



October 8, 2006

*Get Thee Behind Me, Satan*

Shortly after his statement that Jesus was the son of God, and Christ's declaration that on this fact he would build his church (**Matt 16.16-19**), Peter expresses another sentiment to the Lord that earns him a rebuke. As Christ told them of the trials that were to befall him, and his eventual death, Peter stated, "***Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.***" (**Matt 16.22**). Christ immediately rebuked him and stated, "***Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.***" (**Matt 16.23**). This response perhaps sounds a bit harsh, especially after Peter's acknowledgment of Christ's identity and the fact that he was to be given the keys to the kingdom, which keys were used on the day of Pentecost as Peter delivered the first gospel sermon. I have wondered about this conversation and believe that there is much that can be learned from it. Peter obviously meant well in his statement of allegiance to Christ. That intent however was lost in ignorance as Christ points out that Peter does not understand the spiritual nature, nor reason, for Christ's being on the Earth. It serves to show us that good intentions applied to doctrinal matters serve to corrupt the gospel if done so without proper knowledge and application. Many in the religious world believe that as long as an individual's heart is "in the right place" then their actions are acceptable to God. Christ's rebuke of Peter tells us otherwise. I believe there is a deeper meaning here as well. Christ refers to Peter in this passage as "Satan" and orders him to "get thee behind me...". Is this to say that Satan had entered the mind of Peter and caused him to act against his will? We know that Judas acted in accordance with his own evil character which allowed Satan to influence him (**John 13.27**). Did Peter lose his ability to direct his words and actions? The scriptures tell us that God recognized that the mind of man was evil from his youth (**Gen 8.21**). We also find that it is impossible for man to understand or know the actions and will of God if the Lord does not reveal them to us (**Ecl 3.11, Isa 55.8-9**), and God has revealed those things that he wants us to know (**Deut 29.29, 1 Cor 2.11**). We also know that the power of Satan lies in deception and that he desires to keep mankind from coming to an understanding of the will of God (**2 Cor 4.4**). Applying these scriptures to the question at hand we find that when we decide to impose our will, on doctrine, practice, or belief, we take part in the work of the Devil by allowing ourselves to be deceived. The scriptures were given to us to come to a full awareness of the will of God. As Solomon stated, "***Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.***" (**Ecl 12.13**). God has not given us the liberty of changing his word, and thus his will, toward man. We do not have the right to change the doctrine or practices of the church, no matter what our intentions may be. We have an old saying that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, and this is especially true in the spiritual realm. False doctrines have risen because someone thought that their beliefs were a good idea. In most religious organizations that claim to be the Lord's church, there is enough truth taught that one will have a better life by living in accordance with those than without them. But is what we are teaching and practicing pleasing to God or do we seek to gratify our selves in this? Paul stated, "***For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.***" (**Gal 1.10**). It is possible to teach others to follow a doctrine that pleases them, improves the overall quality of life, and condemn them to Hell in the process while thinking they are serving God. The Lord's church makes an appeal to all who will listen to simply allow God's word to speak for itself and to follow those things that we find there. To do otherwise is to give aid to Satan and earn an eternal rebuke from Christ.

TLC