

This is episode 4 of our 'By Bread Alone' podcast series, entitled 'That Old Serpent'.

- Let's take a journey into the story of our enemy. He is the principal threat to all humanity, and he is known by his most notable and dangerous talent, which is artful deception. However many people don't realize, his most notable and dangerous talent is also an indicator of his greatest weakness.
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So, who is the devil?

- He's known by many names, as Satan, the evil one, the adversary, the dragon; the serpent, and the rebel.
- He has earned the reputation throughout human history as the principle antagonist of mankind.
- He's characterized by representing direct and relentless opposition to our well-being, security, and especially our eternal state.
- Interestingly enough, Jesus Christ Himself conceded to the legitimacy of him being a ruling entity by identifying him as the prince of the world.
- But in spite of all of the names he has, the reputation he has earned, the power he wields, and the standing he's granted, Christ gives us a promise concerning him.
- In Luke 10:19, He says...
Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
- We are always safeguarded from being terrorized by the one we know as 'Satan'.
- But who is he?
- It's easy to deify, or give god-like or legendary regard to someone with as infamous a name and reputation as 'Satan'.
- So on one hand, it's true that many religions hail him directly as a god; and the practitioners of those religions follow specific customs and practices to perform their religious duties to him in worship.
- The most well-known of these; especially in pop-culture, are Free Masonry, and of course 'the occult', or witchcraft.
- But on the other hand, it may not be as obvious how he could be hailed *indirectly* as the god of other religions.
- It's important to understand God's perspective on this.
- Exodus 20 gives us the 10 Commandments, and the very first commandment states His perspective explicitly:
- "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
- So according to God, you are by definition worshipping another god if you're not worshipping Him; and according to Christ's teachings, the only other god is the god of this world; which of course is synonymous with 'the prince of this world'.
- So imagine for a moment... every religion you can think of that has a deity particular to that religion; whether it's Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or so on...
- If Satan is worth his salt, and he has fulfilled his intention to be 'like The Most High' (as we'll see later in this podcast), then it stands to reason that Satan is the underlying motivation behind countless other religions; and for each, he is the principal subject of their worship.
- So to the question of 'who is he', the answer is Satan is the god of this world.
- But typically, gods are understood to be all-powerful and all knowing.
- However, Jesus reveals something interesting about Satan.
- John 14:30 reads...
30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.
- Notice in this scripture reference that Jesus, while approaching the hour of his crucifixion, felt the need to conceal certain information from Satan by limiting His communication with the disciples.
- And in doing so, Jesus revealed that Satan obviously can't be all powerful, and can't be all knowing.
- He is bound by rules in terms of acquiring new information; in that he has to actually be present to observe, or else have others report back on his behalf.

- These are clearly not god-like attributes.
- These attributes are indications of the limitations that mere 'created' beings have; and as we'll see in a moment, Satan certainly is a created being.
- But if he intends to maintain his reputation as the god of this world, then it would be in his best interest to present himself worldwide as though he were all-powerful and all-knowing.
- And as history has shown, to his credit, he is relentless and driven to do just that.
- Ephesians 6:12 reads...
12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
- Ladies and gentlemen, we have no choice but to take The Lord's characterization of Satan as 'the prince of the world' seriously.

Satan's origin story provides much needed perspective.

- As we've previously stated, Satan is a created being.
- He was originally created by God as the arc angel Lucifer.
- Many theologians believe that a hierarchical system of rank existed with regard to the angels of heaven, and God designated three arc angels to occupy the highest positions - which were Michael, Lucifer, and Gabriel.
- Also, Lucifer was created as a cherubim; which as far as angels are concerned, are known to possess the highest of rank, power, beauty, and wisdom.
- And indeed, the account of the creation of Lucifer described him as perfect in beauty.
- Ezekiel 28:12b reads...
12 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.
- But with all that power, beauty, and wisdom, Lucifer eventually became corrupt and fell.
- Isaiah 14:12 reads...
12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
- Ezekiel 28:15 reads...
15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.
- There's an interesting lesson to be learned about Lucifer's creation and eventual fall.
- It appears as though he was created as the perfect angel; but interestingly enough, this was not the case.
- Scripture specifies that he was perfect 'in beauty' opposed to being perfect entirely.
- The lesson is that his 'perfection' attribute of beauty became a **liability** for his other perhaps imperfect attributes.
- It is conceivable that it was his temperament's imperfections that made it less-than trivial for him to maintain humility in viewing how perfect he was in beauty.
- And perhaps the consequential loss of humility caused his perfection in beauty to eventually go to his head.
- In any event, he became determined in his heart to consciously and blatantly overstep explicitly prescribed boundaries.
- And as we stated previously, he became driven to his intent to "be like the Most High".
- The five "I will's" of Satan's determination are listed in Isaiah 14.
- Verses 13-14 read...
13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
- The bigger they are, the harder they fall; and as perfect in beauty he was as Lucifer, it's to that exact degree that he became full of dreadfulness and repugnance as Satan.
- Perhaps what we know of the severity of God's judgment of Satan came about because he was fully and consciously aware of what he was doing.
- It is in our best interest to take this seriously as a lesson for us all.

Let's finally dive into his primary weapon against us... which is deception.

- As we know, Satan is known to many by several different names, but two in particular are of interest for this discussion: which are 'that old serpent', and the 'great dragon'.
- Revelation 12 refers to a war that took place in Heaven, which culminated with the arc angel Michael casting Satan out of Heaven onto the earth.
- Most theologians understand this event to have taken place sometime between Genesis 1:1, and Genesis 1:2; that is, sometime after God's creation of 'Heaven and Earth', and before the 7 days of creation concerning mankind.
- Keeping an understanding of this timeline is important, because it carries certain implications about how he interacts with mankind.
- Notice the difference of how the inhabitants of Heaven saw Satan vs. how Eve saw Satan in the Garden of Eden.
- In Revelation 12:9, he was identified in heaven as 'that old serpent', but his embodiment and persona was described as a great dragon.
- It reads:
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
- However in Genesis 3:1, he was both identified as seen by Eve in the garden as a serpent (opposed to the embodiment of a great dragon).
- Genesis 3:1a reads
1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.
- When you think of a dragon, you think 'ferocious', 'powerful', 'menacing', and 'aggressive'; something resolute in its own ability to overcome its opposition by sheer force.
- But when you think of Eve's encounter with the serpent, you envision a conversation with an amicable, approachable, interesting character who she felt totally comfortable engaging with in conversation.
- The fact is Satan couldn't use force to overcome Eve; whereas force was obviously his method of choice in heaven.
- Remember he had been defeated by Michael and cast to a place where he had no rank, nor dominion.
- Since Adam and Eve had dominion on earth, his goal was to somehow seize that dominion.
- This is why the Bible describes Satan as that old serpent who "...deceiveth the whole world".
- Therefore, Satan's dominion as prince of the world was obtained through unscrupulous means.
- Remember, he was cast to earth, and had no rank, nor dominion; so this rendered him bound by certain rules while on earth.
- He was forced to resort to steps of trickery to subvert the rightful owners of the dominion of earth.
- Using artful 'sleight of hand', he could simply cause Adam and Eve to unwittingly surrender their dominion to him without resistance.
- There's nothing new under the sun ladies and gentlemen. What he did with Adam and Eve, he also attempted with Christ, and by the same token, he attempts with all of us.
- But the key is, it was *never* his choice to be here.
- He was cast here for retribution.
- The earth is his prison, not his palace.
- So although deception is his most notable and dangerous talent, it is also literally an indicator of weakness.

- Remember the Bible story of Jesus disciples who, having been sent out to do the work of ministry, to heal the sick, and to preach that the Kingdom of God has come, returned astounded that even devils were subject to them through His name.
- Jesus responds as follows.
- Luke 10:18 says...
18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.
- Verse 20 says...
20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
- The fact is, Satan didn't arrive here with the freedom to destroy us at his sheer whim; his ability to destroy us comes only as a result of us willingly surrendering it to him.
- This is why he had to strategically defeat Adam by deceiving Eve, and cause a domino-effect that echoes throughout the history of mankind through the surrendering of their God-given dominion.
- Folks, let's take this seriously.
- It's the wise warrior who studies his opponent and knows his enemy.
- Satan certainly expresses true conviction and work ethic at the studying of you.
- It's in all of our best interest to take the studying of our opponent seriously.