

THE BIGGEST SCAMMER OF ALL

By Richard Dent

Have you ever been tricked out of money that you would have liked to have used in a more beneficial way? People who do these things are crooks and are not ashamed to steal your material things. We know that in the Old Testament one of the ten commandments was “Thou shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15). In the New Testament, Paul told the Ephesian brethren, “Let him who stole steal no more” (Ephesians 4:28).

Money may not be the only thing that people are scammed out of. Consider the story of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah favored her son Jacob more than Esau. Rebekah told Jacob just what he needed to do to confuse his father, Isaac. Jacob dressed himself up and brought an offering of food to his father who was blind in his old age. Jacob pretended to be Esau and, what do we know . . . it worked. When the real Esau came

to his father with an offering of food, sorrow befell them both. In Genesis 25, we find that Jacob took advantage of his famished brother and got him to sell his birthright to him. Then in chapter 27 we find that Rebekah and Jacob scammed Esau and Isaac again by getting the blessing which should have gone to Esau, as the oldest brother (Genesis 27:30-40). Of course we know that things didn't work out too well for Rebekah and Jacob as he had to flee from the anger of his brother, Esau. Remember that scammer is another word for trickster.

But who is the biggest scammer of all? Why I believe it just has to be old Satan himself. Yes, Satan does not just want your money . . . he wants your soul! Again Paul told the Ephesians, “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the

devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Paul also told the Corinthians that Satan could transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Don't let Satan scam you out of your soul. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26).
— Liberal, KS

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Peter 5:8-10).

SATAN'S TEMPTATION OF JESUS

By Milton Smith

One of the most amazing incidents recorded in the Bible is the story of the temptation of the Son of God by the prince of “spiritual wickedness in the high places.” Each of the synoptic gospels record this incident. We must consider that what took place on this occasion was Satan engaging himself in an assault on the incarnate Son of God. Among the adversaries of Jesus, none could equal the power of Satan. If our Lord was able to triumph over the spiritual assaults of the prince of this world, he truly was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Holy One who has the authority to rescue all sinners from the kingdom of darkness.

Scripture tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for 40 days (Luke 4:2). This would be the ultimate assault on Christ by the wicked powers of darkness. This area the Bible identifies as the

“wilderness,” was often called the “devastation.” It is a very frightening area east of Jerusalem that was entered by traveling down the back slopes of the plateau on which Jerusalem rose over the Dead Sea. It was an area consisting pretty much of nothing but rocks, jagged cliffs, and devastation. It was a most frightening trip. Jesus found Himself all alone in this dreaded wilderness when Satan came to Him. Here, in this intimidating wasteland, Jesus would be confronted by a subtle, crafty, and clever deceiver. Satan's temptation would be masterfully designed to attack Jesus with the greatest amount of impact. Everything about this situation would be dangerous.

But Jesus overcame every obstacle and every temptation that this evil deceiver would throw at him. But what does this mean to us? Basically, three important facts: First, Jesus satisfied the Father's demand for the perfect sacrifice

by his victory over the tempter. Second, Jesus became the perfect mediator between God and man by being “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). And third, in turning back Satan by quoting Scripture, Jesus was showing us how to overcome Satan's temptations by using the Bible. Satan hates the word of God, and when we use it, he is more likely to flee from us and center his attacks on someone else. The temptation of Jesus was truly an amazing incident, and one that teaches the student of the Bible some magnificent lessons.
— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

REPLACING SATAN'S WEARISOME LOAD

By Danny Boggs

“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

We don't have to suffer under sin's wearisome load anymore! Jesus gives rest.

But what is a yoke doing in the middle of an invitation to rest? A yoke pairs two beasts of burden. It fastens around their necks so they can plow together. A yoke usually symbolizes submission and bondage. A yoke doesn't typically suggest rest.

The truth is, every one of us is locked in a yoke before we come to Jesus. Jeremiah wept in behalf of his people: “My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by His hand they were fastened together; they were set upon my neck; He caused my strength to fail” (Lamentations 1:14). Everyone is either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness (Romans 6:16). When we are yoked to sin, the yoke is iron, and sin does not pull its share of the load.

Trudging through life live without Christ is the worst of burdens.

As we keep working toward the end of life's row, the choice is not whether to be yoked, but which yoke to wear. We can stay yoked to sin and its dead weight, or we can be joined to Jesus. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

He is a workhorse!

Drawing on His power for the work, and enjoying His gentle and humble company until the work is finished, we can rest in that yoke.
— Neosho, MO

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:12-15).

THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

By Mark Lindley

It is a fact of history that a man named Jesus died on a cross. This fact is supported by the New Testament and by the secular writings of early historians. No one can successfully deny that Jesus of Nazareth lived and that He died by crucifixion.

However, many who believe that Jesus died on the cross do not believe that Jesus was a divine being. Some affirm that it does not make sense that “the Son of God” would die on a cross. The reasoning is that if Jesus possessed divine power, then He could have saved Himself, and thus, according to some, He must not have been the “Son of God.” To them, it just does not make sense that a divine being would die in such a horrible manner.

But such reasoning is flawed and does not consider why it was necessary for Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Because all have sinned and come short of God's glory, it was necessary for a “sinless” person to redeem fallen man. (Romans 6:23.) Every person who has sinned needs a Savior; and he who needs a Savior cannot be one.

Does Jesus meet the qualification of “sinless?” Notice what the Scriptures teach: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:21-22). Yes, Jesus, and He alone could qualify to be the Savior because only Jesus was without sin.

It is true that Jesus possessed supernatural power, and that He demonstrated such power by healing the sick, enabling the blind to see, calming storms, and by raising the dead. Yet He freely chose to lay down His life for all. Jesus said, “Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18). The all-powerful Christ chose not to exercise His power to save His life.

It may never make sense to some that it was necessary for Jesus to die for us. Some did not understand in the first century: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Nevertheless, His death was absolutely necessary. Only by trusting and obeying Him can we be saved. Jesus is the way!
— Ripley, MS

DON'T BE DECEIVED!

By Bobby Key

Satan is a great hand at imitating God. His only original idea as far as I can determine was that of becoming a rebel. As the "god of this world" he has set up a kingdom similar to that of God Himself. "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The American Standard Version has the word "fashioneth" here, and Moffatt says, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." Satan has the power to make himself look very righteous and sometimes he tries to act like God.

We are not told how God talked with Adam and Eve in the garden; however, it seems the Devil tried to imitate the mode of revelation through which God communicated with man. It is possible that he appeared as an angel of light in the very beginning. Of course he used the body of a serpent, but he was disguised so that Eve was not in the least suspicious of his approach. Eve was deceived in the entire matter (1 Timothy 2:14).

The Devil first wanted to know how much Eve knew. She confessed that she knew of God's restriction and the penalty for disobeying. The Devil as much as called God a liar and then explained that God had forbidden the eating of the tree in the center of the garden because He didn't want man to be like Himself. Eve was taken in by the whole story and believed the Devil was telling the truth.

Yes, we think it is possible that Satan imitated God's mode of revelation. He certainly did not reveal his true identity or purpose.

The Devil also attempts to imitate the miracles God has performed. He did this in Exodus 7, in the case of the plagues. He also tried to work miracles in the New Testament. In fact Paul said, "The coming of the lawless one is through the activity and working of Satan; and will be attended by great power and with all sorts of (pretended) miracles and signs and delusive marvels and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9, Amplified Translation).

Read 1 John 4:1 and learn how to tell the true from the false. If we are not careful, Satan will pull the wool over our eyes!

EDITORIAL . . .

FATHER OF LIES

By Dalton Key

Satan, that great deceiver of man, delights in turning truth on its head. He is both a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Ever since deceiving Eve in Eden's Garden, the devil has been doing his best to pervert the truth of God's word into a lie more suited to his own desires. Those who follow the devil follow his ways, exchanging "the truth of God for a lie" (Romans 1:25, ESV). Imagine how his twisted version of our Lord's beatitudes might sound:

"Blessed are the self-obsessed, for theirs is the kingdom of personal fulfillment.

Blessed are those who seek their own happiness, at any cost, even at the expense of others, for they shall enjoy an idyllic life of health and happiness.

Blessed are the overbearing, for they shall get their own way.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after entertainment, for they shall never be bored.

Blessed are those who demand to be served, for they shall bask in a life of ease and pleasure.

Blessed are those who avoid commitment and responsibility, for they shall enjoy a paradise of independence.

Blessed are the seekers of revenge, for they shall be seen as the heroes and role-models for the children of their generation.

Blessed are those willing to compromise their convictions in a relentless pursuit of popularity, for theirs is the kingdom of personal fulfillment.

Blessed are you when everyone knows your name, when your internet video goes viral, and when you have more money than a superstar in professional sports.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward here on earth, for this has been the true path to pleasure and happiness for selfish souls since the dawn of time."

NEVER FORGET: These "beatitudes" are anything but blessings, are nothing but lies, and will definitely be hazardous to your spiritual health! Satan can never be trusted to tell the truth.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones" (Proverbs 3:5-8).

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith . . ." (1 Peter 5:8,9).

**GOD USES IMPERFECT PEOPLE**

By Danny Tunnell

Paul tells us, "Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame that things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:26,27).

Be the best you can be with what God has given you. God will use you with limitations. Every person has weaknesses and faults. We haven't arrived yet, yet God can still use us while we are growing in Christ. There will always be areas where we can come up higher.

Throughout the Bible, God used people who were not perfect. Jacob was a cheater (Genesis 27). David had an affair (2 Samuel 11). Noah got drunk (Genesis 9:20,21). Paul was involved in murder (Acts 7:54-60). Jonah ran from God (Jonah 1:3). Thomas was a doubter (John 20:24-29). Moses couldn't speak well (Exodus 4:10).

There is no good excuse for just sitting on the sidelines. Nothing disqualifies us from serving the Lord if we repent and submit ourselves to Him. God looks on the heart (1 Samuel

16:7). God has often taken things that are the most unlikely and made them come to pass.

Why doesn't God use the wise, the mighty, and the noble more often? People who think they are wise are harder to change than people who don't think they know as much (Romans 1:22). God said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

As we battle the enemy (the devil), Paul tells us to put on the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14). The God's Word translation calls it, "the breastplate of God's approval." That may be a good way to view things. Because we are equipped with God's righteousness, we have His approval (Romans 3:22; Philippians 3:9). We wouldn't have it on our own. "Their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17). "We have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

When Jesus chose the twelve apostles, He wasn't looking for the best educated or qualified by worldly standards. He chose ordinary people.

The Bible says, "The common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Jesus said, "Follow Me," to a group of fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James, and John. It was a high honor for them to follow and sit at Jesus' feet. The word "follow" in the original language can mean to imitate someone.

Because they weren't high on themselves and honored Jesus and what He said, they were teachable. They learned from Jesus to reject the path of bitterness and revenge for the path of forgiveness (Matthew 18:22). They learned from Jesus to serve others, not to use strong-arm tactics of power and control. Instead of walking in greed, Jesus taught generosity (Acts 10:35). The world's way is to be short on mercy and stingy on grace; to see sinners as a group to be shunned and judged. Jesus loved sinners (Luke 19:10). He saw them as candidates for His redemptive love (John 3:16,17).

God doesn't choose people based on their background, talent, or ability. He can use us with our limitations and imperfections, as we work to overcome them.
— Miami, OK

SPIRITUAL MATTERS MATTER

By Joe Slater

forth (Colossians 3:3-10).

An earthly, political kingdom characterized much of the Old Testament era. Beginning with King Saul, dozens of kings reigned over God's chosen people. Jesus is our King today, but He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). His throne is in heaven, not upon the earth. And His kingdom knows no geographical boundaries, for He reigns within the hearts of His subjects.

Worship in the Old Testament centered around a temple in Jerusalem. Today, God's spiritual temple is built, not of literal stones, but of his people as "living stones" (1 Peter 2:4). Similarly, in contrast to the various sacrifices of the Old Testament, we "offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter 2:5), such as "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

The singing of God's praises was accompanied in the Old Testament by numerous instruments: trumpet, harp, lute, timbrel, flute, cymbal, etc. (Psalm 150:3-5). Under the New Covenant,

however, we pluck not the carnal strings of a harp, but the spiritual strings of the heart (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). To return to playing musical instruments in worship would be no more fitting than the restoration of animal sacrifices.

Let us be thankful for the emphasis the New Testament places on spiritual matters. And let us worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). - Springfield, IL

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