

## Week Four: Our Adversary the Devil –

### *Part II: Activities of Satan – The World of Satan*

## **Satan's Activities**

The variety of names that Satan has alerts us to the fact that he can attack his opponents in a variety of ways. From the fierceness of a dragon (Rev. 12:3) to the attractiveness of an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), Satan can adapt himself and his tactics to suit the person and the occasion. Let's look at Satan's activities in relation to various people.

- I. IN RELATION TO CHRIST -
  - a. The animosity between Satan and Christ was first predicted after the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15). The hatred between spiritual descendants of Satan and the family of God was predicted here. Note the blow by blow action rooted in hatred (enmity). Christ from among the woman's seed would deal a **fatal blow** to Satan's head, while Satan would bruise Christ's heel, a **nonfatal blow**, but one that caused Him great suffering. Satan made concerted attempts to thwart Christ's mission to die for the sins of the world. 1) Herod - (Matt. 2:16). 2) Peter - (16:21–23). 3) Judas (John 13:27). 4) The temptation (Matt. 4:1–11).
  - b. The word "test" or "tempt" includes two ideas: **proving** and **soliciting** to evil. Specifically, Satan tempted Christ:
    - i. To **independence** (Matt. 4:3–4) Satan did not doubt Jesus' identity or his power but he wanted the Lord to assert His independence from the Father by turning the stones to bread.
    - ii. To **indulgence** (vv. 5–7) To have cast Himself off the pinnacle or wing or projection of the temple to the valley 450 to 600 feet below and to have landed unharmed would certainly have been a spectacular sign of the Messiah. But to have done so would have been to take a shortcut and show a lack of faith. Rashness, signs, or presumption never substitute for the constancy of faith, though Satan still tempts us to indulge in these.

- iii. To idolatry (vv. 8–10) Satan has temporarily been given authority over this world (cosmos), but ultimately Christ will rule it. Satan tempts us with the **immediate** and **visible**. Since Satan was unsuccessful in preventing the Cross, he attacks the Gospel, the followers of Christ, and what yet remains of the plan of God for this world.
- II. IN RELATION TO GOD - The tactic Satan uses to attack God and His program in general is to offer a **counterfeit** kingdom and program. This was evident when he originally sinned by wanting to be **like**, not **unlike**, God. The counterfeit was first attempted on mankind when Satan offered Eve the chance to be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5).
- a. The temptation of Christ was also an attempt at **counterfeit**. A counterfeit is as like the genuine as possible, only without some vital feature. Satan's offer to our Lord was to have the glory due Him without the essential feature of His death.
  - b. Today Satan promotes a **form of godliness** while denying its power (2 Tim. 3:5). To do this, Satan disguises **his** servants as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:15).
  - c. He promotes a doctrinal system through the demons who in turn use people who advocate a false asceticism or unbridled license (1 Tim. 4:1–3; Rev. 2:24).
  - d. The ultimate counterfeit will be the coming **Antichrist**, whose activities will be in accord with Satan and who will pawn off on mankind "the lie" (2 Thess. 2:9–11).
- III. IN RELATION TO NATIONS - His principal activity in this arena is to **deceive** the nations (Rev. 20:3). Deceive them how? Apparently into thinking they can **govern** righteously and **bring peace** in the world apart from the presence and rule of Christ. Again, his tactic is to counterfeit.
- a. Presently he **hinders** the gospel - He apparently employs demons in carrying out his deception (Dan. 10:13, 20), and he uses governments to hinder the progress of the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:18). This is one good reason to pray for those in authority (1 Tim 2.1-2).
  - b. **Manipulate** during the Tribulation.

- i. During the coming days of Great Tribulation Satan will deceive the nations into receiving the Antichrist as their savior.
    - ii. Satan, the dragon, will give **Antichrist** his power, and the world will give allegiance to him (Rev. 13:2–4).
    - iii. At the conclusion of the Tribulation Satan and his demons will influence the armies of the nations to march to their doom at the war of **Armageddon** (16:13–16).
  - c. Deception after **millennium** - During the millennial kingdom Satan will be bound, but at the close of that period he will be released and will attempt to lead the world in a final revolt against Christ's kingdom. After this unsuccessful attempt, Satan will be cast forever into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7–10).
- IV. IV. IN RELATION TO UNBELIEVERS –
  - a. **Blind** the mind - In relation to unbelievers Satan **blinds their minds** so that they will not accept the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4).
  - b. **Steal** the word of God - Sometimes the devil comes and takes away the Word that people have heard in order to prevent their believing (Luke 8:12).
  - c. In promoting blindness Satan uses **counterfeit religion**. Satan will use any aspect of the world system that he heads in order to keep people from thinking about or doing that which will bring them into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13; 1 John 2:15–17).
- V. IN RELATION TO BELIEVERS
  - a. Satan, the Tempter Just as Satan tried the Lord, he also tries believers. His aim is to get us to commit evil.
    - i. God may sometimes use Satan in testing us to prove us in resisting his tests. Tests can have three beneficial purposes in the life of the believer:
      1. to **prove** us (1 Pet. 1:6–7);
      2. to **teach** us (4:12–13; see also Heb. 5:8); and
      3. To **increase** our love for God (James 1:12).
    - ii. But Satan's only purpose is to tempt the believer to **commit evil**. There are at least three areas in which Satan tempts believers.
      1. The first is in the area of **conforming** to the pressures and structures of society (1 Thess. 3:5; Rom 12.2).

2. Second, Satan tempts believers to **cover up** selfishness. The story of Ananias and Sapphira serves as the classic illustration (Acts 5:1–11).
  3. Third, Satan tempts believers to **immorality** (1 Cor. 7:5). God provided marriage for proper expression of physical needs and relationships, and He expects husbands and wives to assume their respective and mutual responsibilities. When this is not done, Satan has opportunity to tempt believers to illicit or perverted sexual sins.
- b. Satan, the Adversary - As adversary, Satan **accuses** and **opposes** believers in various areas of their lives.
- i. First, he opposes our **witness** to the Gospel. He does this by confusing us when he plants tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:38–39), by snatching away the Word that has been sown (Mark 4:15), by aligning governmental authorities against believers (1 Thess. 2:18), or by imprisoning believers, believing this will keep their testimony from spreading or make them fearful of witnessing (Rev. 2:10).
  - ii. Second, Satan **spotlights** our sins (12:10). He accuses us before God when we sin, thinking he can cause us to lose our salvation. We have an advocate (1 John 2:1–2).
  - iii. Third, Satan opposes the believer by bringing **unbearable pressure**; two examples:
    1. The case of the **disciplined** church member - One concerned the man disciplined in 1 Corinthians 5.
    2. The case of younger **widows** - The second example concerns women who are widowed at a young age (1 Tim. 5:14–15).

## **SATAN'S WORLD**

We have already noticed that Satan is called both “the god of this age” (aion, 2 Cor. 4:4 NIV) and “the prince of this world” (cosmos, John 12:31 NIV). It is the relation of Satan and the Christian to the cosmos that is the subject of this chapter.

- I. THE MEANING OF THE COSMOS The word cosmos is used **185** times in the New Testament, 105 of which occur in the writings of John. Basically the word denotes an **ornament or order**, cosmos being the opposite of **chaos**. That concept is found in its use in 1 Peter 3:3 and in our modern word “cosmetic.”
  - a. The **universe** (Acts 17:24).
  - b. The **inhabited** earth is also designated by the word cosmos (Rom. 1:8), as are the people who live on the earth (John 3:16; 12:19). It is the people of the world whom God loves and for whom Christ died (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).
  - c. A suggested definition: the cosmos world is that system **organized** by Satan, **headed** by Satan, and **run** by Satan, which leaves God out and is a **rival** to Him. The Cosmos is Satan’s counterfeit kingdom in conflict with God’s Kingdom.
- II. SATAN AND THE COSMOS
  - a. His Authority over the Cosmos - Clearly the Scriptures teach that Satan does have supreme authority over the cosmos. Of course, this is by God’s **permission** and under his Sovereign control. (John 12:31; 16:11) (Matt. 4:8–9) (1 John 5:19).
  - b. His Aim in the Cosmos - Satan’s aim is to create a system that rivals God’s kingdom but that **leaves Him out**.
    - i. It is to promote a counterfeit order. Basically, the cosmos is evil because it is **independent** of God.
    - ii. To achieve his aim, Satan must try to make the values of his godless system seem attractive. Thus he works to make people give top priority to self as number one and to the here and now as most important. 1 John 2:15-17 (read it
- III. GOD AND THE COSMOS
  - a. Planned **Termination** - God has already announced that the cosmos will be judged and terminated. Satan’s rebellious system will come to an end. (Dan. 2:34–35, 44). That event is described in Revelation 17–19 and summarized in 1 John 2:17. It is important to observe that the arena of Christ’s victory will be the same as that of Satan’s kingdom, **the earth**. In the same arena where Satan has reigned, Christ will be victorious.

- b. Permissive **Toleration** - In the meantime God permits the rebellion to continue and the cosmos to flourish. His plan permits evil to run its course, and His long-suffering permits many to come to the truth (Rom. 2:4).
- IV. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE COSMOS
- a. **Separated** from It - Pure religion, James wrote, is to keep oneself unstained from the cosmos (James 1:27).
  - b. **Situated** in It - The believer, though separated from the cosmos, has to live his life in the cosmos. Thus we have to have contact with evil things and evil people. The only way to avoid such contact would be to “go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:10). Here are two guidelines.
    - i. Use it but do not abuse it (1 Cor. 7:31).
    - ii. Enjoy but do not love the things of this cosmos (1 Tim. 6:17; 1 John 2:15).
  - c. **Sufficient** for It - The believer can live victoriously in Satan’s world through faith in Christ who Himself has become the victor over Satan (1 John 5:4–5). No contingency is attached to the promise in these verses. Every believer has victory simply because he is a believer. ... Faith that overcomes involves trust in Jesus (the man), who is God’s Son.

Much information is derived with gratitude from:

Ryrie, Charles C. (1999-01-11). Basic Theology: A Popular, Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth. Moody Publishers.