

Seeing the Lord of the Word in the Word of the Lord

Jesus: The Defeater of Sin and Death

Genesis 3

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Introduction

I am sure everyone remembers when we invaded Iraq this last time. We watched on television while they updated us on what was going on. Generals or television reporters would keep us informed of the progress that we were making in the invasion.

Still today we receive reports on the progress our efforts are making in the war on terror. Commanders, diplomats, or news correspondents will keep us informed of what has happened. We are assured that there are strategic plans in place for victory, but we aren't given the details of those plans. We just know the plan is supposedly working.

In our lives today, whether you know it or not, there is a plan to attack and conquer you! There is a strategy that is out there through which someone is trying to defeat you! The enemy is not Iran, Iraq, or Osama bin Laden. The enemy is Satan. He is roaming like a lion who wants to have you for dinner. And he has a plan to make that happen.

Unlike the War on Terror, where the plans are hidden and we are just let in on the progress after the fact, the strategies of Satan are recorded in the Bible. God has given us a blueprint of the strategy he will use to destroy us. If we look carefully at the Scriptures we can see how Satan works, and we will be better prepared to withstand his assaults.

The very first attack Satan launches on mankind gives us an inside look at his strategy. That first attack happens in Genesis 3, in the Garden of Eden.

Intro Text: Setting the Stage

At this point in the narrative creation has been completed. Moses has spent the last two chapters unpacking for us the creation of the universe. Everything that exists has originated from an all-powerful and all-wise Creator. The Creator has finished His creation and found it to be "very good".

The pinnacle of His created order is man. From the dust of the ground God has specially and uniquely created mankind. Moses has devoted chapter 2 of this story to introducing us to the parents of the human race, Adam and Eve. It is this special part of creation that has the responsibility of representing God on earth, both by reflection His righteousness and holiness and by acting as His vice-regents. They are to do this perfectly, pointing others towards a perfect God.

We are also introduced to the Garden of Eden. This is the place where Adam and Eve are to dwell. Here they have all the food they need, plenty of water with a large river flowing out of it! God has given them abundance. They can eat, drink, enjoy each other, and enjoy an intimate relationship with their Creator and Father. Things are good in the Garden of Eden!

However, Genesis 2 is followed by Genesis 3. Here we see Satan, coming in the form of a serpent, trying to ruin what God has created. The devil comes with his lies and trickery in an attempt to cause a rebellion.

It is here the future of mankind would be altered and it is here we join the story.

The Text: The Bait.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’ ”

Can you see the tactic that Satan is trying to use here? The Word of God is brought into question. “Did God actually say?” Satan wants the woman to question whether or not she has heard correctly, whether Adam has really been accurate in his own understanding of what the Lord has commanded them.

He begins to place doubt in the mind of the woman. But not only does He question the Word of God, He distorts it.

“Did God actually say, you shall not eat of ANY tree in the garden?”(vs. 1b)

The answer to that question is NO! God didn't say they couldn't eat of any tree, only the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They had been given everything but one tiny tree in the midst of a great garden. But Satan has distorted the Word of God and now confusion is setting in.

But Eve fires back. She affirms the truth of God's Word, that God has indeed said these things!

“But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.” (vs. 3)

Not only does she affirm what God has said, but she decides to ADD to it. God said eating of the tree was forbidden, He said nothing of touching it. So, she adds a stipulation and Satan sees no need to correct. You can see him smiling when those words come from her mouth. He has confused her, caused her to add unnecessary stipulations on top of what God has commanded. Here is the first instance of legalism, adding to what God has said.

“But the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (vs. 4-5)

Here is the enticement! The forbidden fruit is shown to be something that will bring pleasure. Instead of focusing on the abundance that God had supplied the serpent points to the one thing that is forbidden. God had more than provided for them but Satan points towards what they thought they were missing.

Deceit is setting in. The ploy of Satan is working well. The woman looks upon the tree, considers what the serpent has said, the fruit begins to sparkle. This fruit will make her wise, it is enticing, like a fish swimming around a worm on a hook, it is too much to pass up. She has allowed Satan to say too much, she has entered into conversation with him and now he has wrecked havoc in her mind and heart.

Text: The Bait Taken!

“she took of its fruit and ate, and she gave also some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (vs. 6b)

We can imagine the scene here. She walks up to the tree, the enemy behind her, the sun glimmering off of the fruit, the wind blowing gently. She reaches up ever so slowly, touches the fruit once and quickly removes her hand. She looks around, she isn't dead, hasn't fallen to the ground in pain, or anything like that. The scene is unchanged. She does it again, this time leaving her hand on the fruit just a moment longer. Again, nothing happens. The third time is the charm. She takes the fruit, pulls it off the tree, and stands with it in her hand.

She considers all that has been said by the serpent. She has not died; she is standing there with a delicious fruit in her hand ready to eat. She puts it up to her mouth, then, a bite is taken. It's sweet to the taste, a ripe and juicy treat. The pleasure is great and the best part is....she doesn't die. Satan must have been right, so she gives to her husband, and he eats as well.

And so the course of human history is altered because it is here that sin enters the world. As the representative heads of the human race, they bring spiritual death to us all. Due to this act of disobedience the entire human race will feel the affects. We will be born sinners!

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23)

“Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation...” (Rom 5:18a)

How could this have happened we ask? Couldn't she see what Satan was up to? It is so obvious!! If we are going to be able to stand where Adam and Eve fell, we must recognize the tactics Satan employed to bring mankind to this point.

The Tactics of the Enemy

Satan engages the woman in conversation where he will:

1. Question God's Word!

Satan takes the form of a serpent and slithers his way into the scene. Here he asks if God has actually said what they thought He said.

"Did God actually say...?" (vs. 1a)

Maybe they have heard incorrectly, or remembered incorrectly what God has said. Either way, were they sure of the Word of God now?

I find this true in my own life. When I am tempted to sin I begin to question whether or not I have read and understood the Word of God correctly. I may begin to rationalize in my head and lose confidence in God's Word (or my understanding of it).

- **Illustration:**

I know sex before marriage is sin, but has God really said that my girlfriend and I can't mess around, just making sure not to have sex?

God's Word says not to get "drunk", but does it say anything about getting high!

These are real rationalizations that people will make in their head when they question the Word of God.

The importance of constantly saturating ourselves with Scripture is evident here. As Satan tries to question what God has said, we will be able to stand when we are confident in the Word of God. This confidence grows as we immerse ourselves more and more in the Scriptures.

2. Distort God's Word.

The serpent not only throws a question into the mix, but he distorts what God has actually said. Here more confusion will begin to set in.

“Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?” (vs. 1b)

Now he has the woman thinking. He has said something that is close to what God had said, but the subtle difference is dangerous. Satan wants them to focus on the prohibition, not the abundance that God has provided. God had not said they could not eat of “any tree in the garden.” There is only one tree they are to stay away from.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.” (2:16-17a)

There is only one tree they may not eat of, all the rest are theirs for the taking!

But again, by distorting the Word of God Satan causes confusion. He turns the woman’s attention to what she doesn’t have rather than what she does have.

Again how relevant to us this is today. We focus so many times on what we don’t have or what others have that we want! We forget that God has graciously given us all that we need! But our selfishness, greed, and envious natures always combat with the new heart that we have through Christ.

Where do we see this today? Are there times when we are tempted to sin and we will distort the clear teachings of Scripture? I believe we do this when we talk about eternal security, or what is most often referred to as “once saved, always saved.”

We take this to mean that we can do things, give in to temptation time and again, without the fear of losing our salvation. I agree 100% that we can’t lose our salvation. But the distortion is that we think that because God has promised to keep us eternally that we can now live anyway we want.

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)

It is true that you are safe and secure in the arms of Christ, but to use that as a license to sin is evidence that aren’t really in the arms of Christ.

What we need to do is recognize when those feelings begin to well-up inside of us, when we begin to think of the things that others have and we don't, that it is Satan who is seeking to lead us astray. In reality God has given us abundance.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

3. Contradict God's Word!

Here Satan call's God a liar! God has said that the consequence for disobedience is death!

"for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (2:17b)

There is no room for questions, eat the fruit and you will die, simple and straightforward. God has not minced words; He has given a clear command. But Satan says God has lied.

"But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die..." (vs. 4)

Now the confusion really begins to set in. The woman has let this conversation go on too long. The Word of God has been questioned, it has been distorted, and now been called a lie. No doubt there is a mixture of emotions that are running through the mind of this woman who has never heard this kind of thinking or talking.

But we can be sure that the Word never contradicts itself. How do we contradict it today?

We can say that we love Jesus but we fail to obey His commands. Does Jesus really say that I have to obey Him? Read John 14 and you will find that to love Jesus is to obey Jesus. To say I love Jesus and fail to obey Him is a contradiction of God's Word.

Summarizing the Tactics

When we strike up the conversation with Satan you can count on him to call God's Word into Question, to Distort it, and to Contradict it. And in order for us to stand firm, we must know the Word of God thoroughly. This is why Bible study is so important.

Everyday we need to read and meditate on the Scriptures. If you never do this, take 10 min each night and read a chapter, or read half a chapter. Get in the habit of

reading some of God's Word each day. As you get used to it, you will begin to read more and more of it, your knowledge will increase, and when the questions, distortion, and contradictions come, you will be prepared to handle the arrows of Satan.

Text: The Consequences of Taking the Bait!

When a fish swims around a hook with a worm on it, stares at it, contemplates taking it, and finally swallows the worm and hook, then the consequences are serious! It is not a good day for that fish, especially if the fisherman is hungry.

When Adam and Eve took the bait Satan put in front of them the consequences were devastating. Although they did not immediately die, they had brought sin into the human race and grieved their Creator.

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” (vs. 8)

Due to the sin in their lives, they try and hid from an all-knowing Creator. No doubt they wanted to keep what they had done a secret. They had listened to the serpent rather than the Creator. Sin has caused man to run from God instead of boldly coming to Him.

And that is the way it will go until the return of Christ. There is not one person who seeks after God on his own. Mankind has turned from the Lord and served the creation rather than Creator. Man has fled!

“But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (vs. 9)

Here God is shown to be the first and greatest missionary. He seeks the rebels out. He comes walking through the garden like a father who already knows what has happened and knows exactly where his child is hiding. He has the disappointment of a father whose child has been disobedient written on his face, as one who will be fair and just, and as one who desires reconciliation.

“And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’” (vs.10)

He knew that God was present yet the man flees from God. Makes me think of Romans 1 where Paul tells us that what can be known about God is fully known, yet man flees/rejects God.

“He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’” (vs. 11)

I can hear the voice of God in this instance. It isn't like God wasn't aware of the answers! Remember how your parents would as you to confess, to come clean. They

may know the answers but they want you to be mature enough to own up to what you have done. God is the same here! He wants Adam to own up to what he has done!

“The man said, ‘The woman whom you have to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’” (vs. 12)

You can hear the blame shifting begin. Husband and wives have been imitating this pattern for centuries. Indeed all mankind has been. We seek to blame others for our mistakes. The man blames the woman, he takes only partial responsibility.

“Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (vs. 13)

More blame shifting here. The man has pointed towards the woman, the woman has pointed towards the serpent. No one wants to accept responsibility. But the responsibility is theirs and God deals with them fairly and justly. The woman will give birth to future generations in pain; the man will work the ground which is cursed to bring forth food. Ultimately they will be separated from God. The Father puts His children outside of the garden...the great separation has begun.

Man is separated from God, from the Garden of Eden till today we are born separated. Indeed we fail to keep the commands of God. We are in desperate need of someone to succeed where mankind continues to fail. But God is not a God who was surprised by these events. Before He deals with the man and woman He tells the serpent, Satan, what to expect in the future.

Text: The Victory to Come!

“The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.’” (vs. 14) “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and her offspring (seed); he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (vs. 15)

Here is what is called the protoevangelium. It is the first picture of the gospel. God has promise Satan that one day he will be crushed. It is a promise that will come through the seed or offspring of the woman. This One will come, withstand the tactics of Satan and crush his head. Who is this that will do these things?

It is Christ! It is Christ who comes from the line of Seth, the son who would replace Abel after he is murdered by Cain. It is Christ who will be tempted in the wilderness as Adam and Eve are tempted in the Garden. It is Christ who would begin to put His heel down on the head of the serpent during His temptation and would finally crush it when He defeats death at the grave.

Christ comes and stands where we fell. He comes and gives us victory over sin and death. We stand confidently against the attacks of Satan, not because we rely on our strength and abilities, but because our King has crushed the head of the serpent, defeating sin and death for us!