

## THE SERPENT DECEIVED ME

**“Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Gen. 3:13).**

The devil has been a deceiver, a liar and a murderer from the very beginning (Jn. 8:44). He never appears dangerous, however, for he is a master at deception. He even masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). No wonder Paul was concerned that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, we also might be led astray from our pure devotion to the cause of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

Jesus once warned His disciples that those who killed them would think they were doing service to God (Jn. 16:2). This is even happening in our own generation. When Khalid Sheik Mohammed, for example, cut off Daniel Pearl’s head he was so proud that of what he was doing that he recorded the ghastly event on video. The grisly execution was accompanied by shouting “Allahu akbar” (God is great). Obviously, in the murderer’s own mind, he was “doing service to God”. When Mohamed Atta wanted to encourage the 9/11 hijackers to die while killing infidels he wrote them a note: “The virgins are calling you”. These poor deluded souls “believed” that after they died 72 virgins were waiting to entertain them.

After three failed attempts to get God to curse the Israelites, the wicked Balaam taught Balak to “cast a stumbling block” before the men of Israel (Rev. 2:14; Nu. 23 – 25). The Bible word used to describe this deception is “skandalon” from which we get our English word “scandal”. It refers to that part of a trap to which the bait is attached. The mouse thinks he is getting free cheese, but he is not! It is a trap! The Hebrews thought they were getting free sex, but they were not. It was a trap! In fact 24,000 Israelites died in the trap. The idea that the devil appears in a red suit with horns and a pitchfork is itself diabolical. The great deceiver is himself is behind it. The Moabite girls who seduced the Israelites obviously did not dress in red, have horns, and carry pitchforks.

Many years ago 59 year old Maurice Dejean was the French Ambassador to Moscow. He naively accepted a luncheon invitation not realizing that he was walking into a trap. After extensive research into the type of women that appealed to him, 29 year old Larissa Kronberg was selected by the KGB for the assignment. The fact that she was at the luncheon was not an accident. She dutifully hung on every word he said and even laughed at his jokes. Asking him to take her home she “imposed” on him to wait a few minutes while she took a swim without any clothes on. After the trap was sprung the KGB agents were slapping one another on the back and the poor deluded ambassador had no idea what had just happened. He was then blackmailed into betraying his government’s secrets for the next 6 years. In 1964 his treason was finally discovered, but it was 6 years too late!

Cattle being slaughtered start their fatal journey in a passageway that seems harmless. Once in that passageway, however, the condemned animal has no choice. It cannot turn back or escape. From the moment it entered the passageway death was certain. In this regard it is important to note that Christ gives us freedom and does not coerce us to do anything. Each disciple freely chooses to follow Jesus. Each disciple also has the freedom to abandon Him at any time. Judas Iscariot proved this. Once when the multitudes abandoned Jesus He invited the twelve to also leave if they wanted to (Jn. 6:67). As long as we have breath we are completely free to abandon Jesus at any time.

The same freedom of thought and action was also a part of the primitive church. Far from forbidding believers to test and compare, we are commanded to do so. We are to test the spirits to see if they come from God (1 Jn. 4:1) We are to test and approve the will of God (Rom. 12:2). In fact, we are to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5:21). Once we have made the test, however, we are advised to “Hold on to the good and avoid every kind of evil”. All of this is done, of course, by our own free will and without coercion. The only thing that constrains the Christian is the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). Remember! **“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us . . .” (Tit. 3:3-5).**