



September 17, 2021

If at First You Don't Succeed . . .

Jesus' victory over Satan in the garden was such that we do not hear of any further encounter between them in the gospels. Perhaps Satan stayed around to see what happened, but when Jesus was nailed to the cross and soon cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46), Satan knew he had been defeated and his attention now was to be focused on those who believed in Jesus. For millennia this has been his primary engagement—his effort to defeat Jesus' followers—and it will continue to be so until the end of human history. His ultimate destiny is described in the book of Revelation:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while . . .

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. - (**Revelation. 20:1-3, 7-10**)*

This is Satan's ultimate destiny. It's a done deal, and he knows it. He and his minions all know where they are headed, as evidenced by Jesus' encounter with two demon-possessed men near the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 8:28-34). The demons, of course, recognized Jesus and shouted at him, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (v. 29). They are referring to the time of their demise. They knew what was going to happen to them, and their only joy, if you can call it that, was in serving Satan until the end. That service, in which they are now engaged, is the deception of the nations, tricking people into thinking they are in control, that they know what they are doing, when all the while they are on the dancing end of Satan's strings.

The Bible presents us with a picture of ongoing warfare between the forces aligned with God and those with Satan. If you look at passages such as Daniel 10:13-20, you will see that there are various levels of evil spirits under Satan's command, at work in the world and at work on us. At the same time there are vast numbers of "holy ones" (Dan. 4:17), God's angels doing his bidding, serving his purposes.

Reflect: *While we should be aware of this constant interaction of spiritual forces, we must remember that the primary means Satan uses to keep the evil pot boiling are the ideas that govern society's individuals. (Q) Are there ideas that you consider good and right, the way that the world works which are nothing more than the lies Satan uses to govern our lives?*