

Paradise Lost and Restored: Who is Satan? (Part 2)

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I. Introduction

Satan, the most perfect angel God ever made, now wants to be God and worshipped as God. His influence touches every aspect of society and every nation. From everyday citizens to Presidents, all are held captive by his deception. This is why wicked behavior is seen as normal and righteous behavior abnormal. And his sway over mankind includes everyone, even God's children. He's the real enemy of mankind who wants to turn us against God so that he may reign.

II. Satan's Goal: to Take Over the World (God's Kingdom) and be Worshipped as God

So is Satan real or a myth? Satan is actually quite real. But he didn't start out as Satan. He was God's #1 angel. He possessed the most beauty and wisdom and held two privileged positions: worship leader of all the angelic beings and protector of God's throne. But one day he wanted to be God and sit on His throne. So he became God's adversary, in fact, his name, *Satan* (a Hebrew word), means *adversary*, Numbers 22:22. Thus Satan is a real being who possesses a mind, will, and emotions, Isaiah 14:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:11; Revelation 12:17. He is constantly referred to as a person not an impersonal force, Job 1:12; Luke 4:6. Now admittedly all of this comes from the Bible and there are those who don't believe in the Bible. Still, shouldn't the atrocities that we commit against each other give us pause? Man is certainly wicked, but is it possible that there's someone else behind our cruelty, urging us on, trying to get us to veer further and further away from the God who made us? The Bible answers "yes" and his name is Satan. And his goal is to take over the world and be worshipped as God.

Satan: ruler of this world and it shows, the world we live in is very vile and wicked, from the boy who tortures ants with a magnifying glass to Hitler's atrocities against the Jewish race to everything in between. One might think that this is simply man's inhumanity to man. But there's more to it than that; something else besides man's cruelty is involved. God says that Satan is behind every wicked thing that happens in this world. How do we know? First, he's the ruler of this world and even though he's been judged, he still holds sway over this world, John 12:31; 16:11; 1 John 5:19. He's hard at work using his most effective weapon: deception. Satan is in fact the father of lies, John 8:44. And he uses deception to blind mankind and keep them from God's truth, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (cf. Revelation 12:9). Thus, as he tempted and deceived Adam and Eve and took from them their God-given identities and replaced them with identities based in fear and shame, so he tempts humanity to sin (e.g., Judas, Luke 22:3) in order to enslave them with a false identity which is constantly fighting against God. He is behind mankind's disobedience to God and is known as the father of all who sin, Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 John 3:8, 10.

But can we really see Satan's influence over this world? Where did parents come up with such wisdom as, "Might as well give them condoms; they're gonna have sex anyway." There was a time when being a pregnant teen brought with it a lot of shame. This is not to say that pregnant teens should be treated as outcasts. That's exactly how Satan wants us to react. A pregnant teen needs a lot of love and guidance. This is to say that Satan's influence has made teen pregnancy an accepted reality. We also see Satan's influence at the highest levels. When President Clinton was caught having sex with an intern in the White House, some said, "That's his personal life; it doesn't matter." In fact, he was reelected. Satan's influence has made wicked behavior normal and righteous behavior abnormal. How do people see a 23 yr old virgin who is waiting until marriage?

Satan even has influence over God's children, Satan is so cunning and his deception is so clever that he's able to deceive the children of God. His goal is to get them fighting on his side so that his rule over the world advances. As he's behind the sins of those who don't believe in Christ, so he is behind every sin that God's children commit. He can even get an apostle to sin, Matthew 16:23. He can get us to lie to God, Acts 5:3. He will even use our unwillingness to forgive each other against us, 2 Corinthians 2:11. It is crucial that we realize that he is the actual enemy we face, not the person who sinned against us. He is forever scheming against us and his desire is to destroy us, Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 Peter 5:8. He will do anything in his power to keep us captive to his will, 2 Timothy 2:26. If he succeeds, his kingdom advances and God's Kingdom stalls.

Satan the Accuser, one of Satan's names is Accuser; he loves to accuse us all day long, Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 12:10. He does this by getting us to see ourselves as our worst self. For example, have you ever failed at something and then defined yourself by that failure? And every time you fail after that, you say, "I knew it; I'm such a failure. What made me think I would succeed?" By the way, do you notice how often Satan gets you to call yourself a failure? He is great at using every terrible event in your life to accuse you and then to get **you** to accuse you. Pretty soon, he's got you believing that you suck and so does your life.....but how do we know this is Satan whispering in our ear? Do you think God speaks to you (or sees you) that way? Absolutely not! Look at the way Gideon sees himself vs. the way God sees him. He sees himself as a coward, God-abandoned, weak, and insignificant. But God sees him as a mighty warrior who can deliver Israel from her enemies and whom God has NOT abandoned, Judges 6:12-16.

Satan twists God's Word, something else Satan loves to use against us is God's Word. Notice how Satan twists God's Word in order to redefine God and get you to worship him and bear his image instead of God's: Matthew 4:1-11, in each one of these temptations, Satan is trying to get Jesus to do what he did, set himself above God. In the first test, Satan tries to get Jesus to follow His own path instead of the one God gave Him. God sent Him out there for 40 days and nights and if Jesus needs to be fed with bread, then God is more than capable of feeding Him as He fed Israel bread from heaven, Deuteronomy 8:1-3. In the second test, Satan twists God's words in Psalm 91 to get Jesus to treat God as His inferior. But Satan's got it exactly backwards. Psalm 91 is about us putting ourselves in God's hands not forcing Him into our hands in order to make Him do whatever we want. To do this is to tempt God to destroy us as we set ourselves above Him (as Israel did and accused Him of not being with them, Deuteronomy 6:16, cf. Exodus 17:1-7). In the third test, Satan says it outright, "If you worship me, I'll give you reign over the whole world." If Jesus agrees, then He will set Satan above God and thereby Himself above God. That is, Jesus would set Himself as the ultimate authority, the Decider, the one who gets to determine who is God.

Satan will interpret God's Word for you, if you let him, Satan will interpret God's Word for you and thereby God. Instead of a Loving Father you will see an angry God whom you cannot please. For example, if you let Satan interpret 1 John, you will walk away thinking that God is a perfectionist who expects you to be perfect like His Son and if you fail, He kicks you out of His family and calls you a Devil's child, 1 John 1:5; 2:3-6; 3:4-10. But if you let God interpret His Word for you, you will sense a Father's love for His child and His desperate concern that you not leave His side because there's a real enemy out there who's trying to destroy you. And you will also sense a Father's pride and encouragement as He tells you that you will be able to overcome Satan's attacks because He is with you, 1 John 1:5; 2:1-2, 12-14; 3:1-10, 16; 4:4, 9-11.

III. Conclusion

And said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"