

The Tempter's Lie

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 September 2011

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Jesus chapter 3 is where we are.

I did give you the notes that we looked at last week, but I'm frank to confess, I don't remember it. He's got all of that in his head. I mean all of it. And if he doesn't get finished with it, it's still in his head and he doesn't remember where he left off.

So I want to review real quickly, just kind of hit the high spots and then maybe you can tell me where we ended. I kind of think I know, but we're looking at chapter 3 and I mentioned last week that chapter 3 is a key chapter, not just to Genesis but to the entire Bible.

It's a key chapter in regard to our understanding of why the world is the way the world is. And you've heard the term worldview and everybody has a worldview and there are many different worldviews.

[1:17] And so, personally, as a Christian and as one who believes God's word is inerrant, my worldview is guided by this book.

This is my worldview. And so, Genesis chapter 3 has everything to do with a worldview for us to understand why there's crime, why there's sin. It's our worldview on understanding how things got to the way they are and why they're progressively getting worse.

And so, chapter 3 is just a key chapter and I mentioned that last week. And then, I started with the tempter.

And the Bible here in this chapter, right there in verse 1, reveals to us, identifies for us, the tempter. The tempter and it's Satan in the form of a serpent.

And we had a lot of speculation about this serpent, what he was like. In fact, we were talking a little bit about that before the service. And Jerry thinks it was an upright walking reptile, right?

[2:21] Isn't that right, Jerry? And I think he's right. I think he had legs and walked around. He certainly talked. As bizarre as that might seem to us. And beyond that, we just can't make any definite statements about the nature of this serpent.

Now, God obviously created many serpents and reptiles and such. Now, the one that Eve talked to was a real one. Real, but it was, the Bible says, more subtle, more cunning than any of God's creatures.

And it was so, if you remember what we said last week. It was so, because Satan had entered into this serpent and was speaking through this serpent.

And so, the serpent had all the cunning of an archangel, albeit a fallen angel. And that's Satan, the one who was thrown out of heaven for his rebellion against God.

And so, knowing that from Scripture, it's perfectly consistent when we consider this serpent, why the serpent did what he did and said what he said and what his desires were, because it was none other than Satan speaking through this serpent.

[3:40] All right, so we looked at the tempter. And then from there, we looked at the tempter's strategy, which is a key point in this text.

And it's key for us to understand the tempter's strategy, because it's the same one he uses today. And hopefully, if you were here last week, and if you weren't, you've got some of the notes there. Though, you know, it doesn't represent everything was said last week. But if you weren't here last week, then look at the notes and consider the strategy of Satan and then begin to recognize it each day, because he's alive and well and working, and God has given him permission here to do what he does here on our planet, in our midst.

He is the prince of this world. And his strategy hasn't changed any over the years. And so, very important that we know that.

And I think we covered that. I'm missing one of my pages. Oh, I know what it was on the back here. Yeah, strategy. And I put on your notes there, the one thing that you need to remember if you forget everything else about his strategy, and it's put in a box right at the bottom of the page.

[5:06] And this really sums it up. His strategy was to tempt Eve, of course, to believe a lie that was believable. But all temptation, see that down there?

All temptation to sin begins with the idea that we have the right to evaluate what God has said or required, and whether it is in our best interest to obey.

Now, you can find that at the root of all temptation and sin. From Eve on, even Adam and Eve on, man has evaluated God and God's Word and has, in one degree or another, taken the authority to decide whether it's in my best interest to question God, to evaluate God, that somehow what God has said is open to our evaluation and our judgment.

And that is the diabolical thing that took place there, way back there in Genesis chapter 3 in the Garden of Eden. And we noticed also how Eve responded to Satan, and this is where I do not remember if we got into that or not, in verses 2 and 3.

We kind of summed it up in your notes, and so if we did get into it, no problem. I'm going to restate it again. She did two things with God's Word.

[6:44] She subtracted something from it. Do you remember? Did I cover this last week? No. I didn't. No. You're right in your right spot.

Well, wonderful. Wonderful. Well, you've got your notes there. Here's how she responded to Satan. Remember, I did mention that Satan quoted Scripture, didn't I?

All right. He quoted God, but he only quoted part of it. And he left out the positive part, and he just quoted the negative part. God said, you may look at all these trees.

You can eat from all these trees with this one tree. And Satan focused on just the one tree, and of course his desire was to get Eve to be dissatisfied, to focus just on the limitation rather than on the freedom.

But Eve also quoted Scripture in her response in verses 2 and 3, and she first subtracted something very important from her quote of God's Word.

[7:50] And I put that there for you. The woman said to the serpent, there in verse 2, we may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. Now, that's a quotation from God, or a paraphrase of God's Word, because that is what God said, but just not quite.

When you compare this with what God actually said in Genesis 2, verse 16, you're going to notice that Eve left out a very important word, the word every, or all.

It depends on your version. That is, God said, you are free to eat from every tree. Every tree. The garden, you might think, well, that's a very minor point.

Maybe you're just kind of making a mountain out of a molehill there. But I think it is important to note that she left that word out. That word that really reveals the heart of God and the generosity of God and the character of God.

Because, remember, that's what Satan wants to bring into question. That's at the heart of his temptation is to get you to distrust the character of God and the Word of God.

[9:00] And so, for her to leave that one little word out indicates that Satan's getting through to her. That the dissatisfaction is beginning to take root in her heart.

And so, she leaves out the word every. But she not only subtracts, but she also adds something to her quote that God did not say in Genesis 2, 17, according to the biblical record, but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.

This is what Eve said to the serpent. God said, you must not eat it or touch it or you will die. And when you compare that with what God actually said in chapter 2, verse 17, it didn't say anything about not touching it.

Again, you might be thinking, well, Pastor, you preachers are all alike. You like to come up with these, you know, these new kind of slant on things and if you can't find one, you just make one up. Well, we do that sometimes. We call that ministerially speaking. But I don't think that's the case here. I think it's pretty important.

[10:11] And really, this is at the heart of cults, the very nature of a cult today. To add to the word of God, subtract from the word of God.

And this is what Eve did. Now, maybe she was just, you know, loosely quoting God. Sometimes we do that, don't we? Kind of loosely quoting. But these are important things here.

God did not say to her not to touch it. He said nothing about that. He didn't even say anything about, you know, not touching the fruit or anything like that.

And what this is doing, I believe, is giving us a window into her heart what was beginning to take place with her. That is, Satan's strategy is beginning to work because she's beginning to feel the unfairness of this law of God's.

You know, that I can't eat of that tree. I mean, look at it. It's wonderful. Beautiful. Why would God withhold that from me? And so, see, here's the evaluation of God's word.

[11:20] You know, we're judging it. God said, don't eat of that tree. And she's beginning to think that's unfair. God's, you know, leaving something out of my life that would be good for me that might be pleasurable to me.

And so, she's questioning God. And so, Eve then failed to respond to Satan according to her intimate, failed to respond to Satan according to her intimate knowledge of the true character of God and his word.

Then, we move from there to the tempter's lie. Alright, we've looked at the tempter, the tempter's strategy.

Okay, my notes all mixed up here. And now the tempter's lie. Now, the strategy, of course, you know, when we looked at those verses, we're seeing the lie.

I mean, there are lies there. there are, and, although we might, we might call them half-truths.

That's being too generous to Satan.

[12:38] But, everything he's saying to this point has some kernel truth. He's just leaving out something and then, of course, Eve did as well. Now, we look at the lie itself. I mean, the full-blown lie and it comes to us there in verses 4 and 5.

Alright, so, if you've got your Bible open, well, we've got the passage probably for you in your notes.

Do I? Verses 4 and 5. Somebody say something. Alright, so, head shaking no and it keeps it on.

Yes. Alright, now listen, here's what it says and I believe, well, let me just read it out of this translation. Then the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die.

For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil. There's the lie of Satan.

In fact, it's kind of a full-part lie and nothing he said there is true. But this is how he responds to Eve.

[13:47] Remember years ago, and it's been many, many years ago and some of you have no doubt seen some of these little gospel tracks called the Four Spiritual Laws.

Do you remember those? Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ, was the one credited for the Four Spiritual Laws. And his Four Spiritual Laws in that track, if you might remember, number one, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

Two, man is sinful and separated from God. Three, Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. And four, we must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Those are Bill Bright's words. Those are the Four Spiritual Laws that Bill Bright put together in that gospel track. I mention that because, did you know, that Satan is very evangelistic in a sense, in a stretch of the word.

Did you know that Satan is so much into evangelism, his own version of it, and Satan has always been this way.

[14:55] And we see this here in Genesis chapter 3, and we can still see it today. And if you're a student of history and world religions over the centuries, and then you'll see this evangelistic, we might even call it a gospel.

That is Satan's own gospel. Though it's not good news, it is bad news and spells doom to anyone who believes it. Many have believed it and do believe it.

And so if Satan were to write his own gospel track like Bill Bright did a number of years ago, then it might be based upon Genesis chapter 3, verses 4 and 5.

And someone has called it, this is not original with me, Satan's four spiritual flaws. He can make up his own little gospel track that way.

An unholy, devilish track. His spiritual, or Satan's four spiritual flaws. And I think we would be forced to admit that his gospel is pretty effective.

[16:10] It has been over the years. It, in a sense, worked with Eve. It at that moment worked with her and also with her husband Adam. And it has worked for countless millions down through the ages and is still working today.

So what are Satan's four spiritual flaws? What do they mean and how do we identify them in our world today? Well, considering verses 4 and 5, I just read it a moment ago, let's just consider these. We'll take them in a little bit different order than they appear, at least in the New King James text. Spiritual flaw number one is this. You will be like God.

You will be like God. Satan says to Eve, see, you know, never mind what God said there. He's not telling you the truth. He's holding something back from you because he knows that if you eat this fruit, you're going to be just like God.

You're going to be like God. And that's a lie. That's his first spiritual flaw. And to understand this spiritual flaw, I think we need to understand that there are basically three views of God.

[17 : 22] Two of these are going to be very familiar to you. we might could obviously branch out into some sub-views that kind of fall under these categories, but rather just three primary views.

The first one is atheism. We're all familiar with that. Atheism. And atheism, of course, is the view that there is no God. And the only reality in life to the, quote, atheist, the only reality is the material. Not the spiritual to the atheist. And so there's no soul, no spirit, no angels, no demons, no miracles, no supernatural, no life after death.

That is, when you die, it's really no different than a dog dying and, you know, going to the ground and decay and it's gone and that's all there is to it. Strictly speaking, that's the atheistic view.

Carl Sagan, one of the most famous atheists, said, the cosmos, that is, all the creation, or creation, you would call it creation, all the physical material world, cosmos is all there ever was and is and all there will ever be.

[18 : 42] Now that's the atheistic view, and we understand that. Then you also know what we could broadly characterize as theism. There's atheism, there is no God, and theism is there is one true God, one God.

Now I understand, I'm not talking here about a specific religion called theism. We spoke about theistic evolution and things, all kinds of different views that would fall under theism, but in the general sense, it could also be called monotheism.

Monotheism, that is, that there's one God, he is the creator, and he is the sustainer of the universe. from my viewpoint, and I would trust yours as well, he's a personal God, that is, you can know him, and he's all powerful, all knowing, all those things, and he will be forever worshipped and served by those in heaven.

One God. And because he is holy and just, again, under theism, he will one day bring every individual into personal judgment, and so that righteousness and his holiness pervades.

We could go on and on about the theism in that sense, in the sense that there is one true God. So there's atheism, there's no God, there's theism, one true God, but you may or may not be familiar with pantheism.

[20 : 25] Pantheism, and the word pan means all, so all that means, means all. Theism, of course, means God. And it's like, ah, atheism, ah means none, no God.

Pantheism means all is God. And so it's been defined this way, God is all, and all is God. Ah, and that's a pretty prevalent philosophy, and has been over the years, and one that is, ah, I think being propagated, ah, by Satan here.

Ah, that's his first, ah, ah, first spiritual flaw, that God is all, and all is God. And so that everything in the universe, ah, according to those from a pantheistic viewpoint, everything in the universe is divided into differing levels of divinity, matter, being the lowest level, the vegetable kingdom, by the way, coming just above that, and then the animal kingdom, and then finally, ah, mankind.

Ah, but, all is God. All is God, so nature is God, the earth is God, that chair you're sitting on, yeah, that's God. And, ah, and you are God.

You're God, I'm God, there, God is all there is. Ah, now that's an oversimplification of the view, ah, but that's pantheism. And pantheism, by the way, is the, ah, religion of the Hindus.

[21 : 55] It's Hinduism. And, ah, the westernized, ah, form of Hinduism is none other than the New Age movement, ah, that's still prevalent today, though it's, ah, you know, its name, ah, has changed.

You don't hear much about New Age anymore, but it's still there. And, ah, and so, New Age, but it's not new, is it? In fact, it is as old as the earth. Ah, and it's the first, ah, it was first introduced here by Satan when he said, you will be like God.

Now, you might think that Satan's gospel would be atheism. I mean, that would be kind of a natural conclusion, that if, ah, ah, Satan's going to propagate any kind of, ah, of, ah, philosophy about God, it would be atheism.

That would be his number one plank in his gospel. Ah, and that is to get man to believe there is no God. But that has never been his strategy. Never.

To Satan, the gospel is, you are God. You are God. Ah, and, you know, even, ah, those who, ah, ah, would call themselves humanists, ah, they still have a religion.

[23:07] And they still believe in a God. Ah, and God, they believe in is, his self. Ah, so it's, ah, ah, that's been his strategy.

And atheism is itself a part of Satan's delusion. Isn't that interesting? How he could use a lie, ah, to lie.

It's all a delusion because the atheist thinks that he believes there is no God, yet in reality he worships himself as God. Ah, so, think about it.

Ah, you don't have to be a Hindu to believe in this first spiritual flaw. Ah, you don't have to do that. Or you don't have to go and join ah, the New Age Church or one of the ah, postmodern churches of our day.

And ah, you don't have to do that to be converted to Satan's gospel because pantheism is simply the belief that you are your own God. And this, this is Satan's, Satan's, ah, gospel.

[24:10] You're your own God and so as God you are your own savior. And ah, as God you determine your own morality. That sound familiar?

And as God you set your own value on life. Ah, that sound a lot like our culture? Today, I think so. and it is accepting, embracing this spiritual flaw number one.

And then spiritual flaw number two is you will not die. You will not die. And ah, what is behind that? What's the substance of that flaw?

Remember now, God said to Adam and Eve, he said, don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was a very clear statement of his law.

There was, there was, there was no gray area there. It was, it was quite, quite specific. That's what God said. Ah, he said, don't do it. Don't do it. This is God's law.

[25:18] And he gave it to them. And to violate that law is sin. It's sin. Sin against the holy God. And so God attached a punishment to it.

Judgment. What did he say? He said, the day you eat of this tree, you will surely die. No gray area there either. Though we might question and wonder what die means.

Ah, we're not going to get into that yet, but we will later on. But, here is what Satan is saying. He's saying, you won't die. Total contradiction to what God has said.

But, what is he saying? He's saying, you will not suffer physical death? Ah, not specifically. What he's saying is, there will be no judgment for your sin. No accountability.

No repercussion. No retribution. No condemnation. There will be no ultimate punishment if you break this law. That's exactly what Satan is telling Eve, telling Adam, and that's what he's still telling people today.

[26:28] You're not going to have to pay for this. There's not going to be any judgment. And, as a matter of fact, Satan is saying, in addition to that, really the opposite of that, he is saying, not only will there be no judgment, no punishment, if you break this law, but if you break this law, it will turn out good for you.

And how many believe that lie? And just send this sin, and you'll have fun, or you'll be better off financially, or, you know, good things will happen to you, you'll prosper, and so forth.

Nothing bad is going to happen to you. That's the lie. That's Satan's gospel. Alright, so, you will not die. Spiritual flaw number three, you will know good and evil.

You will know good and evil. Now, what would we call that in our day? I've got it there in the notes, so you can just cheat. It's moral relativism. I tell you, our culture is completely dominated by that philosophy, that lie.

And most in the world, but especially in the western world, and the quote, civilized world, and prosperous world, have bought into that plank in Satan's evangelistic strategy.

[27:58] They've bought into it, hook, line, and sink. Moral relativism. Moving away, totally away, from any absolute truth concerning moral issues.

And, you know, the whole idea of situation ethics comes from the existence of moral relativism. So, morality is determined by what?

By whatever the situation calls for at the moment. Lying becomes right in a given situation. It's called for, it's permissible.

Stealing becomes right in certain situations. I'll never forget, several years ago, we were living in Memphis, and one of these armored cars went off the interstate, I think it was off the interstate, and went down the embankment, turned over, and opened up, and money just everywhere.

And, I'll never forget, I know it was on Channel 5. I mean, they had the cameras there, and here are mobs of people just grabbing up all this money. And, I remember they interviewed several people right there on the spot.

[29:17] And, you know, you hear words like, I'm poor, or this is God's provision, and all kinds of justification like that. That's moral relativism.

A thing is wrong in certain situations, but in other situations, it's okay. Or, adultery becomes right in certain cultural circumstances.

Or, murder, believe it or not, becomes right in certain situations. And so, man then decides when the Ten Commandments apply and when they do not.

And, we see this very, very clearly. And so, who or what decides what is right and wrong? Is it need? Satan would say, yeah, okay. Or, or maybe situation?

Yeah, yeah. In some cases, situation, is the determinant of what's right and wrong. Education? You know, you reach a certain level of education and, you know, maybe, you know, it's, you're kind of cut above, maybe more of the elite and more of the intellectual and so certain things that used to be wrong are not wrong for you.

[30:30] Or, how about enlightenment? enlightenment? You know, I'm just above all of that. I think that's shared by some in our culture.

What is it? Satan says, well, that's alright, yeah, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, that'll decide or determine what's right or wrong. But, but, more than anything and above all other things, really, he says, you decide.

You decide because you will know good and evil. So, there's spiritual flaw number three. The final spiritual flaw is the culmination of all of them.

And, I think we could say that it is or represents Satan's ultimate goal for man. And, what is that? That man would worship him.

Worship him, not just as an alternative God, but to worship him as the one true God. That he's the one true God and has been the one true God all along.

[31:31] So, here's fatal flaw number four. Your eyes will be opened. You see the progression. When Satan came to Adam and Eve, he tricked them into thinking and believing that they should make up their own mind about what God has said.

And, then he tricked them into trusting their own intuitions, own judgments, rather than obeying God's clear command and their reward, he's saying, will be enlightenment.

Their eyes will be opened. And, what he wants is ultimately for Adam and Eve to encounter him and to think of him as the living God.

Now, this is very subtle. And, he didn't put this on the front end because many wouldn't accept his gospel if he started there. but, his ultimate goal is to be worshipped as the one true God.

That's why he was thrown out of heaven. Why he was cast down like lightning out of heaven. He sought to put himself above the very throne of God.

[32:44] He wants to be worshipped as God. In fact, we could look at the Bible and find a number of things that Satan has said and done and revealed that he wants to be thought of as the I Am, as the Savior, as the Christ, who is the anti.

He wants to be worshipped. And, that's Satan's ultimate goal for mankind to worship him as the true God. So, here are Satan's four spiritual flaws. This is Satan's evangelistic strategy, his gospel, and here they are.

You are your own God. You will not answer for your sin. You define what sin is, and in the end, you will discover, you will know that I am the one true God.

And you will worship him. That's his gospel.