

Satan: Everything You've Always Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid To Ask

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

Is Satan an actual living, personal being? Atheists and their near kinsmen, infidel theologians, say "No."

For instance, G. B. Gray, a representative of the liberal persuasion, wrote:

"If we would fix more exactly on the origin of the Satan, there is much to be said for Marti's suggestion that he is the personification of the self-accusing conscience of Israel" (1899, 4298).

To those who have confidence in the integrity of the Scriptures, however, there is no doubt about the fact that the devil is a personal being.

He is constantly represented in the Bible as a **personal entity**. Personal names and personal pronouns as well as personal acts are so frequently attributed to him that it is impossible to view Satan as the mere **personification** of evil.

The great enemy of God is most commonly referred to in the Bible as "the devil" or "Satan." He is termed the devil thirty-three times in the New Testament, and called Satan thirty-six times.

But he is also designated by many other titles. He is:

- Abaddon, Apollyon, the great dragon, the old serpent, the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 9: 11; 12:9),
- the adversary (1 Pet. 5:8),
- the accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10),
- Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24),
- Belial (2 Cor. 6:15),
- an enemy (Mt. 13:28),
- the evil one (Mt. 13:19),
- the father of lies, a liar, a murderer (Jn. 8:44),
- the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4),
- the ruler of this world (Jn. 12:31),
- the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), and,
- the tempter (Mt. 4:3).

By way of definition the devil maybe said to be:

"A created but superhuman, personal, evil, world-power, represented in Scripture as the adversary both of God and man" (Sweet 1915, 2693).

Satan in the Old Testament

The Hebrew term **satan** etymologically denoted “adversary,” being related to a verb suggesting the idea of “lying in wait.” The word was frequently used in a very general sense of adversary.

In Numbers 22:22 it is even applied to the messenger of Jehovah who opposed Balaam. The general usage is usually indicated by the absence of the definite article. When the article is used, e.g., “**the** adversary,” it becomes a proper name and thus denotes the personal devil.

Satan in the Garden

Our first knowledge of Satan is derived from the temptation account in Genesis. Numerous attempts to refute the historicity of this narrative have been attempted. Professor Melancthon Jacobus speaks to this very point:

“That there was a real serpent in this transaction cannot be doubted any more than we can doubt the real history throughout. Here, where the facts speak, further explanations are not necessary, nor fitted to the time of the beginning. (1) The real serpent is contrasted with the other animals, (vs. 1). (2) In the New Testament allusion is made to a real serpent in referring to the history, (2 Cor. 11:3, 14; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 20:2). Yet (3) that there was in the transaction a superior agent, Satan himself, who only made use of the serpent, is plain from his being referred to as ‘the Old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan,’ (Rev. 12:9) – ‘a murderer from the beginning,’ (Jn. 8:44). Satan is also spoken of as the arch seducer, who is even transformed into an angel of light,’ (2 Cor. 11: 14). The reference may be to this event. Almost all the Asiatic nations hold the serpent to be a wicked being that has brought evil into the world. – Von Bohlen, a Ind., i., 248. Some have sought to turn this history of the temptation into an allegory. But it wears the same aspect of historical detail as the rest of the narrative” (1866, 112).

Satan Tempts David

The divine record of Chronicles declares: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” (1 Chron. 21:1). Here again Satan is seen in his role as a tempter and enemy of God’s people.

Some have claimed a contradiction between this passage and 2 Samuel 24:1 where it is stated that Jehovah moved David to number Israel. There is no discrepancy, however, for a combining of the verses simply shows how God employed Satan as the agent to punish His people for their sins.

Satan Afflicts Job

Satan is given more prominence in the book of Job than in any other Old Testament book. No less than fourteen times he is mentioned in the first two chapters.

Again, modernism has attempted to explain away these historical incidents. Andrew Zenos of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago alleged that

“The apparent incongruity of a person (i.e., Satan) with such a frame of mind consorting with the other ‘sons of God’ in the courts of heaven, giving an account of himself to, and speaking on familiar terms with, God, disappears when the narrative is seen to be constructed, not as a picture of realities, but as a vehicle of moral teaching” (Jacobus 1926, 811).

Such a view totally ignores the facts and reads prejudicial opinion into the sacred text.

Satan: Adversary of Joshua

Satan appears as an adversary of Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3:1, 2. Joshua, clothed with filthy garments that symbolized the sins of the whole nation (of which he was the representative) stood before the messenger of Jehovah.

Satan was at his right hand (cf. Psa. 109:6) to be his adversary. The accuser was not allowed to speak though, rather, “Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan”

The central message of this vision (1-10) was to show that Jehovah’s people, conditioned upon a true reformation, could again enjoy prosperity. But:

“Satan was ready to challenge the Lord’s own institution for the forgiveness of sin, to deny the right of God to pardon the sinner. He seeks to overthrow the Throne of Grace, so hateful to him, and to turn it into a seat of judgment and condemnation” (Laetsch 1956, 422).

Certainly the complete story of the devil’s horrible character is not presented in the Old Testament.

Enough is given though to warrant the conviction that he is truly a malicious being. The New Testament brings into full focus his anti-godly designs.

Satan in the New Testament

The following New Testament references will suffice to underscore our previous affirmations regarding the unscrupulous intent of the Adversary of God and man.

Satan Tempted Christ

As the serpent seduced Eve (Gen. 3:6) through the manifold channels of lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the vainglory of life (1 Jn. 2:16), so he sought to solicit Christ to sin similarly (Mt. 4:1-11).

Interestingly, he is denominated “the tempter” in that narrative. The Greek term is *peirazon*, a present tense participle literally expanded, “the always tempting me,” which suggests his characteristic activity.

Had the devil succeeded in causing Christ to sin, the Lord could not have served as the spotless sin offering (2 Pet. 1:19; 2 Cor. 5:21), and the entire human race would have been forever lost!

Satan’s Affliction on Mankind

Disease, infirmity and death are ultimately the responsibility of Satan. How? By his introduction of sin into the world, he brought about such woes and hence, he is really the murderer of the human family (cf. Jn. 8:44).

This is why it is said that a certain Jewish woman, who had been afflicted with an infirmity for eighteen years, was bound of Satan (Lk. 13:16), and Peter declared that Jesus went about doing good “healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38).

Satan: Enemy of the Apostles

The New Testament represents the devil as a deadly foe of the apostles of Christ, who by their saving message, opposed his work.

The Lord informed Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat” (Lk. 22:31).

Many commentators have over-looked the fact that the pronoun “you” (*humas*) is plural, revealing that Jesus was issuing a warning regarding all the apostles. Yet, recognizing the special weakness of Peter, the Master adds: “but I made supplication for thee (*sou*, singular) that thy faith fail not”

Moreover, Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a “messenger of Satan” (2 Cor. 12:7), and when the apostle would have visited the Thessalonian brethren, Satan hindered him (2 Thes. 2: 18).

It must ever be remembered, though, that the devil can only do what he is permitted to do by God. This will be discussed later in more detail.

Satanic Influences Christ’s Disciples

Satan “put into the heart of Judas Iscariot” the dastardly notion of betraying the Lord Jesus (Jn. 13:2), and later entered “into him” (Jn. 13:27) thus, causing him to consummate the darkest deed of all history.

So captivated by the Deceiver was Judas, that Jesus once plainly called the wayward apostle a “devil” (Jn. 6:70). Judas, however, did not consider himself a mere passive pawn at the disposal of Satan, for he unmistakably acknowledged: “I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood” (Mt. 27:4).

Additionally, when Ananias lied and misrepresented the amount of his gift to the early church, Peter inquired:

“Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3). And yet the apostle further asks: “How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart?” (vs. 4).

Satan cannot overpower us (Jas. 4:7), but he will gladly cooperate in the destruction of our souls!

Where Did Satan Come From?

Though the Bible gives no detailed account of the origin of Satan, sufficient suggestions are found to draw some reasonable conclusions. The devil did not exist eternally, hence did have an origin, as the following indicates.

Satan is not Deity

It is certainly clear that Satan is not of the nature of deity. Deity is all powerful (Gen. 17:1). Deity cannot be restrained (Job 42:2).

On the contrary, however, the devil is clearly not omnipotent as evidenced by the following:

- His power to afflict was limited (Job 1:12; 2:6).
- When rebuked by the messenger of Jehovah, he had to remain silent (Zech. 3:2).
- His authority over world kingdoms was “delivered” to him (Lk.4:6).
- He had to ask for the apostles (Lk. 22:31).
- He can “snatch” no one from the Lord’s hand (Jn. 10:28).
- When resisted, he flees (Jas. 4:7).
- When cast into hell he will be powerless to resist (Rev. 20:10).

Moreover, Scripture plainly affirms that He that is in us (i.e., God) is greater than he (i.e., Satan) that is in the world. (1 Jn. 4:4).

So, to sum up: Deity is all powerful. But Satan is not. Thus, he is not of the deity class.

Satan was created

All things and beings that are not of the deity class are the result of creation:

“[F]or in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers” (Col. 1:16).

This would include Satan as he originally was. It might be mentioned also at this point that all created things had their origin at some time during the creation week of Genesis 1. This Moses states in Exodus 20:11:

“For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”

This included the great host of angels. Incidentally, the angels:

“must have been created at the very beginning of the first day of creation, for Job 38:6, 7 tells of their singing and of their shout of joy at the creation of the earth” (Whitcomb 1972, 43).

Satan’s Fall

All things, as they were originally created, were good. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

"By the application of the term 'good' to everything that God made, and the repetition of the word with the emphasis 'very' at the close of the whole creation, the existence of anything evil in the creation of God is absolutely denied, and the hypothesis entirely refuted, that the six days' work merely subdued and fettered an ungodly, evil principle, which had already forced its way into it" (Keil 1864, 67).

This means that the being known as Satan was not created as Satan (i.e., as an adversary). He was created good, but he became bad.

If Satan was created good, but is now evil, it is obvious that he fell. The Bible seems to indicate that the devil was the very first sinner.

John wrote: "The devil sinneth from the beginning ..." (1 Jn. 3:8). W. E. Vine says:

"There is stress upon the phrase 'from the beginning.' Sin began when Satan first sinned" (1970, 56). See also Guy N. Woods' commentary on this passage.

There are several indications in the Bible that a rebellion occurred in heaven at some remote period of antiquity. In the book of Job, Eliphaz says of God: "He puts no trust even in his servants; And against his angels he charges error" (4:18). Barnes noted:

"Language like this would hardly be employed unless there was a belief that even the holiness of the angels was not incorruptible, and that there had been some revolt there among a part, which rendered it possible that others might revolt also" (1852, LXIII).

Two passages in the New Testament speak of such a rebellion.

"God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet.2:4).

Jude writes:

"And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Angels were obviously subject to some kind of heavenly law, for they sinned and sin is transgression of law (1 Jn. 3:4). All evidence points to Satan as the instigator and leader in this revolt. Also, let it be noted that not all of these rebellious spirits were confined in a place of punishment (cf. Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

In 1 Timothy 3:6 Paul prohibits a novice being appointed an elder "lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

There is some discussion among scholars as to how the genitive *tou diabolou* (of the devil) should be taken. Some see it as subjective in the sense of "the devil's trap of condemnation" into which the novice falls. The expression "snare of the devil" in verse 7 is relied upon as support for this view.

More likely, however, the words "of the devil" ought to be taken as an objective genitive, suggesting the sense, "Lest he be involved in the condemnation which the devil incurred," or the "judgment pronounced on the devil" (Nicoll n.d., 114).

Alford, Wiesinger (in Olshausen), and others strongly argue that *krima* (judgment, condemnation) in verse 6 can only be used of a judgment into which the devil came. If this be correct, we have here a specific allusion to Satan's original fall.

Perhaps a word should be said about certain passages which are thought to shed light on Satan's fall, but which, upon closer examination, are hardly conclusive in that regard.

Is Satan Lucifer?

Isaiah 14:12 contains a reference to "Lucifer" (KJV), an epithet of the **king of Babylon** (vs. 4). Jerome and others of the church "fathers" took this to be a reference to Satan and such a notion is popular today, but there is no evidence of an allusion to the devil in this passage.

Is Ezekiel's lamentation over the king of Tyre a reference to Satan's fall?

Some have asserted that Ezekiel's "lamentation over the king of Tyre" (28:11-19) is a picture of Satan and his fall in Eden. But as Ellison notes:

"Those who implicitly hold this view have generally little idea of how unknown it is in wider Christian circles, or of how little basis there is for it in fact" (Ezekiel: The Man And His Message, p. 108).

Satan falling as "lightning from heaven"

When the seventy disciples returned from a preaching tour they declared: "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name."

He replied: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Lk. 10:17, 18).

Though some see this as a reference to the devil's initial apostasy, Plummer says:

"The aorist [tense of the verb "fallen"] indicates the coincidence between the success of the Seventy and Christ's vision of Satan's overthrow ...; it refers to the success of the disciples regarded as a symbol and earnest of the complete overthrow of Satan" (1969, 278).

Michael's war with Satan

In Revelation 12:7-9 John sees a vision of war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the devil and his angels, the result being that Satan was cast down to earth.

In harmony with the nature of the book and its general context, this is a symbolic description of the battle between the church of Jesus Christ and the forces of Satan. That it does not refer to a fall back near the beginning of time is clear from the fact that Satan was "cast down," or overcome, "because of the blood of the Lamb" (12:10, 11).

It is not impossible, though, that an ancient conflict might have formed the basis of the imagery here employed, even though the reference is not specifically to such an event.

Satan's Mission

The devil's self-appointed mission, very simply stated, is to destroy the human race in hell. It is little wonder he has been denominated by inspiration as the "Destroyer" (Rev. 9:11).

He attempted the ruin of humanity by the temptation of Christ (Mt. 4:1-11), and the seduction of His holy apostles (Lk. 22:31). Though that plan failed (with the exception of Judas — Jn. 17:12), he now nevertheless "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (2 Pet. 5:8).

How is he working today?

But how does this Enemy work today? Satan was permitted to operate in a very limited way supernaturally during former ages of history (as in the case of demon possessions of the first century — Mt. 12:22-29; cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; 2 Thes. 2:9).

Apparently, this was for the purpose of enabling the Lord and His disciples to demonstrate the superiority of divine power over Satanic power.

Today, however, he cannot operate in a miraculous fashion.

If the devil could miraculously dominate men today, there would be, as Rubel Shelly has observed, "a manifest 'imbalance' of spiritual power among men with the scales tipped to Satan's advantage" (Occultism, p. 7).

Professor L. M. Sweet affirms that there is no evidence:

"that Satan is able to any extent to introduce disorder into the physical universe or directly operate in the lives of men ... On the contrary, it is perfectly evident that Satan's power consists principally in his ability to deceive. It is interesting and characteristic that according to the Bible Satan is fundamentally a liar and his kingdom is a kingdom founded upon lies and deceit" (1915, 2694).

The New Testament affords evidence aplenty for this. For instance, the Deceiver:

1. Delights in blinding the minds of the unbelieving that the Light of the gospel should not dawn upon them (2 Cor. 4:4).
2. To accomplish this he does not hesitate to transform himself into an angel of Light, along with his ministers who pretend to be ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11: 14,15).
3. When people are inclined not to believe the truth, the devil takes the gospel from their hearts (Lk. 8:12).
4. He is full of trickery. He has his snares (1 Tim. 3:7), and employs his "wiles" – "a deliberate planning or system" (Eph. 4:14; 6:11; Vincent 1900, 392).
5. Those converted from the power of Satan unto God are thus turned from darkness to light (Acts 26: 18).
6. Accordingly, Christians must constantly be on guard "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

Though we must never underestimate the power of Satan, it is equally certain that we must likewise never overestimate him.

By employing the same weapon as used by Christ – "It is written" (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10) – we can become "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Jehovah can grant us victories over the Destroyer and his kingdom (Rom. 16:20; 1 Jn. 5:4), and by His might, we take courage and press on!

Satan's Destiny

The Lord Jesus Christ will be completely victorious over Satan.

He was manifested "that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). The eternal punishment of hell" is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). And into that horrible place he will be cast and be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

The promise of Genesis 3:15 will then be totally fulfilled:

"He [the woman's seed, i.e., Christ] shall bruise thy [the serpent's] head."

What great rejoicing will then occur!

Related Articles

 [Crushing the Serpent's Head: The Meaning of Genesis 3:15](#)

- [📄 Spiritual Warfare Is Real, Difficult, and Dangerous](#)
- [📄 Who Controls the Kingdoms of This World?](#)
- [📄 Demons: Ancient Superstition or Historical Reality?](#)
- [📄 Jehovah's Witnesses and the Doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ](#)
- [📄 What Do You Know About the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [📄 Who Is in Control of Death?](#)
- [📄 Judas Iscariot: From Apostle to Apostate](#)
- [📄 The Growing Interest in Angels](#)
- [📄 What Happens To A Person At Death?](#)

Works Cited

Barnes, Albert. 1852. *Commentary on Job*. New York: G. A. Leavitt.

Ellison, H. L. 1967. *Ezekiel: The Man And His Message*. England: The Paternoster Press.

Gray, G. B. 1899. "Satan." _Encyclop

Scripture References

Revelation 9:11, 12:9; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10; Matthew 12:24; 2 Corinthians 6:15; Matthew 13:28; Matthew 13:19; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2; Matthew 4:3; Numbers 22:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 20:2; Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Chronicles 21:1; 1 Samuel 24:1; Zechariah 3:1, 2; Psalm 109:6; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16; Matthew 4:1-11; 2 Peter 1:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; Luke 22:31; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; John 13:2; John 13:27; John 6:70; Matthew 27:4; Acts 5:3; James 4:7; Genesis 17:1; Job 42:2; Job 1:12, 2:6; Zechariah 3:2; John 10:28; Revelation 20:10; 1 John 4:4; Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1; Exodus 20:11; Job 38:6, 7; Genesis 1:31; Jude 6; 1 John 3:4; Ephesians 2:2, 6:12; 1 Timothy 3:6; Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:17, 18; Revelation 12:7-9; Revelation 9:11; John 17:12; 2 Peter 3:8; Matthew 12:22-29; Exodus 7:11, 22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15; Luke 8:12; 1 Timothy 3:7; Ephesians 4:14, 6:11; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Romans 8:37; Romans 16:20; 1 John 5:4; Matthew 25:41; Genesis 3:15

Cite this article

Jackson, Wayne. "Satan: Everything You've Always Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid To Ask." *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: July 6, 2020.
<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1581-satan-everything-youve-always-wanted-to-know-but-were-afraid-to-ask>

**CHRISTIAN
COURIER**

©2020. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1559-2235.

Publisher

Fortify Your Faith
P.O. Box 11746
Jackson, Tennessee 38308
Phone: (731) 256-7280 – Fax: (731) 256-5152

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Acceptable Use Policy](#)