

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY

The Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Rector

"KNOW YOUR ENEMY (part 3): The Method Behind the Madness (I)"

SATAN AND HIS KINGDOM

We continue in our series "Know Your Enemy." We have seen how Satan is not only a real personal being, but we looked at his origins. We learned that God did not create a devil. Satan wasn't always Satan. He was originally Lucifer, "the light bearing one" the most beautiful of all the angels. He not only had beauty but as the guardian cherub, Lucifer was in charge of the worship of God (**Ez. 28:12-15**). God gave him great wisdom and great authority but he allowed this God given beauty, wisdom and authority to corrupt him. Lucifer was filled with pride and he said in **Is. 14:12-14**, "***I will ascend, I will be like the Most High,***" (*Elyon*, literally "the strongest strong one"). That's why he fell. Corrupted by pride, consumed with power, he rebelled against God, made war in the heavens, convinced a third of the angels of heaven to go with him, and now he makes war on the saints (**Rev. 12:3-8**). And so Lucifer star of the mourning became Satan father of the night.

Thus, just as there is a kingdom of heaven there is a kingdom of evil. Just as there is the Prince of Peace, there is the Prince of Darkness. And this prince is full of wrath, and his dominion is this world. The kingdoms of this world are his. Recall when Satan tempted Jesus, he offered the Lord all the kingdoms of the earth if He would but worship him.

So whether we like it or not, there is a supernatural evil empire, there is spiritual warfare going on and we are right in the middle of it. The truth is we have a supernatural foe and we are in a supernatural war. And this foe's power is much greater than anything in this natural realm. You don't stand a chance by yourself. You won't be victorious on your own. And if you know that you have an enemy and are in a war, and if you're going to have a chance to win, you will need to know four things: you better know your enemy's strengths and his weaknesses, and you better be aware of your own strengths and your weaknesses.

I am reminded of what happened before the Battle of Antietam in 1862 during the Civil War. The battle ended up lasting just 12 hours but ranks as the bloodiest day of the Civil War with over 20,000 dead and wounded. Though it was a draw, the mediocre Union General George McClellan was able to stop the Brilliant Confederate General, Robert E. Lee's thrust into Maryland forcing him to retire across the Potomac. How was this possible? Two Union soldiers had found a copy of Lee's battle plans and had delivered them to General McClellan before the battle.

Brothers and sisters, though by ourselves we may be know match for our enemy, Satan, the good news is that the enemy's battle plans have fallen into our hands! They are found in God's Word. And it is God's Word that has given us all we need to know about this enemy and how to defeat him.

Now today and next Sunday, we'll be looking at our enemy's strengths as well as our weaknesses (where we are susceptible to attack.) And that means knowing Satan's mission, his strategy as well as his methods of attack. Jesus had a mission, right? Have you wondered what is Satan's mission?

SATAN’S MISSION

1. **His primary mission is to take God’s place.** The clues can be found in **Isaiah 14:12-14**. Recall what Lucifer said and his for rebelling against God: In his heart, Lucifer said, *“I will ascend to heaven, I will set my throne on high, I will sit on the mount of the assembly, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High.”* Satan wants to be in charge and he wants all of creation to worship him.

2. **He seeks to thwart God’s plans.** In **Rev. 12:7 –8**: *“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war...and the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.”* In the garden, the garden, the devil sought to take the place of God in Adam and Eve’s lives. He tried to stop Jesus in the wilderness. He tries to stop God, but he knows he can’t get at God so he goes after those who are made in the image of God. And the way he goes about thwarting God’s plans is to attack man. He can’t “convert” any more of the angels. God says that the devil and his angels are already condemned. There is no second chance for the devil and his angels. But not so with mankind. Every man, woman and child is fair game. And so if the devil’s mission is to take God’s place and thwart his plans then the third part of his mission is this:

3. **He deceives the world into rebelling against God.** He deceived Adam and Eve, and now all of Adam and Eve’s progeny are fair game. And he seeks to deceive the world so that the world will no longer follow and worship God. But not only does he deceive the world,

4. **He makes war on the saints (Rev. 12:17; 13:7).** He will try and stop God’s people from taking back what is rightfully the Lord’s – namely this world. He and his demons will not stop until they have complete control of all of mankind and Christians are in the way. And the sick and sad thing is Satan thinks he can still win. But win or lose the devil’s goal is to take as many people he can with him, because he knows that it hurts the Lord. So if that’s Satan’s mission, what is his strategy?

SATAN’S STRATEGY

Satan has a specific strategy for trying to take over individuals, families, communities and even nations. Recall **1 Peter 5:6-7**: *“the devil prowls around as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.”* The fact is we are the devil’s prey. And Peter uses the imagery of the roaring, prowling and hungry lion because it highlights three strategic approaches Satan uses in accomplishing his mission.

First, there is intimidation. He is a roaring lion. The lion is the king of the jungle because he puts fear into the hearts of other animals. That initial fear comes from his roar. So Satan wants to intimidate and put fear into the hearts of man. He is the chief terrorist; he is the sinister minister of fear. And he will try and use our circumstances, the uncertainties of life, our insecurities, and the tragedies of life to instill fear. And if he has you afraid, he has already won.

Second, there is persistence and surprise. He is a prowling lion. This means this is Satan’s habitual activity. He is roaming about always looking for an opportune time to attack. Like the hungry lion who prowls cleverly, hides in the brush, and stalks his prey waiting for the right moment, so too is Satan always looking for the right occasion to strike. Moreover, he is persistent. He does not discourage easily. And so he goes about looking and waiting for the right time to overtake somebody. Like that of a prowling lion, the devil’s goal is twofold – to wear a person down or to totally surprise his victim.

Third, there is destruction. He is a devouring lion. His intention is our physical and spiritual destruction. He doesn't just want us physically dead, even more so he wants us spiritually dead. That's why Jesus said, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy." He is a murderer from the beginning Satan is about the destruction of God's people, and the enslavement of the unbeliever. Not only is he the god of this world, but also He wants to be Lord of the universe. That's his goal. And so he will seek to destroy anyone or anything that prevents him from being in control. But let's not forget that this is not just Satan's strategy, all the other angels who have rebelled (demonic spirits) are at his disposal to help him accomplish his goals. Unlike God, Satan is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent, but he has a host of angels who help him.

SATAN'S METHODS

Now that we have briefly touched on his strategy, let's begin to look at his methods. One of Satan's primary goals is deception. Anyone who is able to convince a third of the angels to rebel against God has to be very good at his trade. I mean let's face it, if Satan could deceive a third of the angels, do you think he is going to have a hard time deceiving man? So Satan's first method of attack is deception.

DECEPTION

And the devil deceives the world through two primary ways: lies and temptation. Jesus called Satan a liar, the father of lies (**Jn. 8:44**). In fact Jesus said there is no truth in him. Moreover, the devil is called the tempter (**1 Thess. 3:5**). He came to tempt Adam and Eve in the garden, and Jesus in the wilderness.

Now when we talk about deception, when we look at the lies and temptations of the devil we must always remember that it all begins in the mind. The battle we are in, the supernatural war that is raging begins in your mind and ends in your heart – your will. And the truth is in this earthly realm, our minds are susceptible to Satan's message. And if we are not to be ignorant than we need to know what his message is and why it is wrong.

Now what is more dangerous, a clock five hours wrong or one that's five minutes wrong? You may say a clock that's five hours wrong. But that's not true. If a clock is five hours wrong, you're going to know it. However, a clock five minutes wrong, well that can cause you to miss your airplane. You see a lie that is closest to the truth is much more dangerous than a full-blown lie. And so Satan seeks to twist and deceive people by distorting the truth.

And he does this in our minds because the thought is the father of the deed. For Satan wants us to believe the wrong thing because it follows as night follows day that if you're believing the wrong thing you'll be doing the wrong thing. You sow a thought and you reap a deed, you sow a deed and you reap a habit, you sow a habit and you reap a character.

Now Satan's message hasn't changed since beginning of creation. And it will never change. It will always be the same. Please turn with me to **Genesis 3:1-6**. We can go right back to the beginning of creation. We will see that Satan's chief lie concerns the most important, the biggest, most powerful subject of all – God. If he can distort your idea of God, he has you.

Now there are three basic lies that he makes concerning the nature and character of God. He doesn't deny the existence of God. He's too clever for that. He knows a belief in God is self-evident. But what Satan wants to do is get you to think of God as being cruel and harsh and severe. He doesn't want you to think kindly about God, but negatively.

The Lies Concerning God:

Lie #1: God is uncaring.

Satan says to Eve, "*Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"*"

Of course, that was a lie. The truth is God never said no to eating from all the trees, only to eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. So what was Satan trying to do? To convince Adam and Eve that God doesn't really care about them. To convince them that He does not want them to enjoy life but only wants to keep them oppressed and confined. In other words, Satan wants us to think God is an uncaring God. And such thinking often makes people think that belonging to the Lord is like taking bad medicine to get well. Or the idea that being a Christian is something you endure. But that's not right, it's just plain wrong.

I mean can you imagine the beauty and glory of the Garden of Eden? It was all for Adam and Eve. And God, in essence said, "Help yourself." For when God said to Adam and Eve don't eat from the one tree in the midst of the Garden, it didn't mean that He wanted to keep them from experiencing happiness. Rather God wanted them to know things based on what He said, not based on what they experienced. An in order to make a choice, man has to have the choice. No man can love unless he has the opportunity to not love, and no man can be loyal unless he has the opportunity to be disloyal. Moreover, God telling our first parents not to eat of the *one* tree wasn't a threat it was a warning. For every time God says, "*Thou shall not,*" He's really saying, "*Don't hurt yourself.*" And every time God says, "*Thou shall*" He's saying, "*Help yourself.*" God is a good God. But Satan doesn't want people to know that. What does God's Word say about the goodness of God? **Ps. 37:4: *Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*** **Ps. 84:11: *"The Lord thy God is a song and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold to them that walk uprightly.***

Lie #2 - God is untrustworthy.

Now Eve knew that the serpent was incorrect and she states what God had really commanded – that they could eat from any tree except the one. But the serpent continues the lies, he says, "*You will not die.*" Now he is putting skepticism in Eve's mind. The serpent is not only trying to say that God is uncaring but that He is untrustworthy. In other words, Satan is saying, "Eve, God is cruel. He puts all those things in the Garden but you can't touch them. Eve, if this God is not good surely he can not be trusted." And when you think about it, modern man has fallen to the same lie of believing God's Word to be untrustworthy. We have all kinds of substitutes for the Word of God. Let me mention the six of them.

Relativism – the belief that truth is always changing. People who believe in relativism say since we live in a new and modern day, what was true yesterday is not true today. Truth changes over time. Well, if that's the case, then it's not truth. The fact is what is true is always true and if it's new it is not true.

Another standard of knowledge is what can be called...

Subjectivism – It's when people say, "Well, I just feel its true – it just seems to me." Or they say, "Well what's true for you may not be true for me." Well friend, you're not God. Your feelings are not God. If its true its true, no matter *who* its for. Or how about...

Empiricism – that simply means we decide what is true by measurements, by testing, by what can be called obvious evidence – empirical evidence. The scientist bows down to this standard of truth. Then there’s...

Existentialism – this is the one the liberal theologians love. They don’t like to call it the Word of God. They say it only becomes the Word of God when you read it and you have a relationship with it. Then of course, there’s just...

Rationalism – when you take the Word of God and pass it by the judgment of your mind and logic, to determine if it’s true, and then substitute, “Thus saith the mind of man,” for “Thus saith the word of God.” And finally, there’s

Pragmatism – where people don’t ask if its true, but does it work?

The world is full of such falsehoods. And they all come from the master liar himself, who said, “Has God said?” And all this kind of thinking leaves man with no fixed standard of truth. Why is it wrong to steal? Why is it wrong to commit adultery? Because the Word of God says, “Thou shall not steal and thou shall commit adultery.” Why is sodomy a sin? Because the Word of God calls it an abomination. It’s not because of what I think or what you think. You see when we get away from a fixed standard of right and wrong, we get away from the idea of judgment. Law without penalty is only advice and God was not giving advice when he said to Adam and Eve when you eat of it you shall surely die. God is a good God but He is also a holy God.

Lie #3 - God is unfair.

“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” What is Satan implying? Simply this: Eve, God does not want you to reach your full potential. God is someone who knows what its all about. You can know what’s all about. You can be autonomous, independent, and Eve you can reach your own potential. You can be liberated. Why Eve, you can be like a God. Now God may have said, “Don’t do it?” but all you have is what God says. And He’s up there in the clouds and He doesn’t care. In fact, Eve, He’s not only uncaring and can’t be trusted, He’s unfair. Let’s face it, He’s God and He doesn’t want you to know what He knows. Eve, how do you know it is bad, if you haven’t tried it? Eve, if you can make up your own mind about what is right and wrong, God knows you can be like God. Eve, you can make your own decision! You can determine what is right or wrong! Eve, you can be God!

Do you see the progression of Satan’s lies? And when Eve allows such lies to fill her mind, she’s sees the fruit of temptation and is overwhelmed and succumbs to the deception. And hand in hand with the lies about God, Satan lies about man and his relationship to God.

The Lies Concerning Man:

Lie #1 - Man does not need God (self-sufficiency) “Good for Food”.

Lie #2 - Man can be a god (self-empowerment) “Make One Wise”.

Lie #3 - Man can find satisfaction and fulfillment in himself or creation (self-fulfillment) “Delight to the Eyes”.

In other words, you can be all you can be without God. And all these lies are reinforced by the temptations of creation. And so Eve eats of the tree's fruit and then lets Adam eat of it as well: ***"So when the women saw that it was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate."*** Thus, Eve allowed herself to be tempted, all due to a false misconception of God and His Word.

The Temptations of Satan and This World

So what is at the heart of these temptations?

- 1) **"Good for Food"** (lust of the flesh) – deals with doing (our actions) – doing something that is not right.
- 2) **"Delight to the Eyes"** (lust of the eyes) – deals with having (our desires) - refers to what we see – the created world - deals with wanting to have something that is not ours to have or having a desire to have something above anything else (coveting) that will cause you to break God's law.
- 3) **"Make One Wise"** (the pride of life) – is about being (our hearts) – being your own god (me, myself, and I) or making your own god.

Jesus said in **Jn. 8:44**: ***"The devil is a murderer and a liar from the beginning"*** and in **Jn. 10:10**: ***"The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy, but I came that you might have life and have it abundantly."*** There is only ONE WAY NOT to be deceived by such lies and temptations: trust and obey God's Word and God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no other way. Let us pray...

Pentecost Sunday, May 15, 2005 Liturgical Year "A"

Does God has a potential for you – I Cor. 2:9 – eye ear heart of men of what God has prepared for those who love him.

Oh if we only knew – it is to be like Godlike not as God but like God. God is love. Love is God – no. It sounds almost the same doesn't it. A man's religion will rise no higher than his concept of God.

It is to be one with Him and like him but Not to be your own little tin cheap god.

Why takes Satan's substitute when you can have God's truth. AMEN.