

## 152 – Armor up! But first, a word to the ecclesia

I'm excited about sharing what I've been learning as I expand and update the book, *Go GOD!* I think you're really going to like the changes in how the book will look and feel, and the content has been shaping up wonderfully, Praise the Lord!

I had to ask Harold Smith to help me with some momentary confusion about sa-tan when I got into some stuff in the Apostle John's Revelation. Harold and I emailed back and forth for a couple of days, and I thought you'd like to hear a piece we didn't have before. I can't add it to the book, because I haven't been able to find the source myself, and I'm just not released to spend the time on it. In any case, I told Barbara yesterday that if being introduced to Harold in the summer of 2009 was only for the purpose of understanding sa-tan, it was worth the energy I invested, by the Father's leading...and sometimes by His prodding.

Chapter 4, which deals with sa-tan had a working title, "*Ain't No Devil Made You Do Nuthin'*," but its current title is, "*Now Who do We Blame?*"

Here's something Harold sent me this past Sunday morning:

"Satan" does not appear as an entity in any literature until the writings of Origen, some 200 years after the Resurrection. In his "Contra Celsum", Origen identifies the fallen angel Azazel in the [Book of Enoch](#) as "Satan". The Book of Enoch, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, where the name Azazel occurs, was written around 200 BC and is considered part of Hebrew literature - validated in [Jude 1:14-15](#). This account in Enoch is also described briefly in [Genesis 6:2-8](#). In [Leviticus 16:8, 10, 26](#), however, the Hebrew word [azazel](#) (click for the Hebrew perspective) is found to mean, "scapegoat" - most probably, the connection Origen found to link these disparate fragments together into a theology.

I can't tell you how liberating, clarifying, and sense-making it has been to grasp this Hebraic understanding of sa-tan. Tonight you'll discover with me

why has become so important, as we look together with fresh eyes at the Panoply of God from Paul's letter to the Ephesians in Chapter 6. There Paul also introduced the term, **stratagems of the adversary**, and in chapter 4, He used the same Greek word to describe what he called, "**the systematizing of the deception.**"

So, let's go through the newly revised chapter in **Go GOD!**, Chapter 10, titled "*Armor Up!*"

By the way, before I begin, each of you, who have been listening faithfully for many months if not years, will receive a copy of the new book, whenever it's ready to be published. If I'm still among the living, I'll sign each one. If not, I pray that you will know that you had a huge part in making what Barbara calls my living epistle available to the world.

I can't begin to express my gratitude for the privilege of sitting with Him every week to prepare for our time together on Light Up The Scriptures; and throughout the week to be in His presence, to write what He shows... Your generous support of the Ministry Center makes it possible for Barbara and me to focus solely on what the Father directs us to do every day.

Father, I ask You to open the floodgates of Heaven over the ecclesia who have supported Your work in your house, wherever it's been located. Blow the doors off the hinges and flood Your blessing over these sons and daughters of yours. Let every prayer and every penny they've invested reap 100 fold back to them, I pray, holy Father, in Yeshua's name, AMEN.

OK, Let's dive into our study tonight.

# Armor Up!

**Put on the panoply [armor] of God to enable you to stand up to the stratagems of the adversary, for it is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh, but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials.** (Ephesians 6:11-12)

**F**aith in YahHoVeH is no small thing, and we are in for some adversarial opposition – *sa-tan* – but the Father has supplied everything needed to handle what the Apostle Paul calls “**the stratagems of the adversary.**” When we put on “**the panoply of God,**” it is more than enough to “**extinguish all the fiery arrows**” that will surely come...until we have conquered sa-tan.

**What shall be separating us from the love of God in the Messiah Yeshua? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written that “On Thy account we are being put to death the whole day, We are reckoned as sheep for slaughter.” Nay! In all these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord.** (Romans 8:35-39)

Trials are coming, so “*armor up!*” It’s like training for a long distance run. Training builds the endurance to handle the race. It’s not always fun and on some days we might prefer to stay in bed! Trials build our spiritual endurance and give our experiences significance beyond random acts that hurt for no reason.

**All joy deem it, my brethren, whenever you should be falling into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith is producing endurance. Now let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and unimpaired, lacking in nothing.** (James 1:2-4)

**Happy is the man who is enduring trial, for, becoming qualified, he will be obtaining the wreath of life, which He promises to those loving Him.** (James 1:12)

When we “*Armor Up,*” we are fully equipping ourselves to go through any struggle and come out standing on our own two feet, like soldiers who have held steady in the face of the enemy on a conquered hilltop. Our Father has supplied the most effective defensive protection and offensive weapon against the challenges to come. **Panoply** in Greek, means “*every-implement*” (CLNT-KC, 216); “*complete armor*” (Thayer, 476). The Father would not equip His children with anything but the best, so let’s get acquainted with **the panoply of God.**

**Therefore, take up the panoply of God that you may be enabled to withstand in the wicked day, and having effected all, to stand. Stand, then, girded about your loins with**

**truth, with the cuirass of righteousness put on, and your feet sandaled with the readiness of the evangel of peace; with all taking up the large shield of faith, by which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the wicked\*; and receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is a declaration of God.** (Ephesians 6:13-17 –

*\*The word, “one” does not appear at the end of this sentence in the original text. See explanation on page 75)*

The most important part of Paul’s instruction is to **“put on”** the armor! It is not enough that YahHoVeH supplied it; we must *wear* it! Putting on **the panoply of God** enables us to **“withstand in the wicked day.”** The Father well knows there is much to withstand today, in **“the present wicked eon”** (Galatians 1:4), to stay focused on Him and to fulfill the purpose for which we were created! Perhaps Paul was confirming the Lord, when He prayed, **“rescue us from the wicked”** (Matthew 6:13).

Each part of **the panoply of God** serves a specific purpose. When we assemble all the pieces, we can better appreciate how complete our protection is, how thoroughly equipped we are, and how important it is to *put it on!* Here is a paraphrase and expansion of Paul’s instruction, combining definitions from the *Concordant Literal Keyword Concordance* and *Thayer’s Lexicon*:

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*Put on every implement that the Father has supplied for you to stand up to adversarial opposition that could take you down and knock you out:*

- **Protect your loins with truth.** Surround and encompass your most delicate parts with the actual facts, as opposed to the false.
- **Wear your breastplate of righteousness.** Protect your vital organs with your status as one who is justified before God.
- **Put on your sandals.** Walk with your feet shod, secured, and prepared with the glad tidings of peace through Yeshua and the proclamation of God’s grace.
- **Pick up the large shield of faith.** Hold up the truth; it will quench every “flaming dart” coming from any adversary, anywhere, anytime...no problem.
- **Accept salvation’s helmet.** Protect your mind in the certainty that the Father will save you out of death and into life as surely as He did Yeshua.
- **Accept the sword of the spirit.** The only offensive weapon you’ll need is YahHoVeH’s declaration. Carry His saying, promise, or command – which carries His power, agency, authority, and commission – in your heart and on your lips.
- **Put on every implement of this complete armor.** You will stand victoriously, having gone through every struggle with every adversary.

**Hallelujah!**

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What is the source of **the stratagems of the adversary** the Apostle Paul urges us to “stand up to,” and the arrows we are ready to quench? It can’t be “*the devil*,” now that we know what sa-tan is (*see Chapter 4*).

My wife, Barbara, has said this more times than I can count: “*If the adversary could have taken Adam out any easier, it wouldn’t have used Eve.*” Here is the message, as only she can preach it:

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*“Sovereign vessels, who settle for ‘flesh treats,’ are playing too low, and it’ll cost them more than they’d ever want to pay. You get what you play for!”*

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Paul mentions two adversarial tactics: “**stratagems**” (Ephesians 6:11) and “**the systematizing of the deception**” (Ephesians 4:14). Both terms come from the Greek word, “*methodeia*,” which means, “*a method of procedure (of the deception)*” (CLNT-KC 296); also “*cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery*” (Thayer 396).

The Apostle John described very clearly what “**stratagems**” and “**the systematizing of the deception**” look like, even though he didn’t use those terms:

**... the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the ostentation [pretentious parade] of living, is not of the Father, but is of the world.** (1 John 2:16)

John’s description establishes three elements that have been part of human nature from the beginning, which threaten our relationship with the Father and His call on our lives. You and I don’t need *the devil* to blame! We have enough *devils* inside us!

When men and women, who are called out by God for His purpose in this eon, respond to their physical or emotional desires, rather than to YahHoVeH’s words and purpose, they become “*fair game*.” They and the call of God on their lives can be *distracted, delayed, detoured, disqualified*, and even *destroyed*. If we will “*armor up*,” we will stand in the authority of God’s Spirit and His word, which *invites, inspires, instructs, enlightens*, and *guides* us “**... into all the truth**” (John 16:13).

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*Allow me to offer my own description of the nature and character of **stratagems**:*

**Stratagems** are anything that looks **reasonable** to the mind, **noble** or **appealing** to the senses; but which **distracts** our focus and energy, **diverts** our attention from, and ultimately **opposes** the Father’s purpose in our lives. **Stratagems distort** the truth and lead us away from seeking the Father’s face, imitating Him and following Yeshua. **Stratagems stop** us from doing something so simple, yet so important, according to the Apostle Paul:

**Become, then, imitators of God, as beloved children...**  
(Ephesians 5:1)

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My experience of a **stratagem** is that it appears suddenly, “*out of the blue*,” and may be fleeting, like a “*drive-by*” shooting. Here are a few examples:

1. Random but unwelcome phone calls
2. A feeling of obligation to attend a family gathering
3. Doubt about making “*the right choice*”
4. The many “*should-do’s*” of life.

“**The systematizing of the deception**” is “*quieter*,” and therefore more insidious and dangerous, than **stratagems** are. “**Systematizing**” implies aspects of our lives that we have incorporated into everyday routines; we give them almost no thought. At times, we may be aware of a subtle trapped feeling, or that we have compromised our freedom or integrity. Here are a few examples:

1. Unsatisfying relationships we were once enthusiastic about, but now only tolerate.
2. Jobs or careers we once felt were exciting, but which have become uninspiring.
3. Social, religious, or athletic obligations or pursuits that seem noble, pious, or important for a host of personal or professional reasons.

All of the items in the list above appeal to the “**flesh**” (the senses and emotions) and may be easily overlooked or ignored, hidden in some of the most mundane and seemingly innocent details of life. Their effects may seem inconsequential by themselves, but they can drain time, energy, and finances; they disturb our spiritual balance and distract us from hearing our Father’s voice. If a **stratagem** or **the systematizing** throws us off our *correct* course, recovery and restoration can take years, if it can be accomplished at all.

“**Withstanding**” (“*setting oneself against, resisting, or opposing*,” Thayer) “**in the wicked day**” takes deliberate and determined effort. The sooner we make corrections when we spot **stratagems** or **the systematizing**, the closer we will be following Yeshua.

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An example in my own life had all of the hallmarks of a “**stratagem of the adversary**” (we’ll list these hallmarks later in the chapter):

A relationship that began as a sudden, intense emotional attraction, became a “*tug-of-war*” between emotional highs and lows. Pets, which I treated like children, complicated the entanglement. The truth is, I saw danger signs at the first encounter, but I dismissed them. I saw at least two “*chicken exits*” at different times, but I passed by them, and the **stratagem** lengthened and deepened.

My continued acceptance of, and agreement with, the situation delayed my spiritual progress for 11 years, and almost disqualified me and destroyed my calling. The Father, in His mercy, helped me return to the course He set; He removed the **stratagem** with His “*strategy for the victory*.” Four specific steps opened the exit doors a final time and I escaped to reclaim my life:

1. **I offered to support my wife’s ministry to world leaders.** At the time we were acquainted only as colleagues and I knew very little about her work, but I was led to offer whatever help I could in her efforts. Over a 90-minute conversation, I shared with her a greatly compressed version of what appears in the pages of this book. My own spiritual life was rekindled as a result!

2. ***I asked Barbara to be my spiritual “coach.”*** I began studying the Scriptures again, after many idle years, because of the conversation that Barbara and I had at least two months earlier. I wanted to “kick-start” an intimate relationship with the Lord and I knew that Barbara had the “goods”: she possessed a clear astuteness of spirit and a solid personal relationship with the Father that would help me regain mine.
3. ***A sense of urgency in my spirit moved me to call Barbara.*** Several months after our first conversation, I felt an unction in my spirit to call Barbara. It turned out to be a pivotal phone call, after which I felt that we had become close friends.
4. ***I heard and, more importantly, heeded the Father’s word.*** Following a few e-mails, our relationship escalated. While reading one particular e-mail, I heard the Father, literally, whisper inside me, “Say *YES* to this, because it’s not coming around again.” In His grace and mercy, the Father had knit my heart with Barbara’s, brought us *true* love, completion as human beings, and gave me what I believe was a last chance to “obey” Him (obey means, “hear and heed,” CLNT-KC, 209).

***How could one pursue a thousand, or two put a myriad [ten thousand] to flight, if it were not that... Yahweh had surrendered them?*** (Deuteronomy 32:30)

In the strength of two walking as one, Barbara and I *agreed*, individually and together, to say “*Yes*” to YahHoVeH. He confirmed each “*Yes*,” unmistakably and miraculously revealed the immediate step along our course or its correction. The process has continued to this day. Together, the step-by-step leading of *His* Spirit through *our* spirits, in unity, harmony, and great purpose, brought us through to writing this story today (*read more of the story in Chapter 14, “Live the Victory”*).

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**Stratagems** are actually trials of faith; they can “*take our lights out*,” or they can prove and qualify us.

***... we may be glorying also in afflictions, having perceived that affliction is producing endurance, yet endurance testedness, yet testedness expectation. Now expectation is not mortifying, seeing that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which is being given to us.*** (Romans 5:3-5)

If we will perceive **stratagems** in the context of **the panoply of God**, we may remember to “[**take**] **up the large shield of faith, by which [we] will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the wicked.**” We can do more than merely survive **stratagems**; we can stand victorious over them.

***No trial has taken you except what is human. Now, faithful is God, Who will not be leaving you to be tried above what you are able, but, together with the trial, will be making the sequel also, to enable you to undergo it.*** (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Our victory – our “*achievement of mastery or success in a struggle or endeavor against odds or difficulties*” (Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary) – vindicates the Father’s character and validates His purpose.

In an earlier chapter we looked at the deception that diverted Adam and Eve from simply obeying YahHoVeH’s directive. Let’s look at the events again, in the context of a **stratagem**:

**And Yahweh Elohim instructed the human, saying, “From every tree of the garden you may eat, yea eat. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat from it; for on the day you eat from it, to die you shall be dying.”** (Genesis 2:16-17)

In other words, YahHoVeH said, “*Leave that tree alone! Just that one, mind you. You can eat from all of the others, but *THAT* one will kill you!*” It was a simple enough instruction, easy to grasp, and there was nothing unclear about it, right? Adam not only *heard* the Father, but *walked* with Him in the garden! How did the serpent succeed?

First, Eve was baited with what seemed like a reasonable question:

**The serpent said to the woman, “Indeed, did Elohim say, ‘You shall not to eat from every tree of the Garden?’”** (Genesis 3:1)

Eve had no idea that the question *itself* – indeed, *any* conversation with the serpent – was a **stratagem**, and was sure to go badly! Once Eve answered the serpent’s question, she was fully engaged in the **stratagem**, which progressed to the second step: **The serpent flat-out LIED!**

**Not to die shall you be dying; for Elohim knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be unclosed, and you will be like Elohim, knowing good and evil.**

(Genesis 3:4-5)

It’s all over now! The serpent didn’t refute Eve; he simply called YahHoVeH a liar to her face:

**“No, No! It won’t kill you! Not to worry!”**

Then, he added just enough truth to make the lie believable:

**“It will make you like YahHoVeH. You’ll know what He knows. Won’t that be nice?”**

The serpent *must* have heard the Father tell Adam about the trees, which one to avoid, and why. We can only speculate about the serpent’s motive; all we know about it was that it **“became more crafty than any other animal of the field...”** (Genesis 3:1). **“Crafty”** means “*subtle, shrewd, sly, sensible*” (Gesenius). In her innocence, Eve was clearly no match for the serpent’s “talents,” no matter what its motives.

Suddenly Eve was thrown off balance, confused by conflicting and reasonable-sounding information from two different sources, Adam and the serpent. Paul warned the Ephesians, 4,000 years later, to watch out for the same kind of **“deception”**:

**“...being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception.”** (Ephesians 4:14)

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*A single question, plus an outright lie, mixed with a little truth to make the lie believable, established the pattern – the*



*“method of procedure” (CLNT-KC 296), e.g., “the systematizing of the deception” – that we must Armor Up against!*

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Seduced by the **stratagem**, which now included the sensuous appeal of the fruit itself, Eve’s **flesh** desires took over:

**Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it brought a yearning to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining insight.** (Genesis 3:6)

Only *after* the conversation with the serpent did Eve notice anything about the tree, which she had probably walked past many times before. Suddenly, she experiences **“yearning”** (*“to glow hot, to be moved,”* Gesenius), and a desire **“for gaining insight”** (*“have comprehension; act wisely,”* Gesenius). Eve wanted something *more* and *better* than how she perceived her current state. None of this was the case *before* the **stratagem**!

**What’s the lesson? If a snake starts talking, you keep walking, because there are NO friendly snakes!**

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*In the Garden of Eden, only “days” after the creation of heaven and earth, the first **stratagem** was perpetrated and the hallmarks of those to follow were established:*

- *A seemingly innocent encounter can pull us off course, away from YahHoVeH’s clear direction.*
  - *We will likely experience heightened senses, excited about noticing things we didn’t notice before.*
  - *Seductive desires are fueled by, and attracted to, the new things we notice, and the promise of more and better than our current status.*
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The Apostle Paul gave a strong *“heads up”* warning about what undermines our faith. He also spelled out our accountability to safeguard ourselves from being disqualified by trials.

**...unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and**

**thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception.** (Ephesians 4:13-14)

First, Paul established three immediate goals:

1. **“unity of the faith”**
2. **“a mature man”**
3. **“the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ”**

Next, he described the attitudes and character of those who fail to **“attain”** the first three goals:

1. **“minors”**
2. **“surging hither and thither”**
3. **“being carried about”**

Then, Paul defined the *“danger zone”* to avoid:

1. **“every wind of teaching”**
2. **“human caprice”**
3. **“craftiness”** – where have we heard *that* word before?

Finally, Paul’s term, **the systematizing of the deception**, implies that the “method of operation” (the root of the Greek word, **“systematizing”**) is designed to run *automatically*, to look as *normal* as brushing our teeth. In effect, Paul issued a clear and stern warning to the Ephesians and by extension, to us. If the Apostle were speaking to you and me today, he might say something like this:

*“The goal is to get it together and recognize who you are so you can grow up to complete the Messiah. Get past your tendency to bend however the wind blows, to listen to anyone with something to say, or to follow whomever comes to town today.*

*“Quit letting just anyone pull a spiritual fast one on you with slick moves! You’re being sold a bill of goods and it’s a calculated, systematic effort to distract, delay, detour, disqualify, and even destroy your calling before YahHoVeH. Now, get a grip and get on with the Father’s call on your lives!”*

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Paul also described **the deception**, and painted the picture of what life looks like when **stratagems** and **the systematizing** are ultimately successful. He paints a graphic picture of someone who separates himself from any comprehension of, or relationship with, YahHoVeH. Paul’s language makes it clear that those succumbing to **the stratagems** and living in **the systematizing of the deception**, are not even aware of their condition! We can see this all around us today.

***This, then I am saying and attesting in the Lord: By no means are you still to be walking according as those of the nations also are walking, in the vanity of their mind, their comprehension being darkened, being estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the callousness of their hearts, who, being***

**past feeling, in greed give themselves up with wantonness to all uncleanness as a vocation.** (Ephesians 4: 17-19)

A paraphrase of Paul's message might read like this:

*“Stop behaving like people who don't even know YahHoVeH! They are in a state of mental perverseness and depravation that they caused! Their faculties of feeling, desiring, and understanding are covered with the darkness they invited! They have shut themselves out of fellowship and intimacy with the Father!*

*Don't share their lack of knowledge, education or awareness, as if your hearts were like theirs: covered with a thick, insensitive skin. Their genuine emotions are dead; they are greedy to have more and steal away to carouse under the cover of darkness. They have surrendered themselves to luxuriating in lustful, dissipated, and licentious living, as if it were their job!”*

(Combined definitions from CLNT-KC, Thayer,  
and Webster's Online Dictionary)

Later in his letter to the ecclesia, Paul depicted the frame of mind, and attitudes of heart and spirit that disqualify and destroy a man or woman of faith. He alternately outlined the qualities needed to succeed in living above the **stratagems** and **systematizing**. Paul gave specific instructions that are important to us today. His back-and-forth exhortations to “*avoid this*” (in lightface below), and “**do this**” (boldface), show how serious the times and how high the stakes were. The times are every bit as serious and the stakes are just as high today.

*...put off from you, as regards your former behavior, the old humanity which is corrupted in accord with its seductive desires, **yet to be rejuvenated in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new humanity which, in accord with God, is being created in righteousness and benignity** [mercy, kindness and bounty] of the truth. Wherefore, putting off the false, **let each be speaking the truth with his associate, for we are members of one another.***

*Are you indignant, and not sinning? Do not let the sun be sinking on your vexation [indignation, exasperation or wrath], nor yet be giving place to the adversary. Let him who steals by no means still be stealing: **yet rather let him be toiling, working with his hands at what is good, that he may have to share with one who has need.** Let no tainted word at all be issuing out of your mouth, **but if any is good toward needful edification** [building up], **that it may be giving grace to those hearing.***

*And do not be causing sorrow to the holy spirit of God **by which you are sealed for the day of deliverance.** Let all bitterness and fury and anger and clamor and calumny [blasphemy] be taken away from you with all malice, **yet become kind to***

*one another, tenderly compassionate, dealing graciously among yourselves, according as God also, in Christ, deals graciously with you.*

*Become, then, imitators of God, as beloved children, and be walking in love, according as Christ also loves you, and gives Himself up for us, an approach present and a sacrifice to God, for a fragrant odor.*

Now, all prostitution and uncleanness or greed — let it not even be named among you, according as is becoming in saints — and vileness and stupid speaking or insinuating, which are not proper, **but rather thanksgiving**. For this you perceive, knowing that no paramour [male prostitute] at all or unclean or greedy person, who is an idolater, has any enjoyment of the allotment in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one be seducing you with empty words, for because of these things the indignation of God is coming on the sons of stubbornness. Do not, then, become joint partakers with them, for you were once darkness, **yet now you are light in the Lord**.

**As children of light be walking (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), testing what is well pleasing to the Lord.** And be not joint participants in the unfruitful acts of darkness; **yet rather be exposing them also**, for it is a shame even to speak of the hidden things occurring, done by them. **Now all that which is being exposed, by the light is made manifest, for everything which is making manifest is light. Wherefore He is saying, 'Rouse! O drowsy one, and rise from among the dead, and Christ shall dawn upon you!'**

**Be observing accurately, then, brethren, how you are walking, not as unwise, but as wise, reclaiming the era, for the days are wicked. Therefore do not become imprudent, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** And be not drunk with wine, in which is profligacy [unsafe action], **but be filled full with spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing music in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, to our God and Father, being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.** (Ephesians 4:22 - 5:21)

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Participating in the administration of the Father's grace through faith in Yeshua carries a high level of personal accountability for its safeguarding in our hearts, minds, and bodies! Like the ecclesias of the first century, we are on notice to watch out for and guard against the same traps they faced. The negative qualities that Paul described were pervasive in his time – and seem no less so in ours – even though they may have appeared “*normal*” to much of the population. That which deceives and which clamors for our attention and agreement often appears *more* appealing than the Father's course for our lives. This is the nature of “**the systematizing of the deception.**”

The “*system*” was set up in the first garden, when “**the first man, Adam... a living soul,**” chose to follow his own desires rather than YahHoVeH's instruction. In another garden, 4,000 years later, Yeshua,

**“the last Adam a vivifying [life-giving] spirit”** (1 Corinthians 15:45), paved the way for us, through His obedience to the Father, to break out of the “*system*”!

Modern examples of **the systematizing of the deception** are literally everywhere: stock market promises, corporate *ladders* to advancement, easy credit markets, and quick-fix drugs for every condition imaginable. Other illustrations include the excitement of sports, televised gambling, and million-dollar game shows; seductive infomercials for real estate riches or the newest kitchen gadget. Television *Soap Operas*, *Reality Shows*, and *Sitcoms*, succeed in hypnotizing millions into fanatic loyalty. Many seem to be seduced continually by an insatiable **yearning**, and are easily distracted by “**desire**” for something *more*, *better*, or *faster*. It appears that little has changed since the Apostle Paul penned these words to describe the people of his day:

**...for many are walking, of whom I often told you, yet now am lamenting also as I tell it, who are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose consummation is destruction, whose god is their bowels, and whose glory is in their shame, who to the terrestrial [earthly] are disposed.”** (Philippians 3:18-19)

Our senses are constantly bombarded by a pattern of seductive propositions, followed by outright lies, sprinkled with enough truth to make them credible. It’s a wonder that anyone can hear the Father’s voice at all!

**...for everything that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the ostentation of living, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing by, and its desire, yet he who is doing the will of God is remaining for the eon.** (1 John 2:16-17)

**Are you not aware that the friendship of this world is enmity\* with God? Whosoever, then should intend to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God.** (James 4:4)

**\*“enmity”** in Greek, is “*hostile, hating and opposing another*” (Thayer, 265)

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Satan succeeded in Eden and Adam was disqualified. A life of intimacy with the Father in the perfect paradise was destroyed. Because Adam and Eve gave into their own “**seductive desires**” (Ephesians 4:22) and someone’s “**craftiness**” (Ephesians 4:14), they took the rest of us down with them into the sentence of death that we suffer today...until the Messiah dawns in our hearts!

The pattern and principles of **stratagems** and **the systematizing of the deception**, were set in the garden of Eden. They appear *slick*, *seductive* and *smooth-talking*; they look *tempting*, sound *logical*, and if we succumb to their *promises*, which are actually *lies*, we earn *disqualification* and *separation* from the Father.

**Stratagems** and **the systematizing of the deception** are “*equal opportunity*” phenomena. They appear in all shapes and sizes; they attack both genders, all ages and races, and no area of life is exempt. Issues of every description – people, animals, jobs, religion, politics, weather, entertainment, you name it – may all be subject to sa-tan, the adversary within and without, to test us, just like Eve, Adam, and Yeshua Himself.

After 40 days and nights in the desert without food, sa-tan tested Yeshua in the wilderness. The same tactics that succeeded with “**the first Adam**” failed with “**the last Adam**” (1 Corinthians 15:45). The scriptures that the sa-tan used to try Yeshua, Yeshua used to silence the sa-tan and send him packing.

The first appeal was to Yeshua's physical hunger; the second was to the desire for recognition and a sense of significance; finally, sa-tan appealed to the natural reflex to avoid pain and suffering. Yeshua withstood each challenge by quoting the Scriptures – **“it is written.”** He **“put on the panoply of God,”** wielded **“the sword of the Spirit,”** spoke **“a declaration of God,”** and, **“having effected all,”** He stood. Yeshua remained faithful to the Father's words and the purpose for His life. He knew who He was and why He was here. There was no talking Him out of it, but He had to face the sa-tan, to produce the resolve He would need to accomplish His mission, and ultimately redeem the failure of **the first Adam.**

**Yeshua was led up into the wilderness by the spirit to be tried by the adversary. And, fasting forty days and forty nights, subsequently He hungers. And, approach-ing, the trier said to Him, “If you are God’s Son, say that these stones may be becoming cakes of bread.” Yet He, answering, said, “It is written, ‘Not on bread alone shall man be living, but on every declaration going out through the mouth of God.’”**

**Then the adversary is taking Him along into the holy city, and stands Him on the wing of the sanctuary. And he is saying to Him. “If you are God’s Son, cast yourself down, for it is written that**

**‘His messengers shall be directed concerning Thee’**

**and ‘On their hands shall they be lifting Thee,**

**Lest at some time Thou shouldst be dashing**

**Thy foot against a stone.’”**

**Yeshua averred\* to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not be putting on trial the Lord your God.’”**

**Again the adversary takes Him along into a very high mountain, and is showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these to you will I be giving, if ever, falling down, you should be worshipping me.”**

**Then Yeshua is saying to him, “Go away, sa-tan, for it is written,**

**‘The Lord your God shall you be worshipping,**

**And to Him only shall you be offering divine service.’”**

**Then the adversary is leaving Him. And lo! messengers approached and waited on Him. (Matthew 4:1-11)**

**\*“averred” = “declared forcefully and confidently” (CLNT-KC, 22)**

Yeshua succeeded where Adam failed, and on the eve of His capture, He could say, **“the Chief of the world is coming, and in Me it has not anything”** (John 14:30).

Stratagems are an inevitable part of the “testing” and “proving” process, even for the Son of YahHoVeH! There may be **stratagems** occurring in one or more areas of your life right now! The good news is that we can **“stand up to the stratagems of the adversary”** (Ephesians 6:11), as long as we wear **the panoply of God** and wield the weapon He has provided.

You now know the enemy – the sa-tan – and what the tactics are to test and try your faith. You also have the armor and weapons you need to deal with it effectively.

**“Armor Up!”**