

The Doctrine Of Satan

by Greg Rasaka

Perhaps now is the time to look closer at Satan. You do not have to agree with what I conclude, but I do ask that you give this careful consideration. Just because a lot of men have said something is so for centuries, does not make it truth. On the other hand, what God says holds as truth throughout the centuries.

I also think there have been plenty of those, through the ages, who have seen things in a different light. The difference is the publicity, or lack of publicity given to them. The things we will discuss here may go against your present way of belief, but we need to realize that often what we assume to be correct, is actually erroneous. If we have an incorrect concept of Satan, that can reflect negatively on so many other concepts in the Bible.

What does the Bible really say about Satan? Does the Bible actually teach that Satan is a being that is responsible for all evil? Does the Bible really teach that there is an evil being that is so powerful that he can ruin God's creation, and keep it in turmoil for millennia? To hear what is commonly preached in pulpits, on the TV and the radio, you would certainly think so.

Yet I doubt that any one of those believes that Satan is all-powerful, all-knowing, and omnipresent. Yet he is supposedly wreaking havoc all over the world at any given moment. I think much of that way of thinking perpetuates because it gives us someone to blame, as if mankind is incapable of such evil. Well, according to the Bible, man is completely capable of such evil.

Understanding the Words

A loanword is a word taken from another language that is completely or partially letter for letter. In other words, transliterated. This is done when there is no equivalent word or name in the second language. The problem is, often times there is a corresponding word in the second language. This causes confusion, especially when the translators take the liberty of picking and choosing when to translate and when to transliterate, depending on their understanding of the text. Consequently, the very meaning of the loanword is changed. Though not always practical, for the most part, a translator should translate, and leave the interpretation to the reader.

Satan is one of those loanwords. The word **satan** (Strong's 7854), is a Hebrew word meaning, "adversary," or "accuser." I ask you to ask yourself as we go along, whether or not it is proper to assign the word **satan** as a proper name at all, or should it be rendered as adversary or accuser each time.

If you have a copy of Robert Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, you may notice that he never uses the word Satan, but rather, Adversary. Sometimes he capitalizes it and sometimes not, depending on his own understanding of its use. In the New American Standard Bible, we find the word Satan used 18 times. The same word, **satan**, appears 9 other times in the Hebrew text, but is translated "adversary" or "accuser." These are Numbers 22:22; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22; 1 Kings, 5:4, 11:14, 23, 25; Psalm 109:6.

The English reader is unaware that the same word, **satan** is used. There is another word **satan** (Strong's 7854) that is spelled the same with one vowel sound different (according to the Masorets). This is the root from which 7854 comes. It is a verb meaning to accuse or oppose, but is also translated as a noun, "accuser" or "adversary." It is never translated as "Satan."

As I said, we need to understand if this word is actually ever applied as a proper name for an evil archenemy of God. If it is, then there is no problem with the rendering, Satan. If not, the rendering should be thrown out and replaced with adversary or accuser. For those who may not know, the ancient Hebrew language had only one case; in other words, no capitalization to help us out. We will take a look at the places where our English Bibles use the word Satan shortly, but I want to say a few words about the Greek first.

The corresponding word in Greek is **satanos** (Strong's 4567), also a loanword from the Hebrew. Satan is found only once in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament, abbreviated LXX), in 3 Kings 11:14 (1 Kings 11:14 in English Bibles). **"Then the Lord raised up an adversary (satan) to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal line in Edom."** There is no mystery here. The man was an adversary to Solomon.

So in the LXX, what word do we find in place of **satan**? We find **diabolos** (Strong's 1228), which is commonly translated, "devil." The word means "slanderer" or "false accuser." We have taken this loanword and made it as a title for this arch evil being. Is this proper?

Check out the renderings in the following passages. Wouldn't it sound funny to render the word *diabolos* as "devil" in these three places?

"Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips (*diabolos*), but temperate, faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:11).

"...unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips (*diabolos*), without self control, brutal haters of good,..." (2 Timothy 3:3).

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips (*diabolos*) nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,..." (Titus 2:3).

The title "the devil" is not used in the Hebrew Old Testament at all. The King James Version uses the word "devils" four times when referring to false gods, to which sacrifices had been given.

I hope you can begin to understand how misleading our translations can be, both built upon, and perpetuating the idea of an arch evil being, we call Satan, or the devil. Ultimately, you must make up your own mind based upon your own diligent study. I hope you have learned by now, not to base your understanding upon popular opinion, or what the "authorities" claim as truth. I won't tell you what to believe, but I will present some things for you to use as food for thought.

Looking Closer at Satan

Let us begin in Genesis. It is commonly claimed that the serpent in the garden was Satan. If the serpent is taken literally in the garden, it would seem that the serpent was the cause of Eve to sin. If taken figuratively to represent the evil, rebellious nature of man, or one's own voice of temptation, the element of a separate deceiver is removed.

In the case of Cain's sin, a separate deceiver is not in the picture at all (unless one infers it), only the element of sin. God told Cain that **"...sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, but you must master it"** (Genesis 4:7).

Now let's look at what God said in Gen. 6:5. **"Then God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."** That is a strong statement against man. Do we see God blaming man or Satan? God destroyed the world because of man's evil nature, not because of Satan. If Satan was the cause of all this evil, wouldn't it have made more sense for God to destroy Satan and spare mankind?

Say you were in charge of a group of kids, and you taught them proper, but the group of kids turned to evil ways because some dirt bag down the street had influenced them. Would you think it best to destroy the kids, or destroy the dirt bag? By destroying the dirt bag, you could remove the evil and straighten out the kids again. If you destroyed the kids, what would be gained?

The evil would still be there to infect the next bunch of kids. However, if the evil was a part of the kids themselves, and there was no outside influence, the only way to rid the evil would be to destroy the kids. Which did God do? He destroyed the "kids." However, God saved eight people, and from them, the seed of evil lived on in them and grew, remaining with us yet today.

Now look at Genesis 8:21. **"... I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth..."** Here again man is accused of evil and Satan is nowhere mentioned. James states in ch.1:14-15, **"But each is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."** There was a perfect opportunity to set the blame on Satan, but James puts the blame on man's evil nature.

One may point out that later, in 4:7 James says, **"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."** But does this passage necessitate an arch evil being? Getting rid of the loanword and translating *diabolos* instead, it can read, **"Resist the slanderer (or false accuser) and he will flee from you."** In the time that James was writing, the Jews were most definitely the false accusers of the brethren. They slandered the followers of Christ unrelentingly.

Satan In the Old Testament

We will look at the places where **satan** has been translated, "Satan." The first place it is found in the Bible (NASB) is 1 Chronicles 21:1. Does this account necessitate a separate deceiver? Or was it purely the fact that David got cocky and fell victim of his own evil desires? The word is also used three times in Zechariah 3:1-2. However, this is a prophetic vision and so taking it literally is not sound exegesis.

The only other place where the word Satan is found in the Old Testament is in the first two chapters of Job. Here it is used 14 times. In this text Satan is portrayed as a personage. I see the book of Job as an elaborate parable, a literary invention dealing with the sufferings of man, and why man cannot understand why the

righteous suffer along with the sinners. (Being a parable does not detract from the value of the message any more than the parables that were spoken by Jesus.)

For one thing, if Satan is an evil being, how could he be in the presence of God as is portrayed in Job? Think about it. In the same light, how could he be in the presence of God along with Adam and Eve in the garden? Does that make sense? If sinful man cannot be in the presence of God, how can Satan, the greatest sinner of all be in the presence of God?

Satan's Origin a Myth

Many contend that Satan was a fallen angel. This idea is taken mainly from two passages, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Both are erroneous conclusions. Let's look first at Isaiah 14. By reading only selected parts of this prophecy, one can easily come to the conclusion that it is speaking of the devil and how he had fallen from his heavenly place.

But let's not start in the middle. Instead, proper exegesis requires that we get the context first. The prophecy begins with 13:1 and states that it is an oracle concerning **Babylon**. He goes on telling of cataclysmic destruction, which was typical for prophetic language concerning the destruction of a nation. In verse 17, God says he will use the Medes to destroy them. Verse 19 again tells us the subject is **Babylon** and that they will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

The discourse continues into chapter 14, and verse 4 identifies the subject as the **king of Babylon**. Again, verse 22 identifies the subject as **Babylon**. Isaiah 13:1 through 14:23 need to be read as a whole. After you finish reading through 14:23, read Daniel 5:18-30, and compare the language. It is strikingly similar, and both are speaking of the arrogance of the king of Babylon.

Much of the error stems from 14:12 and the King James Version. **"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning."** First, the term Lucifer is merely the Latin translation of the Hebrew word **helel** (Strong's 1966), meaning day star, star of the morning, or shining one. Isaiah 14:12 of the King James Version is the only place it can be found in the Bible. It comes from the root word **halal** (Strong's 1984), meaning to be boastful. This has wrongly been taken as the former name for Satan. The reason for this is because of the preconceived idea that the text is speaking of Satan and his alleged fall from heaven.

Next, the word translated "heaven" is not **shamayim** (Strong's 8064), the normal Hebrew word for heaven or sky. The word here is **maal** (Strong's 4605), and it means above or upwards. With this in mind it is easy to see that the text is saying that the king of Babylon, morning star, has exalted himself above all, and God destroyed him as a result. The devil is not the subject at all. The term morning star is a figure of speech meaning **brightness that is short lived**.

Ezekiel 28 is a similar misconception. Verses 2 & 12 plainly address the subject to be the **leader of Tyre**. But let's back up and get the context. Chapter 25 tells of God's judgment on Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia. The next judgment pronounced is that on Tyre. Chapters 26, 27 and 28:1-19 are dealing with Tyre. After this we have judgments on Sidon and Egypt. Why would an account of the fall of Satan be stuck in between? Such would not fit the context.

A king represents his nation, and so this prophecy is not only against the king, but also the nation as a whole. Chapter 26:2, 3, 4, 7 & 15 show the subject to be Tyre. In chapter 27, verses 2, 3, 4, 8 & 32 all reveal the subject to be Tyre as well. Then chapter 28 seems to be directed to the **king of Tyre**. Because of the lofty language used, it is commonly thought that the text must refer to the devil, even though the text says it is the **king of Tyre**. Once an idea is cemented in tradition, it is very difficult to get rid of it.

Now 28:13 in particular causes difficulty, **"You were in Eden, the garden of God."** One instantly thinks that this could only be Satan, as he was in the garden of Eden. (Eden is a loanword meaning delight). The LXX says, "You were in the delight of the paradise of God." Above, we challenged the idea that the serpent refers to Satan (at least the common conception of Satan).

The text is God's word and cannot contradict itself. The text says it is the king of Tyre, so what does the phrase **"You were in Eden, the garden of God"** mean? It has to be figurative like it is in Genesis. Apparently, Tyre must have been righteous, and found great favor with God at one time, but then became highly elated as a result, and God destroyed it. If this was an account of the fall of Satan, wouldn't the text say so? Verses 2 & 9 both say, **"You are a man and not God."** Was Satan a man? Certainly not traditionally.

The text speaks of how Tyre gained riches and wisdom by trade. How would this refer to Satan? What does Satan, a spirit, need with gold, silver and precious stones. Power is the desire of Satan (traditionally speaking). From 28:12 to the end of the chapter is highly figurative language. It is poetic and symbolic in nature. Is there really any sound reason to insert Satan as the subject here? It goes against the very context of the entire prophecy.

In 28:2,12, God tells Ezekiel to tell this to the king of Tyre. Now, suppose for a moment that the subject is Satan. How is Ezekiel supposed to deliver a message to Satan? Why must we force Satan into the context when the text itself tells us time and time again that the subject is Tyre and its king?

I don't think that Satan butted in on God's creation and deceived Adam and Eve. God could have removed Satan from the picture, but did not. God created Satan or evil for a purpose, and was part of God's plan all along. No one or nothing can foil God's plan.

You say, "God is righteous and cannot create evil." The fact is, there is evil in God's creation and if you say God did not create evil, then you are forced to say that God created something that was imperfect and became evil. Either way it boils down to God's works. God foreknew this and therefore cannot be considered as brought on by an outside force. It was not an oversight on God's part.

I know some of you may not see this the way I do, but let's not let that interfere with our pursuit of truth. The Bible though, does say God created evil. Proverbs 16:4 states, **"The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil"** Also, Isaiah 45:7, **"The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these."** Salvation was not a plan to counter man or Satan. God is in control of all his creation.

So, in the Old Testament, little is revealed concerning Satan. What is the adversary? Is it in reference to an evil being or the inherent evil within man? Or is it sometimes referring to one and then the other? These are questions that remain to be satisfactorily answered as far as I'm concerned.

The evidence seems to be in favor of the evil intent of man, rather than an evil being, as opposed to tradition, which insists Satan to be the supreme evil being. From what we have seen, tradition seems to be correct in understanding that the terms **satan** and **diabolos** are interchangeable. They are both in reference to an accuser.

Satan In the New Testament

What does the New Testament say about Satan? Does the New Testament shed new light on the subject? The first place we encounter Satan in the New Testament is Matthew 4 (Mark 1:13), where Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. He then fasted for forty days and was approached by the tempter.

Reflecting back on Eve and the serpent in the garden, is this truly a separate deceiver, or is it the voice of temptation working on the humanity of Jesus? Here again, are we to take this literally or figuratively? Of course the big difference is the fact that the deity of Jesus did not succumb to the temptation.

Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, be killed and raised up on the third day. Peter rebuked Jesus saying, "May it never be." Jesus' reply was, **"Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's"** (Matthew 12:22, 23). Peter was not Satan, but was playing the part of the adversary. He was attempting a different course of action than God had intended.

In Mark 4:15, when Jesus explains the parable of the sower, he says, immediately after the word has been sown in them, Satan, the adversary takes it away. Who was the adversary that stripped the word from those who accepted it? The Jews.

When the seventy had returned from their mission, Jesus said, **"I was watching Satan fall like Lightning from heaven"** (Luke 10:18). Many take this passage to mean that Satan fell from his place in heaven. In the first place Satan had no place in heaven. Secondly, the statement isn't saying that Satan was falling from heaven, but rather, **the adversary was falling in the manner that lightning falls from heaven.** It was a figure of speech. In other words, the Gospel was gaining much ground over Judaism while the seventy were out preaching.

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20). Is this to be taken to mean "Satan," or the adversary, the Jews? In verses 17-19, Paul is telling the brethren to watch out for those who cause dissension and teach falsely. These men are slaves of their own appetites, smooth talkers to deceive the unsuspecting. He wanted them to be wise in what is good and evil. Then he tells them God would soon crush their adversary. Does this fit the Jews? Of course it does, and they were crushed shortly after.

In 1 Corinthians 7:5, we find Satan again as the tempter. But again, is this an outside influence, or is it the evil, lustful side of man? **"Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self control."**

Remember what James said, **"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust"** (1:14). Was James mistaken? No, I do not believe he was. He was being quite clear with his words. I think we need to stop and think each time we see the word Satan in our Bibles and ask ourselves, if the context is speaking of our own voice of temptation as James points out, or is it speaking of a literal adversary, or accuser, such as the Jews. Or the third choice, is it speaking of some supernatural boogeyman.

If we have Satan as our boogeyman on whom we can blame evil, where do we draw the line? In other words, do we blame it all on Satan? If we do, that makes us blameless, except for the fact that we carried out his

prompting. This would mean we do not devise evil, we merely carry out what the instigator prompts us to do. (We read earlier that man is a deviser of evil). Or do we blame only the really heinous acts we commit on Satan? As I asked earlier, where do we draw the line?

What was it that hindered Paul from going to see the Thessalonians (Thessalonians 2:18)? Was it Satan the evil being, or the adversary, Paul's opposition?

In 1 Timothy 1:20 we read, **"Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan [literally, the adversary], so that they may be taught not to blaspheme."** Paul says these were among those who were "shipwrecked" in regard to their faith. If Paul had turned them over to Satan, how would that have taught them not to blaspheme? However if Paul had handed them over to the adversary, in other words the Jews, you can bet they would have been taught a lesson on blasphemy. A good stoning would make them take notice.

What is meant by the term synagogue of Satan used in Revelation 2:9 & 3:9? The text tells us in both places that they are those that call themselves Jews and are not. I rather doubt that it was Gentiles working for Satan, pretending to be Jews. I would see it as fleshly Israel, those who were teaching against Christ, and the true Jews of these two passages were Jews who belonged to the spiritual Israel — the remnant. So there were two groups of Jews, the synagogue of Satan (the adversary) who were Jews outwardly, and the Jews who were Jews inwardly, the remnant that followed Christ.

It does seem to be true that the idea of Satan has evolved much with the passage of time. The Old Testament idea of Satan is less defined, than in the New Testament. Demonology is all but absent in the Old Testament, yet is found quite regularly in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels. Why did this type of thinking develop and where did it come from? Does it have its roots in Babylon? Much corruption began there.

The Pharisees were responsible for corrupting the Law, making it out to be something it was not. Could it be that the same kind of growth in ideas changed the concept of Satan and demons, bringing them to be one of central thought and importance? Hasn't the same type of idealistic growth happened much more recently? Look at dispensational theology. It was unheard of until less than 200 years ago, and the idea, being based on false assumptions, has grown so large that most of Christianity can see nothing else.

Now if this is what had happened by Jesus' time, he was not going to waste time and re-educate the public concerning their concept of Satan. He merely used their common ideas to support his message of salvation. They believed in Satan and demons. Whether it was reality or folklore, Jesus used it to his advantage.

Paul did the same kind of thing at Athens (Acts 17:16-34). He didn't come into town and announce that all of these gods are false and Yahweh is the only real God. Instead he used the altar marked "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" attempting to reach these pagan Greeks. In this way he offended no one and was allowed to preach the Gospel. Telling people that they are wrong right off the bat is a sure way of getting the door slammed in your face. Jesus did not need to change their concept of Satan when he could work with it for good.

Another thing to consider is, did the people of that day and age really believe in Satan? They obviously believed in demons, assigning things they did not understand to be brought about by demons. But do we have a single verse where the Jews brought up Satan? Not that I know of. This term Satan is used by Jesus and the apostles. Why didn't the Jews ever use the term? Could it be because they did not feel comfortable using a term that was applied to them by Jesus and the apostles? Was Jesus' and the apostles' use purely figurative? The Jews were not into using figurative language like Jesus and the apostles were.

The Jews do accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, ruler of the demons (Matthew 12:22-29). Beelzebul is not Satan. Beelzebul, or Baalzebul was the god of Ekron, meaning "lord of the flies." Jesus only makes the comparison of Satan casting out Satan to show them the futility in arguing that Beelzebul could cast out his own demons. He is not equating Satan with Beelzebul.

Yes there are "Satan" verses that are not so easy to look at from this point of view. But I think we owe it to ourselves to keep this whole idea in mind when reading our Bibles. It may clear up a lot of problems elsewhere.

Today most view Satan as the great evil being, who is responsible for everything that goes sour. That may never change and maybe that is okay. What's more, it may never be proven wrong. However, the concept that Satan was an angel that fell from his place in heaven can be proven false, simply by the absence of facts to support it. It is the product of most false doctrine — taking verses out of context.