

Your Adversary the Devil

1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour

CLASS	DATE	TEACHER	HOST
1. The Reality of Satan – His purpose and schemes – 2 Corinthians 2:11			
2. Pride – When Satan tempted David – 1 Chron. 21:1-8			
3. Doubt – When Satan tempted Job – Job 1:6-12			
4. Covetousness – When Satan entered Judas – John 13:27			
5. Betrayal – When Satan tempted Peter – Luke 22:31			
6. Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes – When Satan tempted Eve – Genesis 3:1-6			
7. The Easy Way – When Satan tempted Jesus – Matthew 4:1-11			
8. Deceit – When the Pharisees did the work of Satan – John 8:44			

CLASS 1: The Reality of Satan

2 Corinthians 2:11

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

To identify Satan, his power, his purpose and his schemes so that we might avoid being devoured by him

Who is Satan?

We are not advised of his background and origin. The name *Satan* (Hebrew) means “opponent”; *Devil* is the Greek translation of the same word, with more meaning of “false accuser”. Sometimes he is called the Tempter (Matthew 4:3). Once in the New Testament he is called Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15), and once Beelzebub (Mark 3:22). We do not know if he is a created being or if he is a being who fell from God. Many passages which are inferred to imply he was an angel who fell from Heaven are misunderstood; ultimately, there is nothing that says he is a fallen angel or some type of child of God, although 2 Corinthians 11:14 says that he transforms himself (i.e. in deception) into an angel of light. He is not *Lucifer*, a name given to the King of Babylon (only) in Isaiah 14:12.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Many people speculate about the origin of Satan. Is this wise? What dangers arise from over speculation on this subject?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Lucifer means “Morning Star”. Who is called the Morning Star in the New Testament?

We are told some things about the identity of Satan: he is called **the god of this age** (2 Corinthians 4:4); he is called a **dignitary** and an **angelic majesty** in 2 Peter 2:10 and Jude 8. Jesus called him the **ruler of this world** in John 12:31, which nicely corresponds to his offer to Jesus in Matthew 4 of the world. Paul calls him a **spiritual power of wickedness in a heavenly place** in Ephesians 6:12. He is also called the **Father of Lies** in John 8:44. All of these titles and descriptions (some of which are metaphorical) are of one who has a spiritual power.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does it mean when we are told NOT to revile (or falsely accuse) dignitaries in 2 Peter 2:10 and Jude 8-10?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Do you think that Satan had the ability to deliver the world to Jesus?

What is the power of Satan?

First, we are told that he has the power of death in Hebrews 2:14. This likely is more pointed to the second death (Rev. 20:6). He owns all those under this curse; thus he is the strong man Jesus came to bind and rob in Mark 3:27.

Second, he has the power of accusation. We see that this is likely the meaning of his being in heavenly places; in Job 1 and 2 we see him appear before God to make accusation against Job. In some similar way he made accusation against Peter according to Luke 22:31. Yet we are told that by the power of Jesus the accuser no longer can make some accusations (Revelation 12:10).

Third, we see from his introduction in the garden that he has the power to use the world to tempt us to sin. He can present to us things that entice the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How or when did Jesus bind Satan?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In what way are Satan's accusations now refused?

Why Learn About His Works

We are told by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we ought to understand the schemes of Satan to avoid being taken advantage of by him. This implies that he actively seeks to ensnare us, a truth seen on multiple occasions. We must understand that while he manipulates the world around us, the ultimate source of our temptation is our own desires (James 1:13-15). This is why we bear the guilt of our sins, and not Satan. Satan merely facilitates our desires; he does not create them, and he does not compel us to act.

This is best seen in the Garden of Eden. There Satan (perhaps even authorized by God, as with Job) arrived and presented the forbidden fruit under these circumstances: (1) he lied about the words of God; (2) he made God appear to be in the wrong; (3) he changed the word "sin" into "knowledge". This manipulation of the truth becomes a pattern for all time.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does Satan's scheme work today? In other words, what are some situations where Satan uses (1) the lie about God, (2) making God appear in the wrong, and (3) changing words to change our view of something evil? How does this work in works of the flesh like covetousness, homosexuality, promiscuity, evolution, drunkenness, etc?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is it a false accusation to say Satan is the reason we sin?

CLASS 2: Satan Uses Pride

1 Chronicles 21:1-8

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

We need to understand how Satan works. We are looking at the time that Satan manipulated David to number Israel and thereby sin against God.

The Census of Israel

This is one of the more intriguing passages in the Bible. In the account in Chronicles we see that “Satan stood up against Israel and moved David”. However, in 2 Samuel 24:1 it says that the Lord “moved David”. From our last study, we see that Satan’s work is one that must be authorized by God; we saw that with both Job and Peter, and we see it here too.

Why was this a sin, and what moved God’s anger? To begin, God has constantly said that we are not to trust in our own strength, but in Him (see Isaiah 31:1). A census of this sort was a military accounting, which is in its root a desire to trust in that power. God’s anger may have been moved more because of Israel’s confidence in general rather than just David, as it says in 2 Samuel 24:1.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Here we see that it is a grievous sin to trust in our own strength. How do we do that personally today?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Who is the one man who saw this census as a sin? Why might that be ironic?

Satan and the Pride of Life

It seems that Satan moved David by either fear (his fear of his enemies) or pride. While it is not entirely clear, we will proceed that, because of Joab’s words, it was a manipulation of pride that brought David to this place. Specifically, we will say it is the pride of life that is mentioned in 1 John 2:15-16. This passage corresponds to the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3:1-6. There, when Eve was tempted, we are told that it was the desire to be wise that caused her to stumble.

David (likely) desired to trust in his own strength rather than to trust in the Lord. Again, this is a bit speculative, not knowing the specific mind of David. But for our study, let us consider how easy it is to rely on our own understanding. When we see the purpose of God, often we try to force it into our own reasoning. We try to make that purpose something that fits into our understanding. But sometimes, we must admit that we cannot.

Consider how Naaman in 2 Kings 5 could not fit the command to be baptized seven times into his reasoning of the restoration of health; it simply did not work in his mind. Yet it was his obedience that ultimately restored his health.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In what way does “*desirable to make one wise*” mean “*pride of life*”?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are some examples of ways which we often want to force our understanding into God’s commandments?

The Dangers of Pride

Pride is dangerous. God says that He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. God speaks of how He hates pride (Proverbs 8:13). Yet there are times where pride and boasting itself is not wrong, such as in 2 Chronicles 17:6, Isaiah 4:2, Galatians 6:14, 2 Thessalonians 1:4. It is hard to discern, but there is a time when being proud is acceptable. These things revolve around what it is we are proud of; things that come from God.

God despises those who lack humility, and those who look down on others. Yet when our confidence is in God and His works, this boasting seems to have a place and purpose in our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is it a sin to boast about the achievements of a local church?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does the bible mean when it describes the “Proud Look” as in Proverbs 6:16?

CLASS 3: Satan Uses Doubt

Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

There are many examples of the workings of Satan. Here we are seeing a conversation between God and Satan, and what Satan sought to accomplish by persecuting Job. Our position here is that the greatest struggle Job would have (which covers most of the book) was when his friends came and accused him of sin.

The Sufferings of Job

Satan the accuser met God and made the accusation against Job: if God were to *“put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”* This accusation had to be met; God permitted Satan to afflict Job. Job was afflicted by Satan in two stages: first he lost all that was in his life. Second, he subsequently lost his health.

We are told that when Satan did this, Job never faltered. He proclaimed that God was just, and that nothing he had was not subject to being taken away. While Job would often lament that it was not just to suffer as he did, he never accused God of not being fair.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Does Satan still have the ability to accuse us as he did Job? Are we still subject to suffering for the purpose of determining our faithfulness?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What thoughts do you have about Job’s wife? How does her suffering fit into this account?

Job’s Friends

Most of the book of Job (chapters 3-37) is about a conversation between Job and his four friends. While at first they are good comforters (Job 2:12-14). But when they hear Job’s complaint, they become indignant. They believe that this terrible suffering could only be because Job has sinned, and that Job’s self-righteous declaration (i.e. that he has not sinned) is itself a sin.

What if Satan’s greatest tool in this test was not the events in the first two chapters, but the friends who came afterwards? What if their devious purpose was to cause Job to doubt and then deny God? We know for certain that Satan’s direct work here was the events in Job’s life; but we are also told that Satan works through ministers who accomplish his purposes (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why do people often think that bad things occur because of sin?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: When we suffer, how can we discern when things happen to be tested, or they are a consequence of our own sins, as sometimes is the case?

The Danger of Doubt

Doubt is dangerous. It is much like a seed, that begins very small, but when it is sustained over time, it grows into other things. We are told that if we have faith without doubt, we can accomplish great things (Matthew 21:21). We are told our prayers are effective when they are without doubt (1 Timothy 2:8, James 1:6). Even our service to God is damaged when there is doubt present (Romans 14:23).

Doubt is not itself sinful. But when we refuse to deal with doubt, it becomes something else. It can move into inaction. It can become disbelief. It can grow into rejection. All of us are plagued with doubt from time to time. We need to see this as a scheme of the devil; his purpose is to cause us to doubt (1) our salvation, (2) our right conduct before God, and (3) our resolution to remain faithful.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is it a sin to boast about the achievements of a local church?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does the bible mean when it describes the “Proud Look” as in Proverbs 6:16?

Dealing With Doubt

How do we deal with doubt? We are told that for somethings, the Scriptures themselves are the answer. John said in 1 John 5:13 that the things that are written (specifically in that book) are written so that those who believe can know they are saved. If you want to erase the doubts you have towards God and your salvation, you **MUST** spend time studying the Bible, being diligent to show that you are approved by God (2 Timothy 2:15).

We deal with doubts about ourselves by self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5). We need to look at every one of our works and deeds and see that we are walking by faith. When we find we are not, we need to correct ourselves. Too, we have a spiritual family that can help us to overcome doubts.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does confessing our doubts, sins and weaknesses to one another help us to overcome doubt?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why do we sometimes avoid dealing with doubt?

CLASS 4: Satan Uses Covetousness

John 13:26-30

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

One of the greatest questions in human history is the motivation of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. We are told that Satan played a part in this when we are told that Satan entered Judas in John 13:27. This declaration likely speaks less to a possession and more to a willingness to act on Satan's prompting. The question is this: what prompting did Satan use to push Judas to act?

Judas's Weakness

Earlier in the book of John an important fact is given to us about Judas. In John 12:6 we are told that Judas was in charge of the money box (the charitable treasury the apostles and Jesus kept with them). More importantly, we are told that Judas stole money from that box. Thus we might be seeing the weakness in Judas's moral fiber: he was greedy for money, and was willing to sin to obtain it.

This might bring us to the motivation of his greatest sin. In Matthew 26:14-16 we are told that Judas went to the chief priests and asked "*What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?*" This seems perfectly in line with the nature of the man seen in John 12. Satan entered and manipulated Judas by the love of money.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Was Judas a full partner of the work of the apostles, or was he just there to betray Jesus (consider Acts 1:17)? In other words, was he chosen to sin, or did he have a genuine apostolic purpose and fell from that grace?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does Judas's subsequent actions to betraying Jesus indicate about him? Could Judas have repented?

The Love of Money

In 1 Timothy 6:6-10 Paul says some important things about the love of money; consider them in particular in the life of Judas ("*pierced themselves through with many sorrows*") and in the operation of Satan in our lives. First, note that Paul says it is the desire to be rich that is the problem. Perhaps this ought to be our thought process; many people become rich by good choices or fortunate circumstances, but those who desire to become rich are the ones in danger.

What is a love of money? Jesus warned of those who would make money their god in Matthew 6:19-24. This idea means that money can become something that we begin to worship; we make sacrifices to it, we offer our service and devotion to it, and we hope that it will reward us for this service. It becomes our definition of success and happiness.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What is the difference between desiring to be rich and being rich? Which one is a sin, and why?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In what ways do people worship money?

The Danger of Covetousness

The word that describes this sinful desire for wealth is covetousness. In the Ten Commandments covetousness was covered thoroughly (Exodus 20:17). It makes sense if one can worship money, that covetousness is a type of idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

We have seen that Satan's greatest tool is deception. Being the "Father of Lies" (John 8:44), Satan manipulates our perceptions to create falsehoods we want to believe. In Mark 4:19 Jesus warned about the deceitfulness of riches. This is a common theme in the Bible: wealth can deceive us.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does it mean to "covet"? Is it simply any time we want something?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are some other examples of Satan deceiving men? Did his actions attempt to deceive Job? How did Satan deceive David to number Israel?

The Deceitfulness of Riches

There are a number of ways that money deceives men. In Luke 12:16-21 a rich fool believed something false from his wealth: that he would have time to enjoy it. In James 4:13-14 James warns of believing that the future will bring us a profit. This too is deception. Wealth deceives us many ways. It promises happiness, contentment and security, and fails to deliver these things. We are always grasping at it, and like the gambler at the slot machine are willing to put just a little more effort to get it, but it is a deception to believe that it will answer our problems.

Solomon was the wealthiest man of the ancient world. Yet he realized that money failed to bring him contentment or security, and that it did not help when facing the ultimate fate of all men (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, 6:2). Both the rich and the poor have the same God, and both see the same fate. Riches make us think we are different, but we are not, and to believe we are is a great evil before God.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can we tell if someone has been deceived by riches?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Money promises many things it will not deliver. How did Paul tell us that we could achieve contentment in life in 1 Timothy 6:6?

CLASS 5: Satan Uses Betrayal

Luke 22:31-32, 54-62

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

The accounts of the life of Christ each contain those pertinent facts of Jesus' work that reflect the purpose of that Gospel. Not all tell us of His birth, of His wilderness temptations, of His calling of the Apostles, or even the establishment of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, they seem to keep only at their core the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So when they all tell us of one particular event, we can say with confidence that this is of particular importance. All four Gospel accounts tell us of the denial of Jesus by Peter.

Peter's Weakness

Peter has already given place to Satan working through him. In Matthew 16:23 Peter was rebuked by Jesus ("get behind me, Satan") for saying he would prevent Jesus' death. Some might say that Peter seems to be someone who is quick to speak, but slow to think on his words, a common ailment. We do not doubt that Peter was ready to fight to protect Jesus (as seen in John 18:10), but it is the more difficult willingness to suffer shame that gave place to the working of Satan.

Satan is an indirect participant in this passage. The petition to sift Peter has already been made, and even more remarkable, Jesus knows the end results of that testing. We are almost certainly meant to see that Peter's test is going to occur within a few hours, when he is challenged by men to identify himself as a disciple. Before the rooster has crowed twice, Peter will have denied Jesus three times. This denial is a betrayal.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why is it harder to suffer for the sake of righteousness than to fight for it?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What might Satan's petition to "sift" Peter have been like (considering Job 1)?

The Denial Of Christ

Peter's denial is an important study. First, it reflects that even the greatest of men, men who walk with Jesus and see all of His works, can stumble and fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). Second, it teaches us that denying Jesus is a form of betrayal of Jesus. Denying Him in this case was Peter's unwillingness to be identified as a disciple of Jesus. This denial contrasts with Jesus' clear expectation of all disciples: "*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 10:32-33).

Denying Christ is not just something we do with our mouth. Our actions can deny Christ too. In fact, most of the active references to “blasphemy” in the New Testament refer to a professed disciples behaving in a way that denies Christ (Romans 2:24, 1 Timothy 6:1, Titus 2:5, 2 Peter 2:2). Jude declared that men who turn the grace of God into lewdness “*deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jude 4), and Paul told Titus that men may profess to know God, but deny Him in their works (Titus 1:16).

Our adversary the Devil seeks to provoke us to deny our Lord. He may arrange circumstances in the world to be such that we face persecution or perhaps just humiliation for the name of Jesus. Often, facing that experience, we falter, and we deny our lord.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are some of the ways that we deny Christ?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What is the end result of denying Christ (2 Timothy 2:12)?

Peter’s Restoration

There are a lot of lessons from the betrayal of Jesus by Peter. We can make the point that following Jesus at a distance is dangerous; we can see that once we sin, it becomes easier to continue to sin in greater degrees. We can see that God warns us both by His word and by the circumstance of sin itself to change course.

But perhaps the most important lesson is that Jesus said that after Peter had succumbed, he would “turn again”, or repent. But what is remarkable is that Jesus sought to encourage Peter to then use this experience as a way to encourage his brethren. It may be that in John 21, as Jesus asked Peter “do you love me” three times, this reflects the three betraying moments. But Peter’s restoration becomes an avenue through which we are reminded that even the most deplorable of betrayals can be forgiven if we are prepared to turn again to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: At what point did Peter “repent” of his sin? Do we know?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: The bible mentions sins that cannot be forgiven (Luke 12:10, 1 John 5:16). How does this measure against the idea that we can be forgiven for any sin of which we repent?

CLASS 6: Satan Uses the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life

Genesis 3:1-6

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

The fall of man in the garden is an often referenced event in the Bible. It marks the moment that sin entered the world, and it teaches us about the way which Satan operates. A very important idea is found here: that there are three avenues which we are tempted. These are restated in 1 John 2:16 which says *“for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

When Jesus was tempted, He faced three temptations that reflected these things (Luke 4:1-13). Thus He truly was tempted in all manner as we are. But in each case He taught us how to resist these temptations. This will be the subject of the next class.

Lust of the Flesh

After Satan appeared to Eve, we are told that she first saw that the tree was good for food. This reflects the lust of the flesh, that fleshly appetite that is natural to all creatures. It is manifested here as a literal appetite for food, but can reflect other appetites such as sexual, chemical (drugs/alcohol) or any desire within our flesh.

We need to consider that the desires of the flesh need to be approached with a mind that says there are two considerations. First of all, sometimes these appetites have appropriate ways to be satisfied. 1 Corinthians 7:1-4 speaks to this. But sometimes we are expected to deny ourselves in order to please God. Consider the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 16:24 or 19:12.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Are the desires of the flesh wrong? How might Eve have handled this desire?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How might the habit of fasting increase our ability to deny fleshly desires?

Lust of the Eyes

Eve's second observation was that the fruit was a delight to the eyes. This can be a complicated observation, as it was not that the fruit looked good to eat (i.e. lust of the flesh), but that because of its attractive nature she wanted to have it. Why do we want nice things? A generic coat can keep us warm just as well as a name brand coat, but often our desire is to possess that which is more attractive or appears better.

We are warned in the New Testament of the danger of wanting things because of how they make us feel. We are warned not to make judgments based on appearances, nor are we to seek appearances as a way of life. Jesus said that if the eye is darkened, then everything that it looks to will be darkness (Luke 11:34-36). Jesus was using the idea of the lust of the eye to say that if our eyes pursue worldly things, everything we are filled with is going to be evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are some examples of the lust of the eyes?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: If it is not wrong to want nice things, how might we consider when the line to sin is crossed?

Pride of Life

Our second study on David reflected on the pride of life, so we won't spend much time on this point. We need to see that for Eve, the pride of life was in a knowledge or wisdom. Pride of life can include success, fame, power or education as pursuits that cause us to esteem ourselves beyond what is reasonable.

There is nothing that was necessary for Eve in the desire to be wise. She had all that she needed in life. Yet she was moved to gain something that would elevate her in her own esteem.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How is the desire to be wise a temptation?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: When is it wrong to seek after knowledge or the titles that go with success?

CLASS 7: Satan Uses the Easy Way

Luke 4:1-13, Matthew 4:1-11

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

Our last study spoke of the way Satan uses the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. When Jesus was tempted, He faced three temptations that reflected these things (Luke 4:1-13, Matthew 4:1-11). Thus He truly was tempted in all manner as we are. In each case Jesus's response teaches us how to resist these temptations.

At the heart of these temptations was Satan promoting the "easy way" to do things. The easy way to satisfy hunger; the easy way to make men confess Him; the easy way to overcome the world. While there is considerably more to the temptation of Jesus than this, we will use this idea as our focus: Satan tempts us to do things the easy way rather than the right way.

Labor For Our Bread

When Jesus was tempted through the lust of the flesh, it was His devastating hunger that was the vector of temptation. Hunger is a fleshly desire, and to have fasted 40 days would increase that hunger dramatically. Satan's offer (or observation) was simple: Jesus (*if* He was the Son of God) had the power to end His hunger. Yet He resisted, pointing out that man could not live by bread alone, but instead by the Word of God.

Often bread is the metaphor or symbol for our needs in life (Matthew 6:11). Paul declared to the Thessalonians that people were to work for their bread (2 Thessalonians 3:8-12). Many people pursue a lifestyle that avoids working. Maybe they want to win the lottery or retire young. There is a great danger in this pursuit. Work is a good thing (Ecclesiastes 2:24), and while it is good to be blessed not to have to do it, it can also be dangerous (Luke 12:16-19).

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does turning to the word of God make fleshly temptation more bearable?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How was eating bread changed from rocks a temptation? What sin would have happened had Jesus turned the stones into bread?

Avoiding Tribulation

When Jesus was tempted again, Satan took Him to the tops of the mountains where He could see all of the world. Perhaps here the temptation (in part with the absence of suffering to overcome the world) was that Jesus could possess all that He could see. When

Jesus rebuked Satan, it was the cost of these things that Jesus rejected. He would pay the price of suffering and submission rather than the easier price of sin.

No one wants to suffer. Yet we are told many ways in the New Testament that suffering produces something beneficial to our souls (2 Corinthians 4:17, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7). Even Jesus did not desire the pain of suffering, as we see in the Garden of Gethsemane, but he saw it as the only way to accomplish the plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is it wrong to avoid suffering if we are able to do so?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does suffering accomplish for our benefit?

The Recognition of Men

Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple and suggested that if He stepped off, He would be carried down by angels, and would receive the glory due to the Son of God. All those at the temple would see this, and all would declare Him to be the Son of God. Yet this was not the Messiah of prophecy, nor would it cause Him to fulfill His mission. Thus Jesus defended Himself from this temptation by replying that, as God, He was not to be tested.

We often wish that people knew of our good works. Yet Jesus warned us that we are not to do our works for the sake of the praise of men (Matthew 6:1-4). Instead, we are to pursue humility and meekness. In doing so, God is glorified, and He promises to glorify us in due time.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What kinds of things do Christians sometimes do to gain the praise of other Christians?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can we avoid seeking the praise of others?

CLASS 8: Satan Uses Deception

John 9:38-50

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

One of the most confrontational debates Jesus had with the Jewish leaders was found in John 8. That discussion ended with them taking up stones in an attempt to murder Jesus. Jesus was telling them that He did the will of His Father, but they did the will of their father, whom He identifies in verse 44 as Satan.

Scriptures point out that anyone who is in sin is owned by sin, and as such is of Satan. Consider that Paul says that all of us who were dead in our sins were sons of disobedience under the power of Satan in Ephesians 2:1-3. The Jewish leaders are not particularly sinful to be called the children of the devil.

But what is interesting is that Jesus points to Satan's particular work of deception in their relationship with him. He is called a murderer from the beginning, which must point to his work against Adam and Eve. This murder character is because he is not of the Truth, and is a fabricator of lies. Satan's ability to deceive is characteristic of him and of those who follow him.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How were the Jews deceived by Satan? What was at the heart of their deception?

The Deceitfulness of the World

Our previous studies have shown us that Satan uses the world to cause us to sin. A great part of that is the deceiving nature of the world. We are told riches are deceiving (Mark 4:19). Time is deceiving too, in that we always have less than we imagine (Heb. 3:13). The things in this world are always working to deceive us, causing us to believe them apart from God.

Even telling ourselves that these things do not speak the truth, we are still tempted to believe them. We are still tempted to believe that just a little more money will give us security, or a little more time will permit our faithfulness. We listen to the lies of evolution and the science of skeptics to permit our faith to be shaken. Satan has been successful in the use of the things around us to compel us to doubt that which we believe by faith.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does wealth and money deceive? How does time deceive us?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Can someone believe in (the general theory of) evolution and still be a person of faith?

The Most Dangerous Deception

We are warned many times in the New Testament: “Do not be deceived” (Luke 21:8, 1 Cor. 6:9, 15:33, Gal. 6:7, James 1:16, etc.). This means that the ability to avoid deception is in our grasp. But the greatest danger of deception is when we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8, 1 Cor. 3:18). Jeremiah 17:9 says that the heart is deceitful above all things; when we lie to ourselves, we almost always believe it.

We might consider that this too is a work promoted by Satan. By encouraging our envy, our pride, and our ignorance, he is able to convince us to believe things that we should know are not true. One of the most difficult things to do is to convince someone who is self-deceived of their error.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are some examples of lying to ourselves?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does something like pride lead to self-deception?

The Love of the Truth

Jesus spoke often about the nature of Truth. He said that He was the Truth, and He said that the Word of God is the Truth (John 17:17). One of the most important ways to avoid being deceived is to create within ourselves a love of the Truth (2 Thes. 2:10). Consider how Eve might have reacted had she had a genuine love of the Truth.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What ways can I create a love of the Truth?