

# Knowing Satan's Schemes

by Zac Poonen

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*To overcome Satan, we must be aware of his schemes, compare ourselves with Jesus, and cultivate humility and contentment.*

**Duration:** 50:41

**Scripture:** Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezekiel 28:12-17, Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, 2 Corinthians 2:11, Galatians 6:3, Hebrews 7:25, Revelation 12:10

**Topics:** "Satanic Deception", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the tactics of Satan, focusing on how he deceives through pride, rebellion, accusation, and drawing people to himself. It emphasizes the importance of being alert to Satan's schemes, understanding his origin, and learning from Jesus' humility and prayer for believers. The message highlights the need to avoid pride, comparison with others, rebellion against authority, and the spirit of accusation, while encouraging respect, humility, and drawing others to Christ.

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## Transcript

This verse, Matthew 16, verse 18, that I will build my church in the gates of hell and not prevail against it. Matthew 16, verse 18, that I will build my church in the gates of hell and not prevail against it. You see, the gates of hell is the powers of spiritual darkness, the powers of satan.

And satan is a deceiver. And we must recognize it's very easy for us to be deceived. Believers are being deceived everywhere.

Satan doesn't come with a dark face, he comes as an angel of light. And Jesus, Peter Paul once said in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 11, the last part, we are not ignorant of his schemes. We must not be ignorant of satan's tactics.

And that's why the bible tells us something about satan, which they never knew in the old covenant. There are some things written in the old testament about the origin of satan. And if we study that, we will see something about his tactics.

So, we want to be alert to the way in which satan will seek to enter our life or our home or our church. If we are ignorant of satan and how he became the devil and all that, then he can deceive you. So, let's look at two passages in the old testament about the origin of satan.

First of all in Ezekiel chapter 28. Here, the Lord says to Ezekiel, verse 12, Take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre. And the king of Tyre was the devil, who dwelt inside the earthly king.

And you see that very clearly when he says in verse 13, you were in Eden, the garden of God. And in verse 14, you were the anointed cherub with colors. And the last part of verse 12, you had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

It's obviously referring to satan. And he says, I placed you, verse 14, on the holy mountain of God. And verse 15, you were blameless in your ways.

So, there was a time when satan was an anointed angel. And he had so many abilities that God gave him. Verse 17, your heart was lifted up because of your beauty.

And then I cast you down. So, that's the first thing we need to understand. That satan became satan because of pride.

Not by murder or adultery or telling lies. But by pride. And not on the outside, it says his heart, 17, was lifted up.

Pride begins in the heart. And why was his heart lifted up? Because God had blessed him in so many ways. He says because of his beauty.

When you are proud because of your good looks, you got a little bit of the devil in you. When you're proud because you're more intelligent than others, you got a little bit of the devil in you. There's nothing wrong in being beautiful.

Nothing wrong in being intelligent. But when you're proud of your beauty, proud of your intelligence, proud of your wealth, proud of your car or house, or proud of your Bible knowledge, or proud of how spiritual you are, or proud of your church, any type of pride, the devil's got it. Because that's how he became the devil.

And along with that pride, we read in Isaiah 14, there was a spirit of rebellion against authority. Isaiah 14, verse 12, How have you fallen from heaven O star of the morning, sun of the dawn? You've been cut down to the earth. See, that's where you get the word Lucifer.

It's from verse 12, star of the morning. Nowhere in the Bible do we get the real name of Satan before he became Satan. He's just called star of the morning and sun of the dawn.

Somehow the word Lucifer has stuck to it. Okay, we'll call him that. But he said in his heart, verse 13, I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God.

I will make myself like the most high, verse 14. God said, you'll be thrust down to heaven So, here was pride and here was a dissatisfaction with the position God had given him. You know, God had made him even the head of the angels, he was not happy.

He wanted to be like somebody else. He wanted to be like God. Whenever you're not happy with the circumstances God has put you in, the Bible says be content with what you have.

When you have a spirit of complaint against God for your circumstances or your situation, Lord, why have you made me like this? Why you made me so short or so fat or so dark or so white or why you allowed me to grow up in this family? Why you haven't done this? Why you haven't done that? Why you made my

circumstances like this? I want something else. It's a little bit of the devil. If we don't recognize the schemes of Satan, he will come into us without our knowing it.

He doesn't come saying, hey, I'm the devil, let me come into you. He'll come in through just a little pride. Hey, don't you think you're a little more spiritual than those other people? And you say, yes, I think so.

We don't even realize it's the devil. Hey, don't you think you're a little more good looking than those other people? Yeah, I think so. Don't you think you're a little cleverer than all those dumb people sitting there? Hey, don't you thank God for it? Why don't you thank God for it? And then you pray, Lord, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

That's not the Pharisee praying. Who prompted him? That wasn't the Holy Spirit. It was the devil.

To puff him up, to make him discontent when this devil makes you discontent with your situation. That's why he made Eve. He made Eve discontent with her situation.

Eve, see, God has not allowed you to eat that from that tree. He's made you unhappy. Come on, take it.

That's how sin came. When God has not given you something that you think you should get, and you try to get something God has not given you, that's the devil. We can ask God for anything.

And God chooses not to give it to us. We bow and say, Lord, accept children. You know, sometimes it could be a sickness.

We pray, Lord, heal me. And for some reason he doesn't heal. Then you can be like the devil.

You know, why hasn't God done this? But Paul submitted. He said, Lord, I've got the sickness. Heal me.

God said, no. He said, OK, I'll accept it. So what have we learned from these a few instances? How does Satan come against the church? By pride? Make you compare yourself with other believers and think you're better? You don't think that's the devil, but it is.

That's why I tell people never compare yourself with others. Always compare yourself with Jesus. You remember when Peter was walking on the water and he looked at Jesus, he walked.

But the moment he turned his eyes away from Jesus, he sank. That's always when we sink. Our eyes are turned away from Jesus to somebody else, something else.

That means we're not satisfied with Jesus Christ. That's not enough, Lord. I want this also.

Good, I want you. But I also want this. You'll be very unhappy.

You say, Lord, I bow to your will. Give me whatever you think is best for me. You'll always triumph over Satan.

If you're always wanting this, wanting that, you'll be miserable. Or if you try to compare yourself with others and think you're better, again, the devil got him. Because when you compare yourself with others, two things can happen.

One, you may feel you're better than them and become proud. And the devil gets it immediately. Or you can compare yourself with them and they're better than you and you get jealous.

He's got a better house than me, a better car than me, a better job than me. He's got more spiritual gifts than me. His church is better than mine.

And he's better than me in so many ways. His children are better than mine. There are so many reasons for jealousy.

Or like Cain, the fire of God is falling on him, it's not falling on me. So kill him. Do you know in Christian circles there's so much of jealousy? They can't bear to see God blessing somebody.

And when they see God blessing somebody and they're trying to tear him down and say it's all wrong and false teaching and all types of things. the gates of hell prevail against the church. When we stop looking at Jesus and start looking at people and become either proud because we are better than them or jealous because they're better than us.

The best thing is not to look at them at all. Look at Jesus, you'll never be proud, you'll never be jealous. People have asked me, Brother Zach, how can we always remain humble? Because the Bible says God gives His grace only to the humble.

I always want to get grace so I always want to remain humble. See, the answer is just look at Jesus. Compare yourself with Him.

You'll see so much sin in yourself that you'll never become proud. I made it a rule many years ago that I would never never never compare myself with another person. But I would compare myself with Jesus all the time.

And that saved me. It just saved me from pride, saved me from jealousy because I'm not interested in finding out whether I'm better than somebody. If somebody's better than me, I praise the Lord.

That's great. I feel you know, I feel humble when I look at Jesus because I'm so much unlike Him still. So that's the first thing.

If you want to overcome Satan, remember these are the ways He comes. In earthly warfare they always try to study their enemy. How is the enemy coming, going to come against us? Paul studied the tactics of Satan and he says we're not ignorant of his tactics.

I find most Christians haven't understood that. Satan has overcome many churches because the leaders have not taught the people how to fight and how to overcome Satan. How he comes.

You see, Satan was the leader of the angels to worship God before he became Satan. And then, why should they all worship God? I want some people to worship me too. And he tried to get some angels to worship him.

God cast them all out and those are the demons who went with the devil. They all had a rebellion against God. So, this rebellion against authority is what made the devil devil.

So, Jesus, in order to bring salvation, did the opposite of what Satan did. Bring salvation? How did sin come? Satan exalted himself. How did salvation come? Jesus humbled himself.

Only these two spirits operating in the world today. One spirit always seeking to go up and up and up and up and the other spirit of Christ seeking to go down and down and down. One seeking to exalt itself and

the other seeking to humble itself.

And whether you know it or not, all of you are being, all of us are being taken up and influenced by one of these spirits. You're always either seeking to go down or seeking to go up. The church is full of people who want to exalt themselves over others.

Jesus said, you're all servants, you're all brothers. He washed the disciples' feet because they thought they were all too big to do that thing. Whenever you think that you're too big to do some lowly job in a church, you're being influenced by the devil.

Jesus was always willing to do the loneliest job in the church. I've said in our church in Bangalore, if you really want to be a part of the church, start by trying to clean the toilets. I said, I've done that.

I'll do it today. What's wrong with that? It's a house of God. Can't be served, sweep the floor or do anything.

Anytime you feel, I'm too big for that. That's the devil. Seek to go down.

If people think less of you, praise the Lord. If they think too much of you, get scared. But it's not like that with many people.

They're happy when everybody thinks so highly of them. And they feel sad when people think less of them. There's so much in fellowship with the devil.

They want people to think highly of them. This is how Satan overcomes. See Galatians chapter 6. See Galatians chapter 6. Verse 3. If anyone thinks he's a somebody when he's actually a nobody, he's deceiving himself.

That's a great verse. Do you recognize yourself as a nobody or you feel you're a somebody? There are a lot of people who come to the church and they want to be somebody in the church. He is deceiving himself it says.

Our calling in the church is to be nobodies. See the Apostle Paul and what he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. In Corinth, Paul and Apollos were the great servants who did something. He says in verse 6, chapter 3 verse 6. I planted Apollos water.

But God caused the growth. Now listen, read verse 7. The one who plants is a zero. The one who waters is a zero.

God is everything. What is Paul saying? I'm zero. Apollos, another zero.

God is everything. If you want God to use you to build his church, always be a zero in your own eyes. And if you're not yet there, ask God to bring you there.

God has to bring a man and a woman down to zero before he can use them. The moment we lift up our heads, the devil shoots us and knocks us down. You know, when we were trained in the military, we had to learn how to crawl on the ground against enemy fire without lifting up our heads.

The man who lifts up his head is the one who gets shot first. So they would have a barbed wire about 9 inches above the ground and make us crawl underneath that. Even in the military they know, keep your

head down and you'll be alright.

It's a very important lesson. I was once speaking to the children in our church back home. And I was telling them the importance, trying to teach them the importance of this.

Because, you know, in school there's so much of competition among children. And many children feel so small and inferior because I'm not as good as the other child. Some are good academically.

Some are good in the sports field. But some children are not good at either. So I said, I want to teach you a lesson.

So I said, OK, let's get one of these girls to come here. OK, this is the girl who comes first in the class. What is she in God's eyes? Daniel 4, verse 35.

It's a great verse. Daniel 4, 35. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as zero by God.

OK, here's this girl who's come first in the class. What does God call her? Zero. So I gave her a big piece of paper with zero written on it.

She can stand there with zero. OK, I'm saying we pick up this boy who always wins the athletic championship. He always gets the medal for the athletics.

What's he? Another zero. So he also stands there with zero. OK, we'll pick up another boy.

He always comes last in the class. What's he? Also zero. Here's another girl who can never win anything in athletics.

She always comes last in the races. She's also a zero. She stands there with a zero.

First in the class, last in the class, first in athletics, last in the class, at last. Then I said, what about me, the great preacher? I took a zero. There's absolutely no difference.

Everybody is a zero. I think there's only one person who's not a zero. He's a one.

That's Jesus. And I said, if I have, I took this number one. And I say, if I have Jesus, I suddenly become a ten.

See, I put this one next to me. Now I'm not a zero anymore. I'm ten.

And I say, one of you zeros come here. Let's have some fellowship. Hey, I'm not saying I'm going to give him a hundred.

Let's get one more. Meaning one thousand and ten thousand. Would you remove Jesus? Boy, we all became zeros again.

They will never forget it. But it's really true. So those children, you know, felt really happy.

Hey, it doesn't matter so much if I did my best, I didn't come first, I didn't win the races, so what? I did my best. That's all. But, but I have Jesus, so I'm valuable to God.

Nobody's a zero when he has Jesus. Well, at least be ten. If you can have fellowship with another person, you'll be a hundred.

That's why fellowship is so important. That's the way to overcome Satan. Then I'll tell you another characteristic of Satan.

It says in Revelation 12 and verse 10 that Satan is the accuser of the brothers and he accuses them day and night. He's always trying to find fault with somebody. He never says anything good about anybody.

He's always trying to find some fault in somebody. I said, do you have that habit? Do you look at people and you're always trying to find some fault in them? You can never see any good in them? That's the spirit of the devil. When I have married couples meetings, I say, I want you to do something now.

Take a piece of paper and without thinking quickly write down five good things about your wife. Five good things about your husband. Scratch your head.

So you see how difficult it is? Okay, put your paper down. Now take it again. Now take it again.

Write down five bad things about your wife. Five bad things about your husband. That shows something about what you're thinking.

We prefer to remember all the weaknesses in one another. That's exactly what the devil wants you to think about. We blame one another.

We say such exaggerated things. If somebody does something wrong once or twice, you're always doing it wrong. I did it only twice.

This is how nature is. It's all part of the devil. The accuser of believers.

Do you know what Jesus does for believers? It says here the devil accuses 24 hours. Day and night. Hebrews 7, 25.

Hebrews 7, verse 25. It says Jesus does something 24 hours for believers too. 24 hours! He prays for them.

So there are two ministries going on. Always trying to find fault with believers day and night. And another ministry that sees those faults and prays for them day and night.

It's happening right now in the heavenlies. The devil and Jesus both see a fault in me. I've got faults.

Some of them I see, some of them I don't see. And the devil immediately says, see, he's like this. And Jesus is praying for me.

Help me to overcome it, Father. You and I are co-workers with Satan or with Jesus. You see something wrong in a brother or sister or your wife or husband.

You say, no, it's like this, like this, like this, just keep talking about it. Or you like Jesus and say, Father, help that person to overcome it. Help my husband to overcome it.

Father, my wife's got this bad habit. Help her to overcome it. It's only between you and God.

Do you know that's how you can get into fellowship with Jesus? You say, why am I not getting closer to Jesus in fellowship? Well, start doing what he does. Then you'll get into fellowship with him. What is he doing? What's he doing? He's praying for people that they'll be better.

But if you get into fellowship with Satan, accusing, finding fault, always looking with magnifying glasses at the weaknesses of your wife, husband, other people. Over a period of time, you'll become like the devil. You'll preach, talk about the Bible, but you'll become like the devil.

I have seen numerous people like this. They talk religious language. You don't see the spirit of Christ.

There's another way the devil overpowers the church. Make you compare yourself with others. Be proud, or be jealous, or accuse, or as I said, rebel against authority.

There's another way. Draw people to yourself. Get people to admire you.

That's what the devil wanted. He didn't want people to worship God. He wanted them to worship him.

There's so many people in church like that. They want believers to admire them. They don't like them admiring somebody else.

You must admire me. We're not called to get people to admire us. We're called to get people to admire Jesus.

If your life can point to Jesus, that people are drawn to him, they don't see you. That's the person who's really filled with the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus said in John 16, the Holy Spirit will not speak of himself.

He will glorify me. I know I'm filled with the Holy Spirit when I don't draw people to me. I want to draw them to Christ.

So, the spirit of rebellion, that's another thing. There's rebellion everywhere in society. Children rebel against their parents.

Factories, workers rebel against their mothers. In countries, people rebel against the rulers. Students rebel against their teachers.

In the church, people rebel against the authorities God places on them. You've got to be careful of the spirit of rebellion. That's why the most important thing we must teach our children is to respect and honor their parents.

I see sometimes small children rebelling against their parents, not respecting older people. I know it's going to go very badly with those children. I remember years ago, a small boy, must have been three or four years old, he was showing his hand like this to your father, who do you think you are? He called his father and said, be careful.

Don't ever let your boy behave like that. He didn't take me seriously. Twenty years later, his son is a rebel.

Teach your children to respect parents and older people. Teach them when they go to school to respect their teachers. I used to tell my children, don't gang up with the other students and disrespect your teachers.

A lot of children do that, don't join them. Because it's the spirit of the town. There's a lot of rebelling against authority in society.

I said, don't rebel against your boss in your office. If you're not happy with that work, resign, go somewhere else, but don't sit there and cause rebellion. Don't rebel against authority in your church.

Maybe the church is not following the Lord. Fine, just leave the church and join another church. That's okay.

I've done that many times. But don't rebel. There's nothing wrong in leaving a church.

If you find somebody, better join them. I remember one brother telling me, someone who didn't like me too much. Someone who did not like me too much.

He said, Brother Zach, you're such an unstable person. You leave one church, you go to another church. Then you go from there to another church.

I said, I've been unstable all my life. When I was a little boy, I left the kindergarten and went to the first grade. After a year, I left that and went to the second grade.

I even left school and went to college. I wasn't like those steady people who stay in kindergarten all their life. I wanted to learn more.

I didn't stick in one place where I could just rot away. I found something better, I went there. Same with the church.

I mean, if you would put your wife in a hospital and she's not getting any better. There's another hospital which is better. Will you take her there? How will you say no? I've got to be loyal to this hospital because I put her here first, let her keep her there and let her die there.

You'd be crazy. If you find a better hospital, take your wife there, let her live. What about if you find a better church? Is your spiritual health not as important as your wife's physical health? That's not rebellion to leave the church.

But we shouldn't stay in the church and cause problems to the leader of the church. I was unhappy, I just quietly left and said God bless you folks, I'm not going to interfere with your work. If you're alert to these things, Satan will never get power over us.

We can build a church that will overcome Satan. Now we'd spend 45 minutes trying to answer these questions.

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