

# Background of Deception

## Introduction

We are all familiar with the idea of deception and, when we think of Jim Jones, David Koresh, Heaven's Gate and other cult groups, we have a hard time understanding how anyone could swallow such lies to the point of death. That is because we under-estimate the power of deception.

The source of all deception is the Enemy of our souls, the devil, that old serpent. Jesus called him the father of lies.<sup>1</sup> He speaks from his nature, which is that of a liar and a murderer. He actively uses lies to foster his deceptions even to the point of disguising himself as an “angel of light”.<sup>2</sup> As a result “...it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness,<sup>3</sup>... For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Now we need to remember that the Devil is not just playing tricks on us; he is serious about his deceptions. We need to stop and think about why is the Devil deceiving us—what is his goal, what is he after? We have not taken this seriously enough and we are reaching a season in the purposes of God where deception becomes a key player in the closing of the ages when “...that lawless one will be revealed...that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”<sup>5</sup>

## Deception in the Garden

Our first picture of deception and how it works is presented to us in Genesis and the scenario in the Garden of Eden. We know that God made man for a reason and the fulfillment of that reason required that man be tested, that is, put to the test of obedience. God was not after a puppet but one who would obey by choice out of his love of God. In order to accomplish that God planted a garden and put man in it.<sup>6</sup> (Notice the whole world was not a garden, only that area that God planted as a garden.) Then, God gave man a job—to cultivate and keep the garden.<sup>7</sup> Then He gave man the a command to obey. This was one simple, clear command that also revealed the consequences of disobedience.

### Genesis 2:16-17 NASB

(16) The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

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1 John 8:44

2 2 Corinthians 11:14

3 2 Corinthians 11:15

4 2 Corinthians 11:13

5 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10

6 Genesis 2:8

7 Genesis 2:15

- (17) but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Now, the manipulation of the Devil enters the picture. God had a plan for man that could only be fulfilled after man proved his obedience. The Enemy's goal was to prevent man from ever fulfilling his purpose in God, so the Enemy began a program to deceive Eve.

### Genesis 3:1-6 NASB

- (1) Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" *[The meaning here is this: "Is it really the fact that God has prohibited you from eating of any of the trees of the garden?" This is designed to hint at something unjust on God's part, "Why is any tree withheld from you?" This is what is insinuated. Deception will, many times, start with a question that twists or perverts a piece of God's truth]*
- (2) The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;
- (3) but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" *[The words "or touch it" are added by Eve. God had said nothing about touching it, only not to eat it. We are open to deception when we begin to add to what God has said.]*
- (4) The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!" *[This is the lie. It is a direct contradiction of what God had said.]*
- (5) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." *[To complement the lie, the character and motivation of God is questioned by hinting that God did not want man to be too powerful or to be able to really see things as they are; so, a promise is made that their eyes would be opened and they would be like God or to be a god.]*
- (6) When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. *[The deception was completed when the three aspects of the desires of our flesh were activated by Eve contemplating the words of the serpent and considering the forbidden fruit.]*

We can glean from these scriptures some tactics of the Enemy about how he implements deception in us.

1. The Enemy begins by questioning or impugning God's character or motives, implying that His requirements are somehow unjust or unfair.
2. The Enemy then contradicts God's Word with an alternative that will correct the unfairness with a promise of being like a god ourselves.
3. The deception is completed by an appeal to the three-fold desires of our flesh—provision (good for food), pleasurable enjoyment (delight to the eyes), and wisdom (desirable to make one wise).

So, following the old adage, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it", the Devil has been using these same tactics ever since the Garden. And we still fall for them!

## Results of the Original Deception

Prior to eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve had regularly fellowshiped with God in the cool of the evening when He came down and walked with them. They were naked and it was not an issue. However, the Enemy had promised them that their eyes would be opened when they ate of the fruit. This was not a lie. “... *the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; ... and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*”<sup>8</sup>

Their eyes were opened; but, what eyes were these? Their physical eyes, obviously, had always been opened because they didn't stumble around the Garden as blind people. Their spiritual eyes must have been open because they walked with and fellowshiped with God in the Garden. So, that leaves the eyes of the soul. Apparently, until that point, Adam and Eve saw everything through their spirit, that is, the input of their physical eyes was processed by the spirit and not the natural mind. After eating the fruit in disobedience to God, their spiritual eyes closed and their soulish<sup>9</sup> eyes were opened.

When the eyes of their soul were opened, the way that they saw things changed, that is, their perception of reality became skewed or twisted. Reality had not changed at all from before they ate the fruit until after they ate the fruit—they were naked in the Garden and God would come down and fellowship with them. However, the way they **perceived** reality was now different—they saw themselves as naked, meeting with God was now fearful and so they hid.

This has continued to be a problem for fallen man. We see things from the natural, which is version of skewed reality. This is corrected in Christ Jesus. When Jesus said that He is the Truth<sup>10</sup>, the root word means “reality”. It is in Him and the Word that we find out what things are really like—true reality.

When we are “born again”, we receive a new spirit, new life and our spiritual eyes are opened again. However, we also have our soulish eyes open, which results in “double vision”. That is why the scriptures emphasize that we walk by faith not by sight.<sup>11</sup> Faith is from the spirit and with the eyes of faith we see a different reality than what our physical eyes perceive. There is a clear example of this in Second Kings and the story of Elisha and his servant.

### 2 Kings 6:15-17 NASB

- (15) Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"
- (16) So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."
- (17) Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the

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8 Genesis 3:7-8

9 While both Hebrew and Greek have adjectives that come from spirit and soul, we do not have one for soul in English. We have “spiritual” to describe things that are of the spirit, but we do not have a corresponding one for soul. In this series I will use “soulish” or “soulical” to describe things that are of the soul.

10 John 14:6

11 2 Corinthians 5:7

LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

What the servant saw with his natural eyes as interpreted by his soul was overwhelmingly scary. However, when his eyes were opened and he saw true reality, things were quite a bit different than he thought.

## Goal of Deception

The Enemy has a two-pronged purpose for leading us into deception. His overall strategy is to try to cause the purposes of God to fail. He can only do this if he creates a scenario in which God, Himself, must, because of His righteous nature, abort His plans. The Enemy doesn't have any power that can change God's purposes, so, he tries to create situations that compromise the integrity of God unless God makes changes. Since God's eternal plans and purposes involve mankind, the Enemy focuses on us so that he can make God destroy us.

The first attempt to accomplish our destruction was in the Garden. Once man sinned, he was cut off from God and incapable of fulfilling God's purpose. Man was now marked for destruction. However, God was a step ahead and had already made provision to redeem man by the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>12</sup>

The second attempt for our destruction occurred when the Enemy heard that a Messiah was coming.<sup>13</sup> The Enemy set out to so corrupt man that it would be impossible for the Messiah to come. This almost happened as the whole world became wicked before the Lord except for Noah. God destroyed everyone else but saved Noah.

The Enemy has repeatedly tried to corrupt man to the point that a righteous God would have to destroy him. Or, prior to the coming of Jesus, prevent the Messiah from appearing in the earth. Since the coming of Jesus, the Enemy has attempted to prevent believers from fulfilling their destiny in God. There are many other examples in the scriptures about this strategy of the Enemy.<sup>14</sup> Deception plays a key role in fulfillment of the Enemy's strategy.

The other aspect of deception is that the Enemy wants is to receive worship—he want to be as God. He manipulates men through deception to worship some aspect of him. Many times this is done through idols and things of that nature; however, in the last days, the Enemy will move to receive worship directly to himself through his false prophet.<sup>15</sup>

Remember that when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden, they received within themselves the ability to decide good and evil without recourse to God. The Enemy uses this part of fallen man to twist the truth about good and evil to deceive us, even to the point that good is called evil and evil is called good—a complete reversal of the order established by God.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>14</sup> For further study in this area see the June 2006 issue of Present Truth Teaching Letter: “Spiritual War Series—Satan's Strategies”, which is available in the Present Truth Archives on the website

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 13:4,8,12

Deception either ignores the requirements of God or cause us to misapply or consider them to be unjust and unfair just as the Enemy implied to Eve that it wasn't fair for the fruit of any tree to be withheld from them. And since God did withhold the fruit of one of the trees then God must have an ulterior motive by His command to not eat of it. And if God had an ulterior motive then He was withholding something that would keep them from coming into their full potential and make them as wise as God Himself.

Deception isn't just a lie. It is a twisting of the Truth in such a way as to cast doubt on God's motivations and intentions. It begins to function in our lives as if it is true—it gains power in us that will begin to move our allegiance from the Lord God to a false god.

*Our next lesson will look at how deception is manifested through false signs and wonders.*