

Satan, his Origin and Mission

Lesson 5

Satan, his Origin and Mission

Apologetics Press Christian Evidences Correspondence Course

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Life is difficult enough on its own, without any outside force “**stacking the deck.**” Unfortunately, however, there **is** an outside force marshalled against us. Within the pages of Holy Writ, that “**outside force**” is identified by a variety of designations, but likely the best known and most widely used is **Satan**. From the first book of the Bible to the last, the existence of Satan as a real, literal adversary is affirmed.

But exactly who is this devil, Satan, who has established himself as God’s archfiend and mankind’s ardent foe?

What is known about his specific origin?

Why has he arrayed himself against both God and man?

And what is his mission?

These are questions that cry out from the human heart for answers.

Satan’s Origin

The Bible does not address specifically the origin of Satan, yet there is adequate information to draw a logical, well-reasoned conclusion as to how he came into existence. Consider the following.

Is Satan Deity?

Although quite powerful, Satan does not enjoy the status of deity. Clues to this fact are scattered throughout the pages of Inspiration.

Deity is **eternal**.

Scripture speaks of “**the eternal God**” (Deuteronomy 33:27) Whose “**years will have no end**” (Psalm 102:27), and Who is “**the Alpha and the Omega...**, Who is and Who was and Who is to come” (Revelation 1:8).

Deity is **omnipotent**.

He is referred to as “**God Almighty**” (Genesis 17:1) Who cannot “**be restrained**” (Job 42:2). By “**the thunder of his power**” (Job 26:13-14) He has the might to create (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:12) or destroy (2 Peter 3:10). He alone retains the power to in still life (Genesis 2:7) and to raise the dead (Ephesians 1:20).

Deity is **omnipresent**.

“**[T]here is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account**” (Hebrews 4:13). He is “**at hand**” and “**afar off**” (Jeremiah 23:23-24). He is able to “**bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil**” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Deity is **omniscient**.

The psalmist wrote: O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it (139: 1-6).

God not only knows the past and the present, but the future as well (Acts 15:18). Indeed, “**how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out**” (Romans 11:33).

Satan, by comparison, does not possess these qualities.

For example, he is not omnipotent.

Scripture affirms: "Greater is he [God] that is in you than he [Satan] that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). When he sought to "sift" the apostles as wheat, he first had to "ask" for them (Luke 22:31).

Satan is not omnipresent.

His position as "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) was "delivered" unto him (Luke 4:6). When he eventually is cast permanently into his place of eternal torment, the devil will be powerless to resist (Revelation 20:10) because he will be bound (20:2). Omnipresence, by definition, is not restrained.

Furthermore, Satan is not omniscient.

If we are sufficiently knowledgeable of the Word of God, and carefully wield that knowledge to resist him, the devil does not possess a superior knowledge sufficient to overcome us, but will "flee" (James 4:7; cf. Matthew 4:4). He is not intelligent enough to outwit us in order to "snatch" us from the Lord's hand (John 10: 28).

The only possible conclusion regarding Satan is that he is not deity. But such a conclusion has serious implications. If Satan does not partake of the nature of deity, then he cannot be eternal. Thus, he must be a **created being**.

Was Satan created 'Evil'?

But what was Satan originally?

When was he created?

And was he created "evil"?

The biblical evidence may be summarized by saying that the Scriptures categorically state that all things, as they had been created originally, were good. Genesis 1:31 records: "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good."

Thus, whatever else Satan may have been originally, he was **good**. God did not **create** Satan as an evil adversary; rather, Satan **became** evil. Some, however, have suggested that God's statement in Isaiah 45:7 "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and **create evil**. I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things" indicates that God does, in fact, create things that are evil.

This view results from a misunderstanding of the use of the word "evil" within the context of that passage. The statement obviously can have no reference to moral evil, since such is contrary to God's holy nature (Isaiah 6:3). Deuteronomy 32:4 describes Jehovah as the "God of faithfulness and without iniquity."

An in-depth examination of the passage in Isaiah reveals that God, through the prophet, was announcing to the (as yet unborn) Cyrus, king of Persia, his intention to use the monarch as an instrument for punishment.

Notice in Isaiah 45:7 how the word "evil" is employed in direct contrast to "peace." God's point was this: "I form light and create darkness [viz., I control nature]; I make peace and create evil [viz., I also control nations]; I am Jehovah that doeth all these things."

Later in **chapter 47**, there is a commentary that further explains how the word "evil" is used in **chapter 45, verse 7**. In verse 11, as he described the coming judgment upon Babylon, **Isaiah** said: "Therefore evil shall come upon you; You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; You will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, Which you shall not know." The "evil" that God "created" was **desolation** due to the wickedness of the Babylonian empire.

In **Isaiah 31:1-2**, God similarly warned Israel that if the Hebrew nation forged an untoward alliance with Egypt, He then would bring "evil" (i.e., **punishment**) upon them. Thus, as one writer observed, "evil" can be used with a purely secular meaning to denote physical injury (**Jeremiah 39:12**), or times of distress (**Amos 6:3**), and that is its significance in **Isaiah 45:7**" (**Jackson, 1984, 1:84**).

When Job's wife proposed that he curse God and die, he responded: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (**Job 2:10**).

Job's meaning is clear: shall we not receive **punishment** and **correction** from the hand of Jehovah, as well as innumerable blessings? God creates evil only in the sense that he brings punishment or calamity upon those who do evil.

The late **Rex A. Turner Sr.** wrote regarding this point: "In no sense, therefore, has God created criminal or moral evil. In no sense, therefore, has God provoked or brought about evil in any angel or man" (1989, p. 79). We agree.

Is Satan a fallen Angel?

There is compelling textual evidence within the Bible which indicates that originally Satan was one of the angels who inhabited the heavenly realm, and that he (with others) departed from a righteous state and rebelled against God.

In two separate New Testament passages, reference is made to a revolt among the angels in heaven. The apostle Peter said that "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

Another inspired New Testament writer wrote: "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Since the Bible also refers to Satan as "the prince of demons" (**Matthew 12:24**), and speaks of "the devil and his angels" (**Matthew 25:41, emp. added**), the only logical conclusion is that Satan is the leader of a group of rebellious angels expelled from heaven to eventually spend eternity in hell.

From references such as these, it is clear that God created angels (just as He has men) with the powers of reason and free will, which made it possible for them both to think and to choose. Apparently, certain of the angels chose wrongly, which is why Peter referred to angels "who sinned."

But John wrote that sin is "lawlessness" (i.e., transgression of God's law; 1 John 3:4).

In some fashion, then, the angels' sin consisted of breaking God's law by not keeping their "proper habitation," but instead departing from whatever appropriate position it was that God had established for them.

Since Scripture speaks of “the devil and **his angels**,” it becomes reasonable to suggest that Satan was either the instigator, or leader (**or both**) of this heavenly revolt.

Why has Satan arrayed himself against God and Man?

In any study of Satan, the question is bound to arise:

Why has Satan established himself as God’s archfiend and man’s ardent foe?

No doubt a portion of the answer can be found in the fact that he, too, once inhabited the heavenly realm but, as a result of his defiant rebellion against the great “**I Am**,” was cast “**down to hell**” (2 Peter 2:4). Satan’s insurrection failed miserably, and that failure had dire, eternal consequences. His obstinate attempt to usurp God’s authority cost him his position among the heavenly host and doomed him to “**everlasting chains under darkness**” (Jude 6).

In the end, his sedition gained him nothing and cost him everything. Regardless of the battle plan he adopted to challenge the Creator of the Universe, regardless of the battlefield he chose as his theatre of war, and regardless of the strength or numbers of his army, the simple fact of the matter is that, in the most important contest of his existence, He **lost**! Yet, his anger at having been defeated fuelled his determination to strike back in revenge.

But strike back at whom?

It was futile to attempt a second mutiny. God’s power was too great, and His omnipotence too all-consuming (Job 42:2; 1 John 4:4). Another target was needed; another repository of satanic revenge would have to be located. And who better to serve as the recipient of hell’s **unrighteous** indignation than mankind, the only creature in the Universe made “**in the image and likeness of God**” (Genesis 1:26-27)? Thus, with the creation of man, the battle was on and has been ever since.

In his war against Heaven, Satan will stop at nothing; it is a “**no holds barred/winner take all**” battle. Witness, for example, his cruel deception of Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) with its temporal and eternal consequences of physical/spiritual death (1 Corinthians 15:21; Ezekiel 18:20).

Recall the trials, tribulations, and tragedies visited upon the Old Testament patriarch, Job (Job 1-2). Weep in sadness at the Great Adversary’s so successfully convincing Judas to betray His Lord (John 13:2) that Christ referred to him as “**the devil**” (John 6:70).

Or, tremble in dismay at the potential ruin of humanity, had Satan succeeded in causing Christ to sin when he tempted Him in the wilderness those many years ago (Matthew 4:1-11). Had Jesus yielded, there would have remained “**no more a sacrifice for sins**” (Hebrews 10:26), and man would have been doomed, destined to inhabit forever the “**blackness of darkness**” (Jude 13) in hell.

Make no mistake about it. Satan **has** arrayed himself against both God and man. He **is** God’s archfiend, and man’s ardent foe. Nothing short of an absolute victory will satisfy him; nothing short of a hell filled with every single member of the human race will dissuade him. He is, indeed, “**the enemy**” (Matthew 13:39).

Why has God allowed Satan continued to exist?

As we study this enemy, another question comes to mind:

Why has God allowed Satan to continue to exist?

What possible justification could God have for allowing one so wicked to continue to live?

It seems the answer has to do with both the nature of God and the nature of the spirit beings (angels) that He created. There is a clue regarding this point in the text of **Luke 20:33-36**. Within this passage, Jesus spoke of the righteous who one day would inhabit heaven, and stated that **"neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels."**

If righteous humans who will inhabit heaven cannot die, and if they are equal to the angels, then it follows logically that angels cannot die. There never will be a time when the spirits or angels, the evil as well as the good, will cease to exist. Punishments and prescribed limits have been passed upon evil spirits, and all the more will be passed upon them, but they always will exist.

There may be more to Satan's continued existence than simply the angels' immortal nature. Perhaps the reason is expressed in the words that the Lord gave Moses to speak to wicked Pharaoh: **"Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth"** (Exodus 9:15-16, emp. added).

Indeed, from a distinctly human vantage point, the continuation of evil, even for a brief period, generally is not viewed as either desirable or ideal. But, as one author concluded, God may have **"allowed Satan to retain his power, temporarily, until He is through using him to test and purify a people for his ultimate glory and purposes"** (Brown, 1974, 91[16]:245).

In **John 9**, the story is told of a man who had been born blind. When Jesus' disciples inquired as to the reason for his predicament, He responded that it was so that **"the works of God should be revealed in him"** (John 9:3). What all this entails, we may not profess to know, realizing that the **"secret things belong to the Lord our God"** (Deuteronomy 29:29). But the Scriptures do reveal enough information for us to conclude that Satan's continued existence follows logically from the immortal nature of angelic beings.

They also reveal that the devil's existence is not at variance with Heaven's eternal plan, since at times it affords opportunities for mankind to witness God at work amidst His creation.

What is Satan's Mission?

Were Satan made of flesh and bone, we might employ the oft'-used phrase to describe him as **"a man with a mission."** But do not let the fact that he is spirit rather than flesh trick you into thinking he has no mission. He most certainly does, and has since the day he was cast from the heavenly portals. Simply stated, that mission is the complete destruction of all humanity in hell.

Within Scripture, Satan (i.e., our **"adversary"**; Zechariah 3:1) routinely is denominated by such unseemly designations as: (a) the devil (i.e., slanderer; Matthew 4:1); (b) **"the god of this world"** (2 Corinthians 4:4); (c) the father of lies (John 8:44); (d) the **"Great Dragon"** (Revelation 12:9); (e) **"Beelzebub"** (i.e., prince of demons; Matthew 12:24); (f) the **"wicked one"** (Matthew 13:38); (g) **"the prince of this world"** (John 12:31); (h) the ruler of darkness (Ephesians 6:12); (i) **"the tempter"** (1 Thessalonians 3:5); (j) **"accuser of the brethren"** (Revelation 12:10); (k) a **"murderer"** (John 8:44); (l) **"the enemy"** (Matthew 13:39); (m) **"a roaring lion"** (1 Peter 5:8); (n) a **"serpent"** (2 Corinthians 11:3); and (o) **"angel of the bottomless pit"** (Revelation 9:11).

Satan's names describe his mission. His primary goal is to alienate men from God by causing them to sin. His main objective is to make all men his slaves, thereby robbing them of the freedom that God's Word alone can impart (John 8:32).

‘Resist the Devil’

Is our battle against God’s archfiend and man’s ardent enemy a losing one?

Are Satan’s powers too great for us to overcome?

Shall we simply give up and raise the white flag in ultimate surrender?

What shall be the end of this matter?

While we never should underestimate Satan’s power and ability, neither should we underestimate the power and ability of our God and His Word. Satan may have the power to ensnare us, but Jehovah has the power to remove us from that snare (2 Timothy 2:26). Truly, “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (2 Peter 2:9). We must realize that while God will not necessarily act to prevent our temptation by Satan, neither will He allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As Satan’s adversaries, we must not, we cannot, be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Neither can we be double-minded (James 1:8) nor lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16). Rather, we must be alert to the ever present danger that our enemy represents. We must “put on the whole armor of God” that we “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...” (Ephesians 6:10-18). Then, with such armor we can “resist the devil” (James 4:7) and say with the faithful of all the ages: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Conclusion

God not only “bound” Satan, but also sealed his ultimate doom. Our Lord will be victorious over Heaven’s Great Adversary, for “to this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

It is via the power inherent in His own death and resurrection that He will “bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The fate that awaits this traitorous tyrant is clear: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). Eternal punishment in hell has been “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

God’s covenant pledge, made with our forefathers in Genesis 3:15, then will be fulfilled once and for all: “He [Christ] shall bruise your [Satan’s] head.” The paradise lost of Genesis will have become the paradise regained of Revelation. With the earthly reign of Satan brought to an end, and the eternal bliss of God’s saints secure, then we shall be able to say with the psalmist of old: “This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (118:24).

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Questions—Lesson5

True or False

Write **TRUE** or **FALSE** in the blanks before the following statements.

- _____ 1. The Bible teaches that Satan is a real, literal adversary.
- _____ 2. God created Satan as an evil adversary.
- _____ 3. Satan's names describe his mission.
- _____ 4. Although quite powerful, Satan does not enjoy the status of deity.
- _____ 5. Satan's powers are too great for us to overcome.
- _____ 6. It is logical to conclude that Satan is the leader of a number of rebellious angels who were expelled from heaven to eventually spend eternity in hell.
- _____ 7. Like God, Satan is **not** a created being.
- _____ 8. **Isaiah 45:7** teaches that God creates moral evil.

Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer(s).

1. Satan wants all men to go to:
(a) Heaven (b) Worship (c) Bible class (d) Hell
2. Which one of the following titles is not a designation for Satan?
(a) Prince of this world (b) Roaring lion (c) Devil (d) Messiah
3. Satan is:
(a) A created being (b) Omnipotent (c) Omniscient (d) Omnipresent
4. Which of the following is Satan's primary goal?
(a) To cause men to sin (b) To spread the gospel (c) To strengthen the church (d) To help the needy
5. Satan is not:

(a) A fallen angel (b) Deity (c) A liar (d) The prince of demons

Matching

Match the Bible verse with the idea in the verse
(Place the correct letter in the space provided by each number).

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. ____ God has given us the victory through Jesus Christ | A. 1 Corinthians 15:57 |
| 2. ____ "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" | B. Psalm 139:1-6 |
| 3. ____ "Put on the whole armor of God" | C. 1 Corinthians 10:13 |
| 4. ____ The angels who sinned were cast down to Hell | D. Matthew 12:24 |
| 5. ____ God is omniscient | E. John 8:44 |
| 6. ____ Satan is known as "the ruler of the demons" | F. James 4:7 |
| 7. ____ The father of lies | G. 2 Peter 2:4 |
| 8. ____ God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure | H. Ephesians 6:11 |

Fill in the Blanks

- Compelling textual evidence within the Bible indicates that _____ is a fallen _____.
- The _____ knows how to deliver the _____ out of _____.
- Sin is a _____ of God's _____.
- In **John 9**, the story is told of a _____ who had been born _____.
- Only _____ is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and eternal.

Notes and Comments