

## Satan's Plan Our Lives

### Introduction

Things in this world are not always what they seem. This world is not a playground but a battleground; in fact, it is a spiritual battleground. There is a spiritual battle which is raging for our souls, and one thing we need to recognise is that the Lord is not the only one who has a plan for our lives because Satan has a plan for our lives, too. So, today we'll explore the nature of Satan's plan for our lives.

Now the central bible verse which sums up this battle which goes on in the spiritual world is Ephesians 6:12. This is what it says:

*For 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.*

So what is Satan's plan for your life and mine?

There are various aspects of this plan which I will share with you as we move along. One aspect of Satan's plan for our lives is to cast doubt.

### Doubt

This is a central aspect, the sowing of doubt. One aim is to cast doubt on Jesus being actually the Son of God and another is to cast doubt on the reality of God's power. It's amazing to think that, even when Christ was walking on earth, many doubted despite having witnessed miracles such as Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

In John chapter 10 verse 30, Jesus even states who He is. He says: *I and my Father are one*. The Jews were actually in no doubt what He was saying and this is illustrated in John chapter 10 verse 33. They say: *"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

I believe such doubt, shown even amongst his disciples, immediately after the crucifixion, was entirely the work of Satan. After all, sowing seeds of doubt is a pattern he started with Adam and Eve at the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden.

At the time of the Columbine high school shooting a few years ago, a pastor is recorded as saying, *"I think God is broken hearted. I don't think God was in control of these events"*

I believe that this is the work of Satan who would have pastors saying such things, for it's ludicrous to suggest that God, who brought the universe into being and who parted

the waters and whose Son brought Lazarus back to life is not in control of world events!

There are certainly troubles in this world but God allows them for His purposes. One of His central purposes it to give us free will which runs the risk that people will choose evil over good. This is an acceptable risk to God because He desires that we make a free choice to come into relationship with Him. However, this is very different from believing that God is powerless over this world's events.

### **Discouragement**

Another aspect of Satan's plan for our lives is discouragement. In the biblical book of Job, we discover the details of how Satan attempted to beat Job down until he was so discouraged that he would curse God and never worship Him again. How his wife must have despaired as the family was torn apart, but I've no doubt that Job's wife was in Satan's grip when she said to Job - Job chapter 2 verse 9: *Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!*

Satan will try to do this to us today by stirring trouble of all kinds in our families, financial problems, health issues, unhappy marriages and the loss of a loved one to name but a few, because his major purpose is to get us to be so discouraged that we will disown God. Under such circumstances, we must resolve not to fall, we need to declare as Job did in chapter 13 verse 15: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.*

### **Distraction**

Distraction is another aspect of Satan's plan for our lives. As one writer puts it, Satan has weapons of mass distraction. He loves nothing more than to distract us from spending time with God or for working for Him.

It's this type of distraction that Jesus was referring to in Luke chapter 8 verse 14 in his parable of the sower. This is what He said: *The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.*

Satan wants sports, computer games, TV and movies to consume excessive amounts of our time to distract us from God's plan for our lives. Equally, money, power, sex are all forms of distraction that the enemy uses. He knows everyone's particular weaknesses and he will leverage these weaknesses if he can!

### **Distress**

Another insidious aspect of Satan's plan for our lives is distress. Satan wants to turn our everyday cares into fears. He loves to make us worry about things that are not going to happen. Now contrast this with God's assurance in Matthew chapter 11 verses 28-30. When Jesus says this: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I*

*am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

Men, you know men, who seem to have everything in a worldly sense but who do not have God, often live distressed, even tortured lives! Henry David Thoreau, who was an American philosopher of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, not a Christian, but who nevertheless, made a true statement when he said: *"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them."*

Thoreau's statement actually sums up life without the hope that is in Jesus Christ.

Take Freddy Mercury, for example, late lead singer of Queen, who apparently had everything. He had fame, adulation, riches, but he is reported as saying:

*"Because audiences love me, it's hard for them to believe that somebody like Freddie Mercury could be lonely," he said. 'In fact, my kind of loneliness is the hardest. You can be in a crowd and still be the loneliest person because you don't really belong to anyone."*

Now Freddie Mercury's statements are echoed by other very famous people, who have some pitiful last words to say and yet they seemed to have everything going for them, but they did not have Jesus Christ in their lives.

Voltaire, for example, the famous French Philosopher. His last words: *"I am abandoned by God and man...I shall go to hell."*

Thomas Paine: *"I would give worlds, if I had them, that the 'Age of Reason' had never been published. Oh, God, save me; for I am at the edge of hell alone..."*

Thomas Carlyle said: *"I am as good as without hope, a sad old man gazing into the final chasm."*

Even Gandhi, shortly before his death, Gandhi wrote this: *"My days are numbered, I am not likely to live much longer, perhaps a year or more...For the first time in 50 years I find myself in the slough of despond...All about me is darkness."*

## **Deception**

A further aspect of Satan's plan is deception. The various quotations I've given you from Voltaire and so on indicate the result of living a life under Satan's deception.

There are many forms of deception. For a Christian it might be *"You have let God down. You might as well give up because you are not fit to be a Christian"* However, especially for the non-Christian, one of his biggest deceptions is to trivialize Hell. Typical of this was Ted Turner's speech to the National Press Club when he was then the boss of CNN. This is what he said:

*“Heaven is going to be a mighty slender place. And most of the people I know in life aren’t going to be there ....Those of us that are going to hell, which will be most of this room; mostly journalists are certainly going there. But, when we get to hell we’ll have a chance to make things better because hell is supposed to be a mess. And heaven is perfect. Who wants to go to a place that’s perfect? Boring. Boring” and then the audience burst into laughter.*

Now this is a bit of fun; we all like a bit of fun but not when it’s misplaced. Christ followers have to recognize that in the New Testament hell or Hades is mentioned explicitly 23 times. On 16 of these occasions, Jesus is the one who utters the word. In fact, two thirds of the teaching on hell come from Jesus himself!

We can only conclude that the idea of Hell is not just a tool to keep people in line, but it is an essential teaching of the Christian faith.

Here is one famous description of Hell out of Jesus’ own lips: It’s Luke chapter 16 verses 19-31 - a bit long, but bear with me; there are many principles

#### *The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*

*Jesus said, “There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man’s table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.*

*Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.*

*The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’*

*But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’*

*Then the rich man said, ‘Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home. For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.’*

*But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.’*

*The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’*

*But Abraham said, 'If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead.'*

Now, some people call this a parable of Jesus, but some scholars believe Jesus is describing an actual event because of the 38 parable stories he told, other than this one, Jesus never called anyone by name. Even if this is a parable, there are certain principles that Jesus is conveying here which we need to note and these may be some of Satan's best kept secrets:

a) You Can't Take it With You

The first point is that you can't take it with you. The rich man's wealth was absolutely useless in the afterlife.

b) God is Just

The second point - God is just. Contrast Lazarus's existence in heaven with his existence in hell and the existence in hell of the rich man.

c) We Recognize People in the Afterlife

The third point is that we recognise people in the afterlife. The rich man recognizes Lazarus and Abraham. From hell the rich man who is lost sees Lazarus who is saved! Can you imagine lost husbands seeing saved wives, lost parents seeing saved children and vice versa!! Surely we don't want to be like the rich man, on the outside looking in!

d) The Rich Man Was Religious

Another point from the passage is that the rich man was religious. He calls out "Father Abraham" and Abraham even calls the rich man "son". You don't get to heaven by being religious or having a show of religion!

e) We Can Remember Our Life on Earth

Another point, we can remember our life on earth. In verse 25, Abraham says, *Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted and so on.* There is no Alzheimer's in hell. Those who are lost will be able to recall the words of those who tried to reach out to them and oh what regret they will have!

f) No Turning Back

Another principle, there's no turning back. There is a great chasm that is fixed permanently between heaven and hell and no person can cross it. When we die, there are no second chances.

### g) Being Not-too-Bad-a-Person is not Good Enough

Another point, a person being not too bad a person is not good enough. The rich man was not too bad a person. He was concerned to see that his family doesn't meet the same fate as himself when he realizes that he is lost.

What is Abraham's message to the rich man concerning his family? His brothers have the Bible, if they read it, believe it and action it, they can be saved from hell.

Satan would like us to be like the Ted Turners of this world and ridicule hell as a concept, as an idea. I am very reluctant not to take hell seriously when Jesus spent so much time talking about it! Satan and the Devil are mentioned over 80 times in the New Testament. Also, let's not forget the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus which many believe, many Christian commentators believe, to be a true story.

### h) Death

Make no mistake, the final aspect of Satan's plan for your life and mine is death. He sows doubt; this is coupled with discouragement, distraction, distress and deception and all this has the ultimate aim of bringing about our death. One of his delights is that we will end it ourselves - by suicide. The only hope for you and me and the human race, in general, is Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus makes it clear; he leaves us in no doubt when He says in John chapter 14 verse 6: *I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.*

### **Summary**

So let me sum up what this message has been all about. Satan's plan, for all who will listen, is to:

1. cast doubt on the existence and authority of the Father and the Son,
2. discourage us so much that we depart from God's coverage,
3. inject us with unnecessary fears
4. distract us from serving Him
5. minimize the consequences of going down his route.

Many such as Voltaire, Paine, Carlyle and Gandhi ended up wishing they had not followed Satan's plan for their lives! Let's not make the same mistake! We won't, if we hold onto the hope that is belief in the Lord and his son Jesus Christ. The following verse captures God's, as opposed to Satan's, plan for our lives: This is Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

So, this is this week's message. The essence of this message now you can now discuss in your house churches, in your fellowship groups and in your virtual churches.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. A central feature of Satan's plan for your life can be summed up as placing you under spiritual oppression. What is this oppression and what are the strategies we should use to overcome it?
2. Why would a pastor make a statement to the effect that God is not in control?
3. What are Satan's Deception Tactics?
4. If the rich man was religious, not too bad a guy, and was in hell, what implications has it got for us today?
5. It seems the likes of Voltaire, Paine, Gandhi etc. who made very despairing statements at the end of their lives were staring into the gates of hell. Had God given up on them i.e., had they run out of chances?