

## The Father of Lies vs. the Gospel

- I. Corinth was the cesspool of the ancient world. Like Rotterdam or Calcutta today. Filthy and corrupt. Yet according to Acts 18, Paul spent eighteen months there. He started a little church there. And in his second letter to the Corinthians he addresses questions and problems and even calls the congregants “saints.”
  1. Paul 2 Cor 11:1-4; 12-14, 12:7. The big problem the “saints” have is that they are being misled by the Devil. “As the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, so your thoughts are being led astray...” “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”
  2. 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The devil is glad for us to mock him and make jokes about him. He’s sneaky. 2 Cor 11:1-4. As the serpent deceived Eve...so we, too, are easily deceived. John 8:43-47, 8:44: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and **the father of lies.**”  
In Matt 4 and Luke 4 the devil tempts Jesus and even uses scripture to tempt Jesus. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 3: “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. An evil soul producing holy witness is like a villain with a smiling cheek, A goodly apple rotten at the heart. O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!”
- II. C. S. Lewis said the devil works harder in the church because he owns all the rest. Three examples from church history:
  1. Montanus. 156 A.D. Montanus was an apocalyptic preacher who started a pentecostal movement that nearly destroyed the church. He believed that history was divided into three epochs: 1) The age of the Father, the Old Testament; 2) The age of the Son, the New Testament, and 3) The age of the Spirit, inaugurated by Montanus himself. He claimed to be the passive instrument of the Holy Spirit. He and two female prophets who accompanied him, Prisca and Maximilla, spoke in tongues and claimed that the words they spoke were the voice of the Holy Spirit. Under the guise of spiritual enlightenment, Montanus led believers away from Christ and into their own new prophecy.
  2. The pornocracy in the church. From about 850-1000 A.D. A period so vile that you can’t talk about it in polite company. There were about 48 popes in this short time, almost all of them shockingly depraved and perverted in every way.
  3. Joachim of Fiore, d. 1202. He was the most important apocalyptic thinker of the Middle Ages. Joachim viewed history as divided into three epochs according to the three persons of the Trinity. His epoch, then the modern epoch, was the dawning of the age of the Spirit. He believed the institutional churches would be soon be unnecessary as a contemplative utopia would come into being. He believed that current events around him were signs of the times, that is, signs of the Apocalypse. Again, under the guise of spirituality and goodness, Joachim of Fiore misled believers.
- III. What about here and now?
  1. Today Africa is the future of the church, of a vibrant Christianity. And yet syncretism, that is, mixing native religiosity like ancestor worship into Christianity, threatens the integrity of the church. Even the Vatican has buckled and allows ancestor worship in African Catholic churches under the guise of caring for people in purgatory.

2. Prosperity gospel preachers, popular worldwide, undermine the gospel. Preachers like Joel Osteen in the US and Edir Macedo in Brazil (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), Joseph Prince in Singapore (New Creation Church) offer a syncretic stew of the prosperity gospel, miracle healings, self-help, and the like.
  3. The rise of secularism and Islam has put Christianity on the defensive.
  4. Corruption rife in both Catholic and Protestant churches.
  5. Civilizations rise but they fall. Two thousand years before Christ the Harappan civilization was a flourishing commercial society. And yet it vanished and is virtually unknown today because evil things “simply happen.”
  6. We, too, build our own little kingdoms and strive to rule them.
- IV. Why are we talking about all this?
1. Because salvation is at stake, and the Evil One leads us astray.
  2. There is really only one apocalyptic event and that event changes everything. Whatever takes away from the sole focus on the cross and resurrection is of the devil. As Paul writes:
 

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want **to pervert the gospel of Christ**. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:6-8).
  3. We are easily suckered by the devil. He flatters us: We are good people, doing good. Our situation is not desperate. The devil lures us away from the “one mediator between God and sinners, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5).
  4. No one knows the hour of his coming (Mk 13:32). Five times in the New Testament it is stated that that the kingdom comes like a thief in the night: Matt 24:43, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10, Rev. 3:3, 16:15.
  5. Whatever takes away from the sole focus on the cross and resurrection is of the devil.