

If I Were the Devil

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You, the devil, have been removed from Heaven¹ and severely defeated at the Cross², and you aren't happy. You know it's impossible to dethrone the Creator but you have to show how you're at least in His class, so you intend to cause as much grief as you can with His creation, perhaps even preventing that eternity in the lake of fire you've been promised.³ After all, if you can take a significant number of humans with you, maybe the Creator will change His mind?⁴ Either way, you have only one shot at this. What scheme(s) would you concoct to successfully cause the maximum amount of grief?

Some will consider pride to be the devil's ultimate scheme and it certainly is a sin that cripples all of humanity and which remains a subtle snare for many, even most Christians, for their entire lifetime. The "big-I problem" is certainly a big problem in the "church" and it does lie at the root of every other sin because it was likely to be Lucifer's original sin.⁵ But to say *pride* is the description of Satan's ultimate scheme(s) to cause the maximum amount of grief for believers comes up way short. Such a devil is already defeated for the genuine believer because he or she routinely takes their pride to the cross to die!

What we need to examine is something equally pervasive but even more insidious, a deeper strategy that even more subtly undermines the work of Christ on the cross in the lives of people who would try to follow Him. Let us consider "church" attendance.

- If I were the devil, I'd change people's mind about what "church" really is so that even if someone did go to "church" hoping to find Jesus, they would likely never actually spiritually grow up to be like Him.⁶ I wouldn't particularly care which "saint" or "church" superstar anyone tried to emulate so long as they weren't actually interacting with and becoming like Christ Jesus, certainly not stirring up many to do so.⁷ I'd make it so that the hypocrites and the spiritually dead (especially the wealthier ones) were the most catered to⁸ and I'd try to keep the feedings that Jesus gives (after all, He did say He would come in and eat with anyone who opened the door for Him⁹) to a minimum or at least to minimum effect. Thus, the spiritually hungry and sick do get fed but since they almost never learn to get up from their sick bed, take up their cross and actually go wherever the Lord might lead them¹⁰, the critical care patients and the dead remain. And then I'd stir up teachers to shame and guilt anyone who didn't go to "church" so that their followers might also come under the spirit-numbing influence of these multiple deceptions.
- If I were the devil, I'd get people to exchange rituals and religion for a real relationship with the Father¹¹ – and dogmas and doctrines for the real spiritual truth that sets Christ's disciples free.¹² After this exchange was successful, which should be done in as few generations after the crucifixion as possible and at a time when most people are more involved in living life and only a few in writing about their own experiences and ideas, I'd stir up government persecution to destroy

Christianity, the Scriptures and all Christian writings in the hopes that this might conceal my work as well. Then, I would support someone like Constantine, an excellent compromiser, to encourage government tolerance of my new “Christian” religion while I, of course, stir up the new religious leaders to be most intolerant of anyone who tried to restore the original faith or to return to their first love. I would continue to develop and evolve this strategy for as long as it was successful – even for millennia.¹³

Now, let us consider how we study the Bible.

- If I were the devil, of course, I’d want people to take verses out of context and never learn to cross reference the subject matter of the verse to see what other authors from the Bible said about the same subject.¹⁴ I’d want monks to burn ancient documents in fires just to stay warm or remove trash. I’d also want King James to force his translators to insert “certain of the old words” into a verse so that deceived practitioners will perhaps build a whole pattern of, say, pulpit preaching on one single verse (that gets changed back to the original meaning some 380 years later when the New King James version is published) or to insert the word “church” where “assembly” or “congregation” would be much more accurate and appropriate¹⁵ so that my scheme about “church” attendance is aided along for centuries. I would never want, if possible, the people to be careful to find out for themselves God’s intention(s) in any verse, but I would certainly want to change practices that have great impact on those who hear someone say that “this” is “that” when it isn’t necessarily so.
- If I were the devil, I’d get teachers to add subtle distortions to the practice of reading and studying the Bible to get their followers to rely on their own intellect rather than upon God’s Spirit of truth who alone leads all followers of Christ into all truth. Take the word “hermeneutics.” The word derives from the Greek/Roman god Hermes, the messenger god.¹⁶ In the New Testament, Jesus, whose Spirit is the Spirit of truth, is alone said to be the Word of God¹⁷ and it is unclear why His followers would need a method derived from the mythology of false gods to follow Him but it would certainly be effective for some of the work I’d want to do as knowledge still puffs up those who pursue and possess it.¹⁸ There is no class of people more zealous to oppress and persecute others than those who are filled with arrogant belief that they alone possess all the right answers.¹⁹ Or take the word “apologetics.” This word, “defense” or “answer,” literally “from the Word,” is at least found in the New Testament²⁰ but I’d convince people that “the Word of God” referred, not to Jesus Christ and His Spirit of truth as the piercing and dividing sword of the Spirit,²¹ but to any isolated Bible verse as taught by a favorite teacher according to some denominational sect’s doctrines and dogmas or even just according to someone’s private interpretations.²² I wouldn’t care what conclusion a Bible student arrived at so long as it was *not* the rightly divided word of truth nestled within the whole counsel of God.²³

- If I were the devil, I'd get people to be so focused on what some teacher says is true that they'd never find out for themselves what the Spirit of truth says any particular Bible verse really means.²⁴ Thus people would worship and follow a second hand "God," the one talked about by their favorite teacher, where they would get to pick and choose which of God's attributes they like (and they can switch teachers if they don't like what any particular guy or gal says)²⁵ and they themselves remain spiritually blind and immature, unskilled in the word of righteousness and virtually unable to discern both good and evil.²⁶

Consider Satan's overall strategy.

- If I were the devil, I wouldn't try to come up with one grand super-lie that would take down everyone at one time. I'd use the strategy of death by a thousand cuts. I'd come up with a billion small, subtle lies so that when a follower of Christ believed one, it would be a small, subtle quenching of the work of the Spirit of truth in their lives.²⁷ Over time, the cumulative work of all those lies would have great likelihood of causing that one to fall from grace,²⁸ step out of the protective hand of God²⁹ and become a proud practitioner of the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith that happens before the return of Christ.³⁰

Such a devil as this would be very hard to defeat because anyone who would speak against his schemes will be considered a lunatic and labeled a schismatic and heretic for daring "to speak against God's precious church" and will be attacked by those who are loyal to their own favorite "church" which is very right in their own eyes because they do not serve and obey the King Jesus Christ.³¹

Let he who has ears hear.

Footnotes

Because I am not the devil and the above was written, not from imagination but from the Bible and from experience, I will provide references to the verses from which these ideas are drawn in the hopes that you will be a noble Berean and search the Scriptures to see that these things are so (Acts 17:11) and then follow the Lord wherever He might lead you.

¹ Lk. 10:18

² 1 Cor. 2:8, Col. 1:20

³ Isa. 14:12-15

⁴ Mt. 25:41

⁵ Ezek. 28:17

⁶ 2 Pet. 1:5-8

⁷ 3 Jn. 9

⁸ Jas. 2:2-4

⁹ Rev. 3:20

¹⁰ Lk. 9:23

¹¹ Col. 2:16-19

¹² Jn. 5:39, 8:31-32

¹³ To glean this perspective one needs to be familiar with “church” history and especially the “church” fathers. Philip Schaff’s series, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. II*, is a good place to start.

¹⁴ 2 Pet. 3:16

¹⁵ Fifteen general rules were set forth by King James for the guidance of the translators. No. 3 reads: “The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.”

¹⁶ The Greek words *hermenia* [2058] and *hermeneuo* [2059], also derived from Hermes [2060] the Greek god of language, refers specifically to interpreting tongues or languages. Today, “hermeneutics” is used to justify “interpretations” of doctrines and denominational (sectarian) “distinctives.”

¹⁷ Jn. 1:1, 14

¹⁸ 1 Cor. 8:1

¹⁹ Phlp. 3:6

²⁰ The Greek words *apologeomai* [626] and *apologia* [627] refer to a legal defense or answer one makes in response to legal charges. Today, “apologetics” is used to promote the apologist and/or his own private or denominational (sectarian) “interpretations” of doctrines.

²¹ Heb. 4:12, Eph. 6:17

²² 2 Pet. 1:20, Rom. 16:17-18. Note this latter verse must be recognized as referring to those who teach things in contrast to the words of Jesus and the original apostles and can in no possible way be seen as referring to the teachings or indoctrinations a modern

student has received while under the tutelage of teachers at some Bible school, university or seminary.

²³ 2 Tim. 2:15, Acts 20:27

²⁴ 2 Tim. 2:16-18

²⁵ 2 Tim. 4:3-4

²⁶ Heb. 5:13-14

²⁷ 1 Ths. 5:19

²⁸ Gal. 3:1-3, 5:4

²⁹ Jn. 10:27-29 Many people rely on this passage for their “eternal security” but fail to realize that while no one can forcibly remove another from the hand of God, there is nothing that Jesus says here that rules out the possibility that one under deception can willfully and voluntarily forsake the protections, even the eternal ones, of God.

³⁰ 2 Ths. 2:3

³¹ 2 Pet. 2:1-2 Commentators who translate this verse as if it refers to fringe cultic groups that deny the deity of Christ have failed to recognize that those who fulfill this prophecy will deny the sovereignty (kingship) of the Master (Greek despotes [1203] from which the English word despot is derived) who bought them. This prophecy says that “many will follow” – the few cultic fringe groups that deny the Deity of Christ are simply not numerous enough to qualify as “many.” However, the “church” that denies Christ His right to be King and Head over all things is.

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