

Our Adversary / Gulf Gate Church; 01.25.09

PPT and script / Great Courses catalog / Bible / water

{1: Blank} Introduction

- † There are 800 busses in England carrying an advertisement that reads, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” The Discovery Channel sells DVDs of a “documentary” about Jesus being married to Mary Magdalene and sharing a tomb with her and their children. The Great Courses program has teachings on the Old Testament, New Testament, the scriptures in general, the gospels, and early church history, all of which are taught by liberal theologians who doubt the integrity of the Bible and push belief in false Gnostic teachings. The question is whether these actions are uncoordinated ... or part of someone’s master plan.
- † I am sure most of you are aware that we have an adversary. The name “Satan” means “adversary,” and the Bible makes clear that he is a real individual.
- † Maybe you have heard that in the Bible he is also called the Devil [Revelation 12:9]; the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the great dragon in Revelation [Rev. 12:9]; and Be-elzebul, ruler of the demons; Be-elzebul means approximately “Lord of Filth” [Matthew 10:25].
- † Maybe you know the Bible says he is called the “ruler of this world” [John 12:31]; the “god of this age” [2 Corinthians 4:4]; the “prince of the power of the air” [Ephesians 2:2]; “the tempter” [Matthew 4:3]; “the Evil One” [Matthew 13:19]; and the deceiver [2 John 1:7].
- † Maybe you even know that he was described by Peter as a roaring lion! prowling around, looking for someone to devour [1 Peter 5:8].
- † But tell me the truth . . . when you think of Satan...
 - Don’t you tend to think of him as a grotesque red devil? **{2: Red devil}**
 - Or do you think of him the way Paul described him, appearing as an angel of light **{3: Angel of light}** [2 Corinthians 11:14]?
- † One of the greatest deceptions ever has been how we think of Satan. And that deception leaves us open to his other deceptive work.

{4: blank} Identity and Goals

- † So we begin today by asking, “Who is this adversary?” In Ezekiel 28, God directs the prophet Ezekiel to speak first to the human ruler of the state of Tyre, and then [28:12b-17a] to the real power behind him. Here we have God’s description of our adversary.
 - **{5: Ezekiel 28:12b-14a}** God says, “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you” [NIV].
 - Satan is an angel, indeed, he is literally an anointed cherub! We know the cherubim are the angels that guard the throne of God [Ezekiel 10] and guarded the Garden of Eden after God kicked Adam and Eve out [Genesis 3:24]. They are God’s bouncers! mighty and strong, but also apparently very wise and very beautiful.

- Many theologians interpret this excessive praise for the way Satan was made to mean he was the height of creation, the strongest, wisest, and most perfect angel ever. In any case, we need to know that he is a strong and wily adversary.

† **{6: Ezekiel 28:14b-17a}** God continues: “You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” [NIV].

- Satan’s heart became proud because of all his beauty. Because of what God gave him, Satan got proud. We often make this same mistake, don’t we? We compare ourselves favorably to others, with our looks, our brains, our abilities, our lifestyles, maybe our outward morality... we take what God has blessed us with for his good purposes and we allow our pride to turn those things to evil and selfish thoughts, just like Satan.
- Satan corrupted his wisdom for the sake of his splendor. He is self-centered and proud... but a capable adversary.

† **{7: Access to Heaven}** We know from the book of Job [1:6-7] and something Jesus said in the book of Luke [22:31-32] that Satan roams throughout the earth and still has access to God in Heaven.

- God stripped him of his trusted heavenly duties, but Satan still has access to God in Heaven, and he uses that access to make accusations against us.
- We know from the book of Revelation that the time is coming when God will cast Satan and his demons out of Heaven [12:7-9], and even off the Earth [20:1-3], but that time has not yet come.

† **{8: Isaiah 14:13-14}** We need to understand what this adversary wants. In the book of Isaiah [14:13-14], there is a passage which theologians believe refers to Satan as the power behind the evil nation of Babylon: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” [NIV].

- Satan wants to be God! Not satisfied with being God’s #1 angel, he desires to be like God, the Most High. Satan wants to rule in place of God, he covets God’s glory, power, and authority. Let’s take a look at how Satan has tried to reach these goals.

Method of Attack

† **{9: Genesis graphic}** The Beginning: In the Garden of Eden [Genesis 3:1-6], Satan persuaded Adam and Eve to follow his counsel instead of God’s. We see temptation in this story. But before the temptation became real, Satan distorted God’s Word, tried to convince Eve to doubt God’s motives and his Word, and fed Eve an outright lie. The temptation in this story was to act independently of God, just as Satan had acted, but there was a lot of deception leading to that temptation.

- This, as we know, resulted in great tragedy for mankind, introducing us to sin and corruption. It also resulted in Satan’s rise to supreme power on the Earth. It was Jesus who referred to Satan as the “ruler of this world,” though that will last only until Jesus comes back. After deceiving Eve, Satan had the allegiance of the fallen angels who had followed him, he had seized control of the Earth from mankind, and he had strong sway over mankind. Not a bad start toward reaching his goals.

- † Deception of Non-believers: To keep his influence over us, Satan tries to prevent people from coming to faith in Christ.
- **{10: 2 Corinthians 4:4}** 2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV] says, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
 - Satan has blinded them: he has deceived them about the truth in the gospel, the truth about God, because if we are not actively following Christ in faith and obedience, then we are following Satan, as we pridefully exert independence from God, just as Satan did...
 - **{11: Ephesians 2:1-2}** This also leaves us open to greater Satanic influence, as Paul taught in Ephesians 2:1-2. As we can see in many examples in the gospel accounts, sometimes this has extended even to direct demonic possession.
- † Distraction: Satan also tries to frustrate God’s work in the lives of believers. There are several ways he goes about this.
- As in Job, there are times Satan and his demons bring about problems and failures, to sadden and frustrate the believer. This kind of distraction tempts us to abandon the purposes God has given us – such as evangelism and our own growth – so we can tend to our wounds or problems.
 - **{12: Lightner’s book}** Robert Lightner, a Dallas Seminary professor, wrote “One of the devil’s tricks is to keep us so busy worrying about things we can do nothing about that we fail to do anything about the things we can change” [81].
 - For example, many of us are now at risk of being laid off from work. Our focus each day should be on working hard and trusting in God’s provision, but many of us are instead distracted into anxiety and bitterness, emotions which hurt both our productivity and our witness for Christ.
 - There is a deception behind this temptation to distraction: we forget to rely on God to care for us, we forget that God’s purposes should be our priority, we forget that we exist for God’s pleasure, not the other way around.
- † **{13: Two types of distraction}** Sometimes we are tempted to be distracted by otherwise good things, such as Martha was distracted from worship of Jesus by her chores in Luke 10:40-42.
- Ten years ago, when I joined a new church, I participated in as many different ministries as I could. But what I should have done was find the ministry God had for me to do at that time. I was so busy doing good things, that I didn’t have time to do anything really well, and I didn’t focus on the ministry in which God was prepared to give me the greatest effectiveness.
 - Is there anything distracting you? Are you obsessing with anxieties or with desires? Are you so focused on running the children around to their activities, watching sports, or working, that you are losing focus of God’s priorities for you, hurting your relationship with God and slowing your spiritual development? We must keep our focus on God.
- † **{14: Lies slide}** Lust: Despite being reborn in the Holy Spirit, even we believers face the lustful kind of temptation [1 Peter 2:11; Romans 13:14]. Just like for Eve, there is deception behind our lust:
- We get convinced that we deserve something, so it is ok to go into debt for new furniture or to steal from the company that under-pays us. We get convinced that we have a right to be happy, so it is ok to have that affair or to get divorced. We get convinced that the end justifies the means, so it is ok to lie or pirate CDs if it helps us be successful in our ministry. We get convinced that we cannot control our natural urges, so it is ok if we kill people... most of us resist that urge, don’t we? and yet we use this logic to justify our sexual lust or our gluttony at the table.

- In every case of such temptation, when we don't resist, we put ourselves and our desires ahead of God and his commands. Sometimes we rationalize our way into doing it, clearly a form of self-deception; sometimes we assume it will be ok because we have grace, an attitude which is condemned in the Bible [Romans 6:15], and thus also is a deception.

† **{15: Blank}** Accusation: Another form of deception is what is commonly called “accusation,” which essentially is negative thoughts, about yourself, about God, about the church, or about your life.

- You've had these thoughts... {whisper...} God couldn't love someone like me... I am a terrible person... I'll never be good enough... these church people won't accept me... this church is losing its direction... my spouse is a jerk... there's no hope for this marriage...
- Sometimes Satan uses temptation and accusation together. First you get the left jab, that it is ok to succumb to temptation, that God will understand; then you get the right cross, that you are guilty and worthless and despised by God. All lies...
- **{16: Accusation}** I am not sure how this works: whether it is a demonic whisper as portrayed by fiction author Frank Piretti, or some other supernatural mechanism, but we know it can happen as described in the Bible, which says Satan moved King David to number Israel [1 Chronicles, 21:1] and that Satan put it on Judas' heart to betray Jesus [John 13:2]. Somehow, our adversary plants negative or bad thoughts in our heads. And when we dwell on them, believe them, or act on them, we play right into his hands.

† **{17: Blank}** Deception about God: These are all great weapons of our adversary and terrible things to experience, but I want to focus today on the primary kind of deception we face, whether we are believers or non-believers, which is deception about God and his Word.

- Satan distorted the words of God in the Garden of Eden [Genesis 3:1-6] while talking with Eve. Even in tempting Christ, Satan distorted the meaning of scripture [Matthew 4:6], as he tried to get Jesus to act independently of God the Father.
- One of the reasons I am passionate about studying the Bible is that seven years ago, if you had asked me what it meant to be a good Christian man, I would have given you a wrong answer. I was deceived, and my deception hurt my witness to others, distorted my teaching in Life Group, and created such a burden within me that I was miserable. I thank God that my mentor showed me scripture that gave me the truth: it was the truth that set me free.
- If you think about it, when you are tempted, you know it; but by its very nature, deception is something you don't realize is happening to you! When you are deceived, you don't know it. You might be deceived right now – in fact, I will bet every one of us in this room is deceived about something! – believing something false about God, about yourself, or how to be blessed.
- Several years ago, I was deceived about having hair on the back of my head. I was! The wife of a friend of mine videotaped his black belt test, which I attended. When I went to their house to watch the tape, the VCR was not working, and everything was fuzzy. Just as I said, “Who's the guy with the Jewish beanie?” [I didn't know the word yarmulke], just then my friend hit the VCR, the picture cleared, and it was me! The point is that we are all deceived, and the only way you will discover your deceptions is to be exposed to God's truth. Therefore, if you are not spending a lot of time with your Bible, then you are not giving yourself a chance!

† Sometimes, these deceptions come from our culture. I think of *The Da Vinci Code*. I know people who read that book and assured me that they knew it was just fiction. But, while they were able to disregard some of the more blatant lies, some of the more subtle ones crept into their thinking. When I talked to them six months later, they would say something terribly incorrect, like Constantine

controlled what books were put into the Bible, and when I would ask where they got that idea, we would trace it back to that book. Satan weakens their faith through this deception.

- † Just as often, these deceptions come from churches and Christian bookstores!
 - Within Sarasota, so called “Christian” churches are teaching that Jesus was just a good man; or that Jesus is not God or man, but some other type of created being. Some teach that God himself was once a man and if you live right you too can become a god.
 - Some teach that Christ’s death on the cross accomplished nothing, or that it accomplished much but not enough to assure us of salvation by grace, instead we must prove worthy of it.
 - There are others who get these big things right, but teach false doctrines about Christian life: that we should seek prosperity for ourselves instead of sacrificially suffering for the gospel; that we can control God by naming and claiming the blessings we want, instead of depending on God and crying out for his mercy; that we must live in legalism to remain righteous instead of obeying because of the change God has graciously worked within us. Still others teach human ideas and pretend they are supported by scripture. All of these are deceptions, lies and distortions about the Word of God or about God himself.

{18: Pattern} Self Exaltation

- † Satan deceives us about God and his Word, and then he tempts us to think selfishly, self-righteously, to live for and exalt ourselves, instead of God.
 - We tend to think of evil as something obnoxious to common decency, but it is really anything that promotes sin, which simply is going against the will of God. Thus, while we expect to see evil in an obvious form, we often miss it because it is subtle. One massive deception is our failure to see that Satan will often promote something we think of as good... if it will lead us to exalt ourselves instead of God.
 - **{19: Chafer book}** Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary, wrote a book called, *Satan: His Motives and Methods*. In it, he says, “... Satan’s ambition was not to become a fiend, but rather to become like the Most High. He will, therefore, strive for all that is moral and good: yet at the same time do all in his power to draw men from their natural reverence of God ...
 - **{20: Chafer book 2}** ...The Satanic message for this age will be reformation and self-development, while the message of God is regeneration by the power of the Spirit [66].” Do you see the difference? Satan advocates we be dependent on ourselves, like he is, while God urges us to be dependent on himself.
- † Just as in Sarasota today, the Corinthians 2000 years ago were being led astray by those who preached a different Jesus and therefore a different gospel.
 - **{21: 2 Corinthians 11:13-15}** In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul wrote, “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness...” [NIV].
- † There is a growing religious movement in this town, and in this country, in favor of doing religious acts to justify ourselves as righteous, while denying the work of Christ on the cross as unreasonable. People want to feel good about themselves because of what *they* have done, not because of what Christ has done for them.

- **{22: 1 Timothy 4:1}** 1 Timothy 4:1 says, “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” [NASB].
 - You can identify these groups in our society, because they work with Satan to deny Christ’s return, to deny Christ’s divinity, and to deny Christ’s atoning work on the cross. Their false gospels exalt the writer or the reader, not Christ. They promote good causes, even religious activities, and **sometimes include every good thing about Christianity except one: they deny the gospel truth upon which salvation depends** [Chafer 72].
 - **{23: Chafer book slide 2a}** Writing in the early 1900s, looking back at Bible prophecy and forward to our times, Chafer said, “It is evident that the method of this deception is to imitate the real ministers of Christ. Evil will not appear on the outside of these systems; but they will be announced as ‘another gospel’ or as a larger understanding of the previously accepted truth,
 - **{24: Chafer book slide 2b}** and will be all the more attractive and delusive since they are heralded by those who claim to be ministers of Christ, who reflect the beauty of an ‘angel of light,’ and whose lives are undoubtedly free from great temptation...
 - **{25: Chafer book slide 2c}** Their gospel is one of human reason, and appeals to human resources. There can be no appreciation of divine revelation in them, for they have not come really to know God or His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - **{26: Chafer book slide 2d}** They are ministers of righteousness which should never be confused with the preaching of grace. One is directed only at the reformation of the natural man, while the other aims at regeneration through the power of God. [76]”
- † **{27: Chafer book slide 2e}** The Unitarian and Unity churches in Sarasota are filled with nice people who do many good things for our community, but they are churches that fit this description of Chafer’s because they deny Christ’s divinity and they deny his atoning work on the cross.
- In their efforts to promote their false human merit gospel, they deny parts of the biblical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and teach instead the false Gnostic gospels. In fact, these churches are so far away from orthodox Christian doctrine, that they admit to an affiliation with the non-Christian, “New Thought” group in Sarasota, called the Center for Positive Living. It was from the Center for Positive Living’s website that I got all those subtle but misleading lies for the PowerPoint we showed before the service began.
 - These churches also support the Jesus Seminar. Created by liberal theologians of many denominations, who have adopted the views of the Unitarians, this group goes around the country promoting a “historical Jesus” who was just a good man. Because of their skepticism, arbitrary assumptions, and weak logic, they teach that only 20% of the biblical gospels are accurate with another 30% mostly true. They have thrown out half of the scripture in the gospels! yet they totally accept the false Gnostic gospels written hundreds of years later.
 - I can assure you from my seminary studies that there is an incredible amount of evidence that the scriptures we have today are accurate. Yet, it is this group that most influences the documentaries shown on television. The History Channel, the Discovery Channel, the broadcast networks are all influenced by these so-called “Second Questers,” people who believe the New Testament to be mostly false, and so try to discover a “more historical” Jesus. Just recently they influenced PBS’ *Frontline*, which ran a special on the history of Jesus, arguing – against all the documentary evidence to the contrary – that the early church did not consider Jesus to be the Christ.
 - Support for this Jesus Seminar when it came to Sarasota in 2007 was not just from the Unitarian type churches, however! This way of thinking that denies the integrity of scripture, the divinity

of Christ, and the atonement of the cross has infiltrated more denominations. In Sarasota, both the First United Methodist Church and the First Congregational Church of Christ supported this group. In Christian seminaries, this has been increasingly a problem over the last century, and so more and more pastors are coming out of school doubting the essential truths or orthodox Christianity.

- † Imagine Satan's pleasure over infiltrating the church, so that individual congregations would save no one, but instead introduce many to false humanistic doctrines, subtly leading people to follow in Satan's footsteps. Satan's cause was greatly weakened by Christ's first coming, and will be destroyed by his second, but for now, Satan is still hard at work against us.

{28: 1 Peter 5:8-9 and James 4:7} Our Resistance

- † What do we do? We resist. 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" [NIV].

- James 4:7: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" [NIV].
- We must be on the alert, because the attack is continuous! We must resist the temptation to get distracted away from our purpose for God. [1 John 2:15-16]
- We must resist the temptation to be disobedient; we all have weak spots, so be vigilant about yours! avoid situations that leave you vulnerable and learn how to respond to temptation the biblical way.
- We must resist the lying accusations we hear in our heads by taking our thoughts captive in the name of Christ [2 Corinthians 10:5].
- We must resist by coughing up any evil within us, not holding onto anything that is not of God, so the devil cannot get a foothold in our life. [Ephesians 4:27]

- † **{29: Modified 1 Peter 5:8 and James 4:7}** Second, we must depend on God and not try to resist in our own strength. Remember our enemies are supernatural so we must rely on God to be victorious. The context of both the James and 1 Peter passages warns us that our resistance must be in complete dependence upon the power of God.

- Remember, God *wants* us to be dependent on him, he designed us to be dependent on him; what Satan wants is for us to act independently of God, so if we try to resist Satan without depending on God, then we fall right into the trap.
- In our dependence, we can take comfort in remembering that God alone is sovereign... Satan is God's enemy, but he is an enemy who must obey God. We can take assurance from 1 John 4:4: "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

- † **{30: Armor of God Ephesians 6:11-18}** Third, we must put on the Armor of God.

- Ephesians 6:11-18: "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the

shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...

- Truth and righteousness are the essence of Christian character and equip us to resist temptation. I have a shirt I used to wear a lot when I went out to eat. It has a sheriff's seal on it. Every time I eat out with this shirt on, the waitress asks if I am a deputy. When I deny it, she says I should have lied, so she could have given me a discount. So I tell her my integrity is worth more than \$1.85, and that statement never fails to startle her. "I never thought of it that way," she says. We should. Guard your heart and your loins, put on truth and righteousness.
- The gospel of peace and the Word of God, if you know them well, will dispel all deceptions! It is the truth that sets you free and provides you with identity and purpose!
- Faith and knowledge of your salvation provide courage, hope, and motivation. In faith, we must live out the victory Christ accomplished. Note again the need for dependence on the Holy Spirit! If we are to walk worthy of the calling we must learn to be dependent on the Holy Spirit.

† **{31: Black screen}** Fourth, we must educate ourselves about the deceptions of this "angel of light." Remember, Satan is a powerful, intelligent, and deceptive supernatural being, who wants to rule in place of God. He wants to deceive us into following him [instead of Christ], by acting independently of God. So we must learn what is true in scripture so we can recognize the signs of false teachings, for it is easy to be deceived otherwise.

† Last, we must examine ourselves. Satan wants to tear us down, but then he wants to build us up to feel good about ourselves, through secular psychology, New Age / New Thought philosophy, or our own achievement, but the emphasis will be on exalting ourselves, as he does, instead of exalting God.

- **{32: List}** If you want to follow Christ instead of Satan, then you must realize the following:
 1. You cannot save yourself: you must accept the salvation God offers through Christ's death! [Romans 3:23-24]
 2. You have no righteousness or value before God from what you accomplish; you must accept the righteousness of Christ that God grants you. [Romans 1:16-17; 2:29; 3:19-20; 8:10]
 3. You have no sacrifice of moral effort to make; you must accept the sacrifice for all sin that God provided through Christ. [Titus 2:14]
 4. You cannot build your own character; you must allow the Holy Spirit to bring you the fruit of the Spirit. [Galatians 5:16-25]
 5. You cannot conform yourself to what is good; you must allow yourself to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into Christ-likeness. [Romans 12:1-2]

† This is what the Bible says. The false preachers will tell you differently, and so will the world, and so might your own fleshly reasoning. Recall from last week that James teaches there are two kinds of wisdom: one that comes from God and one that comes from Satan, the world, and our flesh. Will you follow Christ and rely on God's wisdom, the Bible, or will you follow the lead of Satan and choose to rely on something else?

† **{33: blank}** If you are a visitor with us today, it might encourage you to know that I am not the usual preacher and this is not a typical sermon. This church is focused on Jesus. Come back next week and give this fine church another chance.

- † Right now, I ask everyone in this room to consider whether you know you are dependent on God for your righteousness, for forgiveness, and for salvation; and I ask you right now to decide if you want to follow Jesus Christ in this dependence on God, instead of following the lead of Satan by being independent of God. Whether it is the first time you have made that decision or whether you have been a Christian for a long time but know you are vulnerable to deception... please, if you agree with what I am saying, echo this prayer of mine.

Dear Father God ... I open my palms to you ... because I know I bring you nothing...
I know at times I have ... fallen for Satan's deception ... and followed him in sin...
I know I need your gift of forgiveness... I know I need your gift of righteousness...
I believe Jesus Christ was God the Son... whose death paid the price... for all my sins forever...
I believe you raised him from the dead... proving who he was...
and that my faith ... in your promise of deliverance... means I am saved. Amen.

- † If you meant that prayer, then you are born again in spirit, declared righteous by God, already a citizen of Heaven and an adopted child of God! You can never lose that. But the Bible has something to say to you: Beware! You are still vulnerable to deception, and you have an adversary intent on taking you down... so watch out! prepare yourself! and be blessed!