

THE ORIGIN & FALL OF SATAN



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The Origin and Fall of Satan

Who is Satan? We live in a day when many people have different ideas about who Satan really is. Some believe he is just a mythological figure and not a real, personal being. Others, though believing he exists, are not overly concerned about him and live as if he does not exist. To many, the idea of Satan conjures up images of a red being with two horns on his head, a tail, and a pitchfork in his hand—hardly a being that needs to be taken seriously.

The Bible, however, presents a very different picture of the being known as Satan. The Bible presents Satan as a real, powerful being who actively opposes God and His plans. This opposition also extends to those who belong to God. That is why Peter warns Christians, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

As Christians, we must have a proper, biblical understanding of the person and work of Satan. In this booklet we will examine what the Bible has to say about the origin, fall, current activity and future destiny of Satan. The more we understand what the Bible has to say about this enemy of God, the more we will be able to stand firm against him.

THE ORIGIN OF SATAN

The first account of Satan (Genesis 3)

Genesis 3 is the first text that introduces us to the being known as Satan, although he is not specifically called by that name. In this chapter, which describes the fall of man, Satan, by means of the serpent, deceived Eve into eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eating from the tree was a direct violation of what God had commanded earlier. Adam soon followed his wife in this rebellion against God, and the fall of man occurred. In this first biblical account involving Satan, we are not given any background information concerning him. We do not know the details of his creation or how he became a fallen being. He is just there.

It is obvious, though, that by the time of Genesis 3, the creation and fall of Satan had already occurred. As we will see, Satan was created like all other angels so he is not eternal. He was created at some point by God. Many Bible teachers believe that the creation of Satan and the angels took place early on the first day of creation as described in Genesis 1. Job 38:4-7, for instance, indicates that the angels “shouted for joy” at the creation of the earth. Therefore, the angels, including Satan, were probably created just prior to the creation of the earth.

Another reason for believing the angels were created early in the first week of creation involves the relationship of angels to mankind. Scripture tells us that the role of angels is linked to humanity. Hebrews 1:14 states that angels are “ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.” Since the purpose of angels is to “render service” for mankind, it is possible that the creation of angels took place in relation to the creation of man, perhaps in the same week. Scripture is not definitive on this issue, but the two mentioned passages suggest that the creation of Satan and the other angels took place early in the first week of creation.

The reason for Satan’s fall (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Satan was created by God. But at some point after his creation he rebelled against God. How did this happen? There are two passages in the Bible that seem to address this issue—Isaiah 14:12-15

and Ezekiel 28:12-19. We will look at the Isaiah passage first:

“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit (Isaiah 14:12-15).

The immediate context of this passage is an address that Isaiah the prophet made to the human “king of Babylon” (14:4). There is good reason to believe, however, that Isaiah goes beyond the literal king of Babylon to the real spiritual power motivating this earthly king—namely Satan. Satan, I believe, is being addressed in the person of this earthly king. Why this conclusion? Statements within this section of Isaiah seem to go beyond what could be true of a human king. For example, verse 12 states, “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!” The being described here obviously had a very exalted position in “heaven.” This description would fit a spiritual being such as Satan better than an earthly king.

That God would address Satan through another person is not without biblical precedent. There are other instances in Scripture where God speaks to Satan through someone or something else. In Genesis 3:15, while pronouncing the judgments associated with the Fall, God spoke to Satan through the serpent. Another example is Matthew 16, in which Peter argued with Jesus about His coming suffering and was told by Jesus, “Get behind Me, Satan!” (v. 23). In this account, Peter was used as an instrument of Satan to thwart God’s purposes, and Jesus spoke to the real source (Satan) behind Peter’s comment.

Isaiah 14:13-14 gives more information concerning Satan’s fall from heaven. In five “I will” statements, it is revealed what led to his fall:

- 1) *“I will ascend to heaven” (13a).* Satan desired equal authority and recognition with the God of heaven.

- 2) *“I will raise my throne above the stars of God” (13b)*. The “stars of God” refer to angels. Angels were created to serve God. Satan, though, wanted this authority for himself. He wanted to usurp God’s authority over the angels.
- 3) *“I will sit on the mount of the assembly” (13c)*. Satan wanted to overthrow God’s kingly rule over the universe.
- 4) *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” (14a)*. “Clouds” are often associated with God’s glory in Scripture. Satan desired to have the glory that belonged only to God.
- 5) *“I will make myself like the Most High” (14b)*. This sums up what Satan’s sin was. Satan wanted to be like God with all the glory, honor and power that came with being God.

We see from these five “I wills” that Satan’s sin was pride. He wanted to be like God and take the place of God. The next passage, Ezekiel 28:12-19, tells us more about the fall of Satan.

Satan’s original condition (Ezekiel 28:12-19)

“Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of

your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more." ' ' "

This text, like Isaiah 14, is also addressed to an earthly king—the king of Tyre (v. 12). And, like in Isaiah 14, there is language in this text that goes beyond a physical king to the real power behind this ruler—Satan.

Verses 12-13a state, “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God.” This description clearly shows that we have gone beyond an earthly king here. No human ruler could be said to be perfect or “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” Nor was the earthly king of Tyre in “Eden, the garden of God.” All this, though, could be true of Satan. Satan, then, is the one in view in this passage.

Verse 14 tells us that Satan was “the anointed cherub who covers.” Cherubim (plural of “cherub”) were high ranking angels associated with God’s presence and glory. In the Old Testament, Cherubim, in the form of golden images, were placed upon the Mercy Seat that sat on the Ark of the Covenant. The Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant were kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle where God’s presence resided. The cherubim were so associated with God’s glory that the writer of Hebrews referred to them as “the cherubim of glory” (Hebrews 9:5). Satan, being a cherub, was, therefore, associated with God’s glory. That he was the “anointed” cherub shows that he once had a special position among all the other cherubim. He was once the chief cherub.

Verse 15 states, “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.” The angel we now know as Satan was not created evil. He used to be blameless in his ways and was created perfect with wisdom and beauty. This perfection, however, lasted until unrighteousness was found in him. At some point Satan became opposed to God. We also see from this verse that Satan was created. As powerful as Satan is, he is not eternal like God.

Verse 16 reveals more about Satan’s character, “You were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast

you as profane from the mountain of God.” Verse 17 also states, “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.” This fits the five “I wills” mentioned in Isaiah. Satan was taken up by his own beauty and perfection and thought he deserved to be in the place of God.

When Satan sinned, he was cast out from his position in heaven. His rebellion also brought about the fall of other angels, as well. Revelation 12:4 indicates that a third of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion. These fallen angels are now called demons. There is one devil (Satan), but many demons. Satan, as a created being, cannot be everywhere at one time like God. His demons, though, work for him and carry out his plans. Demons are in line with Satan, but he is their leader. His power and influence are great. In fact, 1 John 5:19 states that “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Satan is also referred to as the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan and his demons are actively involved in promoting a world system that opposes the plans of God.

Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 tell us how the fall of Satan occurred. Because of his desire to usurp God’s authority, Satan lost his position in heaven. He remains, however, a being of great wisdom and power. He is so powerful that even Michael the archangel, when doing battle with him, did not dare “pronounce. . . a railing judgment” against him, but simply said, “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). Michael treated Satan with great respect in calling on the Lord to deal with him. That is a good reminder for us. Satan may have lost his exalted position in heaven, but the angels, including the archangel of heaven, still have great respect for his power.

This angelic respect for Satan in Jude is contrasted with the false teachers who “revile angelic majesties” (Jude 8). These false teachers make light of the devil and his demons. Jude goes on to say, “these men revile the things which they do not understand” (Jude 10). False teachers do not properly respect the power of Satan. That was true in Jude’s day as it is in ours. There are many false teachers today who make light of Satan or deny that he is a real personal being. These false teachers do not know what or whom they are talking about.

THE ACTIVITIES OF SATAN

Satan, the slanderer (Job 1-2)

We have looked at the origin and fall of Satan; now we are going to look at his activities since his fall and how he opposes the plans of God. Job 1-2 is one such passage that gives us insight into his activities. In this passage we see that although Satan lost his *position* in heaven, he did not lose his *access* to heaven. On certain occasions when God calls all the angels before Him, Satan also appears. This is what happens in Job 1-2. In both chapters, Satan appears before God in heaven. Some have had trouble accepting that Satan has access to heaven since he is such an evil being; but his appearance does not defile God nor does it defile heaven.

Job 1:6 states: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.” The “sons of God” in this verse refers to all the angels, including both fallen and unfallen angels. Satan is also present and the Lord initiates a conversation with him: “And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it’” (Job 1:7). This is similar to what Peter was talking about when he said, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

God then directs Satan’s attention to Job: “And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil’” (Job 1:8). We know from Satan’s response that he was familiar with Job (Job 1:9-11). He knew of Job’s condition and was well aware of what was taking place on earth.

A similar scene between God and Satan is recorded in Job 2: “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD” (Job 2:1). As in chapter one, Satan asks permission of God to allow him to inflict calamities upon Job to test his trust in God. We see in these two chapters of Job what I call “glimpses into the spirit world.” Without Job’s knowledge, a conversation is taking place in heaven that directly affects him.

In this section we also learn some truths about Satan's character. He is a slanderer. In fact, the name Satan means "slanderer." When God says that Job is a "blameless and upright man," Satan slanders Job's character. He tells God that the only reason Job obeys Him is because God has given him so much. He also tells God that if calamity were allowed to befall Job, Job would curse Him (Job 1:11; 2:5).

From this account, we see that God does allow Satan to bring great calamity upon Job. Job lost his wealth, children and personal health. As readers, we know why these trials came upon Job. They were the result of God's conversations with Satan. Job, though, never did know the reason for the trials that came upon him. Even at the end of the book when God speaks to him, God does not reveal to him all the specifics of what took place in heaven. God just reminds Job that his duty is to remain faithful.

As Christians, we can learn from this account from Job. We do not know what is going on in the courts of heaven. We do not know what Satan may be telling God about us. We do not know what God may allow to happen to us. All we are called on to do is trust God and be faithful.

Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Zechariah 3)

Another passage which discusses the activity of Satan is Zechariah 3. This chapter also describes a heavenly scene: "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him" (Zech. 3:1). Satan in this text is presented as an accuser. Here, he is accusing Joshua the high priest. In a passage previously mentioned, 1 Peter 5:8 refers to Satan as an "adversary." This term has the technical meaning of "an opponent in a law suit." Revelation 12:10 also calls Satan "the accuser of our brethren." In the courtroom of heaven, he stands as our opponent accusing us before the Judge of All.

Though Satan leveled accusations against Joshua the high priest, the Lord came to the defense of Joshua: "And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" (Zech. 3:2). Zechariah 3:3-5 reveals that at the time of this incident Joshua was clothed with "filthy garments." The Lord, though, forgave his iniquity and had clean garments put

on him. Though Satan accused Joshua, the Lord provided for Joshua. From this we see that Satan's accusations fail because of the righteousness God provides for His people. In this case, Israel would be preserved, not because of their faithfulness but because of God's faithfulness. The same is true for us as well.

Satan is a vile opponent. He accuses us before God, and he also tempts us to sin. We must remember, however, that even though Satan tempts us to sin, he does not cause our sin. We are responsible for our own sin. The old adage, "the devil made me do it," is not correct. When listing the sinful activities that people commit in Galatians 5, Paul called these activities the "deeds of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19). Jesus said, "out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries" (Mark 7:21). We sin because of our "flesh" and our "heart." We cannot blame our sin on the devil. He may tempt, deceive and lure us to sin, but when we sin, it is our own fault. And when we do sin, Satan is ready to stand before God and say, "See what an unfaithful servant he is!" What an awful thing sin is!

Sin has serious consequences in a variety of ways, and it often affects those closest to us. It mars our testimony for Christ, and worst of all, is proclaimed by Satan in the courts of heaven. It has been said that "secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven." When we sin in secret we may think we are getting away with it, but in reality Satan is there proclaiming it in the courts of heaven. He is declaring our sin before all the assembled angels who stand before the throne of God. He is there to say, "Look what he has done!" Fortunately, we have a High Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father. Praise God that when we sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" who is "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1, 2). Though Satan may accuse us, our High Priest, Jesus Christ, effectively pleads our case.

Because of Jesus Christ we stand before God uncondemned. But what a tragedy it is when we sin and give substance to Satan's accusations before the throne of God.

Satan, the father of unbelievers (John 8:41-44)

Another truth we see from Scripture is that Satan is the father of all unbelievers. This is made clear in John 8:41-44. In this passage

Jesus confronted the Jewish religious leaders who thought they were saved simply because they were physical descendants of Abraham. Jesus, however, showed them that they were not children of Abraham because they did not do the deeds of Abraham. In fact, they were seeking to kill Jesus. Jesus, in verse 44, tells them who their father truly is:

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

Satan is characterized by murder and lies. There is no truth in him and those who are his children do not want the truth either. For example, when we plead with someone to believe in Christ but he refuses to do it, that person is manifesting the character of the devil. Just like the devil, he wants nothing to do with the truth.

Satan controls his children. He moves them to do his bidding and to resist the purposes of God. He even moves many of his children to be “religious.” Many people go to church and say that they believe in God, but they still belong to the devil. Paul stated that “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). If Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, we should not be surprised that his servants do also. When counterfeiters make a copy, they try to make it look as real as the original as possible. That is why the better the counterfeit, the more carefully it must be examined. Most adults, for example, would not be fooled if someone tried to give them Monopoly money instead of real money. Monopoly money looks too fake and people would not accept it. Professional counterfeiters, though, are able to make money that looks very much like the original. In fact, most people are not able to tell the difference between professionally done counterfeit money and real money. You have to know what you are looking for to be able to spot the fake. In the spiritual realm, Satan’s plan is to make his purposes look like God’s purposes. If a person does not know how to spot his deception, he will fall for Satan’s tricks.

Second Corinthians 4:3-4 states: “And even if our gospel is

veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Satan deceives unbelievers. He makes them think that they are “okay” and that they are on the road to heaven when in reality they are not. He blinds them to the truths of the Gospel. When the Gospel is presented to those Satan has blinded, they are not able to see the truth. That is why we must pray diligently that God will open the eyes of those who are blinded by Satan. Only the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit can take away the blinding veil Satan has placed over unbelievers.

Satan, the promoter of false worship

Satan is also actively involved in promoting false worship. It may surprise some to know that Satan is not anti-religion. In fact, he is pro-religion. Except for biblical Christianity, Satan is the founder of all the world’s religions. He knows that if he can keep people from worshipping the true God, he will be the one receiving the worship. That is what he desires. Satan, then, does all he can to promote false worship. We saw in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 that Satan wanted to be like God and take over all the privileges and honor that belonged to God. It is no surprise, then, that he wants people to worship him.

First Corinthians 10 tells us about the nature of false worship and why it is so dangerous. When Paul wrote this passage, he was addressing the Corinthians who lived in a society saturated with pagan idolatry. Most people in the Roman society of that day worshiped idols which they considered to be gods. Paul, however, shows what they were really worshipping:

“What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons” (1 Corinthians 10:19-20).

Paul knew that idols were not real gods. They were just carved images of wood and stone—nothing more. But when people worshiped these idols, they were really worshipping demons who were behind the idols. That is why Christians should not take part in false worship.

Those involved in such activities are really worshiping demons. It is not that the objects themselves become demons, but the false worship itself is motivated and directed by demons. That is why Paul also says, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (1 Corinthians 10:21-22). A person cannot worship God and demons at the same time.

Satan’s greatest tool: false teaching

Satan also furthers his cause through the use of false teaching. As 1 Timothy 4:1 states, “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” False teaching is not harmless; it is very serious. According to Paul, demons are behind doctrines that do not line up with the Word of God. It is one of Satan’s great purposes to deceive people, and the best way to do that is to promote doctrine that is not in accord with Scripture.

How do demons promote false doctrine? Demons are actually very clever in how they promote false doctrines. Very seldom do they promote doctrine that is obviously wrong, for most people would not fall for it. What works best is when demons carefully weave elements of truth with error. That way the error they promote looks like the truth and more people will accept it.

It must be remembered that demons know good theology, and they are able to use it for their deceptive purposes. In Mark 1:24, for instance, one demon cried out to Jesus, “I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” In Acts 16:17, an evil spirit following Paul said, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” These are true statements. James also tells us that the demons believe in one God (James 2:19). Demons, then, know good doctrine. But they are also experts at taking the truth and mixing it with error. It is this mixture of error and truth that becomes so dangerous. For example, if someone were to give you a big bowl of your favorite soup but also added one drop of powerful poison, the soup would become a bowl of poison. All it takes is that one drop of poison to ruin the whole soup. The same is true with doctrine. All it takes is for a little error to ruin the truth.

Satan knows that Christians who do not know the Word are susceptible to error mixed with truth. That is why “like newborn babes” Christians are to “long for the pure milk of the word” that we may “grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). We must know the Word because of the existence of doctrines of demons.

Demons promote false doctrine through false teachers. False teachers are teachers who claim to speak for God, but in reality are promoting doctrines of demons. How can we spot and avoid those who promote false teaching? Isaiah 8:20 gives the answer: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” Isaiah’s point is simple: if a teacher does not teach doctrine that lines up with the Word of God, he is a false teacher. He has no light (salvation) in him. True biblical teaching is in accord with the Word of God. A person may claim to speak the truth, but if what he says does not line up with the Word of God, he is a false teacher.

Another tactic of Satan is to wean people away from the Word of God. He tries to steer Christians away from serious study of the Bible. He may not be able to do this all at once, but over time he convinces people that serious study of the specifics of the Word is not really that important. He convinces them that sound doctrine is not really that essential for Christian living. As a result, people want good stories and “practical” messages from the pulpit. This shift from sound doctrine has taken place in many churches. Churches, on the whole, have become weaker and weaker in their knowledge and proclamation of the Word. As a result, people in the churches have become less discerning and more susceptible to false teachings. Today, those who take doctrine seriously and study the specifics of the Word are seen as “nit-pickers” and “unloving.” People begin to think that grappling over doctrinal issues is just a battling over nothing. As long as we “love Jesus,” nothing else really matters.

Satan and his demons do not try to deceive Christians by convincing them to throw away their Bibles or believe obviously strange doctrines. They are much more subtle than that. They are going to do what Satan did to Jesus in Matthew 4—quote Scripture. Satan quoted Scripture, but what he said was out of context. Satan wanted Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. He quoted Psalm 91:11-12 to show that God will protect His own from stumbling. It is true

that Psalm 91:11-12 does say that. Jesus, however, showed Satan that Psalm 91 could not conflict with what Deuteronomy 6:16 said about not testing the Lord. Scripture does not contradict Scripture; therefore, the Psalm 91 passage had to be understood in light of what God had said in Deuteronomy.

Satan wants to confuse Christians, and he will even use the Bible to do so. He knows that most Christians are not discerning enough to avoid his traps. They often do not know how the verses of the Bible relate to each other. It is easy for him to take something out of context and have people believe it. As people have lost their ability to discern truth from error, they have become even more susceptible to false doctrine.

The major Protestant denominations are an example of how far Satan can deceive people. Many of the mainline denominations are mostly populated now by unbelievers. The founders of these denominations, however, were strong Christians who believed the Word of God. John Wesley was a strong believer. John Calvin and Martin Luther were strong Christians who believed in the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. The denominations who claim to follow in the footsteps of these men, however, have drifted far away from what these men believed. The denominations that claim these men now deny major truths of the Word of God. One such truth often denied is the inerrancy of the Bible.

THE FUTURE OF SATAN

We have looked at Satan's origin and fall. Plus, we have examined his current activity. Now our attention will be focused on the future of Satan. There are two passages in Scripture that tell us about the future of Satan—Revelation 12 and 20. Earlier we saw that Satan lost his exalted position in heaven, but we also saw that this loss of position did not result in his loss of access to heaven. Revelation 12, though, tells of a future time when Satan loses his access to heaven. It tells of a time when he will no longer be able to stand before God and accuse the saints. And Revelation 20 tells us of a coming time when Satan will be bound and no longer able to deceive the nations.

Satan loses access to heaven (Revelation 12)

The events of Revelation 12 take place after the Rapture of the Church and during the seven-year Tribulation period. In fact, the casting out of Satan in this chapter takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation period—at the three and one-half year point. In the first two verses of this chapter, John described a sign that appeared in heaven. He then told of a woman, who represents the nation Israel, and a child who represents Jesus Christ. In verse three he also describes a dragon that represents Satan: “And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.” Satan is the dragon and the seven heads represent seven earthly empires. The “ten horns” represent the final form of Satan’s empire on earth. Satan is presented here as the motivating power and authority behind the earthly empires mentioned here. The fact that he is a “great red dragon” shows that he is ferocious in character. That would fit Peter’s description of Satan as a “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8).

Revelation 12:4a states that “his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven.” This seems to be a reference to the number of angels who followed Satan in his rebellion. That is why we believe that one-third of the angels followed Satan when he rebelled against God. These fallen angels are now known as demons.

Revelation 12:4b tells us that “the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.” This depicts Satan’s attempt to destroy Jesus when He was born. Verse 6, though, states that “the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” Here we see that the woman (i.e. Israel) flees into the wilderness for a total of three and one-half years. This fleeing into the wilderness by Israel takes place at the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period. Verses 7-10 describe what happens next:

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 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. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

We learn more about Satan's activities from this passage. He has been a relentless slanderer of God's people. He has continually accused them before the throne of God. But he is now thrown down from heaven. It is at this point, at the middle of the Tribulation, that he loses his access to heaven.

Verse 11 says, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death." Satan may have accused God's people, but they overcame him because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

Verse 12 tells of a coming time of trial on the earth as a result of Satan being cast from heaven: "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time." When Satan is cast to the earth after three and one-half years of the Tribulation, he knows that his time is short. He knows Christ will be coming to the earth shortly to set up His kingdom and put an end to his activities. That is why Satan is filled with "great wrath." Revelation 12:14-17 goes on to say that for the remaining time of the Tribulation period, Satan will attempt to destroy Israel and all who belong to God.

When we read this passage, we may wonder why Satan resists the plan of God. If he knows he is defeated why does he keep on fighting God? But that is the power and deception of sin. Sin never makes sense! People make the same mistake as well. The Bible foretells the awful fate awaiting those who reject Christ, but many who know this truth will not cast themselves on the mercy of God. While people know what God says, many still refuse to believe Him. In the end, most people think they will be "okay" and that everything will work out fine. That is how sin and self-deception work. Satan, though knowing what the Scripture says, still thinks he can win.

Satan's final destiny (Revelation 20)

Revelation 20 tells us of Satan's ultimate destiny. After deceiving the world through the Antichrist during the Tribulation period, he is thrown into the lake of fire. This takes place in connection with Jesus Christ's second coming to earth:

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time (Revelation 20:1-3).

When Jesus Christ returns to earth, Satan is bound and thrown into the "abyss" for one thousand years. During this one thousand years, Satan is no longer active on the earth and all of his activities are ceased. This is not quite the end of Satan's activities though, for after this thousand-year period, he is released for a short time:

And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:7-9).

After the one thousand years, Satan is released to lead one last rebellion against God. This shows how hardened sin can make an individual. Even after being thrown into the abyss for a thousand years, Satan, when released, still thinks he has a chance to overthrow God. When released, he gathers all the unbelievers and comes against Jerusalem. His rebellion, though, is quickly put down by God. Fire comes from heaven and devours Satan and all the enemies of God. Satan is then thrown into the lake of fire where he will be "tormented

day and night forever and ever.” Satan’s ultimate destiny is eternal torment in the lake of fire.

DEALING WITH SATAN

We have looked at several passages that deal with Satan’s origin, fall, current activities and final destiny. A discussion of Satan, however, would not be complete without also examining what the Bible says about how Christians can protect themselves from Satan.

Satan is a cunning and deceptive enemy, and the only way anyone can ever have victory over him is through the power of Jesus Christ. The apostle John stated that, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). By His death, Jesus Christ has provided freedom from the power of Satan. Hebrews 2:14 also states that through His death, Jesus was able to “render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” Jesus Christ provided victory over Satan by His death on the cross. Those who believe in Jesus Christ have the power of the devil broken in their lives.

First John 4:4 also says, “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” The “He” who is in the believer is the Holy Spirit. The “he” who is in the world is the devil. We see that the Holy Spirit who indwells the Christian is more powerful than the devil whose presence is in the world. According to 1 John 5:18: “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.”

How do we daily protect ourselves from the schemes of the devil? Ephesians 6:10-11 gives us the answer: “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” Even we believers, in our own might, are no match for the devil. We must be “strong in the Lord.” Without the Lord, Satan will squash us like a bug. We are also commanded to “stand firm” against the devil. This command to “stand firm” is also repeated in verses 13 and 14. We stand firm against the devil by putting on the

“full armor of God.” It is not enough to be partially armored because the devil is too smart and masterful as an opponent. He knows exactly which piece of armor we have left off and where to strike. He knows where we have been careless and indifferent. When we do not put on the full armor of God, we are like a soldier in battle who has carelessly laid aside his protective gear. When he least expects it, the enemy will attack and he will suffer defeat.

Indeed, the devil is a fierce and awesome opponent. As Ephesians 6:12 states, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” We sometimes forget that the battle is a spiritual one. We look at the human opponent and say, “I can handle this guy.” We become deluded when we think like this. We can make the mistake of becoming so confident in ourselves that we do not bother to seek the Lord. Then we come away from the battle bloodied and beaten and wondering, “What happened?” We thought we could handle the situation in our own strength, but then we found the devil to be far more powerful than we are. That is why we must stand firm in the strength of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Satan is a real being. He is a fallen angel. He is the enemy of our souls and opposes the plans of God. His current activity is to deceive people away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and accuse believers in the courts of heaven. Fortunately, we who are in Christ have an Advocate who pleads our case. We know that in Jesus we have the ultimate victory. We also know that there will come a time when Satan will be sent to the lake of fire forever. Praise God for these truths!

