

B. Satan and the Demons

1. Names of Satan

Today we come to the section of the lesson dealing with Satan and the demons. We've been talking about angels which serve God, but not all angels do. You also have a spiritual being referred to as the devil, or Satan, in Scripture, and the demonic hordes which serve his destructive purposes. So let's talk first a bit about the names of this person.

The principal name given to the spiritual being that opposes God is Satan. This is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew and Greek words for this individual: in Hebrew, *Satan*, and in Greek, *Satanas*. The word "Satan" means "adversary" in both languages – in both the Old and New Testaments. The word for Satan is used fourteen times in the opening chapters of the book of Job to denote this supernatural being which is opposing God. Let me read Job 1:6-12:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, "Whence have you come?" Satan answered the Lord, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth

thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand.” So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

Here Satan is described as being among the company of the sons of God in heaven.

The same word is similarly used three times in Zechariah 3:1-2. It says,

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan!”

In these passages the word “Satan” appears with the definite article – “the” Satan – meaning the adversary or the accuser who is opposed to God. So it's not simply a proper name. It's a kind of descriptive term as well – the adversary, the accuser.

In the New Testament, the word *diabolos* is also used for this person. *Diabolos* means “the devil” or “slanderer.” For example, 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour.” Here our adversary, or Satan, is described as the devil.

Sometimes Satan is given another name in Scripture – *Beelzebub*, or a variant, *Beelzebub*. This term is derived from the Canaanite deity Baal. For example, Matthew 12:24 says, “But when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.’” They thought that Jesus

in casting out demons was acting in the authority of Beelzebul, whom they identify as the prince of demons. Similarly, Jesus in Matthew 10:25 admonishes his disciples: “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household?”

The term *Baal-Zebub*, from which this is derived, means the Lord Prince. He is a Philistine god, part of the pantheon of gods of Israel's neighbors. The people of Israel regarded the Philistines as worshipping not the same God that they did; rather they said they're worshipping Satan. Baal-Zebub is really the prince of demons. Paul similarly thought that the devotees of Greco-Roman religions were not worshipping God, but in fact worshipping demons rather than God. For example, in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 Paul says flatly,

. . . what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

(So much for religious pluralism!) Paul, like his fellow Jews, regarded these pagan deities as demonic.

Satan is also called a liar and a murderer in John 8:44. Jesus says,

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is called the prince of the power of the air. Ephesians 2:1b-2 says,

. . . when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Here you have Satan (or the devil) referred to as a prince, much as the angels are sometimes referred to as princes. He is a spiritual being of enormous power and authority.

In fact, he is called the ruler of this world in John 14:30-31. Jesus says,

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Here Satan is described by Jesus as the ruler of this world. That's a very sobering title for Satan. Similarly, 1 John 5:19: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." We often think of God as the ruler of this world, who has authority over the world in which we live. But John says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one – that he is, in fact, the ruler of this world. So in a very real sense we are living in enemy territory. We are living behind enemy lines in this world. In fact, Satan is even called the "god" of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, speaking of unbelievers, Paul says,

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God.

Here Satan is called a god.

So we've seen that he's called the ruler of this world, that the whole world lies in his power, and that he is the god of this world, who blinds the minds of unbelievers to prevent them from receiving the Gospel of Christ. So that gives you some understanding of the incredible power and authority of this being.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:5 he is called the tempter. Paul says,

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.

Paul feared that his fledgling church would have been led astray into heresy by the temptation of Satan. So Satan is also one who tempts Christians with a view toward destroying them and bringing about their lapse from the true faith.

In Revelation 20:2-3a we have a whole series of titles given to Satan. I quote:

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more

Here he is referred to as “the dragon.” “That ancient serpent” is perhaps a reference back to the serpent in the Garden of Eden who deceived Adam and Eve. He's called “the devil” and “Satan.”

Revelation 12:10 echoes Zechariah 3:1-2 that we've already read:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Here he's referred to as the accuser of the brethren just as in Zechariah 3. There he was accusing the high priest Joshua before the Lord.

So I think you can see that this adversary, or Satan, is referred to in Scripture by quite a large number of names and titles. He's called Beelzebub, the devil, the liar, the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world, the god of this world, your adversary, the dragon, the ancient serpent, Satan, and the tempter. All of these go to describe the spiritual being that is bent upon the destruction of God's work and his Kingdom in the world.

As we've seen then, Satan is presented as a powerful and evil adversary of the work of God and the Kingdom of God with whom we have to contend. This naturally raises the inevitable question as to the origin of this being. Since God is not evil and does not create evil, how is it that there could even be such a creature as this? How could there be such a being as Satan? When God created the world in Genesis chapter 1, it says that he looked at creation and saw that it was very good. Everything was good. So how do you explain the origin of someone like Satan and the demons that follow him? That is the question that we will take up next week.