

DECOYS AND DIVERSIONS

MANPADS (Man Portable Air Defense Systems) are a growing threat to commercial aviation. There are an estimated 75,000 of these shoulder fired anti-aircraft missiles throughout the world. They can be purchased on the black market for as little as \$5,000. The FBI estimates that there have already been 29 missile attacks on a variety of commercial airlines resulting in over 550 deaths. More than two dozen terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, are believed to possess these weapons.

The early MANPADS, like the heat seeking Russian SA-7, are fairly primitive and can usually be lured away from the target by decoy flares. With more advanced models there is a growing “cat and mouse” game between the electronics in the missile and the countermeasures seeking to confuse it. The point is, that decoys and diversions are a standard procedure used to keep deadly missiles away from the real target.

But now let us extrapolate this principle into the spirit world. Spiritually speaking, we are engaged in a life and death struggle with eternal consequences. But “. . . **our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**” (Eph 6:12) Our spiritual enemies are doing everything they can to avoid their inevitable defeat. Every time believers take aim on the true target that will guarantee our victory, the wicked one tries to divert our attention. The devil will use any decoy or diversion to keep us from doing the will of God.

Note, for example, what happened at Ephesus. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that corrupted men like savage wolves would distort the truth and try to draw away disciples (Acts 20:29 - 30). This literally happened. That is why Paul left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). He was to command certain men not to teach their false doctrines any longer. The “goal” of the Christian life is “love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). These men had “swerved aside” or “wandered away” from love, to myths and endless genealogies.

Genealogies are mentioned so often in Scripture that one can immediately see how easily the devil can use them as a diversion. In Genesis, for example, chapters 4, 5, 10, 29, 30, 36, and 49 are devoted to genealogies. In addition to many other genealogical references in the O.T. Scriptures the first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles are completely devoted to genealogies. The genealogy of Jesus is the first thing we read when we open our Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew. The genealogy of Jesus is also found in Luke 3. While the study of genealogies is important, IT IS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE BIBLE!

The most important thing in the Bible is love! To love God in the proper way and to love our neighbor in the proper way summarizes the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:37 - 40). By this shall all men know that we belong to Jesus if we have love one for another (John 13:35). Love is the more excellent way Paul proposed to the Corinthians and without it our religious sacrifices are like a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Love is more important than faith, more significant than hope, and it will last forever (1 Cor. 13:13).

As you know, there are literally hundreds of divisions in the Body of Christ. These divisions are not only seen on a denominational level, but in individual congregations as well. While in Bible College many years ago I was made aware of a church in southern Illinois that split during a building program over which Sunday School teacher was going to get the biggest classroom. How sad! Once they quit loving one another they didn't need the new building.

Love is indeed the goal! It is an accurate reflection of God's nature and eloquently explains why He gave His Only Begotten Son. This is the way that we understand the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Because the works of the flesh are manifest in our divided world, God sends the Holy Spirit into the heart of every true believer. Paul reminds us by inspiration that the “fruit of the Spirit is love”. It is easy to love people who are lovely, but when men are driving nails into our hands and feet we need supernatural power. Love is the true goal of every Christian - don't be diverted!