

The Deceiver – Revelation 20:1-3

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Stealth*

1. There was a movie several years ago about an alien who came to earth on a kind of hunting expedition; his prey was man.
2. This alien had a unique form of camouflage that allowed him to *disappear*.
3. Being invisible, he was able to go wherever he wanted without being detected.
4. This movie was shown to a gathering of army generals and one of them suggested that they should get to work developing just such a cloaking device.
5. It has long been the aim in warfare to infiltrate the enemy's ranks without detection.
6. Stealth and invisibility are prized features in battle.

B. *He Ain't Real*

1. What's true in physical warfare is true in the spiritual realm as well.
2. One of the devil's chief ploys has been to *remain hidden*, and to accomplish his work without detection.
3. Keith Green titled one of his songs – *No One Believes In Me Anymore* – The subtitle was *The Devil's Boast*
4. According to a new survey by the Barna Research Group,
 - a. 6 out of 10 Americans *reject* the idea of a literal spiritual being referred to as Satan.
 - b. they contend that “the devil” is merely a religious *symbol* of evil.
 - c. what's a bit shocking to discover is that there's *no statistical difference* between those who call themselves Christians and those who make no such claim! ^[1]
 - d. only 41% of those who claimed to be born-again Christians believe Satan is real. ^[2]
5. Pollsters found that immediately after the events of 9/11, there was a sharp increase in the number of those who were willing to revisit

- the idea of the existence of the devil.
6. But as the most recent poll by Barna shows, the passage of just *one year* has erased such thoughts.
 7. No doubt Satan counts this as a major coup.
 8. As long as he can remain *hidden* and convince people he's *not real*, then he need never worry about being directly attacked.
 9. He delights in keeping us focused on the *symptoms* rather than the *cause*.
 10. Every fire season, some arsonist sneaks out to a dry hillside and starts a fire, then withdraws.
 - a. when the fire trucks and crowd gathers, then he comes out again to stand among them.
 - b. he delights in watching all the attention his little act has caused —
 - c. it gives him a sense of power! But no one knows it was him.
 - d. so he goes off and starts another fire, and another, and another
 - e. and the firemen rush here and there putting the out.
 - f. it will never stop until someone realizes an *arson* is behind the fires and *stops him*.
 11. This is the devil's strategy; he's an *spiritual* arson who sets sin-fires with the spark of temptation.
 - a. if we would halt the damage, then we need to recognize the cause
 - b. and combat him.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-3

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

1. We covered these verses last Wednesday but we need to take a look at them again this morning.
2. What I want to focus on is one phrase in v. 3, where John says –
... that he should deceive the nations no more ...
3. That's a remarkable thing to say in light of all the *horrific* things we read about that will take place during the Tribulation.
 - a. in chs. 6-18 there's been widespread persecution and martyrdom for those who refused to identify with the antichrist.
 - b. there's been terrible injustice and immorality the likes of which are nearly unimaginable - the evil of those times will be epic!
4. And yet, when John sees the devil finally defeated and shut away for a thousand years, he reduces *all* the devil has done down to this – **DECEPTION!**

5. In v. 1, John sees an angel coming from heaven with a key and a chain.
 - a. the key is to the bottomless pit, the abyss, which we learn in ch. 9 is a place of confinement for wicked spiritual beings.
 - b. the chain is to *bind* the devil with.
 - c. this takes place just after the Second Coming when Jesus returns visibly to earth and sets up His Kingdom.
 - d. that Kingdom will last for a 1,000 years!
 - 1) a thousands years of Paradise Restored
 - 2) a thousand years of peace and prosperity
 - 3) but in order for there to be a thousand years of that, the devil has to be shut *up* & shut *out*.
 - e. so the angel wraps him in a chain forged by God, and deposits him in the bottomless pit.
 - f. then he locks him in with the key, and sets the seal of God on the door.
6. And again – notice *why* the angel does all of this –
... so that he should deceive the nations no more ...
7. There's a crucial truth we must glean from this – the devil's primary strategy, really, his single weapon is what? ***Deceit!***
 - a. all he's done, all he's accomplished he's done through deceit.
 - b. his weapon is lies.
 - c. and the only power he possesses is the power we give him by

believing his lies.

B. The Father of Lies

1. One day Jesus was speaking to the Jewish religious leaders who were opposing Him.
2. He knew that their hatred and opposition of Him was inspired by Satan so in [John 8:44](#) He said to them -

You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

3. There are a couple of very important things revealed in Jesus's words here.
 - a. He said that the devil was a "murderer from the beginning."
 - b. He means that it was the devil's aim to kill Adam and Eve.
 - c. when he came to Eve in the Garden of Eden and suggested she eat of the forbidden fruit, he made it appear that he wanted something *for* her that would *benefit* her.
 - d. but he lied! All He wanted was to secure the result of her eating he knew it would bring – **DEATH!**
 - e. but notice that – he couldn't kill her outright. No! He had to elicit *her assistance*.
 - f. and there's no way he could gain that by telling her *the truth*.
 - g. "Hi. I'm Satan and I want to kill you. So please eat that fruit God told you *not* to eat and that you would die if you did."
 - h. instead he came with a lie.
 - 1) first of all, he hid his true spiritual form by entering one of the creatures of the garden.
 - 2) then he came to Eve and questioned the wisdom of God in *prohibiting* them eating that one fruit.
 - 3) think about that for a moment for it's a profound revelation of the deceit of satan.
 - a) Adam and Eve possessed *total freedom*,
 - b) *nothing* was prohibited them *except one thing* – the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- c) imagine living in a world where there was only one thing you couldn't do!
 - d) but God *had* to put that tree there and to make that prohibition.
 - e) He had to because man and woman needed the presence of a *choice*.
 - f) don't forget that the reason why God created us in the first place was because of love.
 - g) we exist to enjoy an intimate love relationship with God -
 - h) and love by its very nature has to be free; it has to be a choice.
 - i) so God placed a *choice* in the realm of the first man and woman by planting that tree.
 - j) how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden without Falling, we have no idea
 - k) it may have been days, weeks, months, or years. It may even have been decades.
 - l) but we read at some point, the devil came and tempted Eve.
 - m) how? With a lie!
- i. he began by suggesting that *God* was the One who wasn't being truthful;
 - j. that the forbidden fruit was actually something that would make her better, more complete.
 - k. oh, and that threat that she would die – that was just a *scare tactic* on God's part - she wouldn't die!
 - l. all long, Satan's motive was one thing – *to murder* Eve and Adam.
 - m. to sink them in a state of spiritual death and separation from God and to usurp the authority given to them by God over the Earth.
 - n. when Eve, and then Adam fell, he secured his objective and established a beach-head in his invasion of Earth.
 - o. this is why Jesus called Satan a murderer *from the beginning* and the father of lies.
4. Make no mistake friends, nothing's changed.
 - a. deception is still the devil's strategy.
 - b. and his objective remains the same – to murder you!

- c. but the death that he aims at is primarily *spiritual* – he wants to separate you from God.
- d. so he will lie to you with the same lies he told Eve;
 - 1) that God is a spoilsport and only wants to put *prohibitions* on you that will keep you from having fun and becoming all you can be.
 - 2) he gets you to focus on the things you *ought not do*, rather than on all the good things God so abundantly blesses you with.
 - 3) try this experiment: put 10 plates of cookies in front of a 6 year old and tell him/her he/she can eat a cookie from *every* plate except one particular one.
 - 4) then leave the room, but sneak back to watch what happens.
 - 5) I guarantee you, that child will sooner or later grab a cookie off the forbidden plate.
 - 6) there's something twisted now in human nature that *ratifies & endorses* the Fall in the Garden.
 - 7) it's like a spiritual gene that repeats the fall again and again.
- 5. Once the devil established himself on Earth by wresting the authority of Adam and Eve, he set about to construct a whole kingdom of deceit.
 - a. we read about it in the first chapters of Genesis
 - b. the deception grew so great it demanded the judgment of the flood.
 - c. then, after the flood it grew again and took form in Babylon.
 - d. the confusion of the languages was a major set back to the devil's plans for world domination,
 - e. but as we now come to our modern age with global telecommunications, computers, and all the rest of technology we see the age-old barriers of geography and language being overcome.
 - f. technology has renewed construction on the Tower of Babel.
- 6. The Book of Revelation tells us of the not too distant future when the devil's bid for world domination will be realized in a 7 year period that begins with seeming peace and prosperity, but ends with epic evil and violence.
- 7. And through it all, the one consistent theme will be *the lies of Satan*.

8. This is why his kingdom will come crashing down so quickly, because it's built on air, on deceit.
9. Once Jesus comes again, *the key* to restoring earth to the Paradise God intended it to be will be to remove the devil & his lies.
10. This is why the devil is bound and sealed away.
 - a. as the father of lies, he needs to be silenced.
 - b. with him locked away in the abyss, the earth will be released from being enthralled by him.

C. We Don't Have To Wait

1. While the *world* will have to wait for the Second Coming to be released from thralldom to the devil's lies – those of us who believe in Christ *don't have to wait*.
2. Jesus's *first* coming broke the power of satan's lies!
3. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."
 - a. faith in Him releases us from the dominating influence of Satan's deceit.
 - b. it's like we get a new set of eyes and ears once we're born again.
 - c. many people can't understand how they could have been so wrong, so *blind* to the truth once they come to faith in Jesus!
 - d. this is what hurts so when we're talking with the lost
 - 1) we know the truth of the gospel and realize it's so simple.
 - 2) and yet they just don't get it.
 - 3) that they would *reject Christ* when *we* know all He wants to do is love and bless them troubles us deeply.
 - 4) we so easily forget that there was a time in our lives when *we* wanted nothing to do with God - we were blinded by the lies of the devil.
 - 5) Paul puts it this way in **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

³But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded . . .

4. Note that – Paul calls satan the "god of this age."
 - a. he gives him that title because when Adam and Eve fell,
 - b. they forfeited the authority & dominion God gave them over the earth.
 - c. but when Jesus came, He broke the authority of the devil.

- d. Jesus reclaimed man's lost dominion and authority.
- 5. In **1 John 3:8** we read this –
For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.
- 6. In **Colossians 2:15**, Paul tells us that Jesus has “disarmed” the powers of darkness!
 - a. that word *disarmed* means to take away the weapons of warfare,
 - b. to strip a defeated foe of his *power* to wage war.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Application

1. You see friends, today, the devil possesses no *real power*.
2. Jesus defeated the devil at the Cross – He took back mankind's lost authority.
3. The only thing left to satan is his *lying mouth* – but even deceit has lost it's power over us because He who IS Truth indwells us by the Spirit of Truth.
4. What the *world* will only know when Jesus comes again and satan is bound *can* be true in and for us who believe in Christ *right now!*
5. Again – the devil's single strategy is to deceive.
 - a. everything he does is a lie and aims at your destruction
 - b. oh sure, he may use something that's true, but only as bait for a bigger lie.
 - c. he hides death in an attractive package – but make no mistake he wants to kill you.
6. The only power the devil possesses is the power we give him by believing his lies.
7. We must call his bluff and reject those lies!
8. The only way we can do that is by knowing the truth – and that means –
 - a. first of all, by being born again,
 - b. then secondly, by applying ourselves as diligent students of the Word of God.

B. Our Authority

1. Once we know the truth then the next step is to use the authority Christ has given us.

2. Just as the devil will be bound and shut out of *the world* after the Second Coming, so he can be bound *out of your life right now*.
3. That takes place as you realize the authority that's yours in Jesus's name!
 - a. the authority Adam *forfeited*, Christ *reclaimed* and now *delegates* to you!
 - b. remember the key the angel brought to shut up the devil?
 - c. that key represents the angel's *God-given authority*.
 - d. you too have a key to shut up the devil's lying mouth.
 - e. that key is the Name of Jesus.
 - f. listen to what Jesus said in [John 14:13-14](#)

13 Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.

- g. Jesus is giving us permission, no, even more, He's *commissioning* us to carry on His work by giving us the authority to use His name.
 - h. His name represents Him; His work, His authority, His power.
 - i. the setting in which Jesus said this was the last Supper after He had told them he was going away but would return for them one day.
 - j. in the meantime, while they waited for Him, they were to carry on His work.
 - k. and as we just saw in [1 John 3:8](#) Christ's work was to destroy the works of the devil.
 - l. Jesus has given us authority to tear down the lies and deceit that hold ourselves and our loved ones in bondage.
4. Paul says it this way in [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](#)

4 We do not wage war with physical weapons but with mighty spiritual weapons given us by God. These weapons pull down spiritual strongholds, ⁵they tear down deceitful denials of the truth and every proud opinion that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. By them we bring every thought captivity to the truth of Christ.

5. The weapons Paul refers to here are the Truth of God's Word, and

the authority to implement it!

6. Listen to Jesus in [Luke 10:19](#) -

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

10. Friends, it's time for us to throw off the lies and falsehoods that dominate our age and live in the freedom Christ made possible through the Cross.

11. What spiritual strongholds remain in your life, what fortifications of deceit that allow the enemy to rip you off and bring death to you and those around you?

12. It's time to tear them down, in Jesus's name.

[1] <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=122&Reference=E&Key=devil>

[2] <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PageCategory.asp?CategoryID=5>