

# The Doctrine of Satan

from *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans

---

Throughout the Scriptures Satan is set forth as the greatest enemy of God and man. Too long has Satan been a subject of ridicule instead of fear. Seeing the Scriptures teach the existence of a personality of evil, man should seek to know all he can about such a being. Much of the ridicule attached to the doctrine of Satan comes from the fact that men have read their fancies and theories into the Scriptures; they have read Milton's *Paradise Lost* but have neglected the Book of Job; they have considered the experiences of Luther instead of the Epistles of Peter and Jude. To avoid skepticism on the one hand, and ridicule on the other we must resort to the Scriptures to formulate our views of this doctrine.

## I. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN.

### 1. HIS EXISTENCE.

To science the existence of Satan is an open question; it neither can deny nor affirm it. Satan's existence and personality can be denied therefore only on purely *a priori* grounds. The Bible, however, is very clear and positive in its teaching regarding the existence of a personality of evil called the devil. It is popular in some circles today to spell devil with the "d" left off, thus denying his real existence.

Matt. 13:19, 39—"Then cometh the wicked one ... The enemy that sowed them is the devil." John 13:2—"The devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." See also Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 11:3, 14; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

How Satan came to be is not quite as clear a fact as that he exists. In all probability he was once a good angel. It is claimed by scholarly and reliable interpreters that his fall is portrayed in Ezekiel 28:12-19; cf. Isa 14:12-14. That he was once in the truth but fell from it is evident from John 8:44. His fall (Luke 10:18) was probably in connection with the fall of angels as set forth in such passages as 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. Pride (?) was one of the causes (1 Tim. 3:6; Ezek. 28:15, 17). This fact may account for the expression "Satan and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Paul doubtless refers to the fact that Satan was once an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Whenever Satan is represented under the form of a serpent, we are to understand such expressions as describing him after his fall. There is certainly no ground for presenting the evil one as having horns, tail, and hoofs. This is only to bring into ridicule what is

an exceedingly serious fact. A careful consideration of all the scriptures here given will assure the student that Satan is not a figment of the imagination, but a real being.

## **2. HIS PERSONALITY.**

John 8:44—"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John 3:8—"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Satan is here set forth as a murderer, a liar, a sinner—all elements of personality. He had the "power over death" (Heb. 2:14), and is the "prince of this world" (John 14:30).

The narrative of Satan in Job. (cc. 1, 2) strongly emphasizes his personality. He is as much a person as the "sons of God," Job, and even God himself. Zech. 3:1, 2; 1 Chron. 21:1; Psa. 109:6 also emphasize the fact of Satan's personality. Throughout all these Scriptures the masculine personal pronoun is used of Satan, and attributes and qualities of personality are ascribed to him. Unless we veto the testimony of the Scriptures we must admit that Satan is a real person. How can any one read the story of the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:1-11) and fail to realize both parties in the wilderness conflict were persons—Christ, a person; Satan, a person?

Such offices as those ascribed to Satan in the Scriptures require an officer; such a work manifests a worker; such power implies an agent; such thought proves a thinker; such designs are from a personality.

Our temptations may be said to come from three sources: the world, the flesh, and the devil. But there are temptations which we feel sure come from neither the world nor the flesh, e.g., those which come to us in our moments of deepest devotion and quiet; we can account for them only by attributing them to the devil himself. "That old serpent, the devil, has spoken with fatal eloquence to every one of us no doubt; and I do not need a dissertation from the naturalist on the construction of a serpent's mouth to prove it. Object to the figure if you will, but the grim, damning fact remains."—*Joseph Parker*.

There can scarcely be any doubt as to the fact that Christ taught the existence of a personality of evil. There can be but three explanations as to the meaning of His teaching; first, that He accommodated His language to a gross superstition, knowing it to be such—if this be true then what becomes of His sincerity; second, that He shared the superstition not knowing it to be such—then what becomes of His

omniscience, of His reliability as a Teacher from God? third, that the doctrine is not a superstition, but actual truth—this position completely vindicates Christ as to His sincerity, omniscience and infallibility as the Teacher sent from God.

## **II. THE PLACE AND POWER OF SATAN.**

### **1. A MIGHTY ANGEL.**

He was such, and probably is yet. Jude 8, 9—They "speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Daniel 10 shows that Satan has power to oppose one of the chief angels (v. 12, 13 in particular). In Luke 11:21 Christ calls Satan "a strong man armed." He is "the prince of this world" (John 14:30).

### **2. PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR.**

Eph. 2:2—"The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Cf. 6:11, 12. He is also prince of the demons or fallen angels, Matt. 12:24; 9:34; Luke 11:14-18. There is doubtless an allusion here to the fact that the world of evil spirits is organized, and that Satan is at its head.

### **3. THE GOD OF THIS WORLD.**

2 Cor. 4:4—"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." He is "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. Eph. 2:1, 2; 1 John 5:19). Satan is not only the object of the world's worship, but also the moving spirit of its godless activities.

### **4. HE HEADS A KINGDOM WHICH IS HOSTILE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF CHRIST.**

Acts 26:18—"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Col. 1:13—"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." The kingdom of light is headed by a person—Jesus Christ; the kingdom of darkness, by a person—Satan. The one is a person equally with the other.

### **5. HAS SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE REALM OF DEATH.**

Heb. 2:14—"That ... he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." It would seem as if the souls of the unregenerate

dead are (or were) to some extent under Satan's dominion.

### **III. THE CHARACTER OF SATAN.**

We may judge of the nature and character of the evil one by the names and titles ascribed to him.

#### **1. THE ADVERSARY, OR SATAN.**

Zech. 3:1—"And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." (See v. 1-5.) 1 Pet. 5:8—"Your adversary the devil." Luke 10:18. See for use of the word: Num. 22:22. By adversary is meant one who takes a stand against another. Satan is the adversary of both God and man.

#### **2. THE DEVIL, DIABOLOS.**

Matt. 13:39—"The enemy ... is the devil." John 8:44—"Ye are of your father the devil." This name is ascribed to Satan 33 times at least in the New Testament, and indicates an accuser or slanderer (Rev. 12:9). He slanders God to man (Gen. 3:1-7), and man to God (Job 1:9; 2-4).

#### **3. THE WICKED ONE.**

Matt. 13:19—"Then cometh the wicked one." Matt. 6:13 (R.V.); 1 John 5:19 (R.V.). This title suggests that Satan is not only wicked himself, but is also the source of all wickedness in the world.

#### **4. THE TEMPTER.**

Matt. 4:3—"And when the tempter came to him." See Gen. 3:1-6. None escape his temptations. He is continually soliciting men to sin.

In this connection we may speak of the cunning and malignity of Satan (Gen. 3:1). Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). This phase of his work is well illustrated in the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:1-11), and the temptation of Eve (Gen. 3). He fain would help Christ's faith, stimulate His confidence in the divine power, and furnish an incentive to worship. The Scriptures speak of the "wiles" or subtle methods of the devil (Eph. 6:11, 12). The "old serpent" is more dangerous than the "roaring lion."

Satan's subtlety is seen in tempting men in their weak moments (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 22:40-46); after great successes (John 6:15, cf. v. 1-14); by suggesting the use of right things in a wrong way (Matt. 4:1-11); in deluding his followers by signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9, 10).

## **IV. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS SATAN.**

### **1. SO FAR AS THE BELIEVER IS CONCERNED HIS POWER IS LIMITED.**

Job 1:9-12; 2:4-6. Satan had to ask leave of God to try Job. John 12:31; 16:11. Satan hath been already judged, i.e., his power and dominion over believers was broken at the cross, by reason of Christ's victory there. He had to ask permission to enter even swine (Matt. 8:30-32). Satan is mighty, but not almighty.

### **2. HE IS TO BE RESISTED.**

1 Pet. 5:8, 9—"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." James 4:7—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This resistance is best accomplished by submitting to God (Rom. 6:17-33; James 4:7), and by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20).

## **V. THE DESTINY OF SATAN.**

### **1. HE IS A CONQUERED ENEMY.**

That is, so far as the believer is concerned; John 12:31; 16:9, 10; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:15.

### **2. HE IS UNDER A PERPETUAL CURSE.**

Gen. 3:14, cf. Isa. 65:25. There is no removal of the curse from Satan.

### **3. HE IS FINALLY TO BE CAST ALIVE INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE, THERE TO BE TORMENTED FOR EVER AND EVER.**

Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10—"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

## **VI. DEMONS.**

(See under "The Fall of Angels," in chapter on The Doctrine of Angels)