



The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 5: Demonic Assignments in Connection with Jesus' Life and Death

In our present series examining the extent of Satan's power to affect human life, we are continuing to look at the nature of demonic "assignments," focusing this time on the New Testament. Here we see that even Jesus was not immune from Satanic assignments *directed by God*. At the beginning of His earthly ministry He was led *by the Holy Spirit* into the wilderness to be tested by Satan himself. Satan's intent was to derail Jesus' earthly mission while God's purpose was for Jesus to prove His sinless character and worthiness to be the Savior for all mankind. One of Satan's capabilities demonstrated during this assignment was his ability to lead Jesus in an experience of extra-dimensional transport to the "pinnacle of the temple" and to a "very high mountain" from which He was able to see the "kingdoms of the world" (Mat. 4:1-11).

Jesus' triumphant victory over Satan in this wilderness experience did not deter Satan from instigating further attempts to divert Jesus from His primary mission. As Jesus approached His final months of ministry, Satan's schemes seemed to focus on using Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples. Just as we saw in the Old Testament, however, with the godly man Job, Satan first had to gain permission from God to put his plan into action. God granted that permission but, again, not without putting a "safety net" around Peter. This "net" consisted of the powerful prayers of Jesus Himself that Peter's faith would not fail during this time of being "sifted like wheat" by Satan. God also grasped the opportunity to bring good out of Satan's actions. Not only did He expect Peter to be spiritually strengthened through this time of testing, but He also envisioned the impact Peter could have in strengthening other believers (Luke 22:31-32).

When given permission by God, Satan was seemingly able to permeate Peter's thoughts, words, emotions, and actions, disconnecting him from the intentions of his heart. The first recorded incident occurred when Jesus began telling his disciples about His coming suffering and death. Peter quickly declared, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." Jesus immediately recognized the Satanic origin of these words. Looking squarely at Peter but speaking to Satan, Jesus ordered Satan behind Him, declaring him to be a stumbling block to His cause (Mat. 16:21-23; NASB).

Satan's impact on Peter was also seen the night that Jesus was arrested. Peter had vowed only hours earlier that he would die with Jesus rather than desert him. His eagerness to stand with Jesus was demonstrated when he attacked the high priest's servant as the Roman soldiers arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus. He was also one of the only disciples to follow Jesus to His arraignment before the high priest. There in the courtyard, however, fear gripped his heart so strongly that he ended up denying even knowing the Lord three times, exactly as Jesus had foretold him. Recognizing how greatly he had failed and succumbed to the evil one, Peter went out and "wept bitterly" (Mat. 26:31-35; 56, 58, 69-75; Luke 22:50-51; John 18:15).

Of course, Satan used Judas in an even more drastic manner that night. Scripture does not mention Satan seeking approval from God to work through this disciple's life, but we know that Judas' act of betrayal

was in accordance with God's pre-ordained plan (Psalm 41:9; Acts 1:16). If Judas wasn't a true "believer," or Satan was "on assignment" for God in his use of Judas, permission was perhaps not needed.

With Judas, too, Satan was able to penetrate his inner being and put within his heart a desire to betray Jesus. As Judas nurtured this thought and eventually acquiesced his will to it, I believe it opened the door for Satan to "enter" him and carry out his reprehensible act (John 13:2, 21-27).

Satan actually "entering" a person was seemingly without precedent, and yet the nature of the act performed was in keeping with Satan himself doing it, just as it was Satan himself who was involved in the wilderness temptations. While Satan used both Peter and Judas in his plots against Jesus, there was a drastic difference in the culpability of the two men. As Jesus washed Peter's feet in the Upper Room, He assured Peter that he was "clean," but not Judas. Jesus also earlier referred to Judas as a "devil" (John 6:70). Perhaps these are indications that Judas was *not* a true "believer" as Peter was.

In both of these cases, however, Satan was able to lead these men into actions they probably would never have done on their own accord. This is borne out by the intense reaction of both of them when Satan departed and they recognized the nature of what they had done. The degree of remorse shown is also in keeping with the significance of the offense (Mat. 26:75; 27:3-5).

All of these examples reveal a deep, but temporary, penetration of the person's being by Satan for a specific purpose. We see Satan being able to affect man's heart, and thus his actions, as well as impart an extra-dimensional experience of travel and vision. In our next issue we will continue to look at the nature of other demonic assignments in the New Testament that did not involve Jesus.