

The Contrast Between Satan and John the Baptist

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We are going to do something unusual today in that we're going to compare a human being with a spirit being. You could say right off of the top, how can you do that that? That's not fair. There's no comparison. A spirit being has so much more ability and so how can you compare the two? We're going to see that that is not necessarily the case. We're going to see that there is more to this comparison than meets the eye and that there are lessons that we can learn in the Laodicean era about this comparison.

The title of this sermon is

The Contrast Between Satan and John the Baptist

We're going to contrast Satan the devil with John the Baptist. It's surprising because when you look at it, you wouldn't think so before you examined it, but John the Baptist and Satan have a great deal in common. However, they had dramatically different responses to what was placed before them. There were dramatically different outcomes at the end of the trial that was placed before them, or the opportunity that was placed before them, depending on how you look at it.

1. Let's first talk about Satan the devil, obviously a spirit being.

We know he was created, because the Bible tells us so in Ezekiel 28:15.

Ezekiel 28:15. *Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. (KJV)*

Let's go to Job 38:4 and see something that we need to understand regarding this comparison. God is admonishing Job, getting Job to see who God was versus who He was.

Job 38:4. *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.*

7) When the morning stars sang together ... (KJV)

This refers to the foundation of the earth, the creation of the earth.

7b) ... and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (KJV)

We know at that time there were only spirit beings. There were no human beings, yet the Bible uses the word translated "sons." This is Strong's number 1121 and I will quote the meaning; *in the widest sense (of literal and figurative relationship including subjects)*. Obviously, the angelic realm was subject to God. It can also mean a *nation*.

In that sense you could say it was a nation of spirit beings. So, they were sons in a sense that God created them and there was a time when they didn't exist.

It was usual in those days and up until 100, maybe 200 years ago to celebrate the laying of a cornerstone or of the completion of an edifice, a building. It was common when that occurred that the people would rejoice, for example the temple. Let's go to Ezra 3:10. We will see that when this building was completed, there was great rejoicing.

Ezra 3:10. *And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord ... (KJV)*

Notice what happened.

10b) ... they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. (KJV)

We see here that there was great rejoicing when the temple was built. Talk about rejoicing when God created the universe. We're told that the angelic host greatly rejoiced when the universe was created. They praised God.

God then had a specific role for these angels. Let's go to Hebrews 1:14. What was that role that God wanted the angels to perform and the angels to fulfill? This gives us the overall guiding principle of what the angels were to do and why they existed.

Hebrews 1:14. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (KJV)*

They were there to minister to those who would attain salvation and be in the direct family of God as children of God, thereby being above the angels in that sense. There are hints in the Bible and it's likely that the angels understood to some extent their roles, but not totally. Let's go to 1 Peter 1:12. The angels had some questions from time to time. God did not tell the angelic host everything that was on His mind, or every detail of all of His plans.

1 Peter 1:12. *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (KJV)*

This means they didn't understand it completely. It tells us that they were to be ministering spirits to those whom God would call, offer salvation and once salvation was achieved the human beings would eventually become eternal sons and daughters of God Almighty.

Now with the contrast between John the Baptist and Satan in mind let's look at Ezekiel 28 and see a couple of important things regarding the background of this one called Satan. We will begin in verse 12.

Ezekiel 28:12. *Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. (KJV)*

This now transfers from the king of Tyrus and any kind of relation of a human being to the spirit being, Satan.

13) Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God ... (KJV)

That could only refer to Satan, the serpent.

14) Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. (KJV)

This is obviously referring to Satan.

15) Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

...
17) Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness ... (KJV)

What we're being told here is that Satan allowed pride and vanity to creep in and control his mind. Because of that He says:

17b) ... I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. (KJV)

We see here that verse 14 refers to this anointed cherub that covers. Let's go to Hebrews 8:5. I will read this out of the New King James translation to add just a little bit more background to this being that we are talking about. Here it is talking about how the physical things, particularly the temple, the holy of holies, all of the accoutrements of the temple were a shadow of what exists in heaven.

Hebrews 8:5. *Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things ... (NKJV)*

The temple was a copy, a shadow of what exists in heaven.

5b) ... as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (NKJV)

We see here that the ark was a copy or a shadow of what was in heaven. It's possible that Satan originally was one of the angels that covered the mercy seat of the very throne of God, a very high position. Someday we'll get all of the details, but that's certainly an indication.

What about his role, this very high-ranking angel of God. He was a created being. He was created for a specific purpose, to serve. His role was likely one of the most prominent roles ever created, when you think about it. Apparently, he administered or assisted in the governance over other angels. The number of angels, as we know, went into the millions and millions. Let's go to Revelation 5:11 to get a count and this will tell us the level of responsibility that Satan might have had.

Revelation 5:11. *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; (KJV)*

This number was the angels around the throne, including the twenty-four elders. If you do the math, that's a hundred million. And thousands of thousands has to be a minimum of two million. It could probably be a lot more, so the number is a hundred and two million. If that number is correct, that would refer to the righteous angels. That meant that fifty-one million demons went with Satan, because he lead a third of them astray as it shows in Revelation 12.

Yet, despite his power, his beauty and all of that, his role was to be a subservient role, not in the limelight, not commanding everybody's attention. Let's go to Hebrews 1:5. This was God's plan for this being and for all of the angels. Satan apparently had a higher position than your average angel.

Hebrews 1:5. *For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son ... (KJV)*

That appellation could only refer to Jesus Christ.

5b) ... this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6) And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

...

13) But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand ... (KJV)

This He did with Christ.

13b) ... until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (KJV)

We see here that the angelic role was ultimately a subservient role to minister to those human beings who would later become spirit beings, thereby becoming the children of God. This is the role. This is God's plan.

What was Satan's reaction to that plan and to that role? Obviously he didn't like it. He was dissatisfied with it. We don't know how long it took, but he became jealous of humanity, because he couldn't have the sonship and couldn't have the worship. Let's go to Isaiah 14:12 and we'll see why he couldn't accept it, because of a character flaw and because of the pride and the vanity that he allowed to creep into his life.

Isaiah 14:12. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (KJV)*

He is opposing God.

13) *For thou hast said in thine heart ... (KJV)*

God knows the heart.

13b) ... *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... (KJV)*

This indicated he did have some authority. He did have a throne of sorts.

13 continued) ... *I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation ... (KJV)*

That is right up where God is.

13 continued) ... *in the sides of the north:*

14) *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (KJV)*

The Tanakh says, "I will match the most high."

15) *Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (KJV)*

We know Lucifer is a Latin translation from the Vulgate. The Hebrew word here is Strong's number 1966 and it's "heylel," which means *morning star*. There is a note here that says that this word "heylel" is from Strong's number 1984. This opens up what we need to understand. Strong's number 1984 is "halal." We read from Strong's number 1984 that "heylel" means *in a sense of brightness*. Strong's number 1984 "halal" says *to shine as in to make a show, to shine in as to boast, to shine in as to rage*. That is, I

believe, a more appropriate translation for what we find here in Isaiah 14 and considering the context it opens up our understanding of Satan, who wanted to make a show, who wanted to boast for himself and when he didn't get his own way and he wasn't in the spotlight, he wanted to rage.

Verse 15 says, "you shall be brought down." To prove that let's go to Luke 10:17. Christ, when He walked this earth, said that He watched that happen. Satan will be brought down more than once, as we are going to see in a minute, but this is the first time he was brought down.

Luke 10:17. *And the seventy returned again with joy ... (KJV)*

These are the seventy disciples that Christ sent out. They came back after a short little ministerial trip that they took ministering to people.

17b) ... saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18) And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. (KJV)

Satan indeed was brought down. He rebelled because he wasn't the focus and then he was cast out, because God cannot use somebody who wants to have the limelight, who wants to have the spotlight on them, who wants to have it their way. Satan did not have the humility to accept the role that God gave him. He didn't have the Godly vision of the greater purpose that God was doing. He didn't have the vision of how he fit into it, because his role was a subservient role and not the main focus.

Satan, certainly, did not have a Christ-like attitude. Let's go to Matthew 20:25. Notice what Christ said was the attitude that we should have, which is the attitude he had when He walked this earth. This was the attitude that the righteous angels have, but the third of the angels that followed Satan did not have.

Matthew 20:25. *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them [the people], and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

26) But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you ... (KJV)

What should he do?

26b) ... let him be your minister [servant];

27) and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28) even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (KJV)

The Greek word for minister here is Strong's number 1249 and it's the word "diakonos," where we get the English word "deacon." It means *to run on errands, to be an attendant, to be a waiter at a table or to do other menial duties.* Christ said the greatest

should place themselves to be servants. Of course, we have all seen examples in the past of ministers who did just the opposite. They were there to be served, rather than to serve and that is a satanic attitude. Satan was just simply unwilling to be subservient. He deceived a third of the angels and, as they say, the rest is history. That's the background of this being that we are going to compare to John the Baptist.

2. In the second point let's look at John the Baptist.

He is a human, obviously. Let's look at his role. We need to go to Luke 1, starting in verse 11. As we are going to see, he had a role that was planned before his birth.

***Luke 1:11.** And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (KJV)*

This was as John the Baptist's father was serving at the temple.

*12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
13) But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.
14) And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
15) For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit], even from his mother's womb. (KJV)*

None of us has been so honored. No human being has been so honored as John.

*16) And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.
17) And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (KJV)*

His job was to go before Christ and prepare the way. Christ was the focus, not John the Baptist. It was similar to Satan in the sense that he was created for a unique purpose and he was commissioned from the time of his birth. Satan had that commission from the time of his creation. In both cases it was likely that they were the most prominent roles one could have either as a human being, or as an angelic being. Yet, in both cases the roles these two were given were subservient roles, not primary roles. Go to John 3:28. John had the humility to understand this.

***John 3:28.** Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. (KJV)*

I have known some people in the church who would have a hard time saying that if they were in John's shoes. They would say, "Look at me. I'm the forerunner. I'm out here in front. You had better pay attention to me, or you are going to pay the price." Notice what John said, "I'm sent before Him."

29) He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom ... (KJV)

He is referring to himself. He's not part of the party.

29b) ... which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (KJV)

He was happy to stand on the sidelines and see the focus go to Christ and rejoice at what was happening.

30) He must increase, but I must decrease. (KJV)

He understood that and he accepted it, because compared to Christ he knew he was nothing. You see, Satan didn't accept that.

31) He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth ... (KJV)

He understood his place. He understood he was a physical being compared to Jesus Christ.

31b) ... he that cometh from heaven is above all. (KJV)

That includes himself. "I understand that He is above me. I willingly accept that."

Let's look at John's reaction to this role that was given him from birth. Go to Matthew 3, beginning in verse 11. He is speaking to a crowd and Christ is on His way to where John is.

Matthew 3:11. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance ... (KJV)*

Then he switches the focus off of himself.

11b) ... but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (KJV)

Servants or slaves, before they wash their master's feet, had to take off the master's sandals. The master didn't take off his own sandals. He sat down and a slave unbuckled or untied the sandals and washed the master's feet. Of course, we follow that example in foot washing. Here John is saying I'm not even worthy to carry your shoes. I'm not worthy to take your shoes off. I'm not worthy as a servant would be to wash your feet.

13) Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14) *But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*

15) *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. (KJV)*

John allowed Christ to come into the water and be baptized.

16) *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*

17) *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (KJV)*

We have to ask ourselves today: If I were John, what would my attitude be? Today the number one rule in business is to squash those people who are coming up underneath you. If they see a rising star down in the ranks that someday might take your place, the first thing they do is try to squash them, to put out rumors or to put them in a position where they are going to fail, because the man at the top is protecting his position. That's humanly what happens. We need to remember that this person that is coming, Jesus Christ, to take the limelight away from John is his younger cousin. Humanly somebody could say, what's this? This is my young cousin. I'm going to diminish. He's going to ascend. He's going to take my place. I'm going to be nobody after this. That's a human reaction, yet we know very clearly John's humility and his acceptance of his role.

Let's look at Christ's response to John's response, to John's attitude. Go to Matthew 11:11. Notice the honor that Christ gave John for what John did and ultimately gave his life.

Matthew 11:11. *Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist ... (KJV)*

It would not surprise me if over the years in the church some people have allowed themselves to think that they are greater than John the Baptist, even some people today. Christ goes on to say.

11b) *... notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he [John the Baptist]. (KJV)*

Resurrected spirit beings are greater than any human being. People often overlook the humility of John the Baptist, his tremendous humility in great contrast to Satan and his pride and his vanity.

3. A brief third point is to now summarize and contrast Satan the devil with John the Baptist.

Both were created for unique roles by God. They had very specific, very unique roles. Both of these roles were high profile. Satan was ranked high among the angelic hosts. John the Baptist had the honor of introducing Jesus Christ to the world, going before Him and prophesying of His coming. Both of these roles were subservient roles. One was satisfied and happy with his role. He embraced his role with extreme humility and because of that he was called the greatest man that has ever been born of a woman. The other one was unhappy and unsatisfied with his role. It wasn't enough. He wanted more. He rebelled and he fought his very Creator. He refused then and refuses now to be subservient to any being, anybody, anything. This is the contrast between these two individuals; one spirit, one human.

4. Let's spend the rest of the sermon in the fourth point. It is, why are we making this comparison?

What is there to learn from this comparison, that we can take away from this, particularly in the Laodicean era, which we find ourselves living in? The fact is that all of us, maybe if we look back at our lives, we have been through it several times already but I guarantee it's going to happen again and again, at one time or another we're all going to be put in a similar position of being in a subservient role. That will happen. Why? Because God wants to test us to see how we will handle it. Will we handle it like Satan handled it or will we handle it as John handled it? Will we place ourselves and our desires beneath other people? The familiar scripture we quote so many times, Philippians 2:3.

***Philippians 2:3.** Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. (KJV)*

John did. Satan did not. God will put us in a position and it's not a onetime event. It will happen over and over and over in our lives. He will put us in positions to see whether we're going to honor ourselves and exalt the self or whether we are going to put others ahead of us and sublimate our desires for the desires and the needs of others.

God tests ministers, too. Let me give you a personal example. Back in the Worldwide Church of God days pastors were transferred every few years. If you were a local elder, as I was, I've been a minister now for over forty years. I lost track at over twenty ministers that cycled through. The fact is that when a new minister came in, everything changed. I'll give you one example. I won't name names. A very fine minister, good solid minister in Massachusetts gave me a lot of responsibilities. I was an elder and he basically had me physically run the church, because he wanted to focus on the spiritual matters, which is proper. He was transferred and we had another guy come in and, unbeknownst to us at the time, he had come from Pasadena and he was sent to Pasadena because he had gotten into trouble. They wanted to re-educate him in Pasadena and so they sent him as far away from Pasadena as they could, all the way to Boston, Massachusetts. When he came in, he was just kind of cut from a different bolt of cloth, let's say, and began changing things and doing all kinds of different things.

At the same time he wanted to know who was loyal to him versus anything else; headquarters, Mr. Armstrong, even God and Christ in that sense, if you extend that out. When he found out that I was not going to do that, then all of a sudden all of those responsibilities that I had before, basically running the church, now I had zero. I was off of the speaking schedule with kind of nothing to do.

It rankled me at first. Obviously, your ego is hurt, your pride is hurt and all of that. I finally came to a conclusion. I said what is God doing? Is this unnoticeable to God? Does this guy somehow slip under the radar and do this without God's knowledge? Of course it doesn't. God knows exactly what's happening. I came to the conclusion that God allows things like this to happen, for us to be put in a subservient role, because He wants to find out what we're made of. He's basically saying, "Okay Rick. How are you going to handle it? Are you going to handle it like Satan or are you going to handle it like John the Baptist? What's it going to be? I'm going to give you time and I'm going to watch you and I'm going to see how you handle it." So, God allows these things to test us, because He wants to know what's in our heart.

Let's look at the state of the end time church today, immediately before the return of Jesus Christ. I'm not saying Christ is going to return immediately, but in the context since Adam and Eve it's getting close. Let's go to Revelation 3:17 talking about this age, this era, the mindset of the world, but specifically the mindset of the church. We see it. We acknowledge it.

Revelation 3:17. *Because thou [Laodicea] sayest, I am rich ... (KJV)*

Boy we are rich. Compared to eighty percent of the world, probably ninety percent of the people who have ever lived, we live like kings.

17b) ... and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ... (KJV)

That is the mindset, a very independent mindset, a very self-satisfied mindset, a very prideful mindset.

17 continued) ... and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (KJV)

He means spiritually. You have all of this stuff. Most of you live in the most prosperous nation that the world has ever known. You have all of this stuff, all of these things, but you are so naked and so blind and so miserable and so poor that you don't realize it. Let's go to 2 Timothy 3:1, talking about the last days. This adds to the fact that people are pleased with themselves, self-satisfied, independently minded. Nobody's going to tell me what to do.

2 Timothy 3:1-5. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

Very dangerous times are coming.

2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous ... (KJV)

This refers to loving yourself, wanting to take to the self.

2b) ... boasters ... (KJV)

This is bragging about the self.

2 continued) ... proud, blasphemers ... (KJV)

This is putting the self in front of God.

2 continued) ... disobedient to parents, unthankful ... (KJV)

This is putting the self in front of parents and taking things for granted; the entitlement mentality that spills out into the world, too. This entitlement mentality is that I deserve all of this. I deserve welfare, I deserve food stamps. I deserve not to work and have a good life. I deserve not to put in much effort and have all kinds of success. That's the mentality today.

2 continued) ... unholy, (KJV)

Do these two scriptures describe humble people? It's just the opposite, absolutely the opposite. What they describe is a satanic attitude. They describe the attitude that Satan had when he rebelled and continues to have this day.

Our goal, why we're here every Sabbath and the holy days and we study God's word and we pray to God and we want to be obedient to God, is that we want to be members of God's family for an eternity, forever. If that's the case, let's ask the question. Who does God surround Himself with in heaven? What kind of beings are around His heavenly throne? The primary being is our Savior, Jesus Christ, at His right hand, who willingly gave up His life in humility for all of us. Let's go to Philippians 2:3. I paraphrased this earlier, but we're going to go on from there. Christ had this attitude.

Philippians 2:3. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory ... (KJV)

The Cassirer says, "let nothing be done through strife or empty conceit." This is vain, empty, but yet looking to the self.

3b) ... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (KJV)

Again, the Cassirer says, "and may each of you study not merely his own welfare, but that of others as well," care about the welfare of others.

5) *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

6) *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (KJV)*

That's the King James translation. It is not a very accurate translation. The Complete Jewish Bible says this, "who being in the form of God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped," unlike Satan. You see, Christ knows the Father is the Father. Christ knows, yes, He is the Savior, but He is the Son and Christ said "I came to do my Father's will. Your will be done, not mine." That is who is sitting on the right hand of God the Father.

7) *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (KJV)*

He is sitting right next to God the Father. God surrounds Himself with the twenty-four elders. Let's go to Revelation 4:10. It is going to be something to see the twenty-four elders and see where they sit and how they relate and everything that happens someday. Notice their attitude. This is something, not only what they have done, but what they are doing as we speak.

Revelation 4:10. *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

11) *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (KJV)*

Even the twenty-four elders say we're not worthy. Only Christ is worthy. Who are "we?" They cast their crowns down and bow down and worship the Father. Those are the beings who surround the throne. The only conclusion we can draw from this is that the only beings who are around the throne right now are those clothed with humility. Projecting that forward the only ones who are going to be in the family of God and even be able to have access to the throne and come near the throne must be clothed with humility. We can't get around that.

People that want their own way, people that insist on being in the limelight will follow Satan, as we are going to see. You see, Lucifer wanted God's crown. John the Baptist did not. You see, men can do the same thing on this earth. God is watching. God knows the hearts. Like Abraham and Isaac, He puts men into positions and circumstances to see what their reaction is going to be. You can't hide from God.

I had a minister in the '70s. We were new. Dorothy and I had just gotten married and moved here to Washington. I asked him, what is my role? I don't want to overstep. Just tell me what you want me to do. The first thing that came out of his mouth, he said, "Point the people to me." I was just shocked. That was the prime operating orders here? Point the people to you? He said, "I'll point them to headquarters." I thought

well, why are we doing that? Where is God in this picture? Where is Christ in this picture?

Other brethren fight about infinitesimal and small things. Back in the late '70s in one of the churches here in Washington we had the famous battle of the thermostats at one of the churches. It was just amazing. The thermostat was there. There was a fellow responsible for the thermostat, but there were other people in the room who just couldn't accept whatever number he put on the thermostat and so half way into services somebody would go up and change it and then somebody else would go over and change it. They wanted a different temperature. This just went on and on and on. The poor old machine was just about ready to blow up. It was going up and down and up and down. Nobody would just humble themselves and say, look this is not my responsibility. This guy is in charge of this. If I feel strongly about it, I'll go talk to him, but I'm not going to go over there and unilaterally change the temperature for the entire room. That's kind of arrogant. Yet, we have battles over little things like this and God is looking down and shaking His head. You want to be in the kingdom? You want some responsibility in the kingdom and you can't even leave a thermostat alone? I'm sure God just sits there and shakes His head.

I remember making a church visit once. Part of the role I was given at that time was to educate the guys that were giving sermonettes on how to give a sermonette just to help them out, not to dictate or crack a whip, but just explain. We had a problem with this one guy who would give as many scriptures in a twelve minute sermonette as I would give in a sermon. He could rack up twenty scriptures. He would always go overtime and that was another problem. The fact is that you were sitting there and he was whipping through scriptures so fast that the little widows and the people that were hard of hearing and the people that couldn't see very well just gave up. You can read the scriptures at home, which we all should do. When somebody stands up in a position of speaking, you expect them to expound on the scripture. Anybody can stand up and read. I told this fellow that and said, look you only have twelve minutes. You have to have an introduction. You have to have a conclusion. You have to state a purpose. You need to maybe have a true story or give some explanation or some historical background of whatever it is you are speaking on and therefore you can only have a handful of scriptures at most. You could tell he didn't like it. He was sitting there with his arms crossed. Guess what? I was out in the audience. He gave a sermonette and used seventeen or eighteen scriptures. He was giving a message that "I'm going to do what I'm going to do and nobody is going to tell me what I'm going to do." When somebody is put in that position and you observe that, you get a little peek into somebody's heart. God knows the heart, but the door opens just a crack and we can see what's going on in that person's heart in a situation like that.

God will put us through this time and time again to see if we are growing, if we are improving, if we are gaining in humility to see whether we are going to put ourselves first or somebody else first, our wishes first or somebody else's wishes first. We come to the conclusion over years is that maybe our way isn't the best way. Even more importantly, maybe our way is not God's way. I've seen people so sure that their way is God's way.

What we are basically saying is, “God you have to agree with me because I’m up here and you’re down here and therefore you must agree with me.” If we have a John the Baptist attitude then John the Baptist said that he was there to serve. I will even carry your shoes. Just tell me what to do and I’ll do it with a happy attitude. John the Baptist pointed the people to Christ, wanted to do exactly what Christ wanted him to do. Satan wanted to take for himself. He wanted the spotlight. He wanted the power. He wanted the control. He wanted the influence. He wanted to be the greatest.

Let’s conclude now. We here are nobodys. There are no Donald Trumps here. I am thankful for that. The fact is there are no high and mighty here; Hillary Clinton, the Clinton family, the Trump family, the Bush family. There is none of that here. We are the weak of the world, but we are unique, because we have a calling. We have an opportunity and we have a role to play as firstfruits. If we do that the way God wants us to do it, the way John the Baptist did, then we will be in the family of God forever.

We can go forward in one of two ways. You can go forward in the way that Satan did, the attitude of those we read about in Laodicea, calling attention to ourselves, being very self-satisfied, being very prideful, being very self-sufficient and not wanting anybody to tell us what to do. That was Satan’s attitude. Or we can go forward with the attitude of John the Baptist, pointing everyone to Jesus Christ. I am nothing. I am diminishing. He is increasing. I’m not even worthy to undo the buckles of His shoes. As Christ did, giving His life as an example for us, paying the penalty for our sins. Or as the twenty-four elders do at this very moment, bowing down before God and worshipping God. Whether it’s John the Baptist or Satan or us, the choices we make today have eternal consequences. Satan’s choice leads him to the lake of fire. The choice that John the Baptist made caused Christ to say that there has never been a human being born that was greater than John the Baptist; never, ever. My guess is that John the Baptist, is going to be in the front of the line going into the Kingdom of God, so to speak, not that we are standing in line. If he was the greatest when Christ said that, that means Moses is behind him, David is behind him, Abraham is behind him, this very humble man, John the Baptist.

Our choice, our approach, our attitude has eternal consequences every hour of every day. What are we going to do as God’s people? Do we take what is rightfully ours? Are we entitled to things? That’s the attitude of the world today. Or as some in the church have said, “Well because I support the work, because I do the job that I’ve been doing, God owes me the kingdom.” I’ve heard that. Or do we just sit here and humbly pray and thank God for His mercy toward us in spite of our sins, in spite of our faults, in spite of our shortcomings. We’re eternally thankful to Him that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through the remission of sins, He doesn’t hold us accountable.

Let’s go to one final scripture in Luke 18:13. We are breaking into the account of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee was standing praying before God, looking up to God telling God how wonderful he was, how he fasted, how he tithed, how he did all of these wonderful things and then compared himself to this publican who was over in

the shadows and wouldn't even raise his head. God listened to the Pharisee, then He tuned into what the publican was saying.

Luke 18:13. *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven ... (KJV)*

The Pharisee was looking into heaven waiting for God's spotlight to fall on him.

13b) ... but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (KJV)

That should be our attitude, just beating on our chest saying, God I fall so far short. I make so many mistakes. I have so many wrong thoughts. I have said so many wrong words. I have not treated people the way Christ would or I should have. I have just had a litany of screw-ups in my life. Just be merciful to me. Notice Christ's answer.

14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

Let's learn the lesson from this comparison of Satan the devil, a spirit being, with John the Baptist, a human being, and take note of the fact that the main difference between the two is one word, humility. Let's follow John the Baptist's example of humility into the Kingdom of God.