

Do Not Be Deceived My Beloved Brethren - Part 1

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Good afternoon everyone. I'd like for you to start to turn over to the Book of Genesis chapter 3. It's going to be an account that we are all very familiar with, probably read dozens, if not hundreds, of times in Genesis 3. I'm going to start in verse 1 of Genesis 3, and it says:

Genesis 3:1. *Now the serpent was more cunning ... (NKJV)*

I'm reading out of the New King James. And that word "cunning" in the King James is "subtle." The Tanakh is "shrewdest." The New Revised Standard is "crafty."

And it's an adjective. And the English definition of this word is *clever at achieving one's aims by indirect or deceitful methods of involving or relating to indirect or deceitful methods*. And the synonyms are "artful, sly, wily, tricky, astute, subtle, canny, guileful." And Strong's is 6175, `aruwm (aw-room). It means *cunning, usually in a bad sense*.

So, it says:

Genesis 3:1. *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the [Eternal] God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

2) *And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;*

3) *but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

4) *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die.*

5) *For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

6) *So, ... the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and ... desirable [Remember that word.] to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate. (NKJV)*

Now, this is my opinion, but the book of Genesis is a very compressed amount of time. Remember over a third of mankind's total existence on this earth is contained in the book of Genesis. I think it covers the first, if I remember, 2500 years of man's existence.

I don't think that these verses describe a single encounter and a single event. Rather, I think they describe a process that took a length of time. I believe that Eve mulled it

over, thought about it. The more she considered it, the more she was inclined to take it. I think this process is described in those statements.

Now, why do I believe that? Hold your finger there and turn over to James chapter 1. We're going to come back. James says:

James 1:13. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God", for God [Himself] cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires ... (NKJV)*

And the King James says, "his own lusts."

14b) ... and enticed. 15) Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and [when] sin ... is full-grown, [it] brings forth death. (NKJV)

Note there is a progression of events that leads to death. God said not to take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it would lead to death. And here is a description of that process that will take one to death.

I also want you to notice that these steps are described here as an illicit desire that leads to an illicit act that leads to an illicit conception that leads to an illicit birth that leads to the action that leads to death. This process is ultimately an illicit spiritual relationship and it's explained here as an illicit physical and a sexual relationship.

I've always been uncomfortable with people that get too explicit from the pulpit. So, I want to make the point without being too graphic, but this is going to be the premise of the sermon. So, I need to bring it out going forward.

And then he goes on to say in verse 16 of James 1:

16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (NKJV)

As we move forward, we're going to see this concept of being deceived as a central theme of the Bible. In God's word, one of the central themes is about being deceived. And the understanding of it is very important to our relationship with God and Jesus Christ, who is our espoused husband whom we entered into a marriage covenant with. Our being a fit bride and even being among the firstfruits is key to us understanding this salvational issue so that we can prevent and use the tools that God has made available to us to ensure our success.

Today, what I want to do is to start a series of sermons on this subject. I believe it will take three sermons to cover it, but again, I don't know until I get started. My hope is to make each sermon stand on its own, but I believe what we're going to talk about will

provide the foundation for the subsequent. So even though they will stand alone, I want them to build on one another.

In this sermon, I want to examine two primary areas. The first is “What is being deceived?” And, again, that might seem overly simple, but I think you will see as we get deeper into it that that has a lot more ramifications than we might initially think. And number two is, “Is it even possible for us as the elect of God to be deceived? We have God’s spirit. Is that enough to prevent us from being deceived?” And I think all of us have seen that. I think since I have been attending, I have heard it both ways. And in asking and answering these two questions, I think it will allow us to focus on this very important aspect of our Christian journey and one of the very deadly pitfalls that has taken so many out and potentially can cost us our eternal salvation.

If you want a title for today’s sermon, it is—directly from that scripture:

Do Not Be Deceived My Beloved Brethren.

What does James mean after explaining the process that starts giving the definition of being tempted as beginning with “*being drawn away by his own lusts and enticed*” and ending in death?

He cautions the reader not to be deceived. I think in this day and age we tend to think of being deceived as being tricked into something. Perhaps this is a bad example. I always think of Wiley Coyote chasing the Road Runner. And he goes around this sharp curve. He doesn’t make the curve. He runs off the cliff and he’s out there in the middle of air. All of a sudden he looks down. He’s got this sheepish look on his face. He falls and he makes this big hole in the ground. That is maybe what we think about being deceived. We just got fooled into something and made a wrong turn.

Or someone calls you and tells you you’re being arrested because you missed jury duty. There was a summons. When you say, “No,” they ask you for your social security number to ensure that it wasn’t you. And they say, “Oop. It wasn’t you.” You hang up thinking it was a mistake. And the next thing you know your bank account’s empty and somebody’s got your identity by being deceived.

I could go on about the shell game, the Three-card Monty. This, I believe, is what we typically think of. At least that’s what I think of when I think of being deceived. And while these are true and they are true statements, being deceived is much more subtle and much more to us deadly. Before we move forward, I want to examine this admonition because it’s going to broaden the scope of what it means to be deceived.

The word translated “deceived” in James 1:16 is the Greek word, it’s 4105, “planao” (plan-ah’-o). And it means *to roam from safety, to roam from truth*, and here’s the other one, *to roam from virtue*. Nothing in this word “deceived” is about being fooled or scammed. It describes *a moving away from safety, away from truth, or away from*

virtue. And I want to add this in: as a choice. The King James Translates it “to go astray, to deceive, to err, to seduce, to wander, to be out of the way.”

The reason James describes this as an illicit sexual seduction is because that's exactly what it is. We start down a path much like Eve, where despite God saying, “Don't do that,” we cuddle up next to it. We think about it. We start to think it over and at that point, we've started a journey that's described by James that first took Eve out.

On our way back to Genesis, let's stop by Jeremiah. That means hold your finger, keep holding your finger there. Let's stop by Jeremiah 17. Of course, you can never say Jeremiah 17. Everybody goes, “Yup 17:9. Know it very well. ‘The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.’” But I want to stop before we get to verse 9 because there are some keys before that. Let's start in verse 7, Jeremiah 17:7 because there's a key to that.

Jeremiah 17:7. “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is in the LORD. (NKJV)

Not in himself. Not in his wisdom. Not in what he thinks. In other words, he's completely taken himself out. And we will see why, but he says, “My trust is not in me. It's not in what I think. It's not in what I feel because I can't trust that. It's in what God says. It's what He gives me, because He tells me because my hope is in something beyond this.” Notice it says to the person who is like that:

8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes, but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will [it] cease from yielding fruit. (NKJV)

Verse 9, because then it contrasts that man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord, and it says:

9) “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? (NKJV)

Don't trust yourself!

10) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, ... to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit [What?] of his doings. (NKJV)

You see, brethren, the old man that is with us, that is in us, is a willing participant in this seduction. There is a part of every one of us that holds onto the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It doesn't disappear at baptism. It doesn't disappear in ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years. I'll tell you how you can tell if the old man is still with you. Take a mirror, put it in front of your nose, after a minute look, and if there's frost on that mirror, it means you're still breathing. And that means that old man is still there. He hasn't gone away.

But it seems so good. It feels right. It's going to bring me happiness. And we intellectually know that it will only bring hurt and tears and ultimately death. Sadly, it's not just us that suffers but it's those that we drag into our delusion. Go back to Genesis 3. We're going to just repeat verse 6. We'll pick it up there. It says:

Genesis 3:6. *So, ... the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate. (NKJV)*

At this point, we could make the case that some have that poor old Adam was just an innocent victim. It was just this scheming woman that caused this. In fact, probably in good company this is what he tried to convince God of, but we're going to see that there's much more to it as we're going to move forward.

7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8) And they heard the sound of the LORD walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the [Eternal] God among the trees of the garden.

9) Then the LORD God called to Adam and said ... "Where are you?" (NKJV)

This is almost obvious, but the omniscient all-knowing God already knew what they had done, just as He knows. But just like everyone from Adam on, including us, brethren, they had to stand before God and give an account of what they did.

10) So, he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." (NKJV)

I sometimes watch or listen to my grandkids when they're called to give an account of their misbehavior and how they will just beat around the bush and try to distract or deflect each question. You ask them a question, there are times—and this is not about something specific—but I'll ask them a question that all it requires is a yes or no. And then they'll start going off. And I'm going, "I just asked for a yes or no. You're giving me a status report. I just want a yes or no answer."

The problem is, I'm the same way! No one likes to have to give an account of their actions, their misbehavior, their sins if you will, to another, especially to God.

Verse 11:

11) And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree ... which I commanded ... that you should not eat?"

12) Then the man said, ... (NKJV)

Let's try this one.

12b) ... the woman whom You gave ... me, she gave me ... the tree, and I ate.”
(NKJV)

And that was true too, but the implication was all wrong. He didn't take the responsibility.

13) *And the LORD God said to the woman, “What [have] you done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”* (NKJV)

By her own lips, she admitted that she was deceived. The Hebrew word here is consistent with what we read in James. It is Strong's 5377, *nasha'* (naw-shaw'). And it means *to lead astray, (mentally) to delude, or (morally) to seduce*. And the King James uses it *to beguile or to deceive*.

Turn over to 1 Timothy chapter 2 and I'll pick it up in verse 14. It says:

1 Timothy 2:14. *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.* (NKJV)

Those are actually two different Greek words. The one where it says “Adam was not deceived,” is 538, *apatao* (ap-at-ah'-o) and it means *to cheat or to delude*. The one for the woman, for “being deceived” is 1818, *exapatao* (ex-ap-at-ah'-o) and it means *to seduce wholly or to completely seduce*. Let me read what Zodiates has in his Word Study on this word: The base of the verb *apatáō* is used twice in the King James version in 1 Timothy 2:14, but in the UBS (that's United Bible Series) it is used only of Adam having been deceived. When it comes to Eve, the woman, it is *exapathēthesía*. Speaking of the serpent deceiving Eve directly it says that *exapathēthesía* is used: thoroughly deceived. In the mind of Paul, when Satan directly deals with men, he endeavors to thoroughly deceive. This Satan did to Eve, while she simply deceived her husband in persuading him to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Thus, in the three instances where the word *apatáō* occurs, we can say that we can be deceived by the vain, empty, or idle words of others (Ephesians 5:6), by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14), or by vain, external, empty religiosity (James 1:26). And the derivative of the word is 1818, *deceive completely*.

And let me just read about *planáō*: *to lead astray, to go astray, to lead astray from, seduce, to deceive by false reasoning, delude, to catch by a bait, to entice, allure, to entangle, to lay in wait for, to lay a trap, plot for assassination, to ensnare, to lure, a huckster, to sell anything for unwarranted personal gain*.

My take on this—and you can take it for just that—my take was Eve was wholly seduced in that this was going to change her life. She thought it was going to change where she was headed. I believe, after some period of time by the process we read in James, she bought hook, line, and sinker into it—wholly seduced. Adam on the other hand (and this perhaps is even worse) took it because she offered it to him and perhaps

she said to him, “God told them that they would die” and she ate it and she’s still here. She, perhaps, thought she was living proof of the fact that God didn’t mean what He said.

As we know by God’s reaction in the Garden of Eden, Adam didn’t get off the hook with what he did. God held him as responsible for his actions as Eve for her actions. You know, brethren, sin is sin. As I’ve said before, you can try to put lipstick on a pig and you still have a pig with lipstick on it. You can’t make sin look like it’s anything less than that. Sin is sin and sin ends in death.

As we continue, let’s build on what we’ve seen so far. And I’m going to give you the Cliff Note’s version.

Deception or to be deceived is spiritual seduction. In every case we’re brought to the point where we are a willing participant in it.

Now, let’s drill down to that concept because it’s going to reveal just how precarious our situation is if we start down this path. And that’s the path of allowing ourselves to be spiritually seduced. Let’s look at the most read prophecy in the Bible. In fact, if you’ve had your Bible for very long, you can look at the edge of it. You can tell the New Testament from the Old and, if you’ve really studied a lot, you can probably look at the edge and tell where Matthew 24 is. I’ve got a new one, so it’s not telling on me, but let’s go to Matthew 24 and we’re going to start in verse 3. It says:

Matthew 24:3. Now as He [talking about Christ] sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? ... (NKJV)

Because remember, they just showed Him the beautiful city and the Temple. And He said, “Look, it’s not going to be here one day.”

3b) ... And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (NKJV)

So, let’s preface. They’re wanting to know what’s going to happen in the last days. What’s going to be the sign that we’re at the end? Notice what He said.

4) And Jesus answered and said to them, “Take heed [that no one seduces you] that no one deceives you.

5) For many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ,’ and will [seduce] deceive many. (NKJV)

He starts out His prophecy with that. Then He starts the actual prophetic events. Now, let’s skip down to verse 24 because I’m wanting to show you the wrapper that He puts this prophecy in, 24:24:

24) For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders [to seduce] to deceive if possible, even the elect. (NKJV)

And again, over the years I've heard "Well, that means they can't be. We're the very elect, we can't be deceived." I will tell you, brethren, I think Satan would like for us to believe that and let our guard down. In my opinion, the idea that it's impossible to deceive the elect is a doctrine of demons. You see, they would like us to think that we're impervious to deception because when you fortify your weak areas, you don't fortify the impervious defenses. You find the weak spots. Satan wants us to think we can't be deceived, that we can't be seduced.

For those of you that are much younger, it is the "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" defense. Brethren, we have to understand that in seduction, a person becomes a willing participant. They've let their defenses down and they've invited the seducer/deceiver in.

Now, we're going to examine the ways that happens later in another sermon, but right now I want to establish that we are very vulnerable. Christ was warning His people through the ages of this vulnerability. Look at verse 25 of Matthew 24.

25) See, I have told you beforehand. (NKJV)

If you look at the way Christ delivered the Olivet Prophecy, He preceded the actual body of events with a warning and after He gave the body of the prophecy, He ended it with that same warning. In this day where books... Now we have Kindles and iPads and iPhones and our Bibles are in there and it sort of loses a little bit of the picture I want to try to make, but in the days of physical books, consider that the Olivet Prophecy is a series of volumes on a shelf. The bookends of that shelf are "not to be deceived" and "not to be deceived." In other words, Christ—and remember the bookends hold up the books—Christ, the bookends of the Olivet Prophecy are relating to "not being deceived." If that was impossible to do, probably He wouldn't have taken the time. But the bookends of the Olivet Prophecy is a stern admonition against being spiritually seduced before and after the prophetic part.

Perhaps this concept of deceit and spiritual seduction is still a bit of a stretch and perhaps it makes us a little bit uncomfortable. I think I'll let the Bible speak for itself. Look over in Revelation chapter 17. We're going to let Christ Himself use the words. Revelation 17 verse 1, it says:

Revelation 17:1. *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot [the great whore that] sits on many waters,
2) with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (NKJV)*

It wasn't just the kings. It was everybody that bought into it.

3) So he carried me away in the Spirit to the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4) The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

5) And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6) I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. (NKJV)

I'm going to let you look into that.

Notice this, "Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Notice, if a saint dies because of Christ, they're a martyr. Why didn't it just say "Drunk with the blood of the martyrs?" Why does it say "Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs?" And I have my own opinion, but I don't want to get in your way of studying your Bible and coming to your own conclusions. Let me just say that if it was referring.... Nah, I'll let you do it. I'll let you go through it.

Revelation 18:3:

Revelation 18:3. *For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."*

4) And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. (NKJV)

We understand that Babylon and the Babylonian system is the entire world's governmental, business, religious system and we physically exist within it. We realize that this can't mean to physically come out. We are here and we cannot come out of it anymore than in real Babylon Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could come physically out of that.

Remember Jesus in His final prayer before His crucifixion, He was praying to God that He not take them out of the world, but that we were called to come out and remain separate. We're not to entangle ourselves in the world's systems of government or religion. They are Babylon. They are dying. And they're going to be destroyed. If we're seduced to either stay in them or return to them, brethren, we're going to be destroyed as well.

God gave us His word. He gave us the examples of the righteous men. I just mentioned them in Babylon. They maintained their relationship with God while they

physically existed in Babylon. And, brethren, we can do the same thing with God's spirit and with His help. We just read Revelation 17:6. I'll just reread it again.

Revelation 17:6. *I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. (NKJV)*

As with all of God's word, there is meaning in the scriptures that will apply at many levels. I believe this is one of those that if we meditate on the meaning, we're going to understand that there [are] tremendous spiritual implications to that verse. Could part of that "marvel" and "amazement" that John recorded be due to the number of saints that were seduced by the harlot?

When we were young and just starting to come of age, my parents had "the talk" with us. When we became parents and we had children and they came of age, we sat down and had "the talk" with them. Perhaps, brethren, as children and God, perhaps it's time for us to have "the talk."

A hundred years ago when a couple was engaged to be married, it was very important that both the groom and the bride were virgins. It was very important. The bride would wear a white gown at her wedding and that was a symbol that she was a virgin. That was a symbol of purity. Fifty years ago after two world wars and many of the skirmishes, there was a double standard that came about that required the bride to be a virgin and she wore white, but the man, well, he's been overseas. He's been away a lot. Not so much.

Remember, brethren, this is a union that Satan hates, is completely devaluing in our present system, is completely destroying. But never forget God's standards never change.

Revelation 14 and verse 1:

Revelation 14:1. *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.*

2) And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

3) They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

4) These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.... (NKJV)

They were not seduced. "They are virgins," and here's the question that everyone should ask ourselves: "Do we value and guard our spiritual virginity with all of our being?"

4b) ... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (NKJV)

You see, the firstfruits are first and foremost made up of virgins, spiritual virgins that have not allowed Satan to seduce them.

Revelation 19:7, just forward a couple of chapters.

Revelation 19:7. *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

8) And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, ... (NKJV)

The King James says, "white."

The New Jerusalem Bible says, "dazzling white."

The New Revised and the Darby say, "bright and pure."

And the New American Standard says, "bright and clean."

8b) ... for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (NKJV)

And I submit to you that one of those righteous acts is to maintain our spiritual virginity for our betrothed husband so that at that wedding supper, we can be virgins.

Just hold your finger there; we'll come back to it. Turn back to James 1:25. It says:

James 1:25. *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, ... is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

26) If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, ... (NKJV)

There's that word again.

26b) ... this one's religion is useless.

27) Pure and undefiled religion before God ... the Father is this: to visit [the] orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted [unblemished] from the world. (NKJV)

Back to Revelation 19:9.

Revelation 19:9. *Then he said to me, "Write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

You see, brethren, these virgins will appear at the wedding in bright, dazzling white, pure garments.

Let's look at the instruction God gave us in His word regarding remaining a virgin until one is married. Not only is this important in the physical sense, but it's important in the spiritual as well. Turn back to Deuteronomy 22. This gives us a lot about the mind of God in relation to this. Deuteronomy 22 and verse 23, it says:

Deuteronomy 22:23. *"If a woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24) then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, ... (NKJV)*

In other words, she allowed herself to be seduced. This wasn't a rape. This was seduction, both partners willing in it.

24b) ... and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you. (NKJV)

Here's a case of the seduction of a virgin. The penalty was death for both of them.

Just go back up to verse 13. It says:

13) "If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, 14) and charges her with shameful conduct, ... (NKJV)

In other words, ... you know what it means.

14b) ... and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,' 15) then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. 16) And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife and he detests her. 17) Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18) Then the elders of that city shall take the man and punish him, 19) and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman because he had brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; [and] he cannot divorce her all his days.

20) *But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman,*

21) *then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you. (NKJV)*

You see in this case, there was no proof; there was no blood evidence. She had played the harlot and had previously lost her virginity.

Go over to 2 Corinthians 11, we'll start in verse 2. Paul writes:

2 Corinthians 11:2. *For I am jealous for you with [a] godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

3) *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived ... (NKJV)*

Verse 18, "to seduce wholly," remember?

3b) *... as the serpent [seduced] Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. (NKJV)*

"Corrupted" is the Greek reference Strong's 5351. I'm not going to even try to pronounce it, but it means *to ruin, to spoil, to shrivel, or by moral influences to be depraved.*

And then "simplicity" is from 572, "haplotēs" (hap-lot'-ace). And it means *singleness, sincerity, generosity or bestowal.* Let me read what Zodhiates has to say about this because I think he makes a very good point. This is what Zodhiates says and he talks about it being Strong's 572. Here he's commenting specifically about 2 Corinthians 11:3 and he says that 'the simplicity that is in Christ' means the integrity and the fidelity. It means that you're true, that you are remaining true to that espousal Paul was talking about. It's the fidelity that was in Christ.

To put in modern language, he's saying, "But I fear somehow as the serpent seduced Eve by his cunningness that your minds may be defiled from the fidelity that is in Christ." In other words, from being true to Him.

The Bible is replete about warnings about allowing oneself to be both physically and spiritually seduced. I want to do a case study on this from our forefathers, but before I do I want to look at a New Testament commentary on this physical seduction. By reading the commentary, we see a very clear link from the physical that is committed to the spiritual that we're very vulnerable to. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 10, just back to the book previous that we're in. He says in verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 10:

1 Corinthians 10:1. *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,
2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
3) all ate the same spiritual food, (NKJV)*

Notice he's bringing the spiritual into the physical.

*4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.
5) But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.
6) Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.
7) And do not become idolaters as some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (NKJV)*

Speaking of the golden calf incident at the foot of Mount Sinai after entering into a marriage covenant, after becoming espoused to God that is clearly referred to in verse 4 as "that Rock that followed them."

8) Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; (NKJV)

This is from the Adam Clarke Commentary:

Fell in one day three and twenty thousand – In Number 25:9, the number is 24,000; and, allowing this to be the genuine reading, (and none of the Hebrew ... exhibit any [variations]), Moses and the apostle may be thus reconciled: In Numbers 25:4, God commands Moses to take all the heads (the rulers) of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun; these possibly amounted to 1000, and those who fell by the plague were 23,000, so that the whole amounted to 24,000.

It says that if you add that:

... that Phineas and his companions might have slain 1000 men, who were heads of the people, and chiefs in this idolatry; and that the plague sent from the Lord destroyed 23,000 more; so an equal number to the whole tribe of Levi perished in one day, who were just 23,000.

All the commentaries agree that this is referring to the incident that took place at Acacia Grove. The differences of the commentaries seem to center around whether it was 23,000 or 24,000 and how do you make the count. That's beyond my immediate purpose to sort it out.

Verse 9:

- 9) *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;*
10) *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (NKJV)*

And here's the key to this. It wasn't something that happened in a place far, far away and a long time ago. It was recorded for me and for you today as a stark warning. Notice verse 11.

- 11) *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (NKJV)*

And here's the question: "Have we matured beyond the point that this is not relevant to us?" We have God's spirit. We have the lens of 6,000 years of history. "I'm sure glad I'm in need of nothing. I'm at the point of my spiritual maturity that I'm not vulnerable." "I hope" and I'm going to apologize—these are names out of the air—"I hope John and Charlie, Mary, and Martha are listening. They sure could use this, but not me." And again, I apologize to John and Charlie and Mary and Martha.

I want to bring this out because there's another warning. Verse 12:

- 12) *Therefore let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall. (NKJV)*

Now let's go do a case study. Look over in Numbers 33. We're going here to establish the chronology of the wanderings. Numbers 33:1, and Moses wrote this down and recorded it. It says:

Numbers 33:1. *These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

2) *Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these are their journeys according to their starting points.*

3) *They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.*

4) *For the Egyptians were burying ... their firstborn, ... (NKJV)*

Then verse 6:

6) *They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.*

7) *They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth, which is east of Baal Zephon, and they camped near Migdol. (NKJV)*

And we could go on, but let's skip down to verse 48. Every place that they camped God made sure that their wanderings were written down. Look at verse 48:

48) They departed from the [mount] of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.

49) They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab. (NKJV)

The last stop in the journey on the edge of the Jordan and there they are.

50) Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying,

51) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, (NKJV)

Here they were at the last stop in their journey on the shores of the Jordan waiting for instructions to cross over. Just, brethren, as we are at the end of the age, they were at the end of their wanderings. Now, how long they were at Acacia Grove is not specified. We know it was before Moses died and actually it was probably from there God called him up on the mount and he died there.

Turn over to Numbers 25 verse 1 and let's look at the actual event. Again, keep in mind this was after their journey. They are in their physical journey where every one of us sitting here and listening and has God's spirit in this day and age where we are. And that is, we're on the edge of the Jordan looking over into the promised land.

Numbers 25:1. *Now Israel remained in Acacia and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.*

2) They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

3) So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

4) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." (NKJV)

God didn't take lightly to this.

5) So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor." (NKJV)

"Peor" was apparently a mountain. And remember back then all the gods were local gods. There were gods of the valley and gods of the grove and gods in the mountains and gods in the water. But Baal of Peor was the god of this particular mountain. And if you look in just some of the secular history, it was a god that demanded sex acts be performed with each other on this particular mountain. That's what he enjoyed apparently.

6) And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, ... (NKJV)

Notice this. And I think this is very encouraging.

6b) ... the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. (NKJV)

Not everyone in Israel was participating in this seduction. There were some that were truly outraged and hurt and discouraged by it. Let me read what Jamieson, Fausset and Brown says:

... weeping before the door—Some of the rulers and well-disposed persons were deploring the dreadful wickedness of the people and supplicating the mercy of God to avert impending judgments.

Such public lamentations on account of national sins at the entrance to the sanctuary were frequent and allowed at all times except on festivals. Let me read what Barnes' Notes has.

Weeping before the door of the tabernacle - The plague (Numbers 25:9) had already broken out among the people: and the more God-fearing had assembled at the door of the tabernacle of God ... to intercede for mercy, when Zimri committed the fresh and public outrage as described.

Hold your finger there and turn back to Ezekiel chapter 9. While you're turning, Ezekiel chapter 8 and 9 is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem for their worship of idols including the sun. The violence that they had invited in had reached to the point that God was moved to destroy them. You can read them in your own study. They're brought out more in chapter 8. We're going to pick up with the decree in chapter 9 that was put out to destroy them. Ezekiel 9:1.

Ezekiel 9:1. *Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand."*

2) And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3) Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side;

4) and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." (NKJV)

Brethren, God takes note of how we react to what we see around us. Notice the people then and us now. We don't try to stop it. We're powerless against it because we understand it's not a man. It's not our government. It's not the Muslims. The enemy that we are fighting is behind all of that. And we are no match for Satan the devil.

Brethren, do we sigh and cry for the sins that we see? Do our prayers reflect the desire for Christ to return and put Satan away and set up His government? All of these events that we just read are pictured by the fall holy days. Let me assure you that God hears us. God knows our pain. He knows our stress and He's going to take note of it.

Let's go back to Numbers 25 and verse 6. I'll just reread verse 6.

Numbers 25:6. *And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman ... (NKJV)*

He was defiant! Does this world today defy God? Does it stick it in our faces what they're doing?

*6b) ... in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.
7) Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand;
8) and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.
9) And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.
10) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
11) "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, ... (NKJV)*

Remember the righteous acts of the saints that we read in Revelation? Again, we're not called physically, but we are called spiritually, to do that—to put to death those members in us that war against us, those members of the flesh. God takes note of that. Notice this.

*11b) ... so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.
12) "Therefore ..., 'Behold I give to him [talking about Phinehas] My covenant of peace;
13) and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'" (NKJV)*

Psalm 106—hold your place there. Psalm 106 and verse 28, it says:

Psalm 106:28. *They joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead.*

29) *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them.*

30) *Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stopped.*

31) *And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore. (NKJV)*

If you look, Ezra—don't turn there—Ezra chapter 7 verse 1 identifies Zadok, who was the high priest that was selected by casting lots (and remember casting lots was to ask God for His will in that). Zadok the high priest was selected during David's reign and was a direct descendent of Phinehas. God remembered. God remembered the promise that He made.

Zadok's dynasty was carried forward by his descendents through the rebuilding of the temple, and you can read, through the Maccabean times into the New Testament times until the second destruction of the temple. And they will continue on into God's Kingdom.

Zadok was the one that anointed Solomon as king. His daughter Jerusha (and that means *married, beloved possession, precious inheritance*), His daughter Jerusha was married to King Uzziah, who was the king of Judah and their son Jotham reigned after him. Both of them are recorded as doing right in the eyes of God except Uzziah in his last ten years of reign when, just like Saul, he got prideful. He took a censor and went into the altar to offer a sacrifice, just like Saul. And God immediately struck him with leprosy and he was taken out of there, but it was his pride that got him. Other than that, both of those were recorded as being good kings that did what was right in God's eyes. In your own study, go look at 2 Kings 15:33 and 2 Chronicles 27.

Okay, back to Numbers 25 and we'll pick it up in verse 14. It says:

Numbers 25:14. *Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites.*

15) *and the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian. (NKJV)*

In other words, she was a governor's daughter.

16) *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

17) *"Harass the Midianites, and attack them;*

18) *for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor." (NKJV)*

Notice God said, “The Israelites were seduced,” just as Eve, just as many others were. Brethren, just as we can be today. And in every case, the outcome is death. It’s physical death for them. And for us, allowing ourselves to be seduced spiritually and no longer virgins, we’ve disqualified ourselves to being the virgin bride wearing white at the wedding. Brethren, we simply won’t be part of it.

I hope this will sober us and shake us to our spiritual foundations and make us evaluate our conditions. What I wanted to do in this sermon is to bring an awareness that we can be seduced as many have even in the last thirty years. We’ve seen a falling away. Brethren, we see it continuing, but God hasn’t left us defenseless against the wiles of Satan. If I could use a very graphic—God will not allow Satan to rape us against our will, but God will allow Satan to seduce us to be willing participants in it.

God has given us a number of tools to quench those fiery darts that can take our lives. In the next part I want to pick up this case study because you see there is a back story to this, one that points out what is behind this seduction at Acacia Grove. And I want to spend some time looking at that because it will point out some of the ways that we can be seduced.

It will also show us that what we are against every day is an organized conspiracy. Well, let me just say this: I am a conspiracy—what do they say—conspiracy theorist? I believe in conspiracy theories, but what I believe is the mind behind the conspiracies is the master conspirator, which is Satan. Everybody below that, if I could use another modern term, are just the minions. They’re just running around doing what he is programming them to do. But there is a conspiracy and let’s never forget it, but that conspiracy takes place in spiritual places, in high places of the spirit realm.

In the next part I want to pick up this case study and, like I say, delve into the back story. We’re going to see that our adversary and his attempt to seduce us and draw us away from our espoused husband is not happenstance, but it’s crafted and laid out and planned. Then, I want to explore the tools that God has given us to resist.

I’m going to give you some homework, which I hope will help you raise your awareness of this seduction and our vulnerability to it. Between now and the sermon, I want you to study Proverbs chapter 7 in light of what we’ve covered today. It’s only twenty-eight verses long and we’re going to go there and we’re going to deconstruct it, but I’d like for you to do some of your own study. It’s only twenty-eight verses but it is packed with information regarding this subject.

For the final scripture, let’s turn back again to Revelation 14. When a coach or an army officer or a leader talks to his team, his soldiers, his employees, after he gives them all the tactical information to let them know after they’ve gone through the playbook or after they have reviewed the hill, the objective, after they’ve done all the tactical information, they always end with a focus on the final objective. In other words, “Why are we even doing this?” I think it’s beneficial for us to do the same. Let’s ask and answer as we

read this, and we've already read it today, but with this focus: What is the outcome of us continuing on the path and not allowing ourselves to be seduced? Revelation 14:1.

Revelation 14:1. *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.*

2) and I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

3) They sang a new song as it were before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

4) These [were] the ones who were not defiled with women, ... (NKJV)

The women that we read about in Revelation.

4b) ... for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (NKJV)

And as we move forward and we think about this, let's consider our calling. Let's consider the importance that we know what we're doing, that we understand, brethren, that we are all subject to being deceived and the price that we can pay for that deception, that seduction, which we will enter into is our eternal lives.