

Understanding Satan

Lesson 5: Satan's Kingdom

Satan is not working alone to accomplish all that he does (i.e. carrying out the various tactics against us). Remember that Satan is *not* God and so he cannot be everywhere at all times, doing whatever he wants, with full knowledge of everything that happens. So, he does not directly do everything connected with evil. Instead, he is ruler over a kingdom of those who are helping him accomplish his mission (Matthew 12:26; Acts 26:17-18; Colossians 1:13). Recognizing these who work with Satan will help you be better prepared for his attacks.

1) Spiritual beings. Satan is described as the ruler of spiritual forces (associated with being in the air, Ephesians 2:2) and the Christian's warfare is said to be against spiritual forces rather than human ones (Ephesians 6:10-12). This is why God's people must be equipped with spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:13, 10-18). Though we do not have many details about how the spiritual beings who are aligned with Satan are organized and function, we do know they exist and work within Satan's kingdom against us (Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 25:41; Matthew 12:24-27; Luke 7:21; Revelation 12:7-9, 17; 1 Timothy 4:1-3)! Then, while we are not told much about how Satan's spiritual forces work against us today, we do know they are limited and can be defeated in whatever ways they can work (1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-18). Furthermore, I believe the Scriptures lead us to the conclusion that demon possession (as occurred in New Testament times) ended with the cessation of miraculous gifts given to people (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). So, Satan and his forces must continue their work through other means (i.e. temptations, trials, influencing other people to teach falsely, etc.).

2) Governmental authorities. Throughout history, there have been both good and wicked rulers. As every person functions as part of an earthly nation/kingdom, we are all subject to the laws and regulations of those in positions of authority. When these rulers are wicked and oppose what God desires

and requires, they can work to influence people not to obey God (Acts 4:17; Daniel 3, 6). Satan and his allies deceive and manipulate people in positions of authority so they can be used to bring about negative influences on a broader scale for Satan's cause than most people can. For example, this is how Satan used the Roman empire against Christians in the first centuries (Revelation 13:1-2, 6-7). Although not all governmental authorities are evil (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17), these can be used by Satan so as to work against what is good and right (i.e. through persecutions, the formations of law contrary to God's laws, pressure to conform to ungodly standards and beliefs, etc.). Therefore, while we are to respectfully obey these rulers, we must always be prepared to obey God above them (Acts 5:27-32)!

3) False teachers. The Bible often warns about false prophets and false teachers as being real threats to serving God (Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 1:7-11; Jude 1:3-4). In fact, Jesus describes those who would teach such perversions of God's word as wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-31). For, they distort the truth and mislead others while disguised as servants of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). These who teach false messages disguised as the true gospel, then, are not true servants of Jesus Christ; but are servants of Satan (Romans 16:17-18, though many of these may also have been deceived themselves). Satan has been working to pervert the word of God since the first recorded temptation (Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:5-6). Then, since the time the gospel was first preached, Satan has been trying to influence people to distort it in some way. Now, there have been nearly 2,000 years of distortions to the truth and tens of thousands of different types of churches established that all believe, teach, and practice different versions of the "Christian faith." So, there are many perversions of truth religious people

often encounter that hinder them from finding God (2 Peter 3:14-18).

4) Various human servants. Notice carefully how Satan worked through people in the Scriptures in various ways to influence others to sin. These include: Eve (Genesis 3:6, 11-13), Cain (1 John 3:11-12; Genesis 4:1-8), some Jews (John 8:44), Peter (Matthew 16:21-23), Judas (Luke 22:2-6; John 13:27), etc. Today, Satan has many servants on earth cooperating with him (whether knowingly or unknowingly), as he is the god most people worship and serve (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; 2 Timothy 2:26; 1 John 3:8-10)! While this certainly applies to those who are obviously wicked, he can even use those who are generally committed to what is good and right (i.e. Peter). So, as you live around and interact with people regularly, these present Satan with excellent opportunities to influence you (Ephesians 2:2). Particularly, Satan can use those he has been successful influencing to pressure you to conform to the world's standard of beliefs and conduct that are under his sway (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 1:10-19; Isaiah 5:20). In this way, Satan has people all over this world influencing others for his cause. Yet, God urges those people to be transformed and provides the escape for those who want to turn from darkness to light (Romans 12:1-2; Acts 26:17-18; Colossians 1:13)!

Satan is not alone in the mission he is trying to accomplish. Instead, he has an entire kingdom of those who are helping him (whether they do so knowingly or unknowingly). Although we do not have a complete knowledge of how those in this kingdom operate, we know they are leveraging the same tactics against us that Satan uses. Therefore, the same armor God gives us to defeat Satan is also successful against them (Ephesians 6:10-18)!

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?