

## § 8. Doctrine of Creation

### Lecture 21

#### The 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, *Beelzebul*. 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 Beelzebul, 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, who they identify as the prince of demons. Similarly, Jesus in Matthew 10:25 goes on to admonish 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 worshiping not the same God that they did, rather in effect they said they're worshiping Satan. Baal-Zebub is, in fact, the prince of demons. Paul similarly thought that the devotees of Greco-Roman religions were not regarded as worshiping God, but as, in fact, worshiping 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, in fact, 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 the god of this world.

So we've seen that he's called the ruler of this world, that the whole world lies in his power, and here he's actually referred to as the god of this world who blinds the minds of unbelievers to prevent them from receiving the Gospel of Christ. So it 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. 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.

### **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* Could you just comment on Isaiah 14:12, specifically only the King James Version where it says, “how art thou fallen from heaven o Lucifer,” which really only just means “day star” though? But I just find it interesting how a lot of people in our culture think his name is Lucifer, and it's only because of the King James Version because of what I think comes from the Latin Vulgate – the way they translate the word “day star.”

*Dr. Craig:* I will say something about this in a moment when we talk about the origin of Satan. But you're right. In the Isaiah 14 passage it refers to him as a “day star” or “bright morning star” which, as you indicate, can be rendered as this proper name, Lucifer. But it actually is using the metaphor of a morning star like Venus in the morning to describe the person that's being addressed there. I'll talk about that in a moment. Hang on.

*Student:* Do you see these names (or any of these names) as being a proper name for Satan or are they just descriptions like “adversary?” Satan means adversary.

*Dr. Craig:* This is a good question. I do think that Satan is both a proper name and a description. It does appear with the definite article like “the adversary” but it can also be a proper name in the same way we can use the word “President” as a proper name. We can either talk about “the President” or we can say “Mr. President” and use it as a kind of proper name. So I think there are proper names that are also descriptions, and that would seem to be the case with Satan. Beelzebub is certainly a proper name. That would be a proper name springing from Baal.

*Student:* Given the name was “god of this world,” to me would indicate that when God created the world it was good, but when man fell is it not saying that not only man fell but that the whole world fell and Satan was allowed to – God allowed him to – possess

the world as he allowed him access to Job? Is that an accurate depiction of how that term could be used?

*Dr. Craig:* I think we have to say that it's conjectural. It's speculative. The speculation, I think, that you quite rightly raise here is – do you remember we saw before that there were certain angelic beings that were associated with certain nations like the prince of Persia, the prince of Greece, and Michael is the prince or angel of Israel? – could it have been that the proper province of pre-Fall Satan was the universe or the world (maybe the Earth depending on what “the world” refers to here)? That he had been assigned the Earth as his province? And then he falls, and so now the ruler of this age is incredibly wicked and is leading the world astray against God. Or is it rather that Satan, being cast out of heaven, comes to the Earth and there usurps the authority of God and challenges God by asserting his own authority? I don't think we know. You see the difference between the two. Is his being the ruler of this world a function of his original pre-Fall assignment? Or is it a function of his later usurping authority over the Earth? I don't see any way to answer that question.

*Student:* But it does say in Scripture that creation is yearning or to relieve itself of this curse, it seems to me (I'm not sure the exact words used). But it was as if it's under duress.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, Romans 8. Paul speaks of this. How the whole creation groans in travail like a woman in labor for its eventual deliverance and the revelation of the sons of God in glory. So it does seem to portray the whole of creation in travail, as you say.

*Student:* I would say all of these names . . . they become mediators between God and man. So when Satan was cast out, the mediators were removed, and that's why we have a thousand years he's bound. So you can say they became the god of the world because they inserted themselves between God and man. And Christ came to remove all mediators. Now there's only the mediator of Christ to man.

*Dr. Craig:* I don't think that that role is ever assigned to Satan in Scripture as far as I know – that he's called mediator or anything of that sort. It seems to me that quite the opposite – he is usurping authority. He is inserting himself into things that he doesn't belong, but he's not mediating between us and God.

*Student:* [off-mic]

*Dr. Craig:* OK, he said that he inserts himself in between us and God, in effect becoming a sort of god to the unbeliever. Just so long as we don't think . . . I think mediation is just the wrong word to use here. I think it would be more like a rebel who's trying to overthrow the government and set up a false regime in its place.

*Student:* I'm curious as to why you want to read the phrase “the ruler of this world” or “god of this world” literally. When I read that I tend to read that in terms of being hyperbole, that he is saying that Satan has tremendous influence over . . .

*Dr. Craig:* It does seem to be confirmed by the passage in 1 John where he says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and then he's called the ruler of this world as well as the god of this world. So you've got several scriptural passages that seem to suggest that he's in control here; that he's controlling how things are going. Now, of course, this is only within the overall providence of God, but it would make more intelligible why there is so much evil and horror in this world. We are living in a world that is under the control of this malevolent being that is opposed to God and his purposes.

*Student:* I played Jeopardy on Alexa, and earlier this week they had a question about Beelzebub and described the translation to be “Lord of the Flies” which speaks to the book. So is “Lord of the Flies” not a correct translation?

*Dr. Craig:* It is a correct translation of this variant, Beelzebul, which appears in 2 Kings 1:2 and in the passage we read from Matthew. That literally means, not “Lord Prince,” it means “Lord of the Flies,” and it was probably a way of belittling this Canaanite deity for the Jews to call him Beelzebul. He's just the lord of flies. Of course this title was picked up by William Golding in this powerful novel that describes a group of English schoolboys who were marooned on an island and degenerate into these savages that are about to kill each other before they're rescued, thereby illustrating the inherent fallenness and sinfulness of human beings. If you haven't read Golding's novel, you should read it or see the movie which is also stunning and very gripping. But it so illustrates again the hold that evil has upon humanity in showing the evil that is inherent in these seemingly innocent boys.

*Student:* The comment that Satan is in control of this world seems to be in direct conflict with the book of Job where Satan told God, *you built a hedge around him*. That would indicate that he couldn't cross. Comments?

*Dr. Craig:* Well, I would say that Job does illustrate how God gives Satan scope to do these evil, horrible things to Job, but only within the limits set by God. Remember our lessons on divine providence, how (especially on a Molinist view) everything that happens is either by God's direct will or permission. So ultimately God is in control, but he allows this renegade demon to wreak havoc throughout the Earth upon humanity but only insofar as will redound ultimately to God's saving purposes for establishing his Kingdom. So please don't misunderstand me to think that I'm saying God isn't in control.

**END DISCUSSION**

As we've seen then, Satan is presented as this 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Total Running Time: 28:04 (Copyright © 2018 William Lane Craig)