

A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing

Part 1

Introduction; Everything is not as it seems

- A. This is true of people.
1. We go to a store and the salesman is very friendly and helpful until he makes the sale. Then he doesn't care at all for us, especially if something goes wrong.
 2. Politicians are friendly and promise us the moon while running for office. However once they are elected things change.
 3. Preachers and religious people talk a lot about love and helping others. Yet they often neglect actually doing anything themselves.
 4. *Matt 23:14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."*
- B. This is true of things and events.
1. The day is pleasant and the sun is shining and suddenly a storm comes up. There is wind and rain and thunder. There was no warning that it was coming.
 2. Things may be going well at work and the company seems to be doing well. Then it is bought out during a take-over and everyone loses their jobs.
- C. This is very true in religion.
1. Many churches and denominations look very good. They are involved in social programs and politics and trying to make the world a better place.
 2. However they are not preparing the people for heaven. They are so involved in worldly things they do not have time for spiritual things.
 3. Many religious leaders do much good in helping the poor or improving the conditions of those down-trodden that they do not teach them how to go to heaven when life is over.
 4. Many churches and religious leaders are so busy with their creeds, handbooks, manuals and personal agendas that they do not lead the people in the straight and narrow pathway.
 5. *Luke 6:39 And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?"*
- D. Satan tries to appear good. His followers do too.
1. *2 Cor 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*
 2. *Matt 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*
 3. *Acts 20:28-29 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock,"*
 4. Satan tries to appear as an angel of light. He does not wear a red suit and carry a pitchfork. He does not try to look mean and evil.
 5. He does not want his followers to look mean and evil. He wants them dressed up to appear good and decent. They can have more success that way.
 6. Satan and his followers are not what they seem to be. We must beware. Not everyone carrying a Bible and saying, "Praise the Lord", is a follower of Christ. Many are followers of the devil. Satan is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

E. Today we will consider Satan and how he deceives men today.

I. Satan tries to *discredit* God and man...

A. It seems impossible that Satan can discredit God, but he tries.

1. Sometimes he is successful in persuading men. He does make them think God is not totally righteous and good.
2. *Gen 3:4-6 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*
3. Satan convinced Eve that God was keeping something good from her. He made her believe that the Lord was keeping her from being like God.
4. This led to Eve and Adam sinning and being cast from the garden of Eden and separated from the tree of life.
5. Satan was also successful in discrediting Jesus Christ before men. While many did follow and obey, most did not. Satan gave them reasons to reject the Messiah.
6. *Matt 11:18-19 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."*
7. Here the people are inconsistent. They deny both Jesus and John, but for very different reasons. These two reasons contradict each other.
8. *Matt 12:24-27 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges."*
9. Jesus had power that couldn't be denied. So they said He was serving Satan. Satan gave Him His power to do miracles. However Jesus plainly shows their inconsistency again.
10. Men still try to discredit God and Christ today. They call upon Him to strike them with lightning if they are lying, and say He doesn't exist if it doesn't happen.
11. They accuse Him of evil and viciousness because of examples of punishment in scripture. They say He is unreasonable in what He expects of man. Many follow these arguments and accept them.

B. Satan also discredits men.

1. God's people try to live righteous and good lives. Many who do not follow Satan's lead and try to discredit the saints.
2. *Job 1:8-11 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" 9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"*
3. Jehovah uses Job as an example to Satan of how a child of God should behave. Job was righteous and blameless. Yet Satan still finds a way to accuse and discredit him. He says Job only serves God because God does so much for him. The rest of the book of Job shows this was not true.
4. *3 John 1:9-10 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.*
5. John warns against Diotrephes. He loved to be in charge and give orders. To keep his power he even spoke against the apostle John and those with him. We do not know what he said but it was a lie.
6. Paul was often maligned and slandered. He was an honest and sincere Christian. Yet men made him out to be a terrible sinner.

7. *Acts 16:20-21 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."*
8. *Acts 17:6-7 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."*
9. *Rom 3:8 And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.*
10. Men continue to try to discredit God's people. They accuse us of being hypocrites, Jesus freaks, self-righteous and so forth. They can not always discredit our deeds so they try to discredit our motives.
11. The early opponents of Christ said the saints were cannibals because they ate the body and drank the blood of Christ. They said they practiced incest because husbands and wives in Christ were brother and sister. And many other things have been said about the church and Christians.

C. Satan also discredits the word of God.

1. The church is based on the Bible. Our faith is founded in the Bible. If the word of God is discredited, then our faith is groundless. Great effort is made in the world today to discredit the word of God.
2. Satan can discredit scripture by denying it. He can also discredit it by misusing it. If he cannot get men to deny the Bible, he will get them to follow religious error.
3. *Gal 1:8-9 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*
4. *1 Tim 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*
5. Some were preaching another gospel in Paul's day —Gal 1. They were saying things that had not been revealed. New Testament revelation was complete by about AD 50. It then needed to be written down for a permanent record. Some though were already changing it.
6. Not only were some already changing the Gospel, the H.S. predicted that things would get worse in the future. Men would change it more and more.
7. *Matt 4:5-7 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"*
8. In Matthew 4 we see Satan misusing scripture to try to get what he wants. He wants Jesus to sin and he justifies it by scripture. Yet Jesus knows the Bible as well as Satan and shows him his error. We should be able to do this too.
9. Men today make many attacks on the Bible. Many books and magazine articles are written attacking the scriptures. They say it is inaccurate. They say it contradicts itself.
10. This poem about an anvil and the word of God shows how God's word stands up to the attacks of men.
*Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door, And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
 Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
 'How many anvils have you had', said I, 'To wear and batter all those hammers so?' 'Just one,' said he; and then with twinkling eye, 'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'
 And so I thought the anvil of God's Word For ages skeptic blows have beat upon; Yet, though the noise of falling blows were heard, The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone.*
 —author unknown (at least by me)
11. *Matt 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*

D. Satan tries to discredit but God, His word and His people still stand.

II. Satan also tries to Distract us...

- A. Distractions are a part of life. They come in many way and at all times.

1. We may be busy doing a job around the house and our child needs help. We get distracted and do not finish our job.
2. We are at work and we hear a loud sound outside. We go to find out what it was. We do to finish our work.
3. We are also distracted at church. We are trying to consecrate on our singing or the Lord's supper or the prayer. The movements of others, the rain outside or a child distracts us. It sometimes takes great effort to return our minds to what we are doing.

B. Satan tries to distract us with the things of this life.

1. He uses this life to keep men from obeying the gospel. He uses this world to stop Christians from serving God.
2. **Matthew 13:1-9**; In the parable of the Sower Jesus shows how the word of God is received by different hearts. Not every heart is a good heart. Satan is able to distract many from God and from faithfulness.
3. The four soils react differently to the same seed. The wayside is the hard path around the field that men walk on. Seed cannot penetrate this ground.
4. *Matt 13:18-19 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside."*
5. The 'wicked one' is Satan. There are some whom he has persuaded not to even consider the gospel. He can distract them with many things. We must ignore these things as Moses did.
6. *Heb 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*
7. *Acts 17:32-33 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them.*
8. The gospel seemed foolish to the Athenians as soon as Paul preached it. They would not even let him finish. Satan had them completely in his power.
9. *Matt 13:20-21 "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles."*
10. The stony soil hears the word, believes it and follows it quickly. However the word never takes root because of the pressures of being a Christian. This person decides to return to the wide, easy and well traveled pathway.
11. Paul uses strong words about Demas. He forsook or deserted him. He loved this present world. Satan had distracted Demas and he turned from working with Paul.
12. *2 Tim 4:10 ...for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica; Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.*
13. *Matt 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."*
14. The thorny heart obeys the gospel and seems to continue as part of the church. However this heart become so much a part of the world that it is unfruitful.
15. *Col 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
16. Anything we put before God is an idol. Covetousness is idolatry. Satan offers us many things to make first in our lives. Money is just one.
17. *Matt 19:21-22 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

C. Satan even tries to distract us with religion.

1. False religion is one of Satan's greatest weapons. Satan tries to turn us aside to self-righteousness and error. He can make us major in minors.
2. *Matt 23:23-24 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"*
3. The Pharisees were hypocrites. They did many things in religion that could be easily seen or measured. However justice, mercy and faithfulness were neglected.

4. *2 Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*
5. Men search for someone who teaches what they want to hear. When they find him they follow him. They do not care if the doctrine is sound —or healthy. They only care to please themselves.
6. *Micah 2:11 If a man should walk in a false spirit And speak a lie, saying, 'I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,' Even he would be the prattler of this people.*
7. Being religious is not enough. We must know the truth and follow it. Only the truth can set us free from sin and damnation —Jn 8:31-32.

D. These are just some of the ways Satan tries to distract us from serving the Lord.

Conclusion; We must see things as they really are.

A. This is especially true in religion.

1. Men and churches teach many errors. We must reject them and follow the Lord.
2. This means we study our Bibles daily and worship with the saints often. We do what the Lord says to do to be saved.

B. We must believe, repent and be baptized to be forgiven of our sins and saved.

1. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. "*
2. *Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*