**THE DECEPTION OF OTHER GODS**

Sunday School Lesson 1

*Deceptions of the Devil*

Deuteronomy 11:16

8/22/2021

**Introduction:** God is Truth. Satan, on the other hand, is the father of all lies (John 8:44). The Bible also calls him the deceiver. Satan’s desire is to deceive as many people in this world as he possibly can. The Bible tells us that there are many deceivers in this world. They are doing the work of the antichrist (2 John 1:7). They are doing the work of Satan himself. All of this world’s deception falls under the purview of the Devil (Revelation 12:0). While Satan seeks to deceive, it is equally true that mankind does not outright desire to be deceived. The very meaning of the word implies that it does not occur through the request or knowledge of the recipient. The Bible tells us that the bread of deceit is sweet to a man. That means that deception comes in the form of something that is appealing to our senses. Unfortunately, the result is that the sweet bread turns out to be gravel (Proverbs 20:17). As Christians, we must seek the wisdom of God in order to avoid being deceived. The path of fools is a path of deception, but the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way. The hope of this new lesson series is that our eyes will be open to the many objects that Satan uses to deceive mankind. If we can understand what his tactics are, then it should be easier for us to follow the Biblical command to resist him. For this first lesson, we are going to study how the Devil uses other gods to deceive people – even Christians.

1. **THE DECEPTION OF OTHER GODS IS FOUND IN THEIR ECONOMIC PROMISES.**
2. **Notice that the worship of other gods was often based on an economic decision (Daniel 5:4; Deuteronomy 7:25; Jeremiah 44:17-19; Hosea 3:1; Acts 19:23-25).** It might seem difficult for us to comprehend today the idea of false gods because of the way we see them in the Old and New Testament. Yet, I think we miss the main concept of these gods. The Israelites turned aside from the Lord to these false gods for specific reasons. It wasn’t just an enamor that they had with idols made out of shiny things. These other gods promised economic gain for the Israelites. In a later lesson, we will look at the deceitfulness of riches, but for this lesson, we will only note that Christians are deceived by false gods because of the enticement of material gain. Every other god that is mentioned in the Bible was tied to some specific gain that it could offer to those that worshipped it. Ashtoreth was the fertility goddess. Asherah was the goddess of sacred trees. She promised fertility of the land. The Egyptians had many gods that were worshipped such as the sun god Re. The false prophets of these various other gods paraded through the land to tell of what great things these other gods could do for the Israelites.
3. **Notice that God’s punishment on Israel for worshipping Baal shows us an example of Israel’s economic interests in turning to other gods (1 Kings 17:1, 16:31, 18:21).** The false god Baal was regarded as the rider of the clouds. He was supposed to be the storm god, the rainmaker. Followers of Baal were promised that he would come and bless the earth. This information should help us understand exactly what the Lord was doing in 1 Kings 16-18. He sent a great drought to the land of Israel because of their worship of Baal. At the same time, He blessed His prophet and provided for him. The Israelites had been deceived into thinking that they needed to worship Baal to ensure that the rains came to support their farming. Not surprisingly, the prophets of Baal could do nothing to stop the drought from happening. All of this culminated with the showdown between Elijah and these false prophets. Elijah challenged the people to make a decision between God and Baal. They thought that they could just worship both to ensure their best interests were met. They were fooling themselves. God is over all.
4. **THE DECEPTION OF OTHER GODS IS FOUND IN THEIR FRIENSHIPS PROVIDED.**
5. **Notice that the Israelites were most tempted by the other gods of their neighbors (Deuteronomy 6:14, 13:7; Joshua 24:15; Judges 2:12).** It was not just economic enticement that drew the Israelites to other gods. The second aspect of the deception of false gods is the friendships that they provide. The quickest way for the Israelites to make friends of their neighboring nations was for them to receive the false gods of those nations. They did this while they were in Egypt. They were quick to worship the false gods of Egypt. They did this again as soon as they got to the Promise Land. This is likely one of the reasons that the Lord wanted them to totally destroy these other nations. Instead, it was must easier to just adapt those other gods into their own religious practices. At the same time, they likely did not even realize how the additions of these other gods altered and invalidated their worship of the true God. This is a struggle today as well. We become captivated with the little gods of this world because of the friendships provided. Yet, we fail to recognize how these little gods affect our relationship with Christ.
6. **Notice that the other gods of intimate friends are very enticing (1 Kings 11:4; Jeremiah 44:15-16).** In these two Scriptural examples provided, we see that the spousal relationships caused enticement to other gods. The saddest is to consider what happened to King Solomon. This wise king who had been greatly blessed by the true God allowed himself to be deceived and turned aside to other gods. How could a man who had been given so much from the Lord still turn to other gods? The Bible gives us the answer. His strange wives led him into the worship of these other gods. In the book of Jeremiah, we see that many of the Israelites were married to women who were worshipping the other gods of Egypt. They boldly rejected the prophet Jeremiah face to face. They chose to side with their wives over the prophet of God. Of course, this was mostly because of the gains that they thought they would get, but still we see a pattern in Scripture that the deception of false gods often comes through the friendships they provide or the friendships they bolster.
7. **THE DECEPTION OF OTHER GODS IS FOUND IN THEIR WICKED PRACTICES.**
8. **Notice that there is a repeated connection in Scripture between other gods and sensuality (Revelation 2:14; Romans 1:23-24; Exodus 32:25; Isaiah 57:7-8; Hosea 4:12-14).** The third deception of other gods is the wicked practices that they ordain. There is only one righteous God. This means that all of the other gods are based in unrighteousness. Thus, their worship must likewise be based in unrighteousness. This is especially appealing to our flesh. There are many verses in Scripture that speak of sensuality and idolatry together. Baal worship was known for its ritual prostitution. The sensual acts done by the followers of this god and others were seen as sanctified. The most egregious example of this is found in the New Testament with the goddess Diana. We won’t go over all of the specifics of what that worship looked like, but suffice it to say, the worship of Diana was very crude. The worship of other gods allows us to behave in an unseemly way and claim it as righteous and acceptable. At the same time, it makes the worship of God seem rigid and unattractive.
9. **Notice that the worship of other gods gives authority to mankind (Psalm 115:4, 135:5; Isaiah 2:8, 31:7, Acts 7:41; Revelation 9:20; 1 Timothy 2:14; Matthew 24:4-5).** This is a critical point of understanding in this lesson. The deception of other gods is so strong because of what it really offers to us. It offers for us to take authority from the true God and give it to ourselves. This was the original deception in the Garden. Satan offered to give Eve the power and authority over herself. Man knows that there is one true God. We allow ourselves to be deceived into worshipping other gods because it gives us an excuse to do what we want to do. That is the heart of the matter. It ultimately does not matter which other god we submit ourselves to. None of them have any real authority. They are just creations. They are the works of man’s hands. The same is true of the other gods that exist today. I’m not just speaking of false religions with their false gods. I’m speaking of the things that we worship in this world. All of them are worshipped for selfish reasons.
10. **THE DECEPTION OF OTHER GODS IS FOUND IN THEIR INTIMIDATING PERFORMANCE.**
11. **Notice that the Israelites struggled with fear when it came to other gods (Judges 6:10; 2 Kings 17:7-38; Psalm96:4).** This one seems especially foolish, but it is nonetheless true. The Israelites were afraid of these other gods. While they should have been fearing the Lord, they instead allowed themselves to be intimidated by the perceived power of these other gods. This power of course was nonsense, or it was the power of Satan. Fear is very deceptive. Many people in this world have been deceived because of fear. It is an effective tool. The Lord commanded the Israelites not to be afraid, but it is likely that they heard reports coming from the lands around them. They probably heard terrifying things that had been done under the name of some other god. The fear crippled them. The fear caused them to turn aside to these other gods. The world does the same today. If it wants us to turn to some other god, it will often point to the fearful power that it wields.
12. **Notice that the Israelites committed egregious acts unto other gods because of fear (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 18:10; 2 Kings 16:3, 17:17, 21:16, 23:10; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 32:25; Ezekiel 16:21, 20:26-31, 23:37).** The Bible speaks of the Israelites making their children pass through the fire to Molech. This was a ritual that was done in their service to another god. The Lord had expressly forbidden this practice, yet the Israelites kept doing it. The basic idea of the ritual was that the parent would send their child through a purification trial of fire. If they were able to pass through the fire, then they were deemed clean by these other gods. If they failed, then they died. One might wonder why the Israelite parents would be deceived into practicing such a foolish thing. The answer is in what would supposedly happen if you didn’t send your child through the fire. That child would be cursed, and you could expect for that child to die. Essentially, they did it because of fear. Let us be wise and not be deceived by the foolishness of other gods.