

Understanding Satan

Lesson 1: Satan's Origin

Satan is presented as the enemy of humanity from the first time he is introduced to the Bible reader (Genesis 3:1-6; Revelation 12:9; 1 Peter 5:8). In fact, the Bible identifies that we are fighting in a war for our souls against him (Ephesians 6:10-18). Just like in a physical war, it is important to understand the enemy. The more we can understand about Satan, the better equipped we can be to defend against his attacks and emerge victorious. Thankfully, God has given us all we need to know in the Scriptures to understand Satan (2 Corinthians 2:11). Understanding Satan's origin, then, will lay some critical foundations in our fight against him.

1) Three options concerning Satan's origin. Understanding what the Bible says about the origin of Satan will help us speak according to God's words (1 Peter 4:11) and conclude he can be defeated. Options concerning his origin can be summarized by three possibilities. The first possibility is that Satan does not exist. According to this, Satan is just the personification of evil who is a myth rather than a real enemy. Yet, this view cannot be accepted by anyone who believes the Bible to be true (Genesis 3:1-6; Job 1:6-12; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Peter 5:8-9) and it results in not treating Satan as seriously as we should. The second possibility is that Satan is eternal. According to this, Satan is elevated to possessing a characteristic only God possesses as having no beginning or end. Yet, this view cannot be accepted by anyone who believes the Bible to be true, since God is the only one who is eternal (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 4:8) and it results in believing Satan is equal to God and more capable than he really is (Job 1:12; 2:6-7; Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:31; John 10:28-29; 14:30; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 4:4; Revelation 20:1-3).

The third possibility is that Satan was created. According to this, Satan is a real enemy but is not viewed as being equal to God. This view is the only one that fits with the Scriptures (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17) and recognizes Satan as a created spiritual being (Ephesians 2:2) who fails to possess the nature of God so as to be worthy of worship and service (Romans 1:18-25). Yet, how could the holy and righteous God create an evil being like Satan? This question, though, *assumes* Satan was created in his current evil condition. Instead, just as God created people as good and free from evil, we must conclude God also created Satan as being good and free from evil (Genesis 1:31; 1 Timothy 4:4). For, God is completely holy and is never the originator of evil (Deuteronomy 32:4; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5)!

2) How Satan became the enemy. The Bible does not give us every detail about Satan's fall. Therefore, we must be careful *not* to assert anything to be true that cannot be supported by the Scriptures (1 Peter 4:11; Deuteronomy 29:29)! Still, there are a few conclusions we can know that are crucial to a proper understanding. First, Satan was created with free will. Scripture shows how angels make their own choices between right and wrong (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). This must have been true concerning Satan for him to turn from good to evil. Second, Satan chose to do evil. Many scriptures connect Satan with evil (John 8:44; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 3:8). Though these passages lack details about Satan's rebellion, they clearly show it did happen. Third, Satan is now the ruler of the demons. Regardless of how Satan rebelled, we can see that he is not just one among the many angels/spiritual beings who rebelled. Instead, he is clearly the leader of this evil multitude (Mark 3:22-23; Matthew 25:41; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

3) Examining some misused passages.

Although we would often like to know more details about what specifically happened for Satan to turn from good to evil, the Scriptures do not tell us. Yet, this has not stopped many from contriving stories about his origin and even misusing some scriptures to fill in the details. A closer look at these scriptures, though, will reveal they do not teach what they are said to teach. Consider four passages.

First, consider Isaiah 14:12-15. Although many apply this text to Satan (where we get the word “Lucifer” in certain translations, simply referring to the morning star), the text is actually speaking about the downfall of the king of Babylon (vv. 3-4). Second, consider Ezekiel 28:13-17. Although this passage is commonly used to describe Satan’s fall, the chapter reveals God is using strong imagery concerning the king/ruler of Tyre (vv. 2, 12) and his pride (vv. 2, 17). Third, consider Revelation 12:7-9. Although this passage does speak about Satan (unlike the previous two), this passage pictures how God conquers Satan through Jesus and how those who follow Jesus will emerge victorious (notice how Jesus has been born and ascended to God, vv. 5, 7) rather than speaking about Satan’s origin. Fourth, consider Luke 10:18. Although this passage also specifically identifies Satan, the context is speaking about how Satan and his demons submit to Jesus’s name (v. 17) rather than speaking about Satan’s origin.

Satan is the clear enemy of every person who has ever lived. Yet, understanding his origin should encourage us that he can be defeated! For, while he is a real spiritual being who has many followers, he is far inferior to God. And, although we do not know every detail of how Satan has become evil, we can plainly see that God has provided the victory over Satan through Jesus Christ!

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God’s service?

Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series

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