

The Master Magician

By Wayne Vasilenko

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Last week my wife and I watched a television program that showed how magicians perform their magic. It showed the secrets of the illusions that have fascinated people for centuries. The magician that revealed these secrets as you might imagine, is not appreciated much by his peers. The basic goal of magicians is to re-direct your attention so that you can be deceived into seeing, or not seeing, something you expect to be there or to take place. Pastor Al Bausch's recent teaching on Spiritual Navigation (on this Website) got me thinking as to how much deception is going on around us and how it affects our Spiritual Walk with the Lord. As mentioned in the beginning of this teaching, before the deception can take place there is a distraction, or a re-direction of your attention. It is no wonder that Satan was called the Deceiver.

Revelation 12:9(NKJV)

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

We have covered this topic from a different perspective in the past. In the series, "One Accord or Discord - Time for the Church to choose," we brought out how Satan uses deception and distraction to cause problems within the church. What we will now look at is how Satan uses distraction and deception to affect us as individuals. What is in his "Magic Bag," and how does it affect us? I am sure most people reading this have at one time or another watched a magician at work. What do you recall about what you witnessed? The first thing a magician does is to present you with things you are familiar with or comfortable with. He will present you with things that you know to be true utilizing the senses you normally use, in most cases they rely on your eyes. The reason they use mostly visual cues is that it is very easy to distract your eyes. When you focus your eyes on something you tend to narrow your field of view so it is very easy for something to happen at the edge of your field of vision without you even noticing it. When the magician says, "watch closely" it is for a reason. I remember in Army Basic Training that I was attending a class on "Booby Traps." One of the first things the instructor said was, "when something causes you to look up - Look Down!" He then went on to explain that the enemy would put visual distractions in your view to get you to miss something important in your path such as a trip wire attached to a mine. Not being aware of these distractions could cost you your life and the lives of others.

We deal with distractions all the time. For example, while pondering this topic my wife asked me to help her with something and I totally lost my train of thought. In this case the result was no more than a little frustration; there was no harm intended and no harm as a result. However when it comes to our Spiritual walk with the Lord, distractions can have a more profound effect. Distraction has a bad enough effect in this case but the real killer in this realm is the ultimate deception. We are in the middle of a Spiritual Battle. God always has and always will, want nothing but the best for us. We are His most prized creation! Satan on the other hand, wants to take anything God offers us away from us. A popular misconception is that Satan has all kinds of power and control over us. This is a deception in itself; Satan has no power over us, he never did and never will. The only power the Devil has is what we as individuals allow him to have. Remember that even in the Garden of Eden Satan did not force Adam and Eve to disobey God; he deceived them into disobeying God. Satan told them that they would be like God if they partook of the forbidden fruit... they already were like God; they were created in His image! Satan cleverly distracted them from the truth with a false promise of something better.

This is exactly how Satan works among us today, he hasn't changed - his tactics haven't changed.

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Many people have been attracted to Christianity by the prospect of drawing nearer to God who not only took care of the "Sin Issue" for us, but He also promised to take care of our needs and even our wants within limits. However, we are told by Satan that God did not take care of sin completely; he tells us we still have to do something. He may convince some that they have to perform certain rituals in order to be spared the penalty of their sins, he convinces others that sacrifices are still demanded by God. Religions are full of things one must do to appease God. In this case people are distracted by rules and regulations of religion rather than adhering to the Word of God; the result is they have been deceived. They have been deceived even though their initial goal was to draw near to God! You have to give Satan some credit here... he is clever. As for all the other distractions our magician Satan has in his bag, he would likely respond by quoting the comedian Jimmy Durante by saying, "I got a million of um." Think of just ten things that keep you from the Word of God or fellowship with other believers. After you think of these distractions, ask yourself, "How important are they...really?" Yes, Satan is truly a Master Magician. He gets you to see things that aren't there and gets you to miss the things that are right in front of you.

Selah... Pause... Think about that... Dwell on that.