

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Biblical Fathers: The devil - the father of lies

One of my early school-day memories is of being encouraged to read a book entitled '*Aesop's Fables*', standard fodder in those long-gone days. One fable describes a contest between The Wind and The Sun. They had spotted a traveller clad in a heavy overcoat, and they both claimed to be able to get him to remove his coat in a shorter time than the other took.

Confident in his own power, The Wind made the first attempt. He blew mightily with all his strength, but his efforts only encouraged the traveller to pull in his coat more tightly around his body. Reluctantly, The Wind eventually had to give way for The Sun to make his attempt. Gently, The Sun shone his warm, attractive beams. Gradually the traveller relaxed, and loosened his coat as his body warmed through. Inevitably, it wasn't long before he removed his coat altogether.

Apart from anything else, the fierce onslaught of The Wind made the traveller more and more determined, to keep the coat as close as possible to his body. He set himself totally against the very idea of removing it. The Sun, on the other hand, gently applied his beams in such a nice, pleasant way that the traveller relaxed and was most amenable to being encouraged to take off his coat. The Sun was much more subtle than The Wind. The traveller gladly yielded to his undoubted charms.

It did not occur to me as a small boy, of course, but I am certainly now aware that, where frontal attack fails, a more gentle, subtle approach very often succeeds. My apologies to The Wind, of course, for The Wind has a job to do, like the rest of Creation.

One necessary lesson I have learned is this. The devil, Satan, is very much aware that, where violence fails, corruption very often succeeds. He is not averse to using violence, and does, but very often, especially where violence has failed, he achieves his aims by adopting a more subtle approach. Indeed, the first incident we are going to read about in The Bible illustrates the point very well.

God had made ample provision for Adam and Eve. Genesis 2:8-9 record, "*the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man that he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.*" Then in Genesis 2:16-17, "*the LORD God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

However, we read in Genesis 3:1-4 that Satan, in the form of a serpent, approached Eve to persuade her that there was no valid reason why she should not eat the forbidden fruit. "*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; But of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said to her, Ye shall not surely die.*" He as much as said to Eve, "Come on, girl, don't be silly. You don't really think that you will die just because you eat a little bit of fruit? Don't be ridiculous!" How subtle Satan really is.

Apart from the detail, note what Satan did. He told a lie. He encouraged Eve to accept that she had either not heard right, or that God had not really meant what He said. This was the first lie told on the earth - "Really? Did God really say that? Of course you won't die" (see Genesis 3:1-4) No violence! Straight to corruption! Casting doubt on the truth of what God had said! And first Eve and then Adam succumbed.

What havoc has resulted from that one, apparently minor, lie. Adam and Eve did not actually die physically then, of course. They lived on for many years afterwards. Their natural life on earth was not immediately terminated, but, much more importantly, they became spiritually dead as soon as they disobeyed the clear injunction of their Creator God. All their natural descendants ever since have inherited the sinful nature which Adam and Eve acquired as a result of their plain disobedience to the revealed will of God. The vehicle Satan used to achieve this rebellion against God was a lie. He cast doubt on the truthfulness of the very words of God.

The Bible is not very explicit as to the origin of Satan. However, it would help us to understand Satan's attitude if we spent time reading Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:13-19. Both scriptures describe the sort of being Satan is, and what motivates him. He was certainly created perfect, with a high position in the economy of God. However, because of his excessive self esteem and self interest, it was necessary for him to be removed from the presence of God. Certainly, we read in Revelation 12:9 that the moment came when *"the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."*

It is no surprise to read in John 8:44 that the Lord Jesus found it necessary to say to Scribes and Pharisees who opposed Him, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* That is, Satan is the father, the originator, of telling lies. The formulation and telling of lies began with him. We have read the incident where it all started (Genesis 3:1-7).

Now, why did Jesus come into the world? Scripture clearly states that *"[the Lord Jesus became man] so that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14), and also that *"He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8).

Then, when the Lord Jesus was subjected to the temptations in the wilderness for 40 testing days, we get further examples of the lies of Satan (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13). Satan distorted or misquoted Holy Scripture three times to entice the Lord Jesus to submit to him. In each case the Lord quoted or applied scripture correctly to defeat Satan and his purpose. When the devil had ended all the temptations, he left Jesus alone for a while (Matthew 4:11, Luke 4:13).

Acts 10:38 tells us how *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."* He healed the sick, removed deafness, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and removed evil spirits from those who were afflicted by them. In particular, the Lord could and did say of Himself, *"I am the ... truth ..."* (John 14:6) No wonder that Satan plotted to bring about His downfall!

The disciples of Jesus were also tested by Satan, and the Lord Jesus had to warn them, especially Peter (see Matthew 16:23, Luke 22:31) against being deceived into inadvertently doing Satan's work for him. In Revelation 2:9 we learn that there were some men who claimed to be true disciples, but in fact they were nothing of the sort. More lies! In John 6:70 Jesus had to say to them (referring obviously to Judas Iscariot), *"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* One of His very own, yet willing to live a lie.

The New Testament Epistles abound with warnings that Satan is constantly sowing the seeds of doubt in our minds and hearts to make us inconsistent in our lives and witness. Satan's present day biggest, and probably most effective, lie to mankind is to deceive people into thinking that he doesn't even exist. Once a person has accepted that, the battle is over. Satan has won, hands down. No one fears a foe they really believe doesn't exist.

The remedy - *"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11). Why? *"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Corinthians 2:11). 1 Peter 5:8 warns us, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* Then, in James 4:7, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* As the Lord told His disciples, *"Watch, and pray..."* (Matthew 26:41)

How will it all end? At The Second Coming of Christ there will be a climax; the confrontation of the real super powers. The Great Triune God, opposed by Satan and his subordinates. Satan, if you haven't noticed, is the great counterfeiter. But he not only copies God. He imagines that he is equal with God.

The true God, the living God, is a triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Satan models himself in a similar way. When Jesus our Lord appears in power and great glory (Matthew 24:31), Satan will also appear, as leader of an evil triumvirate. First of all, Satan himself. Secondly, the ruler of a revived form of the one-time Roman Empire, called in prophetic scripture The Beast. Thirdly The False Prophet, an Apostate Jew who sets himself up as the religious leader of the unconverted Jews of the last days. To the last, Satan will be the great counterfeiter; in his pride the great copier of God.

The devil's henchmen, The Beast and The False Prophet, will, incidentally, resemble in their activities The Wind and The Sun in Aesop's Fable. The Roman Beast will use military violence, and The False Prophet will be more subtle and use corruption, telling lies. Like Satan himself, their words and their ways will be lies against the truth of the living God. Their individual and joint pretence will be of no avail against God and His Christ.

I cannot do better than read to you the statement given in Revelation 19:11-20: *“I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. and the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*

Having dealt with the henchmen, the Lord Jesus will deal personally with Satan himself, the great counterfeiter, and supreme liar.

The Scripture goes on to say in Revelation 20:1-6, *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

Sadly, but no surprise, when the thousand years earthly kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ comes to an end, we learn that Satan will still not have learned his lesson. Being released, he will demonstrate that he is no better than he ever was.

He will immediately resume his tales of lies, as the originator of them, as we read on in Revelation 20:7-10: *“When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

The true God, God the Father, God the Son (our Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who is The Truth [see John 14:6]), and The Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth, [see John 14:17, 16:13]), cannot tolerate lies; sinful, deceitful lies. God must and will judge them, especially Satan, the father of lies, with righteous judgment. Knowing that, let us do all that we can to be true to the Lord Jesus, speaking the truth in love.

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