

Satan's Devices

As we continue our study of the Kingdom Parables, we are going to look at the next two parables in the light of satanic attacks and what believers can do about them. Our aim in studying the devil's tactics is not to fill you with fear, but to assure you that no matter how powerful Satan may seem, the One in you is greater. Remember, Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Satan will try to prevail against individual believers as well as against the church as a whole; however, we have Jesus' promise of victory.

A believer's studying the tactics of Satan is similar to a football team studying its opponent. A coach will show his team films of the opponent's games. Then they'll talk about their strategy so that they will be able to anticipate moves and thus defend themselves against their opponent's maneuvers. This helps prepare them to win. Likewise, we are preparing for action. We get our training in the Word to enable us to go out and defeat the devil!

Now let's look at the third parable, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, in Matthew 13:31-32. "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

If you will remember, in the first two parables which we have already discussed, the sower sowed seeds. However, in this parable which is about the Church Age, only one seed is sown - the mustard seed. The mustard seed is used as an analogy because it was an important spice in Jesus' day and the people were familiar with it. It is called the least among all seeds. However, when it's planted, an herb comes forth. Then it eventually gets large enough to be called a tree and birds can land in the branches of it.

This parable poses several questions. Who is the sower? Who is the seed? What is the tree? What are the branches? And finally who are the birds?

Let's find out who sows the seed. In John 12:23, 24, Jesus is speaking. "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a com of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

"Glorified" means Jesus' resurrection body. Jesus was not looking forward to the Cross, he was looking forward to the Resurrection. Christianity is not based on the fact that Jesus is on a cross. It's based on the fact that Jesus is resurrected. Satan would like to have people think that Jesus is still on the cross and therefore is power- less. But we serve a powerful Jesus who was raised from the dead! We know that before He could be glorified, He had to be crucified.

The word "corn" as it is used in verse 24, means "seed," (singular) and it refers to Jesus. He is pointing out that He has to be buried. The shell of the seed has to die to release the life that is on the inside.

In Philippians 2:5-9, we find that God, who exalted Jesus, also put Jesus on the cross. He didn't want to, but He put His only Son there and then He poured out the sin, sickness, poverty, and the judgment of all men on Him that day. Jesus not only died on the cross, but for three days and three nights He spiritually died in the heart of the earth, separated from His own Father. Satan tried to get Him while He was here on the earth and missed every time. Now that Jesus had died and was in hell for three days and nights, hell had a party because they thought they had the Lord Jesus. But on the third day, the power of God descended into the pits of hell and released Him from the dead and He led captivity captive, gave gifts unto men and led a triumphal parade in the pits of hell! He unlocked the keys of death and hell. He released those people, took them up to heaven, and then Jesus arose from the dead. Thus, the same God that saw Him on the cross is the same God who also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed. The sower is God the Father and the seed is the Lord Jesus. When Jesus became less than a man on the cross, He became as the least of all seeds. But He is the

One that has been planted and when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree.

This brings us to the next question, what is the tree? The tree is Jesus as the trunk or the foundation. The branches are believers. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches."

As the tree begins to grow, the birds come and lodge in these branches. Who are the birds? They are the same as the fowls in Matthew 13:4, which devoured the seeds which fell by the way side. Verse 19 tells us it is the "wicked one." In other words, the birds are satan and his demons which come to attack the church. Because the birds attack from the outside, or lodge in the branches of the tree, we call these "external" attacks. Satan is no longer attacking Jesus, the trunk of the tree, he's attacking the branches and the branches he goes after first are the most vulnerable ones, the new converts. These are the ones which have just begun to bud on the tree.

Jesus warned against demonic attacks. He said, "They come to you in sheep's clothing but inside they are really ravening wolves that come to devour." By the way, He didn't say they were wolves in shepherd's clothing. When false teachers enter a church, they usually don't try to get behind the pulpit and preach to everybody. Instead, they come in among the sheep and cause them to split. Then they carry off little groups. Furthermore, the new converts who don't know much of the Word are the prey for these false teachers. It takes a discerning ear to hear and distinguish the truth from false teaching. Satan mixes truth with error. If you were to poison a dog (and I know you wouldn't), you wouldn't throw a slab of poison to it. Instead you would mix the poison with his meat. When he starts to eat the meat, he devours the poison at the same time. Satan does the same thing. He starts out with truth to get you agreeing with him saying, "Yes, yes, yes," then he slides into error hoping you will still agree. But someone with discerning ears can say, "Yes, yes, yes, No!" We need to know where the truth ends and the error begins. The Book of Jude tells us that these false teachers cause spiritual shipwrecks. Jude 12 says, "These are spots in your feasts of charity." Actually, the Greek says they are "rocks in shallow water..." Like hidden rocks which capsize boats, false teachers stay just below the surface where they are hard to detect, but they are

there to cause spiritual shipwrecks among believers. These are the same as birds in the branches that infiltrate the church to deceive.

Jude 12 also says, "...clouds they are without water..." A cloud on a hot, dry day raises your hopes by promising rain, but these deceptive clouds are without water. Likewise, these false teachers come along promising great things, but they give nothing. They look like other clouds, other believers, but they don't have water, the Holy Spirit, within them and so they don't have the refreshing to give.

Verse 12 goes on to say that they are like, "...trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots," In other words, they look like they are trying to produce fruit, but they cannot. Why? Because they do not have the life on the inside. They are "twice dead" which means that they are not born again, so they are naturally dead and they are spiritually dead. They're going to stand before the second death, cast forever into the lake of fire. In Jude 13, these false teachers are also compared to raging waves and wandering stars. "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." The one thing that shooting stars and waves crashing on a beach have in common is that they are short-lived. They are beautiful for a moment, but then they are gone.

In Jude 15-19, we learn that at the Second Advent, Jesus will come with ten thousands of His saints:

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. 17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

The speakers of the great swelling words and the murmurers can have a big influence on a baby Christian. Fortunately, Jude goes on to tell us how to build ourselves up so that we are able to discern the truth. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Christianity is not based on the fact that Jesus is on a cross. It's based on the fact that Jesus is resurrected.

One of the most important things for a new convert to do is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and pray with other tongues to edify and build himself up on the inside, then when Satan's deception comes and Satan's false prophets come along, the new convert's spirit will let him know when something is wrong even if he doesn't understand it with his mind. Again, one of the most important things for the new branch to understand is that when the birds come to attack, pray in the Spirit, come to church, read the Bible, get in the Word, pray in the Spirit.

As we said, the attacks of Satan which are exemplified by the birds in the trees represent external attacks on believers and the church. In contrast to this, the next parable which tells of leaven, deals with another way Satan attacks the church - internally. If he can't get at the people in the church, he'll try his best to get into the teaching of the church. By doing this, he can promote false teaching from the pulpit. Even a little false teaching will affect the church as does the leaven in Matthew 13:33. "Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Throughout the Word of God leaven, or yeast, is a type of evil. This doesn't mean that yeast of itself is evil, rather, it is a way of showing how evil can spread. The purpose of yeast is to puff-up. Yeast makes a little look like a lot. Galatians 5:9 tells us, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." If Satan can't attack the church by direct attack, he'll come in and put a little leaven in the lump. The leaven that he uses is legalism. In Matthew 16:12, Jesus warns the disciples to beware of the leaven or the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Legalism is man's attempt to help God, but He doesn't need your help. Some of you came out of churches that were permeated with leaven of legalism. They could talk great swelling words over nothing. Then when you left the church, you couldn't

remember a word. All the air went out of it and there wasn't anything left. This kind of church is built on tremendous programs to puff up and to help the presence of God. From all appearances, it looks good, but there is really no substance to it.

There are three types of leaven mentioned in the Word of God. In Mark 8:15, Jesus warns the disciples, "... Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." In Matthew 16:6, Jesus exhorts them to, "... Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Take a look at the leaven of the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:2-4, Jesus is speaking to the disciples.

2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their words: for they say, and do not. 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The leaven of the Pharisees is to add bondage to the Word of God. Then they glory in your bondage. In some churches, the Word of God is taught, but to enforce holiness, rules and regulations are imposed on the people. When a preacher preaches all morning on "don't do this or that," he is using leaven. He is taking a little bit of the Word and blowing it out of proportion. What he should do is preach the Word and let the Holy Spirit deal with the people. Jesus did preach about sin, but He never went after the people trying to enforce His Word. He didn't plant the seed and then try to enforce it and make it grow; He planted it and went on His way.

It's not up to us to enforce the Word of God with rules and regulations. However, if God puts rules and regulations on you, that's fine. If the power of the Spirit and the impression of the Word of God puts boundaries on you, then observe them.

Verses 5-7 tell us why the Pharisees do this:

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love

*the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7
And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi Rabbi.*

In other words, they like to talk about the fact that their congregations are living holy lives. Why? It puffs them up and makes them look good. They miss the point that the purpose of the ministry is to exalt Jesus, not themselves. To make themselves look good, they added the leaven of rules and regulations to try to make people live holy lives. The result was, they put the people in bondage to laws, the leaven of the Pharisees.

Next, let's take a look at the leaven of Herod. The leaven of Herod is to try to infiltrate the church with worldliness or with politics. So, in Matthew 22:16-22, the Pharisees gang up with the Herodians and they challenge Jesus with a seemingly simple question.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. 22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

If Jesus had answered that they should give tribute to Herod, they would have said, "Fine, now we don't have to pay tithes." On the other hand, if He had said that they didn't have to pay their taxes, they would have labeled him a traitor. But Jesus perceived their evil ways and even called them hypocrites. Then He made them marvel at His wise answer.

The church and politics are like two sides of a coin. They are together, yet separate. While the church shouldn't become involved in politics and shouldn't preach politics from the pulpit, we are to operate in cooperation with the government.

We don't need politics coming in the church; nevertheless, we have many churches that have left the Word and are preaching politics. If you want to become involved in politics, that's fine, but don't drag it into the church. If you renew your mind with the Word, the Holy Spirit will guide you in your voting, and you should vote because you are in the world even if you are not of the world.

Finally, let's find out about the leaven of the Sadducees. This leaven is the denial of the supernatural. In Acts 23:6-8, Paul has been brought before a council of Pharisees and Sadducees. When he realized this, he used their different doctrines to split the group.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Verse 8 tells us that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits. I am bringing this out, because in Matthew 22:23, the Sadducees come right on the heels of the Herodians and ask Jesus a question which concerns the resurrection.

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

They must have thought about this question a long time, because they cooked up a good one. They probably expected Jesus to say, "That's a good question. I really don't know." What Jesus does answer is found in verses 29-32.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

If you take the supernatural out of a church, you take out the power. Jesus said that in the last days many would come who would have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. That's the leaven of the Sadducees. Today it is the denial of tongues, of healing, or of miracles.

Jesus tells them that they don't even know how to interpret the scripture. They can't read black and white in front of their faces. Furthermore, in verse 32, He quotes Exodus 3:6. This is when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. In other words, God is the God of the living and all those who have gone on to be with Jesus are alive and well in Heaven.

The leaven of the Sadducees tries to remove the power of the supernatural out of the church. To take the place of the power, this leaven puffs up the church with great programs and great oratories and great music, which are void of power. Even though during the service you may be moved, when you get out of the church, there is nothing left. It was all leaven.

We are told to go after the meat of the Word. We need to renew our minds with the Word so that we are able to discern legalism and don't fall into bondage or become the victims of any of Satan's tactics, external or internal, which were mentioned in these two parables.

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