HOW SATAN WORKS

Quarterly Aim: To give instances and manners in which Satan seeks to ensnare people into his ways and participate in evil, which is sin.

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Sergeant First Class William Bennett is a United States Army Special Forces Intelligence Sergeant.

Sergeant Bennett has spent a great deal of time training indigenous forces in foreign countries.

The Special Forces motto, “DE OPPRESSO LIBER” means “to liberate the oppressed.”

Through this series of lessons on how Satan works, Sergeant Bennett will show you how to free yourself from the “wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

From the Garden of Eden to the present, Satan is, and always has been, the great oppressor of humankind.
Deception, Deception, Deception

APPLICATION
To show that Satan’s aim is to deceive the entire world.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Trip Martin, a brown-haired, brown-eyed young man of seventeen, did a double-take when he took his eyes off Jennifer Lewis long enough to see that there was a new BTC teacher. Trip didn’t think he was going to like the new teacher, a relatively new member of his church and a soldier from nearby Fort Bragg.

Staff Sergeant William Bennett, a tall, muscular Green Beret with closely cropped blond hair, stood—his hands folded behind his back—in front of the Teen BTC class, looking, to Trip, sort of cold and mean. Sergeant Bennett couldn’t help but think that if the young soldiers he had trained for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan had looked and acted as undisciplined as these spoiled teenagers, he would have ordered them to the floor, put them on all fours and had them counting out pushups, but this was church, not the Army, and Sergeant Bennett understood the difference.

Lawrence Tatum didn’t know what to think about the stiff-looking sergeant. Though he was only seventeen, Lawrence believed God was probably calling him to the ministry. Why not? Lawrence did, after all, make excellent grades, he witnessed, he never skipped church, and he prayed in restaurants. In fact, Lawrence liked it when, at McDonald’s for example, he would remind his friends it was time to say grace, even after they had gulped down half their french fries.
Trip glanced toward the front of the classroom, caught Sergeant Bennett's icy stare, elbowed Lawrence Tatum and nodded in the sergeant's direction. Lawrence, always willing to make a good impression, especially on an authority figure, stood, cleared his throat, and said, “Okay, everybody, quiet down. Our teacher is ready to share God's Word.”

A paper wad hit Lawrence on the head.

Sergeant Bennett smiled—Trip thought the smile was rather stiff—and said, “Deception is an awesome tool. In the Army, keeping the enemy deceived and blind is essential to a successful operation. The longer we keep the enemy in the dark, the greater our chances are for surprise and eventual victory. Satan, of course, is an expert on deception.

“Revelation 12 is historic and prophetic. Verses 1-5 are historic; they depict the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. Verses 6-17 are prophetic; they depict Israel’s persecution just prior to the second coming of Jesus.

“For God to bring His Son into the world required a birth. Revelation 12 describes Israel as a pregnant woman crying out about to deliver a child (verse 2). The words God used here are graphic. The pregnant woman is screaming out with a loud voice. Her labor pains are tormenting her.

“The man child (verse 5) is Jesus. The great red dragon trying to devour the man child is Satan. By cruel tactics and deception, the great red dragon made the birth of Jesus extremely difficult, and he works hard to make your life just as difficult.”

**Our Need for a Savior**

Sergeant Bennett didn’t think his introduction had caught the attention of the class. He did notice, however, that the students were not accustomed to eye contact, a telltale sign, he thought, of poor teaching in the past.

“Satan’s deception,” he continued, “started because of man’s need for a Savior. God created man innocent and sinless. Unfortunately, a short time after man’s creation, Adam disobeyed God, ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and opened a can of worms that no man has been able to handle since. Unfortunately, Adam’s careless act cast the human race into sin (Rom. 5:12).

“In Eden, God didn’t mince words. He told the great red dragon exactly what He intended to do: ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel’ (Gen. 3:15).
“Basically, this was a declaration of war, and the great red dragon took it seriously. From that time, using evil tactics and deception, the great red dragon made the birth of Jesus difficult.”

**What Satan Feared**

Trip raised his hand and waved, more than a little facetiously, Sergeant Bennett thought. “You have a question, young man?”

“Actually, I have a question and a statement,” Trip replied on the verge of sarcasm.

“Let’s have them.”

“First, what do you want us to call you?”

“My name is Bennett, Sergeant William Bennett.”

“My statement is, this great-red-dragon-thing sounds more like a video game than a Bible lesson.”

“And you are?”

“Trip Martin.”

“Well, Mr. Martin, this is not a video game. It’s real. Man’s fall into sin demanded a Savior. A Savior, a Redeemer, is the one thing Satan feared because a Savior would break the great red dragon’s hold on the earth and on mankind. Satan realized a Savior would fulfill the promise of God and ‘bruise’ or crush his head (Gen. 3:15).

“Don’t think for a moment that Satan took God’s declaration lightly! From the second God said, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed’ (Gen. 3:15) Satan set out to prevent the one thing he feared the most—a Savior, a Redeemer, God’s Son.”

**What Satan Did**

“Sergeant Bennett, I have a question.”

“State your name, please.”

“Lawrence Tatum.”

“What is your question, Mr. Tatum?”

“What does any of this have to do with deception?”

“Good question. From the moment God promised a Savior, the great red dragon set in motion tactics that would blind men and prevent the birth of Jesus. Revelation 12:4 states, ‘The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.’ Satan was so intent on stopping the birth of Jesus, he stalked the woman (Israel) and stood before the woman, waiting for the man child to be born, fully intending to kill and devour Him. In fact, the great red dragon used every tactic in his arsenal to prevent the birth of Jesus.
“For instance, the great red dragon used deception when he tried to assimilate the ‘sons of God’ into an ungodly society through intermarriage with ungodly people (Gen. 6:1, 2).

“The great red dragon used deception when he provoked Pharaoh to kill all the male children born to the Hebrews while they were slaves in Egypt (Ex. 1:15, 16).

“The great red dragon used deception by provoking Athaliah to kill all the male offspring of King David, except one child, ‘Joash the son of Ahaziah’ (2 Kings 11:1-3). Think about it, Mr. Tatum! One male child, Joash, stood between mankind and eternal annihilation, all because of Satan’s deception.

“The great red dragon used deception when he provoked King Herod to kill all the male children in and around Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-18). This was an attempt by Satan to kill the man child. In Bethlehem, Satan’s greatest fear had been realized. The Son of God had been born, the Savior was alive, and the Redeemer would soon pay the price for the sins of the world.”

What God Did

Lawrence Tatum thought he had to say something; he was smart, he knew he was smart, and he wanted Sergeant Bennett to know he was smart. He raised his hand again.

“Yes, Mr. Tatum.”

“You make Satan sound almost unbeatable. Aren’t you giving him too much credit?”

“Satan, Mr. Tatum, is not nearly as powerful as God. In fact, in spite of the great red dragon, God brought His Son into the world (Matt. 2:1). From the Fall of man to Israel’s conquest by Rome, Satan, the great red dragon, opposed and fought the birth of the man child. Yet, in spite of everything, all the deception, Satan couldn’t keep Jesus from being born (verse 1). God, in spite of the great red dragon’s deception, brought His Son into the world.

“When God declared His plan in Genesis 3:15, He knew the great red dragon would do everything within his power to prevent the birth of Jesus. God, however, is God, and He is all-powerful.

“For instance, when King Herod, the egomaniacal king of Judah, servant of the great red dragon, sensed Jesus was a threat to his reign, he ordered all the male children under the age of two to be murdered.

“God heard the weeping of Rachel (Matt. 2:18). God heard the daughters of Judah crying and wailing over the death of their sons. Herod, a mass murderer, did not get away with murder because God heard and God saw.
“Historically, Herod’s reign seems long and prosperous, but after he ordered all the male children two years old and under to be killed, Herod developed a mysterious disease and experienced a hideous and painful death (Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Chapter 33, Verse 5).

“God did not allow King Herod, servant of the great red dragon, to get away with killing Israel’s sons. Herod may have been Satan’s servant, and he may have killed many young boys, but he died a horrific death. God does not deal easily with those who try to thwart His plans (Heb. 10:30).

“It is important to note that in spite of Satan’s deceptive tactics, God protected His Son two thousand years ago (Matt. 2:19-23), and God still protects His Son today (Rev. 12:5).

“Satan, as the gospels prove, continually hounded Jesus during His life on earth. Demons pursued Jesus. Religious leaders questioned Jesus’ authority and conspired to kill Him. Finally, Pilate, a spineless politician, gave in to an angry mob and ordered Jesus crucified. A few hours later, Jesus died, and the great red dragon thought, I may not have prevented the birth of the man child, but I killed Him, and what can He do to me now? My head is still intact and there is not a bruise on my body.

“Three days after the crucifixion, Jesus stepped out of the tomb—alive! When Jesus stepped out of the tomb, He stomped the great red dragon’s head in the Jerusalem dirt.

“The great red dragon is still working and deceiving, and he is still opposing God, but he is a defeated enemy. The great red dragon, in spite of his deception, is nothing but a dead snake slithering in the road, holding onto visions of grandeur that will never be.”

**Deception and You**

1. What does God think about deceitful people? (See Psalm 5:6.)
2. What is the eventual outcome of Satan’s deception? (See Psalm 10:1-11.)
3. How does deceit affect your thinking? (See Proverbs 12:20.)
4. What is the result of sweet-sounding deception? (See Proverbs 20:17.)
5. Is it possible for education to deceive you? (See Colossians 2:8.)
6. What does Revelation 20:8-10 tell you about Satan?