Cross for us as us. Jesus went into the death realm for us as us and came out of it for us as us. He broke the devil's power over humanity by paying the price for sin. We defeated the devil through our Substitute Jesus Christ.
 1. When a person bows their knee to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, what Jesus did at the Cross goes into effect for that individual. We can now come out from under his control through faith in Christ. When Jesus defeated the devil and broke out of death we did, too.
 2. When a person believes on Jesus—that He is God and that He was raised from the dead—his sins are blotted out, eternal life comes into his innermost being and regenerates it. We are literally born of God or born again. We face the devil in union with Christ. I Cor 6:17; I John 4:17; 5:1; 11,12; etc.
 - d. The Bible uses three word pictures to describe our relationship to Jesus because we are born again.

All depict union and shared life: vine and branch (John 15:5); husband and wife (Eph 5:30-32); head and body. Jesus was raised up to a position of authority over Satan. He did that for us as us.

1. Eph 1:20-23--Above all rule, and authority, and power and lordship (Alford), exalting him above all Angels and Archangels of every rank (20th Cent). He has put everything under his feet (Conybeare) and made him the head to which the whole Church is joined (Knox) and is filled by him who fills all things everywhere with his presence (20th Cent).
2. Col 2:9,10--For in Christ the Godhead in all its fullness dwells incarnate and, by your union with him, you also are filled with it (20th Cent) (Jesus) who is the authority over all authorities, and the supreme power over all powers (Phillips)
5. The devil was judged at the Cross—his power and authority broken over all who put faith in Christ. But he is not yet subjugated—removed from the earth and confined away from all contact with God’s people. Therefore we must contend with the devil in this world.
 - a. Very few people deal directly with Satan. We deal with lesser fallen angels. However, the name Satan is often used in a generic sense for all evil spirits (fallen angels).
 - b. In previous lessons we have discussed the fact that nowhere does the Bible tell Christians to beware of Satan’s power, but rather his mental strategies.
 1. Paul said we are not to be ignorant of his devices (II Cor 2:11) or his wiles, schemes (Eph 6:11). He beguiles or deludes and deceives through subtlety and trickery (II Cor 11:3)). We must resist his strategies with God’s Word (Eph 6:11).
 2. Our fight is not to defeat the devil. We defeated him at the Cross through our Substitute. We enforce his defeat. Always deal with the devil as a defeated foe.
 3. Eph 6:12--We wrestle with Satan. Wrestle comes from a word that means to vibrate or sway. He and his workers attempt to sway us from the truth (God’s Word) through mental strategies. (More on that next week)

- C. We need to address an important point before we close. All that we’ve said thus far does not mean Satan has no power. We could do entire lessons on this point, but consider a few thoughts.
 1. The Bible makes it clear that angels are inter-dimensional. Although they are immaterial, invisible beings who live in the unseen dimension they can affect the physical, seen dimension in which we live.
 - a. They can minister to and protect God’s people (Heb 1:14; Matt 4:11; Ps 91:11,12; Ps 34:7; etc.). They sometimes take a visible form on this earth (Gen 18:1,2; Heb 13:2; etc.).
 - b. Fallen angels (devils) can produce physical demonstrations in people (Matt 17:14-18; Matt 12:22; Acts 16:16; etc.). (This is a whole lesson for another time. But, a Christian cannot be possessed by a devil because he, in his innermost being, has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.
 1. He can be influenced by a devil through thoughts. If those thoughts are entertained and embraced he could be oppressed or excessively influenced in his mind or body through spirits.
 2. But those spirits must and will leave when a Christian exercises the authority he has through union with Christ).
 - c. But the devil’s greatest power is his ability to deceive. Paul wrote that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (II Cor 11:14, Amp). He is able to make himself look good and entice us to take the bait. Our protection against deception is the armor of God’s Word.
 2. We need to be aware of the times in which we live. We are coming to the end of this age. Jesus will return to earth soon. Before He went back to Heaven Jesus stated that one of the hallmarks of the period just prior to His return will be religious deception. Matt 24:4,5,11,24
 - a. Satan is going to offer the world his counterfeit of Jesus, a false Prince of Peace, in an attempt to entice the whole world to worship him and prevent the rightful King from returning to earth. (We’ve done entire lessons on this in the past.) Dan 8:25; Rev 13; 19:19;etc.
 - b. These conditions will not come out of a vacuum. It will be the culmination of events that are currently moving in that direction. People don’t realize it but they are being increasingly primed to

receive supernatural deception and acknowledge a false Messiah.

c. Paul was given a lot of details about this final ruler. He will have power from Satan and the ability to perform counterfeit signs and miracles. II Thess 2:9-11

1. v9,10--The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all its counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. (NIV)

2. v11--God will let men believe the lies of Satan. God does not “send” the deception. God is truth. He can’t lie or deceive anyone (Titus 1:2). Those who are deceived are willingly deceived because they don’t love the truth. (Whole lessons for another day).

d. Over the past fifteen to twenty years a counterfeit spirituality and fascination with the paranormal has been infused into the culture and even into so-called “Christian” churches.

1. Multitudes have embraced eastern religions (new age philosophies) that have been inspired by evil spirits and directly contradict orthodox Christianity. People claim to be spiritual but not religious. The Bible warns of this form of godliness that deny the transforming power of the

Cross. II Tim 3:5

2. T.V. abounds with paranormal programs. Ghost hunters search for spirits in old houses.

Mediums communicate with the dead. They do contact beings from another dimension—not your departed loved one, but fallen angels or devils. Isa 8:19; 19:3; 29:4

3. The point for our discussion is this: If there was ever a time to have accurate knowledge it’s now. The level of deception in the world is ramping up and will continue. Our protection is God’s Word.

a. Matt 24:24--For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and they will show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect (God’s chosen ones). (Amp)

b. People who do not love God’s truth will be deceived. Ps 119:97--Oh, how love I Your law! It is my meditation all the day (Amp). We put our attention on what we love.

D. Conclusion: When this age has ended and the devil is finally subjugated, we will look on him and “Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you (RSV) (saying can this be the one) who once shook the world (Knox) and (made) its kingdoms to quake in fear (Phillips)? Isa 14:15,16

1. The devil is a defeated foe. But if you don’t know it, if you don’t have your armor on (accurate knowledge of God’s Word) you are a candidate for deception.

2. Become a Bible reader. Not a verse reader or a devotional reader. Read the epistles (letters written to Christians to tell us what we believe and how we are to live). Read them from beginning to end, over and over. Don’t simply read isolated verses. Don’t jump around. Don’t worry about what you don’t understand. Understanding comes with familiarity.

3. You will develop a framework from which to judge the “signs and wonders” and false teachings coming on the earth as the devil attempts to recruit followers to help him hold on to his kingdom.

More next week!