

Spiritual Discernment

Lesson 2: Knowing the Enemy
Springs Reformed Church
High School Class
March 8, 2015

Briefly review the main points from last week's lesson.

- the spiritual battle begins in the *heart* and the *mind* (Eph 6:12)
- we have an *imperative* to discern good and evil (1 Thess 5:21-22)
- discernment requires a *standard* (Heb 4:12)
- the Bible provides the *infallible* standard we need to exercise discernment (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Read Gen 1:31a, 2:16-17,20; 3:1-7. What details can we learn about the serpent from these passages?

- the serpent is a *creature* who was created *good* (i.e., morally upright)
- this creature takes the *form* of a serpent, but he isn't *really* a serpent—which means he has the power to present himself as something he is *not*
- the serpent has personal *identity* and is highly *intelligent* (he is not one of the mute beasts)
- this serpent was *not* part of the animal kingdom that Adam named (i.e., no helper was found for him)
- the serpent's first words are used to cast *doubt* on God's clear commandment to Adam
- the serpent already *knew* what God commanded—he didn't ask his question to get clarification from Eve
- the serpent tries to make himself an ally of Adam and Eve by raising doubts about God's intentions
- the serpent's real goal is to kill Adam and Eve by making them think that the path to wisdom and pleasure is found in disobedience to God's word
- the serpent is determined to *distract* Adam and Eve away from the abundance of God's provision and to get them to focus on the *one* thing they can't have
- the serpent wants Adam and Eve to ignore God's word and judge right and wrong for themselves (by "knowing" good and evil)
- by deceiving Adam and Eve, the serpent is setting himself in direct opposition to God's purposes and God's authority—i.e., he is acting autonomously, and leading Adam and Eve to do the same thing
- while the opening question is merely a gross distortion of what God really said, the serpent follows it with an outright lie ("you will not surely die")
- part of the serpent's deception (subtlety) is mixing truth with error—i.e., he doesn't deny the *existence* of God, but appeals to the pride of the creature to defy the authority of the Creator over the creature

In regard to the temptation of Eve, notice:

- Eve knew *precisely* what God commanded, but failed to defend it
- Eve *added* to the commandment ("neither shall you *touch* it")
- the temptation involved both the *mind* ("wisdom") and the *body* ("food")
- After abandoning God's word, Eve easily rationalized her disobedience—and quickly forgot the terrible consequences

Refer to the parallel accounts in Matt 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

- How is Satan referred to in these passages?
- What are the similarities and differences between the temptation in the Garden and the temptation in the wilderness?
- How does Satan cast *doubt*? How does he appeal to the *senses*? How does he appeal to *pride*?

Notice how Satan uses scripture in the temptation of Christ.

- How does Satan distort God's word when quoting it precisely?
- What important principle of biblical interpretation is illustrated in this account?

Concluding thoughts:

- What is the difference between *freedom* and *autonomy*?
- How important is careful discernment in light of the deceiver's subtlety?
- How important is discernment in light of our radical fallenness?
- What confidence can we gain from Heb 4:12?

Review: Read Genesis 1-3. Notice the contrast between the perfection of the original creation and the corruption that comes as a result of sin. How do the animal skins (v. 3:21) foreshadow the atoning work of Christ and demonstrate the inadequacy of man's efforts (v. 3:7)?

Homework: Look up several more passages that refer to Satan (directly or indirectly). What else can we learn about who he is and where he came from? (Hint: what do his different names tell us?)