**THE DECEPTION OF WISDOM**

Sunday School Lesson 3

*Deceptions of the Devil*

1 Corinthians 3:18

9/5/2021

**Introduction:** The deception of wisdom is a powerful deception. The Bible warns us not to deceive ourselves with this deception. When we speak of wisdom in this lesson, we are referring to the wisdom in the world, not the wisdom that comes from above. (That wisdom is pure and desirable.) As with the deception of other gods and the deception of reaping, the deception of wisdom starts first as a mechanism of the Devil. If we look back to the events of the Garden of Eden, we see that the deception of wisdom is on full display. Satan enticed Eve with the idea that she could have wisdom outside of that which had been given from the Lord. She just needed the knowledge of good and evil, and then she would have her eyes opened. Satan promised her that she would then be as a god. The wisdom that she gained quickly revealed itself as foolishness. Since then, mankind has been on a never-ending question for knowledge and wisdom. The problem, of course, is that man most often looks for these things in the wrong place. Even worse, as one finds the wisdom in the world, the deception only grows greater, and it wraps itself stronger and stronger around its prey. The believer must not allow himself to fall victim to the deception of the world’s wisdom. It is a deception that is incredibly difficult to escape. Let’s examine some observations about this deception.

1. **THE DECEPTION OF WISDOM GUARANTEES SUPERIORITY FOR THE WISE.**
2. **Notice that the world gives high positions to its wise men (Exodus 7:11, 36:4; Daniel 2:12-48, 4:6, 5:7-15; 1 Corinthians 1:22).** The wise are often the first to be given position in this world. Our society elevates the well-educated as people to whom we must respect and listen to. This is nothing new. This practice has been going on since the fall of man. Pharaoh had his wise men that sat as his counselors. Of course, they could do nothing against the Lord and the plagues. Nebuchadnezzar also had his wise men. Thankfully, for him, he had a few wise men who truly were wise – Daniel and his companions. Every time that the king of Babylon had a problem, he called in his wise men to help him. Of course, the ultimate deception of wisdom is that it is based in a measure of truth. True Godly wisdom should be highly regarded. Proverbs 8:11 tells us that wisdom is better than rubies. Other things cannot compare to wisdom. The difference, though, between Godly wisdom and the world’s wisdom is the availability of the two. Godly wisdom is available to all (James 3:17). This allows for the wise to stay humble and meek in their wisdom (James 3:13). The wisdom of the world is partial and feigns uniqueness.
3. **Notice the conceit that accompanies the wisdom of this world (Romans 12:16; Proverbs 26:12-16).** The Devil deceives many with the world’s wisdom by convincing them of the superiority of the wise. The wise person is highly regarded. The wise person is often given position as noted above. People listen to the wise person. As Christians, we must be careful regarding this topic. We have flesh and a mind that both desire the carnal aspect of this wisdom. Our flesh wants to be respected. Truthfully, we want to be considered wise. We do not desire to be considered a fool. There is much conceit in the wisdom of the world. It puffs up the wise. It makes the wise person superior. The Bible tells us that even the sluggard deals with the conceit of wisdom. He thinks he is superior because he is wise enough to escape the work. We are told in the book of Proverbs that there is more hope for a fool than for a man wise in his own conceits. Any person who is wise by the world’s standards is wise only in his own conceit. Perhaps, you have met someone who was so inflated in their own ego and conceit because of their wisdom. Do not be surprised by this. The deception of the world’s wisdom guarantees superiority to the wise.
4. **THE DECEPTION OF WISDOM GRANTS SUCCESS THROUGH CRAFTINESS.**
5. **Notice that the Devil’s deception of wisdom causes craft to prosper (Daniel 8:25; Mark 14:1; Luke 20:23; Acts 19:25; Ephesians 4:14).** The antichrist will cause craft to prosper. Through his perceived wisdom, he will be successful in his plans and schemes. This is what the deception of wisdom has to offer to those that take part in it. The world promotes the idea that the craftiness of the wise is what causes them to prosper. It gives them their success. The Jewish leaders were viewed as wise. They sought to take the Lord through craftiness. They used their wisdom to concoct a plan to crucify Christ. Their wisdom was undoubtedly validated in their own minds when the plan worked. Christ was crucified. They certainly felt very smart and wise as they watched their plan unfold. How many people are there in this world that are experiencing financial or other fleshly success as a result of the craftiness of their wisdom? The temptation is to look at these individuals and be deceived into thinking that you need to have their wisdom in order to be successful. You might experience some success, but it will come at a price.
6. **Notice that the Lord will take the wise in their own craftiness (1 Corinthians 3:19; Job 5:12-13).** Satan loves craftiness. He loves the plans and schemes that the wise mind can come up with. He wants for the Christian to rely more upon our own intelligence and worldly wisdom than upon the wisdom of the world. He knows that worldly wisdom is always scheming and thinking how to garner the best results. The Bible tells us that the Lord takes the wise in their own craftiness. He turns their wisdom back upon them. He is not manipulated or controlled at all by their craftiness. The Lord is not looking for believers who will use their own wisdom to craft a plan of service for Him. He is looking for those who will work by faith and seek His wisdom. Do not let Satan tempt you to follow the wisdom of the world as you walk through life. Be reminded that the Devil himself will also be taken in his own craftiness. He will be cast into Hell for all of eternity. His false messiah that he raises up will be easily defeated. Don’t be deceived in the true outcome of the wise of this world. Their devices will be disappointed by the Lord.
7. **THE DECEPTION OF WISDOM GIVES AUTHORITY TO BLAME THE FOOLISH.**
8. **Notice that the deception of wisdom causes strife and division (James 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:13, 20; 2 Corinthians 1:12).** The wise like to debate their wisdom. This gives in to their conceit, and it ranks the wise among themselves. The book of James speaks of earthly, sensual wisdom. It shows us that this wisdom is based in envying and strife. This wisdom demands for the wisest to be proven out. Wisdom in the world is competitive. It desires to loudly separate out the wise from the foolish. The deception of this wisdom is that the wise get to cast blame upon the foolish. We have already seen how this wisdom promotes superiority. Of course, whenever superiority is promoted, it requires for someone to be identified as inferior. The Greeks loved their wisdom. They would spend much time seeking it and speaking about it. They would argue over who was responsible for every little thing. Of course, it was never them who was responsible. The wise do not see foolishness in their own decisions. They only see it in others. That is what is so enticing for the believer. It rejects personal accountability.
9. **Notice that the wisdom of this world is truly foolishness to God (1 Corinthians 1:19-26, 3:19-20; Romans 1:22; Proverbs 21:30).** The irony of the deception of wisdom is that the Lord views the wisdom of this world as foolishness. He sees their thoughts, and He knows that it is all vanity. There is nothing of substance there. Man cannot even begin to understand the thoughts and ways of God. The wisdom of man in this world isn’t even wise enough to understand our own existence. The wisdom of man does not understand his own purpose. The Bible tells us in Proverbs that there is no wisdom against God. It is impossible to have any wisdom that rejects the Lord. As believers, this ought to be what we remind ourselves when we are tempted in the deception of wisdom. At the same time, we must not get high-minded in the wisdom of the Lord. It does not belong to us. Without the Lord, we would only have the same false wisdom that those in this world claim. Let’s be sure to claim His wisdom. We are not to serve Him in the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians 1:17, 21).
10. **THE DECEPTION OF WISDOM GLOATS THAT IT HAS ALL OF THE ANSWERS.**
11. **Notice that the wisdom of this world speaks of its value with enticing words (1 Corinthians 2:1-6).** Most of our references in the lesson today have been found in the two books of the Bible written to the church at Corinth. More than others, they were dealing with very sensual people who valued the wisdom of the world. Paul spoke of the enticing words of man’s wisdom. He rejected these words and instead spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit. What are the enticing words of man’s wisdom? The enticing words are that man’s wisdom has the answer to all. This is another feature that is so compelling about the deception of this wisdom. We noted in the last observation that it is really foolishness, but it certainly does not present itself in that manner. We must be careful not to have our faith stand in the wisdom of men. This means that we are not to look for validation from man’s wisdom for our faith. Man’s wisdom will never validate faith because it is outside what man can understand and rationalize.
12. **Notice that the wise of this world miss out on the Truth of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:26; Matthew 11:25).** While man’s wisdom promises that it has all of the answers, the sad truth is that it misses out on the most important answer of all. It misses the Gospel. The Lord spoke of things that had been hidden from the prudent and the wise. They could not understand the simplicity of the Gospel. This is the great deficiency of man’s wisdom. It misses the simplest of all truths. It cannot comprehend Jesus. It cannot comprehend the Word of God. Why would we ever want a wisdom that cannot even grasp the free gift of salvation that has been offered to mankind? The Bible notes that there are not many wise men after the flesh that come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the rich man, the wise man has all of the answers already. He does not need any other answer. He does not accept any other answer. Do not deceive yourselves, friend, into thinking that you are wise. True wisdom ONLY comes from above. If we lack it, let us ask more of it from the Master. He will give it to us.