

Satan and Demons: Do They Exist? The Christian Response

A Thesis by Casey Choi

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Introduction

There is an apparent ambiguity surrounding the idea of “Satan” and his host of “demons”. Many theologians argue the topics of who or what Satan is, how he originated, and his abilities regarding the Christian church and its followers. While many come to their own personal conclusions, the subject is still widely argued upon with no common answer to the questions presented. The confusion mainly stems from multiple interpretations of the scarce references to Satan in scripture within the Old Testament and the abundance of references to demons in the New Testament. The most popular theory among all Christians currently would be that Satan is an opposing power to God and is the incarnation of evil himself. This theory, however, most often stems from simple childhood stories of a devil who seeks to destroy humanity and Jesus being the ultimate answer in regards to salvation from Satan’s torment. However, Satan could quite possibly be a simple personification of sin to simplify the complexity of just how dire the situation of humanity is and to exemplify man’s need to depend on God.

While the broad message may be effective in some regard, the most basic question must also be asked: Does Satan exist? If Satan indeed does exist, then there should be an in depth analysis of this adversary of God and His people. Therefore, questions such as “Where did Satan come from?”, “Is Satan the enemy of the church?”, “What are demons?”, and “What power do demons have?” must be asked. Furthermore, if Satan does in fact exist and is the enemy of God, it is imperative that the church be educated on his origins, his methods of destruction, and his plan, as well as a greater understanding of the metaphysical world and the beings that reside in it. However, if Satan and his demons are purely representations of sin and evil and are not real

beings, the church must remove them from doctrine instead of giving false credit to creatures that are irrelevant in terms of core Christian doctrine.

An analysis of both the Old Testament passages and the New Testament passages referencing ideas that are often equated to Satan or demons is the goal of this thesis. Observing the texts in their historical context as well as in the original language it was written in provides quality perspective of what the original authors meant regarding the existence of malevolent beings. furthermore, this paper will also attempt to include an analysis of psychology and physics as well as other scientific practices to explore the validity of Satan and his minions.

Whether in proving or disproving Satan's existence and purposes, one thing remains true: Christ and His resurrection allows the church to live free of distress since He is in command of all creation. This thesis is simply going to answer the questions commonly asked regarding Satan and reinforce the truth in Christ's reign.

Satan Conceptualized in the Old Testament

Where most would suggest that the concept of Satan is first introduced in the Bible is in Genesis in the form of the serpent within the Garden of Eden. This, however, is a common misconception, as it is never explicitly stated that the Devil is the serpent, just as it is never stated that the fruit that Eve is tempted with is an apple. Nevertheless, the role of the serpent plays a major role in the shaping of the character of Satan. First, the serpent is introduced as the craftiest of all the other wild animals, already hinting towards its shifty nature. Note that the serpent is also compared to the other animals in the Garden which implies, if not confirms, the fact that the serpent is indeed a creature and not a metaphorical being. However, the snake is somewhat of a higher power due to its ability to speak as well as being able to manipulate the humans into sin.¹ Some would think that because of this behavior, perhaps the Devil appeared in the form of the serpent, but this can be disproven upon two bases: one, Satan is never mentioned and the serpent is indeed a creature of the Garden of Eden, and two, the doctrine involving Satan does not come about until late in Judaic history, which would prove to be anachronistic.² The creature can then only be defined as a creature of the deep or a creature of the chaos similar to the Leviathan mentioned multiple times in the Tanakh. The “chaos” or “deep” that these creatures come from is labeled as “the primeval ocean that is supposed to surround and underlie the earth,” as found in Genesis.³ El is the only one able to control this chaos and shape the world from it, as evidenced from Genesis 1. This could also provide some motive behind the serpent’s actions in that the very nature of the serpent, as defined by its origins, is to cause chaos.

¹ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 13.

² Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 16.

³ Gordon John Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Genesis 1-15*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 13.

Leviticus also contains a passage that could be mistaken for Satan in the form of Molech, a Canaan god. During this time, the people of Israel are sacrificing their children to a false god to which Yahweh curses Israel once again for disobeying his law. Despite there being no mention of the Devil or Satan, the passage is often misconstrued to equate Molech to a Satan-like being from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which contains a similar passage about Molech or Molech being a synonym for Satan.⁴

The next time “satan” is used in the Old Testament occurs in 1 Samuel when David is running from Saul, who is jealous and wants to kill David. During this time, David hides himself among the Philistines as a turncoat and battles alongside them. However, there is tension brewing between the Israelites and the Philistines, and, with David being a renowned warrior, the Philistines come to distrust him and send him away. This is when the commander of the Philistine army says, “Send the man back, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him. He shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us” (1 Samuel 29:4). In the Hebrew translation the word “lō·šā·ṭān” is used, which directly translates to “adversary”. The word “satan” is used in a literal sense, meaning a military opponent that the Philistines feared and did not want to face.⁵ The word is used once again in 1 Kings, referring to Rezon during the reign of Solomon.

In the following book of 2 Samuel, “satan” is mentioned yet again using the same Hebrew word “lō·šā·ṭān” found in 1 Samuel. David is returning to Jerusalem after defeating his defiant son Absalom in battle and he is greeted by Shimei who seeks forgiveness from David

⁴ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 72.

⁵ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 53.

after being disrespectful towards him by supporting Absalom. David chooses to forgive him, but Abishai, a member of the royal court, suggests that Shimei be punished for his actions, to which David responded by saying, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?” (2 Samuel 19:22). Unlike in 1 Samuel, however, the word “lə·šā·ṭān” is not only used to mean “adversary”, but could also be used in legal terms as an “accuser” since Abishai is a member of the royal court.⁶ Abishai is suggesting to prosecute Shimei and has the power to do so. This usage of “satan” in legal terms is found again in Psalm 109, where the author prays that an enemy be found guilty and that the enemy is punished.

The first time the word “satan” refers to a celestial being is in the book of Numbers with Balaam’s mule that speaks to him. Balaam travels on a journey that is not sanctioned by God, therefore God sends an armed angel to block his path. The angel blocks the path of Balaam three times and each time the donkey moves out of the way to save his master. Balaam, however, is unable to see the threat and beats the mule for being disobedient. When Balaam goes to strike him the third time, the donkey cries out and points out how he has been defending Balaam the whole trip, at which point Balaam finally notices the “lə·šā·ṭān” or adversary before his eyes.⁷ While this is not the “Satan” that most think of, it is significant in that the term is used to define a celestial being for the first time in the Bible.

Next, Satan is finally found as an independent celestial adversary in perhaps his most prominent role in the Old Testament within the book of Job. Satan is now embodied as a being

⁶ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 54.

⁷ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 58.

of either pure malice or one that simply tests humans' strength. Regardless, he is first introduced into the story by presenting himself among God along with other divine beings where Job is then brought up in a conversation between Satan and God. The first unusual aspect about this story is the connection between Satan and God. While not entirely critical to the story, some believe that Satan is a part of God's heavenly host at the time of this story and acts as a type of advisor of human affairs, or that he is normally not present in the heavenly host and is therefore an unexpected visitor.⁸ Regardless, Satan wishes to test Job's loyalty to determine whether it is genuine, or simply because God continues to bless him. For each test, God must give Satan limitations; the first being that he cannot touch Job and the later one being that he cannot take Job's life. The fact that God must set limits gives some insight into Satan's personality in this story, which is that he is often too cruel when he does his work and tends to overextend his power. Job, however, passes each test and God blesses him once again for his loyalty. This entire story between the cruel punisher and the benevolent God, however, likely stems from a common tale at the time where the main character was actually a Jordanian-Abraham type character.⁹ Even though this story could just be a Biblical manifestation of a typical fairytale told at the time, it still gives some valuable insight into how the picture of Satan is beginning to form in Christianity. The true takeaway from the book of Job is to answer the question "Why do bad things happen to good people?" with the answer being that the Resurrection is what Christians have to look forward to, so the struggles on Earth are menial. The simple story of a suffering man with a happy ending tied to it simplified the importance of the Resurrection to

⁸ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 26.

⁹ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 59.

those who may not be able to grasp the greatness of the victory that Christians have in the Messiah. The next mention of Satan is found in the book of Zechariah, where Joshua is brought before the heavenly host and the Lord deems Joshua holy to become high priest. During this meeting, however, God rebukes Satan, the adversary, who is likely having second doubts about the decision.¹⁰ In combination with the idea presented in Job, there is a more independent celestial being that openly opposes God coming to fruition at this point.

Another common misconception of Satan in the Bible occurs in Isaiah 14:12 which states, “How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!” The Hebrew word *hê-lêl* is found here and only here throughout the whole Bible. The word literally translated means star and is translated to Lucifer which means “morning star”. Many seem to believe that this is the origin story to Satan, claiming that he fell from heaven after trying to become God; however, the passage is lamenting the death of the Babylonian pagan king (completely full of sarcasm) and the destruction that follows in the passage is hope for the Israelites that they will be delivered from bondage.¹¹

¹⁰ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 66.

¹¹ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 54.

Satan Found in Zoroastrianism

Before studying the New Testament mentions of Satan, it is imperative to first research one primary religion that seems to propel the idea of an all-evil being into the Middle East. The idea of an opposing power against God can be traced back to 728 B.C. with Vedism in the Mede Kingdom.¹² The religion believes in two primary higher powers, “ahuras” and the “daevas”, with the ahuras being a higher power, and both groups ruled by Ahura Mazda and Mithra.¹³ This religion later evolves into Zoroastrianism through the restructuring of Vedism by Zoroaster who lived around 628-551 B. C.¹⁴ Zoroaster (or Zarathustra in Persian) is given a vision from Ahura Mazda showing the Asha (truth) and the Druj (lie) which founds the dualistic nature of morality found in Zarathustra’s teachings.¹⁵ From this, we see a new character introduced in the form of Angra Manyu or Ahriman, who is the form of pure evil itself by recruiting some of Ahura Mazda’s daevas to become demons.¹⁶ Zoroaster considers himself a man that is the enemy of Druj and an ally of Asha, and wages war on those who support the daevas that have become demons by following Druj.¹⁷ Zarathustra does not intend to give any quarter in this war either as he is quite blunt by saying that those who follow Druj are sin incarnate and should be treated as such.¹⁸ Zoroastrianism is a religion based around an ultimate decision that everyone must answer: choosing to follow Druj or choosing to follow Asha. The chosen path is shown by the lifestyle that each individual leads, which is able to be altered; meaning if one decides to follow

¹² Gerald Messadié, *A History of the Devil*, (New York City, NY: Kodansha America Inc., 1996), 76.

¹³ Ibid.; 77.

¹⁴ Ibid.; 79.

¹⁵ R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (New Haven, CT: Phoenix Press Inc., 2002), 34.

¹⁶ Gerald Messadié, *A History of the Devil*, (New York City, NY: Kodansha America Inc., 1996), 83.

¹⁷ R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (New Haven, CT: Phoenix Press Inc., 2002), 36.

¹⁸ Ibid.; 40.

Asha after following Druj for some time, it is possible (with the reverse being true as well).¹⁹ At this point there are connections being drawn among the Devil, Angra Manyu, and Druj that would make sense given the timing from when Zoroastrianism comes about and when the New Testament takes place (where there is more emphasis on Satan and his demons). Furthermore, Zarathustra teaches about the idea of a “heaven” and “hell” which are literally described as the “best” and “worst” existences, and the latter is explained in detail (regarding the suffering of those who follow Druj).²⁰ More connections between Zoroastrianism and Christianity are more noticeable with further exploration of the religion. In later records of the Gathas (the Zoroastrian text), there is mention of the Saoshyans that, at the end of time, will resurrect the dead and reunite their physical bodies with their spiritual ones. The resurrected will then traverse a river of molten metal which feels like warm milk to the just and will burn the wicked with truth.²¹ Following this, Ahura Mazda brings in a new dwelling where everything is perfect which is known as the “Second Existence”.²² This scene may sound similar to some since the Book of Revelation showcases a similar scene of final judgment and the ushering of a new earth, but whether the Jewish culture influenced Persian thought or vice versa is unclear. During Zoroaster’s time as not only a priest but also as magus of this new religion, he converts a prince by the name of Darius who reigns over a region named Chorasmia, which plays into how the Devil officially comes about. The Persian King Cambyses, the ruler at the time in which Zoroastrianism rises to its peak, is conquering Nubia when an imposter magi claiming to be his brother starts a rebellion, hoping to make a theocracy in the name of the religion. Darius cuts

¹⁹ Ibid.; 41.

²⁰ Ibid.; 56.

²¹ Ibid.; 58.

²² Ibid.; 59.

him down before a theocracy could be achieved, but the fact is that if the coup succeeded, the “Devil” or Ahriman or Angra Manyu would have been set up as a political figure to punish those going against the Zoroastrian law in a secular manner.²³ From this political upset, it can be concluded that “Satan” comes from 6th century B.C. in Iran, which gives more than enough time between the birth of Satan and the writing of the New Testament for the Prince of Demons to be spread across multiple cultures and religions including Judaism.²⁴

²³ Gerald Messadié, *A History of the Devil*, (New York City, NY: Kodansha America Inc., 1996), 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; 90.

Satan in the New Testament

Now given the proper context, by understanding Jesus' teachings about the idea of the Devil and his demons, a proper conclusion can be made regarding their existence and importance in the church. Starting with Jesus' encounter with Satan in the desert (which is perhaps the most explicit reference in the New Testament), there are a few issues concerning the event— there are no eyewitness accounts of the event as Jesus was alone at the time; such an abrupt meeting and conversation with the Devil is not common; the rapid transitions from setting to setting indicate a hallucinatory aspect; and each response from Jesus is directly from the Old Testament. Despite this, there are some statements that can be said regarding its validity: Jesus likely told this account directly to his followers after the event; the scene takes place immediately following his baptism; and the Early Church most likely could not make up such a story in such an early time period.²⁵ The answer then lies within the different interpretations by the authors of the Gospels. Matthew and Luke are extremely similar in their accounts of this story, aside from the order that the temptations are given, as Matthew states that the temptation to jump off the temple came before the temptation to rule the Earth and Luke says the opposite. Mark however, gives a briefer description of the temptations, but includes the idea of Jesus being with wild animals. Some say that the inclusion of this was to portray the parallelism between Jesus and Adam with Jesus being tempted but not succumbing like Adam.²⁶ Each Gospel, however, does put emphasis on what kind of Messiah Jesus would be rather than giving a model of how Christians should act in temptation. The reason for the temptation is likely so that Jesus can fulfill prophecy, as noted

²⁵ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 89.

²⁶ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 91.

by Jesus quoting the Old Testament, as well as showing that ultimately God is in control and is not moved by any temptation.²⁷ The scene in the desert contains many parallels between Jesus and the Israelites in the desert, which makes sense in following the idea that Jesus needed to be tempted to fulfill prophecy. If the Devil does exist, it could be said that he is behaving in a manner similar to how he behaves in Job: one of God's emissaries to test the hearts of men.

Another popular controversy surrounding Satan is his fall from Heaven that is referenced in Luke 10:18 which states, "[Jesus] replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'" The context behind the statement Jesus makes is a series of exorcisms that him and the disciples have just performed across the land, to which Jesus then responds by saying Satan's reign is coming to an end rather than his original fall from Heaven as most would assume. The language that Jesus uses is quite unique in that he uses the verb "theōreō" which is also used in Acts when referencing visions.²⁸ Based off of this, scholars assume that Jesus is speaking in a more figurative manner as opposed to a literal manner regarding Satan. Some also state that this reference is a prophetic telling of Satan's fall from ruler of the Earth because Jesus sees victories over demons as victories over Satan.²⁹

Beyond this, Jesus only briefly mentions the Devil or similar beings in his teachings a few more times in his Sermon on the Mount and in some of his parables. Starting with the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus mentions "the evil one" in the Lord's Prayer in the book of Matthew. Matthew uses the adjective "ponēros" as a noun to purposefully represent evil in an

²⁷ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 94.

²⁸ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 109.

²⁹ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 111.

abstract form rather than as a reference to Satan.³⁰ He merely presents evil as an object that the Church must be wary of rather than a specific being, such as the Devil. The first parable mentioning Satan is the Parable of the Sower, where he is equated to the birds that eat the seeds and therefore destroys life and livelihood. Jesus likely makes this reference due to the imagery of the Devil as a bird in the the Sanhedrin and in the Jubilees, making it more accessible to the Jewish people to better grasp the concept of his teachings.³¹ This however, does not directly prove Satan's existence; rather, Jesus could simply use him as a tool to convey his point in a more concise manner. The next parable that Jesus uses Satan in is the Parable of the Weeds, where Satan plants "weeds" in a field of wheat that represents the separated church and the weeds are burned. The language here is not comparable to that in the Parable of the Sower in that the Devil is not explicitly alluding to any common Jewish passages, but the story is a metaphor that most Jewish people can understand because many of them were familiar with agriculture.³² Jesus is simply saying that those outside of his "crop" (the Church) will be punished and he equates the punishment with burning the weeds. Once again, Jesus uses Satan as more of a metaphorical tool rather than outright proclaiming his existence. The Parable of the Sheep and Goats is the last to mention Satan, by describing the second coming of Christ and the punishment that Satan and his demons will suffer. In dealing with this passage, there is some difficulty in ascertaining what to take literally and what to take as symbolism since the language is apocalyptic, but what is generally gathered from the passage is that Satan and his subservient beings, as well as any unrighteous humans, are destined to destruction by fire.³³

³⁰ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 112.

³¹ Ibid.; 115.

³² Ibid.; 117.

³³ Ibid.; 118.

Jesus' final mentions and dealings with Satan come from the crucifixion and resurrection, starting with Jesus proclaiming "Get behind me Satan!" to his disciple Peter. This usage of "Satan", however, is akin to the usage found in the Old Testament that indicates an adversary or a stumbling block of sorts, since Peter is objecting to Jesus' death.³⁴ Despite his good intentions, Jesus says this in response because he has a prophesied duty to fulfill: to die a sinner's death and resurrect. Following this is the betrayal of Judas, which is attributed to the Devil's work in the books of Luke and John (with John presenting this corruption in greater detail). Despite the language implying a possession of sorts over Judas, based on his actions it is clear that he is quite conscious of what he is doing in betraying Jesus. While Satan may be prompting Judas to turn Jesus over to the Romans, ultimately Judas is moved by his own greed as described in Luke.³⁵ John, while still implying that Judas is aware of what he is doing, presents Satan as being more involved with the betrayal by claiming that Satan entered Judas when Jesus gave him bread. Both instances, however, are simply exemplifying the devilish characteristics of the tragic betrayal that takes place and is in no way minimizing Judas' sin by claiming he is possessed.³⁶ Despite all this, there still is a strong implication of a Satanic being that exists even though Jesus remains in full control of each situation.

Moving on to Acts, Satan is brought up only four times in the accounts of the Early Church. The first mention is in regards to Ananias and Sapphira where the language of Satan "entering their hearts" is similar to the way Satan tempts Judas. Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of avarice and deception by their own choosing, but Peter draws a connection between them and

³⁴ Ibid.; 122.

³⁵ Ibid.; 127.

³⁶ Ibid.; 128.

the Devil, who lies to the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Satan is then mentioned once again in Acts 10:38 when Peter explains how Jesus went about healing “all who were under the power of the devil”. Luke, the author of Acts, sees illness as separate from God’s original design (as seen in the story of the Bent Woman found in the book of Luke) and therefore classifies all diseases that Jesus heals as undoing Satan’s work.³⁸ Later in Acts, Paul encounters a sorcerer by the name of Elymas who fears that he will be out of business if his patrons become Christian. Paul then labels him as “a child of the devil”, which is a direct reference to Jesus’ Parable of the Weeds.³⁹ This reference does not necessarily prove the existence of the Devil, as Jesus’ reference clarifies, but rather acts as an allusion to the metaphor made. The last reference is found in Acts 26:18, where Paul is asked to go to the Gentiles to “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God”. Once again, Satan is referenced as an adversary, but in a much more prominent way than what is found in the Old Testament. Satan is now equated with the darkness and God equated with the light, which implies a more definite evil characteristic being given to Satan, but in remembering the definition of Satan being the adversary, it would be logical to conclude that in God being light, his adversary would then be the darkness.

³⁷ Ibid.; 132.

³⁸ Ibid.; 133.

³⁹ Ibid.; 134.

Demons in the Old Testament

With the exception of the book of Revelation (being a book full of apocalyptic language regarding Satan and the end times), an analysis beyond the book of Acts is unnecessary due to the fact that they follow the teachings of the Early Church and Jesus himself. Before analyzing the apocalyptic piece of Revelation, there are mentions of demons and other malevolent beings across the Bible that are independent from the Devil himself. The Old Testament references are sparse and ambiguous compared to the more frequent and explicit mentions in the New Testament, but each plays a critical role in observing the validity of demons' existence and what exactly their purpose is in regards to the Church.

Starting back in Genesis 4, there is a passage where sin is personified and described as “crouching at your door”, which some would associate to a demon or evil spirit. The author however could simply be using metaphorical language to present sin in a more threatening manner to those who choose not to obey God.⁴⁰ Mentions of demons also appear in Deuteronomy 32:17 where Israel is sacrificing to “šēdîm” (demons), but the word is used as a demeaning term by comparing the other gods (excluding Yahweh) to demons.⁴¹ The same word is used in a similar context in Psalms 106:37 when the Israelites are sacrificing once again to gods other than Yahweh (in this instance they were Canaanite gods).⁴² These insults toward other gods show Yahweh's jealous love in a way that also states his dominion over other gods. Continuing on, in Isaiah there is a unique word used when describing “demons” found multiple times throughout the Old Testament. The Hebrew word “šā'îr” (or the plural “šē'îrîm”) is used when describing idols that the Israelites worshipped, which literally translates to “hairy one”, but

⁴⁰ Ibid.; 74.

⁴¹ Ibid.; 66.

⁴² Ibid.; 67.

the idol is depicted as a goat used in sacrifice.⁴³ The hairy goat-like figure is then equated to demons or false gods in passages such as Isaiah 13:21 or Isaiah 34:14, which could explain why so many depictions of the devil or demons are red-haired and horned figures.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid.; 68.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; 69.

Demons in the New Testament

With the Old Testament lacking many references to evil beings, the New Testament by comparison has more explicit and personal accounts of demons as found in the Gospels and the book of Acts. These encounters give more detail into the character of malicious spirits and what their purpose is, as well as their relation to the Church and Christ. The references in the Gospels begin with the demoniac in the Capernaum Synagogue, the demoniac in Gerasene, the daughter of the Phoenician, and the epileptic boy whom Jesus heals.

Starting with the encounter in Capernaum, Jesus' presence is immediately acknowledged by the unclean spirit that possesses the man in the Synagogue (who trembles in his presence). From this we see that Jesus has power over any ailment or impure spirits since "[t]hey believe and tremble. This unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, under a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights".⁴⁵ The passage simply proves once again that Jesus is in full control, and not only that, but at the time, the news of a man who can cast out demons spreads like wildfire across Galilee. The event in Capernaum occurs immediately after Jesus is tempted in the desert, but the language used here is much more specific, with the word "echōn" being used which directly translates to "spirit" (though with the connotation it means "unclean spirit").⁴⁶

The next encounter Jesus has with demons is in Gerasene when him and his disciples are met with a demoniac after crossing the Sea of Galilee. The demon calls itself Legion and pleads for mercy by asking Jesus to be sent out into the pigs that were feeding nearby. The entire

⁴⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), Luke 4.

⁴⁶ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 140.

account is best explained in the Gospel of Mark and is the most detailed exorcism in the Gospels, which is evident in the conversation between Legion and Jesus and the aftermath of Jesus expelling the unclean spirit from the man's body. There is some discussion on the reason that the demon asks to be sent out into the pigs, with some claiming that the demons simply do not want to be banished from the earth and others stating that since they are unclean spirits, they are meant to go into unclean animals.⁴⁷ Regardless of the reason, the unique exchange between Legion and Jesus gives valuable insight on not only the power that Jesus has, but also on the way demons behave. While proof that demons act the same way cannot be proved, assumptions can be made based on the two accounts thus far. Legion pleads to Jesus and even bargains with him (this is not to belittle Jesus' power but rather solidify how much the demons fear him), begging to not be cast out of the land. Another unique aspect of this account is the fact that the pigs drive themselves into the river and drown, which shows what happens to the demons after the exorcism. Water is a common symbol all across the Bible representing chaos and disorder, similar to how it is found in the beginning of Genesis, and because of this, some say that Jesus sent them to the Abyss regardless of their pleading⁴⁸ while others say that the pigs' drowning is to show how destructive and impish devils can be.⁴⁹

The next demoniac is found in Syrian Phoenicia, whose mother comes to ask Jesus for help. It is made clear the woman is not Jewish when Matthew states that she is a Canaanite woman. The story focuses not on the exorcism, but on the plan that Jesus has to deliver the Gentiles from sin.⁵⁰ The demoniac is not in the passage either; Jesus simply tells the woman that

⁴⁷ Ibid.;154.

⁴⁸ Ibid.;155.

⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), Mark 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Matthew 15.

her daughter is healed after commending her faith. Since the passage is not necessarily meant to exemplify Jesus' power, not much information is given about the girl or her condition.

Regardless, if anything can be taken from the previous accounts, the girl assuredly has some ailment that only Jesus can cure, and the fact that Jesus does so without even verbally casting out the demon shows his power and ultimately his plan for all of humanity in terms of redemption and restoration.

The final major exorcism performed by Jesus is the story of the Epileptic Boy. Of course, epilepsy is a real disease that can occur without demon possession, but based on the symptoms the boy's father lists out in the Gospel of Mark, many are led to believe that the boy may be suffering from the disease. The father says that the boy is under the control of a spirit that takes his speech, and that he froths at the mouth and convulses (which are common symptoms of a seizure). When the boy is brought to Jesus, there is no conversation between the spirit and Jesus since the boy is mute while under its control. Once Jesus casts out the demon, the boy shrieks and collapses, and so Jesus helps him up. Mark likely includes this detail to draw a connection to Jesus resurrecting people both physically and spiritually, which relates to the primary meaning of the passage being centered around faith.⁵¹

Aside from this final account, Jesus also grants his disciples the power to expel demons, which would be a strange ability to give if demons did not exist. The disciples can only use this power by faith, which Jesus emphasizes as well as their mission as his followers. Jesus' ministry is now being passed on to his disciples, which of course leads to their deeds done in Acts following the resurrection. This authority given to his disciples, however, is not meant to be

⁵¹ Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 163.

mistaken with the Great Commission (which occurs before Jesus ascends into heaven) but rather is a prelude of what is to come— the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Regardless, Jesus granting the disciples authority over demons is crucial in not only proving their existence, but the role of Christians when encountering them.

Revelation

The next book to analyze is the book of Revelation (which is likely the book that most think of when discussing the Devil and demons). The date of when the piece of apocalyptic literature was written is still ambiguous, but lands either in 68 A.D., 95 A.D., or 80 A.D. with each possibility having its own reasoning behind it.⁵² Scholars who agree with Revelation being written in 68 A.D. justify their theory by stating that the prophecy regarding the five kings, discussed in 17:10, falls in line with the five kings that reigned starting from Augustus' reign in 29 A.D. up to Galba in 68 A.D.⁵³ Furthermore, there is still mention of the Temple in Revelation, which leads some to believe that the Temple had not yet fallen at the time it was written. Those who believe it was written in 80 A.D. base their reasoning from the Nero Redivivus myth describing an imposter operating under the name of Nero who convinced other rulers to overthrow King Titus, the current ruler, which caused political unrest between Jews and Christians.⁵⁴ Such a political setting leads some to believe that Revelation was written in response to all the rumors flying around at the time. The last probable date comes from the testimony of a man by the name of Irenaeus, which states that John wrote the book of Revelation at the end of Domitian's reign— however, there is some shakiness regarding the validity of his statement.⁵⁵ One issue comes from the fact that Irenaeus is writing nearly a century after John supposedly wrote Revelation (around 180-190 A.D.), and another issue comes from the fact that he is writing to Gnostics, which may skew his writing towards a more persuasive style rather than stating facts.⁵⁶

⁵² A.J.P. Garrow, *Revelation (New Testament Readings)*, (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1997), 64.

⁵³ Ibid.; 70.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; 76.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; 64.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Revelation is unique when compared to the other books of the Bible in that many people still do not know how to read it, and it is heavily contested in regards to its meaning. To facilitate this confusion, some emphasis must be put on the genre of Revelation. Although the Greek title itself is called “apokalypsis”, John states in verse 3 of the first chapter that the book is, in fact, prophecy meant to be given in a worship setting. During this time, it was common for orators to speak prophecy aloud in the congregation in the absence of the vision’s original oracle as a form of worship.⁵⁷ It should also be noted that Revelation is a letter of a transcribed message from one of God’s angels, which clearly entails highly metaphorical and unique language.

There is an interesting story in chapter 12 regarding a dragon and a woman; most equate the dragon to Satan and the woman to the Church. The woman gives birth to the Messiah who will rule all nations while the dragon waits to devour the child, but the child is snatched away to God’s side before such a thing can happen. This piece of the story discusses the victory Christ has over his adversary through the Crucifixion and Resurrection by Jesus being sent to his throne after his death.⁵⁸ It also introduces the main antagonist, which is the dragon. The dragon is often equated to the serpent found in Genesis, the Leviathan found in multiple passages in the Old Testament (such as Isaiah 27:1), or to the Hydra found in Daniel.⁵⁹ The story then follows the dragon chasing after the woman to no avail as she hides out in the desert—angered by this, the dragon sends a flood after her, only for the earth to swallow it. Satan, clearly angered by his defeat, advances against the Church, but the Church is guarded by Christ and his victory already,

⁵⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Revelation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.

⁵⁸ A.J.P. Garrow, *Revelation (New Testament Readings)*, (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1997), 78.

⁵⁹ T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 141.

which is why Satan's attacks ultimately prove ineffectual.⁶⁰ The dragon, angered once again by his defeat, turns against the other children of the woman and stands by the seashore. The children represent the physical weakness that the church has (the woman's hiding place is shrouded, but her children are located beyond the bounds of protection), with the sea representing chaos similar to how it is depicted in Genesis.⁶¹ John then sees a beast rising out of the sea that continually curses God and those who follow him, which most believe to be representative of Nero and his first reign wherein he persecutes the Christians after blaming them for the fire that burned half the city.⁶² Nero is then joined by a second beast which is said to represent cultists of Jezebel and Balaam since the beast rises out of the land (symbolizing a local threat), and the prophets of Jezebel and Balaam are the main opponents of John.⁶³ The second beast persuades the people of the earth to worship the first beast. which further solidifies the idea that the first beast is Nero since many believed that instead of committing suicide, Nero fled to the east to gather forces to take back Rome.⁶⁴ John then sees Jesus standing on Mount Zion with an army of 144,000, but the army is not yet complete, as the phrase "first fruits" hints.⁶⁵ Opposite to Jesus and his army, the dragon gathers his forces on Harmagedon to face him in the inevitable battle that is to come. John is taken to see the whore that sits on the scarlet beast and is shown a judgement scene in which those who follow the beast in fornication with the woman are destined to be defeated by Jesus. The woman is drunk from the blood of the Christians that Nero persecutes which adds another level of connection between the two beasts and the destiny

⁶⁰ A.J.P. Garrow, *Revelation (New Testament Readings)*, (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1997), 78.

⁶¹ Ibid.; 79.

⁶² Ibid.; 83.

⁶³ Ibid.; 84.

⁶⁴ Ibid.; 85.

⁶⁵ Ibid.; 87

for those who follow in the ways of sin.⁶⁶ There is foreshadowing of how the whore is to be killed, which is evidently at the hands of the beast himself who turns on the woman and devours her before the beast is conquered by Jesus and his army.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 91.

Characteristics of Demon Possession

When discussing demons, questions regarding demon possession and exorcisms arise in relation to the modern Church, so by understanding the signs of possession, a proper answer regarding its validity and use can be made. Turning to the Catholic Church is the logical place to find research regarding exorcisms considering that they deal with demons more than any other sect of Christianity. First: identifying demon possession. There is a distinction between demon possession and psychosis, according to Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D. Psychosis is a result of a blurred line between determining reality and imagination and results in disengagement, hallucinations, and loss of control.⁶⁷ Possession, however, is unique even though it has similar symptoms to psychosis, in that victims of possession are often in a trance with their eyes rolled back, spout knowledge, and speak in languages previously not known to them.⁶⁸ Furthermore, they also have no recollection of the event or of the exorcism being performed.⁶⁹ Possession can come about by the victim either welcoming an evil spirit or through another human in cooperation with demons sending them out on a victim.⁷⁰ It is not uncommon for supernatural activities to occur during possession, such as movement or destruction of objects, levitation, extreme weight (the heaviness of the victim increases), telepathy, and formation of apparitions, but one element remains constant in that the victim will vehemently curse those who are performing an exorcism.⁷¹ While it may be argued that demon possession is simply a form of insanity or schizophrenia, the fact that eyewitnesses have seen such unnatural events take place during a possession leads many to think that there is a greater force at play than a mental

⁶⁷ Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D., *CCBB - The Reality of Spiritual Good and Spiritual Evil*, 2017, 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*; 13. Note: This source includes two documented cases of exorcism accounts.

disorder. Granted, only a few accounts of demonic activity at such a high level are recorded, which may lead to some skepticism behind the validity of the instance, or to the instance simply being brushed off as a myth or an exaggeration. Furthermore, an actual account of demon possession is yet to be observed by a physicist or any scientist within a controlled environment wherein a full report and analysis can be made.

Disproving “Satan”

The goal of this thesis is to confirm or deny the existence of Satan and his demons, and the conclusion after all the research, in short, is that “Satan” does not exist (in the sense of a supreme commander of demons, archnemesis to God, and tempter of man), and demons are creatures of the chaos. To some this may seem like quite the unusual conclusion, but by going step-by-step through what is already known, the answer can easily be found. To sum up the points generally, Satan has few references in the Old Testament compared to the abundant allusions to Satan found in the New Testament. By putting this sudden shift into a historical perspective, the core of the argument is found in Zoroastrianism and the introduction of a complete evil that opposes a complete good. Here, at this point in history, there are noticeable correlations between the Christian understanding of Satan and the way Zoroastrianism understands Angra Manyu. Of course, many already know that there are references to Satan in the Old Testament before Zoroastrianism comes about, which will be addressed later. For now, the focus is on the parallels between Christianity and Zoroastrianism.

To begin, the idea of Ahura Mazda (the primary god of Zoroastrianism) is crucial to seeing the similarities between Christianity and what Zoroaster taught at his peak in 630 BCE.⁷² Zoroaster (known in the Persian language as Zarathustra) is best known as the prophet for Ahura Mazda who founded the religion that dominated the Persian empire at the time. Ahura Mazda is the god who teaches Zoroaster that “the human heart and mind [is] a perpetual battle ground between the forces of good and the forces of evil”.⁷³ The essence of this benevolent god Ahura Mazda is manifested into the spirit Spenta Mainyu, who represents the goodness of humanity and

⁷² Miguel A. De La Torre, Albert Hernández, *The Quest for the Historical Satan*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 65.

⁷³ Ibid.; 66.

is constantly locked in war with Angra Mainyu (Angra Manyu).⁷⁴ Angra Manyu is defined as a spirit of pure evil and disorder in the universe, which already sounds similar to the Christian Satan. This religion is ethically based, however, and not based upon a gift of salvation like the Christian faith. Another similarity, though, is the fact that Zoroaster teaches the idea of a “heaven” and “hell” based on the decisions made by humanity between what is good and what is evil, and claims that each decision has a spiritual impact on the cosmos.⁷⁵ Not only that, but many who follow Zoroastrianism say that there is a final battle between Angra Mainyu and Ahura Mazda, and that those who follow the path of goodness will join Ahura Mazda in pairidaēza (paradise).⁷⁶ To summarize, the common themes between Zoroastrianism and Christianity are the idea of an evil being that opposes what is holy, the idea of a heaven and hell, and the idea of a final battle between said good and evil. While these similarities on their own may not solidify the denial of Satan, they do elaborate on the cultural influence that Zarathustra has on the New Testament.

Because of this cultural collision, a new proposal on who or what Satan is comes about: Satan is a representation of sin itself in the Bible and not an actual being that rules over demons and opposes God. Sin is born in Genesis after Eve disobeys God and eats the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and sin is now tied with the flesh of man. Sin is what poses the problem to God and is what separates his children from him, and sin does not come from Satan or any other being. Sin only comes out of the hearts of men who give into its temptation. Of course, being human, sin can only be understood so much by the human mind, so to make it into a character would make the concept much more accessible to anyone seeking to escape its clutches. In order

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.; 67.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

to elaborate, there is a passage in Hebrews that mentions the devil which states, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—”.⁷⁷ This passage seems very explicit when discussing the devil and the power he has, but by observing the passage and replacing “the devil” with sin (which causes us to move away from God), the passage seems more concise and in line with how the Old Testament and even some New Testament passages describe sin. Romans 6:23 even states, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. The wages of *sin* is death, which is the power that “the devil” has as described by the book of Hebrews. At the very minimum, the devil and sin are synonymous, but for the better understanding of Christians, it would prove more beneficial to refer to sin as what it is instead of Satan or the devil.

Next, discussing the objections to the idea of Satan being a symbol for sin and their rebuttals may ultimately solidify this hypothesis. Starting in Genesis, which is perhaps where most would turn to for a discussion on Satan in the Old Testament, the serpent in the Garden is indeed a crafty creature and plants the idea to betray God in Eve’s mind. Sin cannot tempt humans if sin does not exist yet in the Garden, therefore, Satan must have done so. The problem with this idea is that Satan then must also be sinless in order to exist in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Of course, if Satan is the evil that drives humans away from God, he cannot exist in the Garden with God. So if Satan is not within the serpent, then what motive does the serpent have for deceiving Eve? Well, the serpent is actually a creature of the “chaos” which is found at the very beginning of Genesis when God forms the world. Other creatures are said to dwell within

⁷⁷ Hebrews 2:14

the chaos, but God controls them and makes the universe out of the “deep” which is synonymous with chaos. Leviathan and Behemoth are also placed into the same category of “chaos creatures” since only God himself can control them.

The next passage that most would turn to when looking for Satan in the Old Testament is the book of Job where Satan makes quite the unusual appearance compared to the rest of the Old Testament. The story of Job is actually a common tale during the time; Job was written about a young man who suffered greatly, even though he was good at heart. The Bible takes this and places God as the supreme controller of everything that transpires in the universe. Satan is used as a tool here to exemplify God’s command, even during times of struggle. Satan can also be used in the book of Job literally (meaning the literal translation of Satan in the Hebrew) which would place Satan as an “accuser” since he wants to test Job of his faith in God. Even so, this being who is being called Satan could simply be playing his role in the kingdom of God as a tester of human hearts. Regardless, Job finally asks God why he has taken everything from him, which leads into the true meaning of the book of Job: God is in control, God will always be in control, and that humans have no right to question God because of his benevolence. Satan does not even make a final appearance in the last scene of the story, which further implies that he was only used as a piece for the story.

Moving on to the New Testament, Jesus has an encounter with Satan in the desert after he is baptized. Since this passage is clearly after the period in which Zoroastrianism was at its peak, the concept of Satan being the tempter of man is already very prevalent at the time this is written. The passage in Matthew 4 states:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” 10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Once again, the words “Satan” and “sin” are synonymous throughout the passage since Jesus is just as human as he is divine and is therefore subject to sin’s temptation. Furthermore, Jesus is fasting at the time and is likely delirious or experiencing some form of hallucination as indicated by the sporadic changes in locations throughout the encounter. This is only to say that Jesus might be talking to the manifestation of sin itself via a hallucination. The event occurs outside of the city where there are no people to provide eyewitness accounts of what Jesus experiences, but

a story of this caliber is not likely to be made up by a group of rural men. Jesus experiences temptation like any other human, but he is able to rise above and do what humanity could not, which is to deny sin's temptations. Again like in previous passages, "satan" can be used in its literal meaning of "adversary" since Jesus is combating the natural elements that any mortal faces. The time Jesus spends in the desert is like a test proving that he is human (since he experiences hunger, fatigue, and temptation) and that he is also divine (since he manages to overcome these obstacles, showing that he is capable of salvation).

Where Satan really takes the stage is in the Book of Revelation where allusions to him are in abundance due to the apocalyptic nature of the piece. Revelation tells the story of the victory that Christ has over death—it is the final resolution to the main enemy presented all the way back in Genesis: sin. There are no explicit mentions of Satan in Revelation, but many equate the "dragon" to Satan because of its menacing nature and the way it represents all that is wrong with the world. Some may also mistake the two beasts that rise out of the land and sea for Satan when they are, in fact, representative of Nero (during his first rule) and his supporters that want him to conquer and rule over Rome. This is due to the connection drawn from the beasts in Revelation to the beasts found in Daniel's visions which (at the time) represent a corrupted power that reigns over God's people.⁷⁸ Given the nature of the beast's ability to "rebirth" itself and manifest a new head after being mortally wounded, there is an implication of a successive reign of rulers. Nero is the only emperor that matches the cycle of Roman emperors to the cycle of the heads being regrown.⁷⁹ Satan's only reference can only therefore be the dragon, with no other potential candidates being found in Revelation.

⁷⁸ A.J.P. Garrow, *Revelation (New Testament Readings)*, (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1997), 80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*; 81.

Some might still not be completely sure about the idea of Satan not existing at all, to which comes the next point: Satan, at the most, is only a demon. However, in order to make this claim, the question of “Do demons exist?” must be answered first, obviously. Demons within the New Testament have unique interactions with Jesus and his disciples, with each account being seen by multiple eyewitnesses, but the key item of observation is the language in which demons are addressed. One of the most detailed confrontations that Jesus has with demons is the time when Jesus sends Legion into the pigs. The exact passage is as follows in Mark 5:1-17:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

7 He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” 8 For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

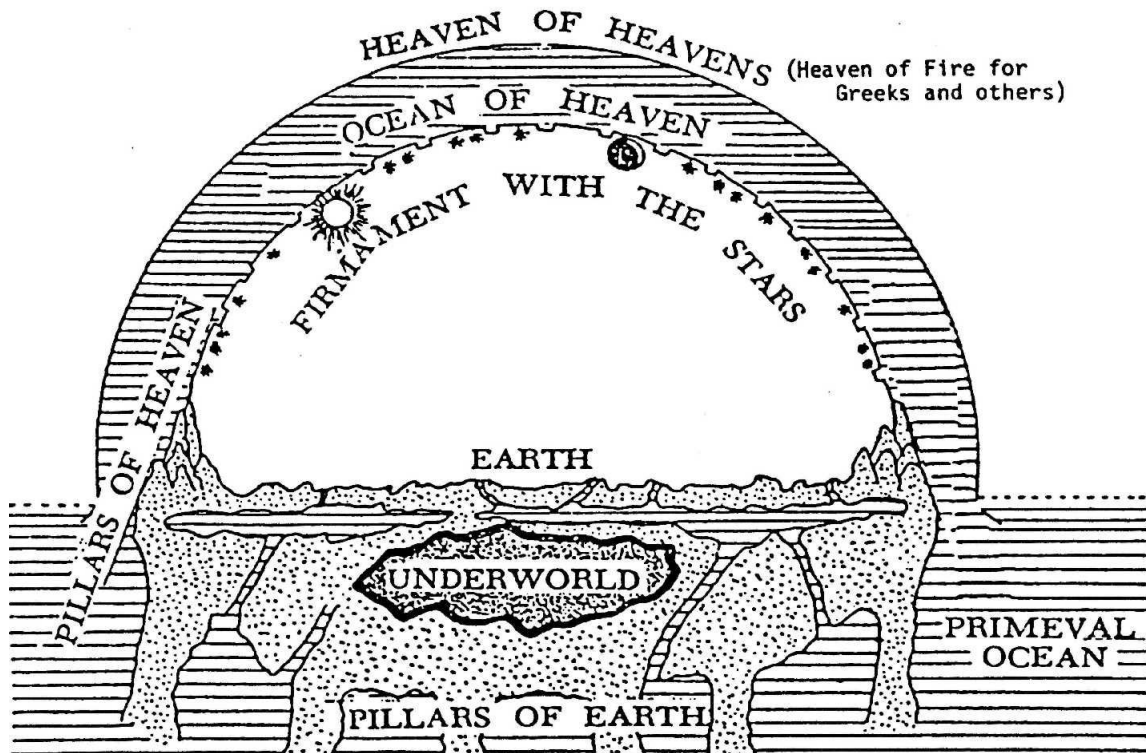
9 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Notice the last verse where Jesus sends the unclean spirits into the unclean animals who drown in the river. In ancient Abrahamic language, the water (which represents chaos) is used in this very passage. The fact that this type of language is being used draws a connection between the Gospels and Genesis, with both having similar metaphorical writing. Jesus is speaking to an audience that consists primarily of Jewish people. The ancient understanding of how the world operates is not the way the modern world understands it now. Jesus had to speak to a nation that believes the universe looks and functions how Abraham saw it, which can be seen in the figure below.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ N. F. Gier, *God, Reason, and the Evangelicals*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987)



Hypothetically, supposing that demons are classified as creatures of the deep, similar to Leviathan or Behemoth, this story of Jesus' command over the demons is a direct parallel to the creation of the earth in Genesis. In Genesis, God commands the chaos and forms the world out of the chaos, and later in the Old Testament is shown to command Leviathan and Behemoth, which no other god can do. In the same manner, Jesus commands the chaos and sends it back into the deep from whence it came. In this respect, we see Jesus proving that he is the same God who created the heavens and the earth to the Jewish people who would be able to grasp these concepts, by using language that they are already familiar with. Each time Jesus faces a demon, it is only to solidify his heavenly superiority as the one true God. However, this language only applies to the ancient era and the understanding of the world has progressed since then, meaning that God no longer needs to use demons to show his authority. Perhaps, if demons do exist, they simply do not have a need to terrorize the modernized areas of the world, or perhaps the

modernized world has lost the need for the explanation of demons. With the principles of physics, in order for demons to exist and interact in the world, they must be composed of atoms and have mass and they also must exist within the bounds of this universe since they cannot transcend space and time. God is the only being that is able to exist outside of space and time and simultaneously operate within the bounds of space and time since he is omnipotent. With no conclusive evidence on what demons are anatomically made of, nor where they dwell within the universe, there is no reason to believe that they exist in terms of modern understanding. But, supposing that demons do exist, from what the Bible shows time and time again, there is no conceivable reason to be afraid of these forces of evil because God, the creator of heaven and earth, commander of the chaos, and conqueror of sin and death is greater than any demon or any devil.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis is to examine the question of whether Satan and his demons exist. Based on the information presented in this thesis, the current logical conclusion is that Satan and his demons, in short, do not exist. This is due to the large impact made on Jewish culture and, by extension, Christianity during the peak of the Persian Empire through Zoroastrianism and its dualistic beliefs, and also due to the ancient understanding of the universe during first century A.D.

Jesus merely utilizes these terms to emphasize his power all throughout the narrative. There is no need for Jesus to uproot the minor beliefs that do not pertain to the kingdom's expansion, as he focuses on his true message which is that he came to defeat death and sin. Within the grand scheme of things, Jesus simply uses the current understanding of the world to convey his message to his people. At the time, it made more sense for Jesus to simply use the language that was present at the time instead of trying to preface his message of salvation with how the universe truly operates to an audience of primarily uneducated people. Now, information is obviously much more accessible and humanity continues to progress in understanding the world properly. There is no need for the concept of Satan in the modern world and it is time that Christians accept the responsibility of their actions and see the true enemy that God sent his Son to defeat. Sin is what started the Fall and sin is what is ultimately defeated, along with death. Satan is only a literary piece for the overall message to be grasped by those who may not have the essential knowledge of how the universe operates.

In regard to demons, the only way demons can exist and interact in our time is if they have matter and mass and exist within the bounds of space and time. Any other claim would

essentially state that they are outside space and time and are therefore timeless. Something that is timeless cannot interact with the universe in space in time except God. Demons must have some physical form, so the notion that demons are spiritual beings is false. Satan and demons go hand in hand, and the Christian response is the same for both. What most people would believe to be the influence of Satan and demons is actually the natural and carnal desire to sin. Sin is the only thing that separates humanity from God and it is the one thing God sought to defeat. It is not essential to the Christian doctrine to believe or not believe in Satan and his demons—the only thing that matters is the belief in the resurrection and that God is God— but Christians should be careful when using this language since it can be misleading and misconstrued.

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