

WHY DOESN'T THE DEVIL JUST QUIT? (Part 1)

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“So who do you think the Devil is?”

My answer to this probing question would determine my “orthodoxy” as far as the two elders from the Christadelphian assemblies was concerned. They had visited my home because many of their membership were attending a series of meetings we had been hosting. They needed to ‘report’ back to the authorities concerning my belief in who or what the Devil is.

By way of introduction, let me say that in my experience the Christadelphian folk are sincere believers in our Lord and are avid students of the Bible. However, their distinctive doctrine that the Devil is not a personal supernatural angel who is implacably opposed to the Living God is, in my humble opinion, a real achilles heel for them.

You only have to look at the conflicting opinions within their own ranks to see there is something seriously wrong with their no-supernatural-Devil doctrine. Most Christadelphians believe the Devil is a metaphor for the internal corruption of the human heart ... the ‘flesh’ nature in mankind, if you will. The Devil is inside each of us!

Others are of the opinion that the Devil represents an external human adversary, whether an individual opponent, or a civil and/or religious system that persecutes God’s people. The Devil is “flesh and blood”!

Still others believe the Devil can be a supernatural angel, but a good angel of the Lord who on occasion may be sent to tempt and oppose the saints to test their loyalty and character.

Such internal uncertainty within Christadelphian ranks should act as a warning signal that the no-supernatural-Devil doctrine is askew.

So, who or what would I tell those two elders in my home that the Devil, or Satan, is? Well, I began at the very beginning. Genesis 3 to be precise. The place where ‘evil’ first insinuated itself/himself into human history ...

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?”’ (Genesis 3:1).

My opening statement quite threw my questioners. They admitted they expected I would start where “everybody else starts”, which is at the end, way over in Revelation 12: 9:

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

“Aha”, they retorted, “but the serpent in Genesis 3 was a beast of the field. There is nothing here about the serpent being a fallen, supernatural angel. You must note the two key words in this verse, ‘beast’ and ‘field’”, they suggested. “The serpent was a beast of the field.” Nothing more, nothing less --- “beast” ... field” --- two key words. In their view the serpent was just a clever animal!

These folk were following the founder of Christadelphianism, John Thomas, who wrote that “the serpent did not intend to lie, but it did lie ... He was a non-morally responsible animal”! ¹

However, I replied that if we were going to build our whole exegetical understanding on just two words, that I would pick the two words that I considered critical to the question. If we must do our exegesis on only two words, then I would choose “more” and “than”. The serpent was “more than” a beast of the field.

¹ John Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, p. 88.

Question! If the serpent was “a non-morally responsible animal”, why did God punish him for his lie? God does not hold to account the non-morally responsible. God did hold the Serpent accountable for his deception precisely because he was morally accountable for his deception!

Responsible exegesis puts the whole sentence and context together,

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

Clearly, “the beast of the field” was an intelligent but sinister moral agent external to Adam & Eve and intent upon their demise. Satan “entered” or “possessed” this animal, this “beast of the field” to be his agent for evil. On a few key moments in Biblical history, it seems, Satan does not leave his nefarious work to anyone else but himself. ²

And when we do get to the end of the story, the Bible in no uncertain terms does identify “the Serpent of old, who is called the Devil and Satan”, as being the one “who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

Obviously, it will not do to pick and choose the words we feel are helpful to our theories, or we will run into serious error. That would be like saying the Bible teaches “There is no God!” Just check up how many times the statement, “no God” is found in the Bible. You’ll be amazed. But of course, it’s the context that makes all the difference for,

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1). And,

“There is no God like Me, says the LORD.”

Both the fool and God Himself use these two words together, “no God”! But would anybody seriously assert that God is a fool for saying these two words, “no God”! Exegetical sense must prevail.

There are obviously many debates within Christadelphian society as to who or what exactly the Devil is. However, for the great majority of Christendom there has always been the consensus that the Devil is a “fallen” supernatural spirit-being who is implacably opposed to God and His Kingdom. ³

Personally, I take the position that Jesus and his contemporaries believed in the supernatural angel called the Devil. If we dismiss the Devil as a myth or a metaphor for evil, we immediately lock Jesus up as a prisoner of the superstitious ignorance of his day, and impugn him with the ignorance of his generation. No. Jesus always spoke the absolute truth, and he knew he was locked in a huge conflict against an intelligent spiritual Enemy.

We are told that in the wilderness “the Tempter came” and spoke to Jesus (Matthew 4: 3). After failing to win his battle with Jesus, we read, “Then the Devil left him...(v. 11). The Devil came and the the Devil left. The Greek verb for “came” (*proselthon*) means “to approach, to draw near, to come up to someone, to come forward”.

After the Devil departed, “the angels came and began to minister to Jesus” (v. 11). You read in the very next chapter that “the disciples came to Jesus” (Matt. 5:1). We read “the Centurion came to Jesus” (Matt. 8: 5). “And a certain scribe came to Jesus” (Matt.5:19). The disciples of John “came to Jesus” (Matt. 9: 14), etc. etc. If language means anything, the Devil was external to Jesus, and came up to him. Jesus was not dialoguing with himself!

My summation is that the apostle Paul wants us to be aware that,

We struggle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this age of darkness, against the wicked spirits in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6: 12). ⁴

If you want to read a graphic account of these “cosmocrats” locked in an epic struggle over the events on earth, try reading Daniel chapter 10. There the “Prince of Persia” is evidently the powerful angel claiming control over that

² The classic example has to be when “Satan entered into Judas” in Luke 22:3.

³ Anthony Buzzard has written extensively on this topic and the interested reader is encouraged to check out his various articles on the Devil and demons at www.restorationfellowship.org

⁴ “The world rulers” are called *kosmokratores*. These ‘cosmocrats’ are malicious demonic personalities ruled over by God’s arch-enemy ‘The Satan’, who himself is called ‘the Prince of the power of the air’ (Eph.2:2).

region of earth, and so Michael the “Prince of Israel” is locked in a dour battle to get through to the man Daniel who is on his knees in prayer for God’s help.

So why does this matter anyway? To modern scientific man in the 21st Century the question seems irrelevant. To the scientific man, of course there is no such person as a supernatural Devil. The idea there is a King of a demonic horde of malevolent and unseen intelligent persons scheming behind the history of mankind is a hangover from mediaeval superstition, surely?

But if we accept the Biblical account, the greatest ruse Satan has is to convince us he does not really exist.

My Christadelphian friends ask me, “But would a good God really allow a fiend and his malicious minions loose in His good created world?” They allege this Devil doctrine is not worthy of the God of the Bible. To that I have simply said, “Across the road in the playground where innocent children play on the swings, there lurks a pedophile waiting his opportunity. On your argument a good God does not exist!”

A good God, for reasons known only to Him, does allow wicked personalities to exist in His good world! That’s true in the physical and in the unseen spiritual worlds. Reality is impossible to ignore. Wise up! We are in a dour fight with a bitter opponent who works tirelessly for our destruction. Why is that so hard to accept in a modern world where Jihadists are committed to the same agenda?

The concerted testimony of some of the Church’s greatest men and women is that the more devoted they grew to God and His work, the more heightened their awareness of the Devil grew. Who does not know the story of Martin Luther throwing the ink well at Satan, so real did his foe appear to him? And supremely, we know the Lord himself who “is in the bosom of the Father”, believed there is a Devil --- and none was nearer to God than he!

Speaking personally, I have witnessed with others in my presence, demonic possession. I have seen demons materialise in front of my very eyes.

When a man’s face distorts into an alien looking face more like an animal than a human,
when a man’s voice transmutes into an entirely different timbre with a pitch and resonance outside the range of its human possessor, and sounding like that from another world,
when a man’s body is contorted and twisted beyond the natural range of movement,
when a man’s strength grows tenfold beyond his normal powers, then it’s legitimate to draw the conclusion that this man is possessed of a wicked spirit or spirits like we read in the Scriptures.

But for the remainder of this article, I want to draw your attention to the bigger picture. Regardless of our personal encounters and experience in this Christian warfare, I want to lift our sights to the big fish in the sea, so to speak. Or, to put it the other way round, although the Devil is interested in ruining the individual believer’s testimony, he has bigger fish to fry!

THE LIE

For the rest of this article and in a follow-up article, I want to explore how the Devil has defied God through the lie that is Islam. From the beginning of human history the Devil has been substituting his lie(s) for God’s word. “Hath God said?” is his *modus operandi*. There are many “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” in our world (1 Tim. 4:1). But particularly relevant, topical and threatening, is the doctrine of Islam.

Now I want to state right up front that I am not attacking individual Moslems. There are many fine, upright Moslem folk who detest what is going on in our world today and who reject for instance, the dreadful ISIS atrocities. Decent Muslim believers are good people in spite of their doctrine, not because of it. It is the doctrine of Islam I want to critically assess.

THE NAME OF GOD

By placing the statements of the Bible and the Qur’an together, a shocking picture emerges. The Bible proclaims the God of the Universe has a personal name, which in the Hebrew is Yahweh,

The Yahweh (YHWH) God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations (Exodus 3:13-15).

The Qur'an refutes this by saying the name of the Creator of the universe is Allah! Who is telling the truth?

DOES GOD HAVE A SON?

Many Christians wonder if Allah and the God of Israel are one and the same deity. Let's settle this question once for all. The Qur'an says,

Say: "Praise be to Allah, who begets no son ..." (Sura 17: 111).

The Christians call Christ the Son of Allah ... Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! (Sura 9: 30).

Warn those who say, "Allah hath begotten a son" (Sura 18: 4).

It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son ... (Sura 19:35).

They say: "The Most Gracious has betaken a son!" Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! ... For it is not consonant with the majesty of the Most Gracious that He should beget a son (Sura 19: 88-89, 92).

Nothing could be stated clearer: Allah has no son! However, the Bible says God has begotten a Son, Jesus the Messiah (e.g. Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:35). Many times God has testified of Jesus of Nazareth, "This is My son, the Beloved one, My chosen one, hear him!" Dozens of times in the NT Jesus is called the Son of God. But the best the Qur'an can say of Jesus is that he is only one of a multitude of prophets.

So, which is the truth? One god has no son and curses those who so believe. The other God has a Son and blesses, receives and loves all who come to Him through his redemption at Calvary. Both therefore cannot be God! One is telling you the truth. One is lying. Allah cannot be the God of the Bible! For we read in First John 2:22-23,

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

THE PURE LAMB OF GOD

Furthermore, the Bible declares Jesus was perfect and righteous before God. The Bible says Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Bible says, that although he was tempted in all points as we are, Jesus remained sinless (Heb. 4:15).

The Qur'an on the other hand does not hesitate to say that Muhammad sinned. We see this in the undeniable facts of history when Muhammad made war against his enemies, when he beheaded many Jews who refused to call him a prophet, when he attacked and pillaged defenceless caravans, when he took numerous wives, even taking to wife a young 9 year old girl, and so forth.

Yet, daringly, blasphemously, Allah esteems this sinner above the sinless and spotless Son of God, Jesus Christ, even though in the Qur'an Allah acknowledges Jesus to be without sin! How can Allah be the God of the Bible Who says He cannot tolerate sin?

THE DOME OF THE ROCK

The Qur'an also teaches that Jesus did not die for our sins, nor did he rise again from the dead. At the crucifixion Allah allegedly whisked Jesus away by sleight of hand, thereby deceiving the High Priest, the Jews and the Romans into believing they had killed him. The Qur'an proclaims Muhammad as the greatest and last of Allah's prophets, thus proclaiming that Islam's Allah has replaced Jesus as the final revelation of the God of the Bible!

This most daring and glaring example of the effrontery of Satan to substitute his lie for the truth of the God of the Bible is seen on the so-called Temple Mount, the Harem ash-Sherif, the very place where it is alleged Solomon's

Temple once stood. Between the years of 691 and 695 AD, the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock on top of what was considered to be the likely site of Solomon's Temple.

Guess what is beaten in gold text on the inside of the Dome of the Rock? You guessed it. Amongst other texts, there stands this one,

ALLAH HAS NO SON.



THIS IS A PHOTO OF INSIDE THE DOME OF THE ROCK:-

LOOK CAREFULLY ABOVE THE ARCHES AT THE ARABIC WRITING. THESE INSCRIPTIONS ARE THE EARLIEST KNOWN DATED PASSAGES FROM THE QUR'AN FROM 691-692 AD.

REPEAT: ONE OF THE TEXTS STATES:-

ALLAH HAS NO SON!

This stark lie stands over today's alleged site of the Temple of Yahweh. Satan has an abominable lie standing there in defiance of the Living God!

The most sacred place in all the world where the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord of the Universe instructed that His House of worship be built as a memorial forever to His holy Name, Yahweh, is now occupied by a foreign god who denies that God has a Son. In the words of another,

And so, a house of worship to a foreign god has continued to adorn the site of the Eternal One's chosen dwelling place. This foreign god, pretending to be the same as the God of Abraham, gave himself a name, which has never existed amongst the Hebrews. He also claims, that what has verifiably been known about the God of Israel for several thousand years, is no longer true, but has been falsified by Jewish People and Christians.

Since Allah also does not recognise the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a careful observer must come to the inevitable conclusion that we are dealing here with a rival god. The God of the Bible declares that '*He is a God Who Does Not Change*' (Mal. 3:6), yet the Allah of the Qur'an claims the right to change his mind whenever he likes. ⁵

Truth has been substituted with a lie. Can you not hear the sinister Serpent's spirit sneering and hissing, "Hath God said?" But will the lie triumph? Will Satan's daring affrontery to the Living God of heaven and earth succeed?

After the disastrous "Christian Crusades", Caliph Omar conquered Jerusalem for Islam in 737/8 AD and in the last decade of that century Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan erected the structure that still stands to this day called The Dome of the Rock.



AERIAL PHOTO OF THE DOME OF THE ROCK SITUATED ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT IN JERUSALEM.

THE NEXT SHOT SHOWS THE HUGE STONE INSIDE THE DOME OF THE ROCK FROM WHICH MUHAMMAD ALLEGEDLY ASCENDED TO HEAVEN TO TALK WITH THE PROPHETS IN ALLAH'S PRESENCE.

⁵ Frank Selch, *Dancing With The Scimitar of Islam*. The Olive Tree Connection, Brisbane, Qld. Australia. 2004. p 95 (Italics original).

This huge stone in the centre of the Dome of the Rock is where Muhammad allegedly met Jibril (Gabriel) who escorted him up to heaven on a white steed for a forty day sojourn with Allah, meeting all the prophets and also talking with Moses and Jesus. It's now the third holiest site of all for Sunni Muslims and the fourth holiest site to the Shi'ites who list Karbala after Mecca and Medina.



The Dome then, was part of the Moslem strategy of raising holy structures on top of the temples and other significant sites in their lands of conquest to show their superiority, and of course, Allah's.

Now just by the way, it is instructive to learn that nowhere in the Qur'an is Jerusalem once even mentioned! Not once. By comparison, Jerusalem is spoken of at least 821 times in the Bible!

Mecca and Medina are named hundreds of times in the Qur'an and in the Hadiths. Islam has never had an interest in Jerusalem until very recent decades. Any current interest by the Palestinians wanting east Jerusalem as their capital is based on political ideology and the legend of Muhammad's ascension only.

AN ABOMINATION

As a matter of interest, when the Caliph Omar conquered Jerusalem for Islam in 637/8 AD, the Christian Patriarch of the city, one Sophronius, was horrified. Setting his eyes upon Omar, Sophronius exclaimed, "Verily, this is the Abomination of Desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place!"

As I will discuss in Part Two of this article, Sophronius' timing was out, but the sentiment of his statement was spot-on. For the Qur'an teaches that Allah refers to himself as "the greatest of all deceivers" (Sura 3:54; 7: 99; 8:30). Through Islam, Satan was now substituting the lie right where God had proclaimed His Name would be forever memorialised!

WHY DOESN'T THE DEVIL JUST GIVE UP?

The Devil knows the Bible. He knows the Scriptures better than we do! He knows he is destined for the Lake of Fire. He knows the place of destruction, Gehenna, "has been prepared for the devil and his angels" from the beginning (Matthew 25:41). He knows he has but "a short time" and so he comes to earth with rage and fury (Rev.12: 9, 13, 17; 13: 7). The Devil knows that God has exalted His Son Jesus to the number two position of authority in all the universe.

So why doesn't he just quit? One day as I was pondering this question, it occurred to me that we see an inkling of the reason in Adolf Hitler's last days.



JUST DAYS BEFORE HIS SUICIDE, THIS FAMOUS PHOTO SHOWS HITLER PINNING MEDALS OF HONOUR ON TEENAGE LADS. HE CONGRATULATES THEM, AND ENCOURAGES THEM TO DEFEND THE FATHERLAND TO THE BITTER END. THE RUSSIANS ARE JUST A FEW BERLIN BLOCKS AWAY! SO WHY DOESN'T HITLER JUST QUIT?

If ever there was a man possessed by the spirit of Satan, it was Adolf Hitler. His ranting against the Jews calling for their "final solution" in the Death Camps, his persecution of anybody who dared to oppose his ideals, his megalomaniacal dream of a Thousand year Reign for the Third Reich --- and, towards the end, his frothing against his own generals who pleaded with him to surrender and to save what was left of Germany's land and people --- are all indicative of the demonic spirit of the Enemy of God and His holy people.

So why? Why was Hitler prepared to sacrifice his own last remaining boys on a bloody altar for no purpose?

Then it hit me with clarity. That's why the Devil won't quit, either. The spirit of Satan is so arrogant, so deranged, so hateful of God that he cannot give up. Knowing, like Hitler, that defeat is inevitable, Satan will not give up, cannot

give up, refuses to give up. He will go on pinning his puny little medals on the chests of anybody still prepared to fight on no matter how lost the cause!

THE ANTICHRIST

Hitler did not quit because he was proud and unhinged. The Devil himself is proud and deranged. All his offspring bear his spirit. The Bible predicts Satan will have a final prodigee who will be “the daddy of them all”. “The man of sin”, “the Antichrist”, “the Beast”, will be the embodiment of the Devil himself. And Scripture predicts this Antichrist will have a special interest in the final Temple in Jerusalem.

He will speak blasphemous things against the God of heaven. We might call him “the Mouth”! For he will “magnify himself in his heart” and he will “speak great blasphemies”. This son of Satan will come “on the wing of abominations” and “make desolate” (see Daniel 8: 23f and 9: 26f). This wicked man, “the son of Perdition” will be empowered by Satan to perform all kinds of lying wonders so as to deceive the world. This abominable person “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the Temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thess. 2: 4f).⁶

He will demand all the world worship him. And if you think it can’t happen, just read your history books. Nebuchadnezzar inspired by Satan’s spirit built a huge gold statue demanding all in his kingdom bow down before his image on pain of death for non-compliance. Some of the Roman Caesars are another case in point. But if you want something current, just look at North Korea’s Kim Jong Un. If you choose not to believe the prophecies of God’s Book, then remember that history is the best predictor of the future!

But here’s the thing. The Devil knows his scheme will fail. He knows the prophecy that Jesus is coming in the glory of God his Father and with all the holy angels of heaven. He knows his “lawless one” will be slain with the breath of Jesus’ mouth to bring his destruction “by the appearance of His Coming” (2 Thess. 2: 8).

The Devil knows the final outcome. He and his evil “man of sin” will be bound and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20: 10). Why doesn’t he just quit? Perhaps Hitler helps us understand the answer. But all this raises another question. Where and When and Will the Third Jewish Temple be built?

As we have hinted, the Third Temple must be built before Satan’s man, the Antichrist can appear, and before the Great Tribulation can begin. Either the Dome of the Rock must be replaced with a Jewish Temple, or the Third Jewish Temple will be erected on another spot. More of this in our second part!

PONDER THIS

Rest assured that the Devil is very much alive and kicking. In the beginning he possessed the Serpent and has been deceiving the whole world ever since. But in these last days, he is becoming more daring, more blatant for he knows his time is short. He is active already in substituting the great lie for God’s holy truth.

Get ready for some amazing discoveries in our follow-up article.

But in the meantime ponder this question. Short of a direct incarnation of Satan himself, is there currently any world religion that is more anti-Bible, more anti-Yahweh and His Son our Lord Jesus, more Antichrist, than Islam and its prophet Muhammad?

Will Islam produce the final “Man of Sin”, the final Rebel for the Great Tribulation? Either way, know that we are locked in an epic battle against the Devil and his “cosmocrats”, and that it will only be won by God’s people who like their Master Jesus, know the Scriptures and know how to wield this “sword of the Spirit”.

We will turn to these questions in part 2.

⁶ There is only one man in the entire NT who claims to be “God”. And it’s not Jesus. “who regarded equality with God not something to be grasped” (Phil. 2: 6)! Jesus refused to be made “equal with God”! See for instance, my article titled, *Did Jesus Make Himself Equal With God?*

