

Spiritual Warfare - Know your enemy

Rebellion on Earth

In the last message, we talked about Lucifer's fall from Heaven and his vengeful determination to bring down mankind and procure worship for himself on this earth.

This battle for the hearts and minds of God's creation began with Satan's first assault in the Garden of Eden. As he had turned away from the truth – the truth of God's sovereignty and the truth of God's love - so now Satan set out to deceive man into doing exactly the same thing!

He himself had fallen prey to blinding ambition and sinful pride. These had prompted him to deny God's authority and to attack God's very nature – a nature that is the very essence of Truth and Love – as evidenced by Christ Himself who was (and is) **full of grace and truth (**John 1:14**).**

We can only imagine just how completely the perspective of this once-glorious cherub must have been corrupted by his own splendour. So blinded that he developed a distorted view of these two essential components of the Divine nature.

Firstly Lucifer would have certainly won a following among many angels by convincing both himself and them that God was not all-powerful and alone worthy of worship. How else could he have entertained the possibility of an equal claim to God's sovereignty- as is made clear in [Isaiah 14](#) and [Ezekiel 28](#)? In his rebellion, therefore, he effectively called God a liar; God was not all He claimed to be - and He certainly wasn't the ultimate authority.

Secondly he would have denied God's love. A being with such burning ambition to reach the top (as it were), would have experienced incredible resentment at being thwarted in his ambitions. This would have resulted in that age-old sinful attitude, so familiar in human relationships, of: "He doesn't want me to reach my full potential and succeed because he wants all the glory!"

These two alarming and ultimately catastrophic perspectives had clearly warped Lucifer's thinking and had even persuaded other angels to join him in his rebellion against God.

So he would employ these same tactics against mankind. If he could deceive Adam and Eve into precisely the same grandiose delusion that had precipitated his own fall from heaven, then he may well have taken the first step to replacing the image of God in man with his *own* image

and hence the first step to usurping the throne of this world.

And that is precisely what our arch-enemy did - using the tactics that now came naturally to him: deceit, delusion, and lies.

God had placed man in an ideal setting: a beautiful garden filled with every kind of luscious fruit tree for him to enjoy and thereby rejoice in his God-given freewill.

As God said in **Gen. 3:16**:

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden....

But of course such a privilege was dependent on man also respecting *God's* will. And God had said in **Genesis 2:17**: **you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil....**

Surely this was no onerous task. Man had only to abstain from taking fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Just one tree!! Indeed, just as the path to salvation is narrow - so was the path to sin. Only one tree among so many!

And what made this tree so special? According to **Genesis 2:9**, all the trees God placed in the garden were **pleasing to the eye and good for food** but unlike the others, this

tree was not for the maintenance of human life or for sensual pleasure: It was a tree to make men wise - to give man the knowledge of good and evil. Notice that God did *not* say that the fruit would make man a god but that it would *give him the knowledge of good and evil* – as God Himself had.

But taking the fruit in disobedience would destroy man.

Gen.2:17: “for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

Firstly, such an act of rebellion against God would estrange man from his Creator who was the only source of life. Corruption and death therefore, both spiritually and physically would be the inevitable outcome of disobedience.

Rom.6:23: The wages of sin is death.

Rom.5:12: ..just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, in this way death passed upon all men because all have sinned.

Secondly – and subsequently – man would be condemned to continue on indefinitely in a similar state of disobedience. This is because he had indeed gained the *knowledge* of good and evil but lacked any capacity to

differentiate between the two. This lack of understanding would corrupt his values and render him unable to reject the evil and choose the good!

So [Isaiah 5:20](#) says:

**Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.**

In the book of James we have a precise summary of this confusion intrinsic in man's distorted value-system. In [Chapter 3:13-17](#) James contrasts the two diametrically opposed forms of wisdom that control men's thoughts and actions. The wisdom of this this earth is **demonic and unspiritual – resulting in, among other things, **envy, and selfish ambition**. Heavenly wisdom, by contrast, is (quote): **pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere** ([James 1:17](#)).**

There is a particular bank that teaches its employees to recognise and reject counterfeit notes. The problem is, counterfeits are so varied that it's impossible to distinguish between them all. So what the bank does is to train its employees to recognise exactly what a genuine note looks like! Anything and everything different to that will be a counterfeit.

Perhaps man, as he walked and talked with God, would have learned to understand and appreciate the true nature of goodness – like the bank employees would have progressively understood what a genuine banknote resembled. If man had reached that stage – surely he would never have been taken in by Satan’s lies and deception. Surely he would have spotted the counterfeit easily.

And what made Satan’s deception such a flagrant attack on God’s sovereignty was this: taking the fruit in disobedience had so thoroughly confused good with evil in man’s consciousness, that his mind was now receptive to the primary and greatest evil possible – the lie that has ever since warped all human reasoning and proved the father of all subsequent deception. It is this: that God is not entirely trustworthy, or alone worthy of worship, but that the serpent, Satan, is mankind’s true benefactor – and his values are the ones that make sense in this world.

Accordingly, to initiate this deadly delusion. Satan set out to foster in man a spirit of pride and independence (disobedience and rebellion, if you will). Satan knew that this was the best way to achieve his goal. After all, it was the very same spirit that led to his own ignominious fall from glory. Man’s dependence and trust, his belief and faith in God, would have to be undermined.

So the first thing Satan did was to cast into doubt the ultimate authority and truthfulness of God Himself!

Gen.3:1: Did God really say ,,,,?

In other words: is God's word reliable? Does He really *mean* what He says? In other words – can He *really* be trusted?

And Eve was lured into the deadly trap! Instead of simply sticking to what God had said, as Christ did in the wilderness, she began to make things up as she went along!

Gen. 3:3

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’.

God had said nothing about not touching the fruit! And, of course, once Eve had departed from the sure foundation of the Word of God and begun to argue with Satan using her own wisdom and intelligence (an unequal match to be sure), she was vulnerable to the lie which followed immediately.

Genesis 3:4: “**You will not certainly die,**” the serpent said to the woman.

So who to believe? Who was the more trustworthy? Of course if man could indulge in forbidden fruit without consequences, that would make Satan’s advice an attractive option!

And now Satan tips the scales:

Genesis 3:5: “**For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**”

Self-serving rationalization has always been an effective ally of disobedience! God hadn’t forbidden the fruit because to take it was lethal! No – it was because God wanted to hold man back - to prevent him reaching his full potential! To prevent him becoming like God!

And to go down that particular path had further serious implications! It would necessarily involve a further assumption that God was not only a liar, but that He was also neither gracious nor kind! He didn't want to share what he had! Ergo – He had forfeited the right to be their God.

It was a masterpiece of deceptive reasoning! And we can imagine the same thoughts running through the mind of the once-heavenly cherub. He also didn't think he could reach his full potential unless he threw off God's yoke.

And so God's truthfulness and the truth of God's love were both subjected to Satanic attack - and man fell for *the lie*.

In doing so - he betrayed his relationship with his Creator - as Lucifer had done - and transferred his allegiance to God's seductive nemesis.

True to God's word, spiritual death followed immediately. In believing the lie - man too was instantly and similarly cut off from the source of all truth. But also cut off from the God who is the only source of life and health,- resulting in the corruption of death. And believing *the lie* – with its fatal consequences, has become part and parcel of human nature and experience ever since.

Consider what Paul has to say about the heartcondition of sinful man in [Rom.1:18](#):

.....they exchanged the truth about God for *the lie* and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever..

Notice that the Greek, contrary to many translations, actually says *the* lie and not *a* lie. It's the same lie!! The lie that was first believed in the Garden of Eden. The lie first embraced by the once-glorious cherub – and subsequently passed directly from Satan to man

That God is not worthy of worship!

That we can be independent of God!

That we can be our own gods - responsible for our own destinies!

What gross deception - yet mankind - corrupt humanity - has always subscribed to it.

And man's rejection of God's truth and God's grace has resulted in a bizarre paradox in human consciousness. On the one hand man will sometimes say that he doesn't believe in God - the truth of God has been lost! But as soon as something goes wrong, that same person will bitterly blame the God that he says he doesn't believe in! He will say: how could a God of love let this happen?? You see, he's also lost the knowledge of God's love.

Man called God a liar in the garden - and he's been doing it ever since! As we said before, the first couple's decision to follow Satan's advice implied that God was really no better - if not worse - than Satan himself. Satan, after all

- and not God - was telling the truth and really wanted what was best for man.

Thousands of years later, God revealed Himself in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. As [Hebrews 1:1](#) says:

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son....

The extent to which our Lord represented the fulness of the Godhead could be seen in the fact that Jesus said on one occasion: **He who has seen me has seen the Father.**

So a rejection of Christ is a rejection of *God* – a denial of the one who was full of grace and truth – manifested in a human existence. We call these people *unbelievers* - and that's generally regarded by Christians as simply a generic name for those who haven't made a decision for Christ - but in actual fact it's something far more serious than that!

Listen to the words of [1 John 5:9-10](#)

We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has

made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

It's the Garden of Eden all over again! Played over and over again in the heart of the unbeliever. With man calling God a liar! With Satan, by one means or another, insidiously playing the same role as the usurper and arch-deceiver.

2 Cor 4:4

..the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And ever since his success in the Garden of Eden, Satan has played on man's pride and carefully nurtured his sinful desire for independence from God. He will encourage anything but faith and dependence on God. Reincarnation, Satanism, evolution, humanism, atheism, world religion - anything but the truth about God.

And with his nature infected by sin, man's spirit is like a warped window pane. It distorts any light it receives from God - simply because it's *God's* truth!

On one occasion Jesus said to the Jews:

John 8:45

...because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

What a stunning indictment of human nature!!

**Not – ‘in spite of the fact that I tell the truth’ – but:
‘*because* I tell the truth, you do not believe me’.**

This makes sense! If Christ is the truth, a rejection of Christ is a rejection of the truth - and vice-versa.

And this darkness of ignorance is the preferred state of unregenerate mankind, who will not believe anything that may threaten his continued enjoyment of independence from God and its accompanying sinful self-indulgence.

John 3:19 Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

If we trace through the progress of mankind from the fall in the garden, we can see that this sinful spirit of rebellion and independence from God has stamped man's activities ever since - beginning with Cain horrifying murder of his own brother. Moral decay then showed itself in Lamech's unjust killing of a young man and culminated in a world-wide flood, made necessary because, in the words of [Gen. 6:5](#):

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

It's also interesting to see how mankind (initially those in the line of Cain), asserted his godless independence by industriously manufacturing a self-supporting and independent life-style –as clearly revealed by Lamech's three sons:

Jabel became the father of Agriculture, Jubal, the father of civilized arts and Tubal-Cain, the forerunner of workers in tools of bronze and iron. Agriculture, art and technology - all three areas designed to make this world a more liveable place; demonstrating man's attempts to create a compatible and comfortable environment for himself on the earth in a world selfsufficiently independent of God.

This is, of course, the drive of humanism - finding the answer to life within us and within what we can achieve. All begun by Satan's blandishments and lies in the garden of Eden.

It's the same lie! The lie from Eden! And in all this, what is the essence of the lie? The malignant core of this

devilish deception that plunged our race headlong into the darkness of sin and death?

That God is not worthy of worship

That we can be independent of God

That we can be our own gods - responsible for our own destinies!

What gross deception! Yet mankind - corrupt humanity - has always subscribed to it.

Sin will always seek to dethrone God. It has to - otherwise how can it achieve independence? So it must always deny the reality both of who God is and who and what we are! Just think about the theory of evolution for a moment.

So man is certainly no lover of the truth

Romans 1:18 says that people **suppress the truth by their wickedness,**

2 Thessalonians 2:10 tells us that sinners **perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.**

Independence from God comes at a massive spiritual cost - not to mention a fatal intellectual compromise.

For example, faced with truth about our Creator, man blindly sticks to notions of evolution - despite the evidence. He will either simply ignore the evidence, dismissing it as unreliable, distorted and biased - or- if this option isn't really open to him, he'll twist it to somehow fit his predetermined and stubbornly inflexible, godless world-view.

The story is told of a man who went to visit his doctor. "Doctor" he said, "I regret to inform you - but I'm dead."

"Well, no - actually you aren't." replied the doctor, "I've just seen you walk into my office."

"But I'm still dead, doctor." said the man. "What you've seen are muscle contractions and spasms. They can happen after death and they brought me in here!"

Puzzled, the doctor decided on a different tack.

"I tell you what," he said. "Let me run a series of tests and we'll settle this once for all."

So the doctor ran his tests and showed his patient the results.

"There", he exclaimed triumphantly. "Everything inside you is working well. Liver, lungs, kidneys and so on."

"Aw - come on doc", the man said. "You know as well as me that tests can be misleading, data can be distorted and results can be falsified. I tell you - I'm dead!"

The doctor was baffled. But then he had an idea.

"Ok", he said. "Given that all that is true - would you agree on one thing at least?"

"What's that, Doc?"

"Would you at least agree that if a person is dead, the heart stops and the blood stops flowing?"

"Of course, doctor - everyone knows that!"

So the doctor jumped up, grabbed a nearby needle, went over and jabbed the man in the arm. Immediately blood began trickling down.

The patient gazed at the trail of blood in astonishment.

"Well - what do you know, Doc," he exclaimed in astonishment. "I was wrong! *Dead men do bleed!*"

Dismiss the evidence if you can. If you can't, twist it to suit preconceived ideas. It's not that man can't believe - it's because he doesn't want to believe. We have a saying, do we not - 'there are none so blind as those who will not see'.

Satan has certainly done a great job of turning man against his Creator. We've managed quite well to do it on our own - but the devil has played a strategic role in the whole affair. And in doing so, he has successfully arrogated to himself the worship and loyalty of this world.

Right now he is the Prince of this world (John 14:30), the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph 2:2) and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John.5:19)

But Satan has a very real problem! A human being would come on the scene and bring him down! The prophecy of the woman's seed that must have been constantly ringing in his ears!

And that's what we'll talk about in the next message on Know Your Enemy: A Glorious Victory!