

Exposing Satan's Role and Tactics

Special Topical Lesson

I. Introduction - Why this Lesson?

- a. This past week I was more keenly aware of the spiritual battle against Satan and the forces of darkness in the spiritual realm, as a result of being engaged in two rather intense spiritual battles.
- b. I think about Satan often, and this topic comes up frequently and naturally in the course of our topical preaching. However, I wanted to have at least one lesson solely devoted to this subject.
- c. David Adams encouraged me to check out some specific lessons posted on our website from the past eight years, where we addressed the subject of Satan in some detail. I was surprised to see how much we had covered. However, the material is dispersed through several lessons posted on our teaching website, including those on:
 - i. **Genesis 2-3:5**,
 - ii. **Exodus 5:1-7:13** (parallels between Pharaoh and Satan),
 - iii. **John 8**,
 - iv. **Acts 25-26**,
 - v. **1 Peter 5:8-14**,
 - vi. **1 John 2:28-3:9**, and
 - vii. At our 2018 Retreat, in a lesson on the *Spiritual Battle*.

II. Why This Matters

- a. Jesus spoke a great deal about Satan. So did the apostles. Satan is discussed throughout the New Testament.
 - i. For example, when Jesus addresses the seven churches in Asia Minor in **Revelation 2-3**, he mentions Satan in his brief messages to four of the seven churches.
- b. The gospel message is generally presented as the solution to a problem we have with God, as a result of our own sins. In modern Protestant circles, the message often follows the following outline:
 - i. We are all sinners.

- ii. Sin separates us from God.
- iii. Sin leads to death and punishment (hellfire).
- iv. Therefore, we have gotten ourselves into a big problem. (Our sin has separated us from God, and we need a Savior to pay the price for our sins.)
 - 1. Faith in Jesus is the solution to the problem that exists between us and God. It gets us out of the punishment we deserve.
 - 2. Therefore, according to this paradigm, the “good news” story of the gospel involves three parties:
 - a. God (who created us and judges us);
 - b. Us (who sin and need a Savior; and
 - c. Jesus (who redeemed us by paying the price for our sins).
- c. In view of the popular modern view of the gospel, consider the following.
 - i. Read **Matthew 12:22-30**.
 - 1. Satan is the “strong man” in the parable.
 - a. However, Jesus is the “*stronger* man” who will bind up the strong man and plunder his house (thereby liberating us from Satan’s control).
 - 2. Satan has a kingdom of his own, according to Jesus.
 - a. Jesus brings another kingdom, the kingdom of God, to wage war against Satan’s kingdom.
 - ii. Paul recounts his first encounter with Jesus to King Agrippa. Read **Acts 26:12-18**.
 - 1. Jesus said Paul’s mission would be to go to the Gentiles:
 - a. To open their eyes;
 - b. To turn them from darkness to light; and
 - c. To turn them from the power of Satan to God.
 - i. That they would receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by faith in Jesus.

- iii. "...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might *destroy the works of the devil.*" (1 John 3:8, NKJV)
- iv. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death *He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,* and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14–15, NKJV)
 - 1. Jesus died to destroy Satan and to liberate us from Satan's bondage.
 - 2. The idea of Jesus paying a ransom for us also points to this. After all, in a kidnapping, who receives the ransom? (**Answer:** It is paid to the bad guy, to the one who took someone captive.)
 - a. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and *to give His life a ransom for many.*" (Mark 10:45, NKJV)
 - b. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who *gave Himself a ransom for all,* to be testified in due time...." (1 Timothy 2:5–6, NKJV)
- d. Therefore, the gospel message has *four parties*, not three. This is very important for us to understand. *Understanding the role of Satan is key to understanding what is going on.* The four parties are:
 - i. *God, who* created us;
 - ii. *We, who* rebelled from God;
 - iii. *Satan, who* took us captive (and wants to take us back); and
 - iv. *Jesus, stronger than Satan,* who redeemed us from Satan's power and liberated us.
 - v. (However, there is more to the story of us being redeemed...)
- e. **Question:** If Satan is such a key figure in the story and is mentioned all over the New Testament, why does the gospel message today write him out of the script? Why do Jesus and the apostles speak a lot more about Satan than most Christians today do?
 - i. **Reason #1: 'Fake News' that Satan Does Not Exist**
 - 1. Most Christians do not believe that Satan exists (a personality who rebelled against God, who takes humans captive and tempts us personally).

2. One recent study in the U.S. indicated *only 40%* of those who claim to be Christians believe that Satan (as a living being) actually exists.
 - a. "Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan 'is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.' An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they 'agree somewhat' with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan.
 - b. (Source: Barna Group, Ltd., 2009 <https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>)
3. Many Christians consider Satan to be no more than a figurative or representative embodiment of evil.
4. People have bought into the popular view of Satan as a cartoonish character and therefore consider belief in Satan to be a sign of ignorance. People are embarrassed to preach about Satan and to admit that they believe he exists.
 - a. Here in 'educated New England', people are liable to consider you to be ignorant or superstitious if you admit to believing in the existence of Satan.
5. The Satanic Temple (TST), headquartered in Salem, Massachusetts (slated to host *SatanCon2023* in Boston in April 2023), formally claims that Satan does not exist (and neither do God nor hell).
 - a. One of the most successful 'gaslighting' or fake news campaigns of all time.
 - b. Bottom line, what Jesus and the apostles taught is either true or it is not: Satan exists and plays an active role in the world.

ii. **Reason #2: Protestant 'Romans Road' Influence.**

1. Popular modern so-called gospel presentations like 'Romans Road' and 'Four Spiritual Laws' do not even mention Satan.

2. Even groups that recognize some of the gaping flaws in these oversimplified evangelical Protestant approaches essentially copy the same approach but add to it (things like obedience, repentance, baptism, perseverance in faith to the end, etc.). Yet even those who add these things to the story nevertheless almost always neglect the part about Satan.
3. In earlier times, when Christians were baptized, part of the conversion process involved “renouncing Satan and his pomp”.
 - a. Instructions for baptism from the Apostolic Constitutions:
 - i. “And when it remains that the catechumen is to be baptized, *let him learn what concerns the renunciation of the devil*, and the joining himself with Christ; for it is fit that he should first abstain from things contrary, and then be admitted to the mysteries.
 - ii. “He must beforehand purify his heart from all wickedness of disposition, from all spot and wrinkle, and then partake of the holy things; for as the skilfullest husbandman does first purge his ground of the thorns which are grown up therein, and does then sow his wheat, so ought you also to take away all impiety from them, and then to sow the seeds of piety in them, and vouchsafe them baptism. For even our Lord did in this manner exhort us, saying first, ‘Make disciples of all nations;’ and then He adds this, ‘and baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ (**Matthew 28:18-20**) Let, therefore, the candidate for baptism declare thus in his renunciation:—
 1. (Source: *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, book 7, section 3; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 476)

iii. **Reason #3: Not Praying the Lord's Prayer Daily.**

1. “Give us this day our daily bread.” (**Matthew 6:11**, NKJV)

- a. This statement obviously implies that one would be praying this prayer daily, or *at least* once a day. It was common practice in the early church to pray it at least three times each day (specifically at 9 am, noon and 3 pm, hours closely associated with the passion of Christ on the cross.
 - i. He was nailed to the cross at about 9 am;
 - ii. Darkness came over the land for three hours, starting at about 12 noon; and
 - iii. He died about 3 pm.
2. "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one..." (**Matthew 6:13**, NKJV)
 - a. From Tertullian, writing c. 212 AD:
 - i. "Satan will not be at liberty to do anything against the servants of the living God unless the Lord grant leave, either that He may overthrow Satan himself by the faith of the elect which proves victorious in the trial, or in the face of the world show that apostatizers to the devil's cause have been in reality His servants. You have the case of Job, whom the devil, unless he had received authority from God, could not have visited with trial, not even, in fact, in his property, unless the Lord had said, 'Behold, all that he has I put at your disposal; but do not stretch out your hand against himself.' (**Job 1:12**)
 - ii. "In short, he would not even have stretched it out, unless afterwards, at his request, the Lord had granted him this permission also, saying, 'Behold, I deliver him to you; only preserve his life.' So he asked in the case of the apostles likewise an opportunity to tempt them, having it only by special allowance, since the Lord in the Gospel says to Peter, 'Behold, Satan asked that he might sift you as grain; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not;' [**Luke 22:31-32**; *note that the 'you' here is plural -CP*] that is, that the devil should not have power granted him sufficient to endanger his faith.

- iii. "...But in the prayer prescribed to us, when we say to our Father, 'Lead us not into temptation' (now what greater temptation is there than persecution?), we acknowledge that that comes to pass by His will whom we beseech to exempt us from it. For this is what follows, 'But deliver us from the wicked one,' (**Matthew 6:13**) that is, do not lead us into temptation by giving us up to the wicked one, for then are we delivered from the power of the devil, when we are not handed over to him to be tempted.
- iv. "...or the design is to humble, as the apostle tells us, that there was given him a stake, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him; (**2 Corinthians 12:7**) and even this sort of thing is not permitted in the case of holy men, unless it be that at the same time strength of endurance may be perfected in weakness. For the apostle likewise delivered Phygellus and Hermogenes over to Satan, that by chastening they might be taught not to blaspheme. (**2 Timothy 1:15**) You see, then, that the devil receives more suitably power even from the servants of God; so far is he from having it by any right of his own."
 - 1. (Source: Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione [On Fleeing Persecution]*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, pp. 117–118)
- b. Satan has some limited ability to attack us, as in the case of Job. However, God put limits on that ability, especially regarding Satan's ability to attack Christians.
 - i. God can use these assaults and trials for a greater good: for example, to defeat or expose Satan, to refine our faith, or even to humble us.
- c. Also, the church can "hand people over to Satan", removing the protection provided by the church/Christian fellowship.
- d. In praying the daily prayer, we are asking God to limit the ability of Satan to tempt and attack us every day.

III. What Jesus Taught About Satan

- a. Satan is a liar and murderer.
 - i. Read **John 8:31-47**.
 - ii. Jesus offers freedom from slavery from a liar and a murderer.
 - iii. Satan was a liar and murderer from the beginning.
 1. This goes back to the story of the original Fall of Man into sin, in **Genesis 2-3**.
 2. Satan is the one who introduced death and sin into the world.
 - a. If we don't understand the role of Satan in bringing evil into God's creation, we cannot properly understand why there is so much suffering, pain and death in the world. It did not come from God.
 3. Satan is the great liar and deceiver.
 - iv. Lies he told Eve in the beginning:
 1. "Did God really say, '*you shall not eat of every tree in the Garden*'?"
 - a. Here, Satan deceitfully *twisted* the command of God. See **Genesis 2:16** and **3:1**.
 2. "You shall not surely die."
 - a. That was a boldfaced lie. See **Genesis 3:4**.
 3. Finally, Satan tells Eve that if she eats the forbidden fruit, she will become "like God, knowing good and evil." (See **Genesis 3:5**).
 - a. Satan used deceit to misrepresent God's character, implying that God's commands were not for her good; that instead, Satan was her 'real friend'. See **Genesis 3:5**
 - v. The most potent weapon against a liar is to tell the truth.
 1. Jesus, when tempted three times by the great liar, simply responds, "It is written..." and then quotes the word of God. (**Matthew 4:1-11**)
 - a. What a great example and lesson for us! Jesus simply hit back with the truth.

2. Eve started there (responding to Satan's deceit by speaking the truth), provided initial resistance to the tempter, but then caved into the temptation.
 3. Recall that Jesus says He *IS* "the truth" (**John 14:6**). Also, He referred to the Holy Spirit as "the spirit of truth". (**John 16:13**)
 4. Jesus came into the world to bring grace (= *favor from God*) and truth (**John 1:14, 17**). He said that if we abide in his word (continue to obey his teaching) "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". (**John 8:32**)
 5. When Pilate asked Jesus if he is a king, Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king, For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that *I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.*" (then) Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" (**John 18:37-38**)
 6. Paul said that in our spiritual battle against Satan, we must have the full armor of God. The first thing he mentions: is "having girded your waist with *truth*". (**Ephesians 6:14**)
 7. Be devoted to knowing the Word of God, measuring all things in light of it, and turning to it when Satan tells us lies and tempts us!
 8. Always tell the truth, and love the truth (good, bad or ugly). Bring the light of truth to every encounter. Hate any deceit in yourself; confess it and expose it to the light!
- b. Satan enslaves, Jesus frees.
- i. At the core of the entire gospel message, Jesus is liberating people from being enslaved to the power of Satan.
 - ii. Foreshadowed by Israel coming out of Egypt, freed by God's power from enslavement by Pharaoh, the liar and enslaver. (**1 Corinthians 10**)
 - iii. Foreshadowed by Laban (the great deceiver), from whose flock Jacob built his own flock, "some of all kinds", and departed with great wealth. (**Genesis 30-31**)
 - iv. The great battle between Jesus and Satan: the deceiver vs. the one who always tells the truth. A reminder of why we must hate and expose all lies. They are from Satan.

c. Satan's origin.

- i. "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, '*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.* Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'" (**Luke 10:17-20**, NKJV)
- ii. **Questions:** What event does Jesus refer to here, that He saw Satan "fall like lightning"? What is the origin of Satan? Was he originally with God in heaven, but later cast out (down to earth)? Where did this bad guy come from?
- iii. All the land animals (including 'creeping things' made on the sixth day, and it says, "God saw that it was good." (**Genesis 2:25**))
- iv. It seems to me that the Creation story pertains to the creation of the world and the physical universe. Angels were present before that.
 1. God said to Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? ...When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (**Job 38:4-7**)
 - a. "Sons of God" as used in Job is a term that refers to angels, with Satan being among them. (See **Job 1:6, 2:1**)
 2. Victorinus wrote, c. 280 AD:
 - a. 'Yet He created angels and archangels before He created man, placing spiritual beings before earthly ones.'
 - i. (Source: Victorinus, *On the Creation of the World*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 341)
 3. **Revelation 12:9** speaks of a spiritual war in heaven. It says, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him."
 4. In **Matthew 25:41**, Jesus speaks of "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels".
- v. Origen wrote, c. 225 AD:
 1. "Regarding the devil and his angels, and the opposing influences, the teaching of the Church has laid down that these beings exist indeed; but what they are, or how they exist, it has

not explained with sufficient clearness. This opinion, however, is held by most, that the devil was an angel, and that, having become an apostate, he induced as many of the angels as possible to fall away with himself, and these up to the present time are called his angels.”

- a. (Source: Origen, *De Principiis*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, p. 240)
- vi. Some early Christians believed that one-third of the angels had rebelled and were taken up with Satan, likely based on **Revelation 12:3**, where it speaks of the great dragon (Satan) sweeping a third of the stars from heaven and throwing them down to earth.
 1. See Victorinus, writing c. 280, in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 355.
 - vii. A few notable early Christian writers (Origen, Tertullian) associated the second prophecy to the king of Tyre with the fall of Satan.
 1. Read **Ezekiel 28:12-19**.
 2. Tertullian tied this prophecy from **Ezekiel 28** directly to Jesus' statement in **Luke 10:18** regarding Jesus having seen Satan fall like lightning.
 - a. See Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 2, chapter 10; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 306.
 3. Origen, writing c. 225 AD, noted that this passage from **Ezekiel 28** could not have applied to any human king. (See Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, pp. 258-9). In that light, consider the following statements from the **Ezekiel 28** passage:
 - a. “You were the seal of perfection.”
 - b. “You were in Eden, the garden of God.”
 - c. “You were the anointed cherub (angel).”
 - d. “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you.”
 - e. “You sinned, therefore I cast you as a profane thing, out of the mountain of God.”
 - f. “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty...I cast you *to the ground* (or *to the earth*).”
 - g. Also, he would be *devoured by fire* in the end.

viii. Read **Isaiah 14:12-15**.

1. "How you are *fallen from heaven, O Lucifer*, who rose up in the morning! He who sends to all nations is crushed to the earth."
(**Isaiah 14:12**, LXX, OSB)
 - a. Again, the same idea here of Lucifer (another name for Satan) falling from heaven and being cast to the earth, similar to what Jesus said He saw, in **Luke 10**.
 - b. **Side Note:** The Greek word for morning star (Lucifer) here, in the LXX, is the same word used in **Psalm 110/109** in the LXX where it speaks of the Son of God being begotten "before the morning star".
2. "For you said in your mind, 'I will ascend into heaven; I will place my throne above the stars of heaven... I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High.'"
 - a. The underlying sin on which Satan's rebellion was based: *pride!*

d. Satan's role in the church.

- i. Read **Matthew 13:24-30** and **13:36-43**.
- ii. Jesus sows good seed (sons of the kingdom) in the field first.
- iii. The enemy (Satan) sows tares among the wheat.
- iv. The angels will sort out the wheat from the tares at the end, at the time of the harvest.
- v. Jesus appears to be teaching that *Satan* will have some of *his sons* among those in the kingdom of God (on earth, the church)!
 1. "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather *out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness...." (**Matthew 13:41**, NKJV)
 - a. **Question:** Will there be wicked people in the kingdom of God (on the earth)?
 - b. **Answer:** According to what Jesus says here, YES. Consider also what Jesus taught in the Parable of the Dragnet (discussed below).
 - i. As Jesus explained in **Matthew 18** and Paul also lays out in **1 Corinthians 5-6**, the church needs to be a disciplined church. When we discover

serious sin in the church, we are called to apply church discipline (warning, rebuking, calling the person to repent and if they do not, expelling the wicked person from the church).

- ii. However, we cannot see inside the hearts of people. Some people will fool us, by appearing outwardly as spiritual people but inwardly being wicked. Despite our best efforts to remove those whom we discover are in serious sin, there will be some wicked people found in the kingdom of God who only will be sorted out in the end. That will be on the Day of Judgment, by the angels.
2. These wicked ones will be separated from the righteous only at the end.
 3. Cyprian commented on this passage and its implications for the church:
 - a. “For although there seem to be tares in the Church, yet neither our faith nor our charity ought to be hindered, so that because we see that there are tares in the Church we ourselves should withdraw from the Church: we ought only to labor that we may be wheat, that when the wheat shall begin to be gathered into the Lord’s barns, we may receive fruit for our labor and work. The apostle in his epistle says, ‘In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor and some to dishonor.’ (**2 Timothy 2:20**)
 - b. “Let us strive, dearest brethren, and labor as much as we possibly can, that we may be vessels of gold or silver. But to the Lord alone it is granted to break the vessels of earth, to whom also is given the rod of iron. The servant cannot be greater than his lord, nor may any one claim to himself what the Father has given to the Son alone, so as to think that he can take the fan for winnowing and purging the threshing-floor, or can separate by human judgment all the tares from the wheat. That is a proud obstinacy and a sacrilegious presumption which a depraved madness assumes to itself.”
 - i. (Source: Cyprian, *Epistles of Cyprian, Epistle 50*, section 3; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 327)

vi. Read **Matthew 13:47-50**.

1. The net (= the kingdom of God) has good and bad fish in it.
2. Jesus makes the same point here that he made in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

IV. Be Prepared for the Battle

- a. Read **Ephesians 6:10-20**.
- b. We are involved in an ongoing battle against a crafty, powerful enemy. Our enemy will be defeated in the end, cast into the lake of fire. Let us make sure we do not share his fate.
- c. We need to understand Satan's strategies and tactics. We need a great deal of spiritual wisdom.
 - i. Let us meditate on the Word of God day and night, and use the "sword of the Spirit", our greatest offensive weapon, to the greatest effect.
 - ii. Study the past 'tapes' of encounters in Scripture that men and women have had with Satan and his temptations. Learn from those who were successful, as well as from those who failed.
 - iii. Study past encounters with the same interest and intensity as a head coach would study tapes of the opposing team prior to the Superbowl.
- d. Pray the Lord's Prayer every day, including the part that says "...and deliver us from the evil one."
- e. The Christian life is not like 'baking a cake' in the sense that all we need to do is follow a set of directions, and everything will turn out perfectly. We are in a war zone. Someone is actively trying to destroy us and what we are trying to build. There will be casualties.
- f. Satan has asked to sift all of us like wheat. We should expect that.
- g. Imitate Jesus to defeat Satan. Recite the word of God in the face of temptation. Always tell the truth. See our enemy as a ferocious lion looking to devour, but copy the saints and be bold!
- h. While Christians are 'nonresistant', that only means we do not fight in the wars of this world and do not use the weapons of this world. As Paul explained in **Ephesians 6**, we are called to be warriors in the spiritual battle against Satan and the forces of evil who are with him.
 - i. We fight, but it is a different battle from the rest of the world, using different weapons.