

## 6. SATAN

Father and Son rule the universe, but the world is under the control of another power whom John calls the evil one (1 Jn 5:19) and Paul calls Satan. Paul says he is the ruler of the aerial realm, the spirit that activates those who are disobedient (Eph 2:2). He warns Christians that their real struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm (Eph 6:12). The heavenly realm here must have the same meaning as aerial realm (Eph 2:2). Satan is the ruler of the aerial realm. The evil spiritual forces Paul is talking about are evil spirits or demons. They don't have bodies unless they possess people. They are spirits, and they exist in a spiritual realm.

From his heavenly throne, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and he intercedes with the Father for the saints. All powers in heaven are in submission to Jesus (1 Pet 3:22), he is superior to them all, but he won't rule the world and its spiritual realm until he returns as the conquering Messiah. Meanwhile, he is waiting for the day when his enemies are made his footstool (Heb 10:13). God will subdue the enemies at the climax of the Great Tribulation when Jesus returns, the climactic defeat being at Armageddon when God destroys the Antichrist and his evil empire. After that event, the Messiah take control and reign until he puts all remaining enemies under his feet (1 Cor 15:25).

At the Messiah's return, Satan will be captured and incarcerated in the Abyss (Rev 20:1-3). The prophet Isaiah predicted this event and the subsequent millennial reign (Isa 24:21-22). He said the Lord would punish the armies of the exalted ones above and the rulers on Earth. They'll be herded together into the Pit, shut up in prison, and *after many days*, they'll be punished. The armies opposing the Lord at Armageddon will be defeated, whether spiritual or human, and these evil spirits and the souls of the human opponents are thrown into the bottomless pit. These are the angels that sinned and have been cast into the lowest hell, chained in darkness until judgment day (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6). Meanwhile, the Messiah and his elders, who represent the saints

(Rev 4:4), are enthroned in glory on Mount Zion. The light emanating from New Jerusalem is such that the sun and the moon pale in comparison.

According to God's plan, when the 1000 years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison and will again incite the nations into rebelling against God and his people. They'll march from all over the Earth to Jerusalem, and surround the camp of God's people (Israel) and the city he loves (Jerusalem). They'll be destroyed by fire from heaven and Satan will be cast into hell to be tormented forever (Rev 20:7-10). This will spell the end of the forces of evil that have plagued mankind since Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent's cunning in the Garden of Eden. That this final battle is different from Armageddon is shown by the fact that the Antichrist and the False Prophet were thrown into hell immediately after Armageddon (19:20), while now, after the millennium, Satan is thrown into hell where the beast and the false prophet had previously been thrown (20:10).

Satan gained authority over humanity and the Earth in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to listen to him rather than to God. However, God immediately pronounced his doom when he declared that an offspring of the woman would crush his head (Gen 3:15), which Jesus did at the cross. His existence, and that of demons and evil spirits throughout the world is very real, especially indigenous peoples, but most contemporary Westerners with their scientific way of interpreting things doubt his existence of the supernatural. In the West, Satan's activities have become more sophisticated and hidden, but in some countries like Italy and Ireland, requests for exorcisms are on the increase, and in 2018 the Vatican held a training course for exorcists. Throughout Africa, India, and South American countries where voodoo and animistic belief is rife, the existence of evil supernatural forces is not in doubt. It is evidenced by the prevalence of demon possession and the effectiveness of black magic. Possessed people covet the sense of power the possessing spirit gives them. Some exhibit supernatural strength, and others speak languages they have never learned.

The Bible blames Satan for the origin of sin and suffering in the world. It was he who, in the form of a snake, tempted Adam and Eve. They disobeyed God and were driven out of the garden. In the book of Job,

we see why Satan is called the ‘accuser of the brethren.’ He accused Job of insincerity in his worship of God, but was proved wrong. In the Gospels, a large part of Jesus’ ministry consisted of exorcisms and the healing of people who were afflicted by the devil with disabilities and disease. John declared that the whole world lies under the control of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19). Paul told the Ephesian Christians that they once lived according to the ways of this present world, according to the ruler of the aerial realm, the spirit who activates those who are disobedient (Eph 2:1-2).

As the devil has this enormous power and authority, how does that relate to the kingdom of God? When Jesus was tempted by the devil before he began his ministry, it was regarding kingdom authority. The devil took him to a high place and showed him *all the kingdoms of the world* in an instant. Then he told Jesus he would give him all that authority because it had been given to him to give to whoever he wanted. If only Jesus would worship him, all that glory would be his (Lk 4:5-7). Jesus rejected the offer because the Father had his own plan and way of giving him the kingdom.

During the last week before the crucifixion, Jesus said it was now time for the judgment of this world to begin. The ruler of this world *will be* thrown out, maybe dethroned (Jn 12:31). Jesus’ triumph over Satan at the cross was decisive, but not immediate; the verb is future. As we have seen above, the apostles still regarded Satan as being very active in the world. He has suffered a fatal blow. Jesus told the 72 he had sent out to preach and heal that he had seen Satan fall like lightning from *heaven* (Lk 10:18). Jesus disabled the rulers and the authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross (Col 2:15). Because of his death he will destroy the devil who has the power of death (Heb 2:14). However, the devil is still prowling around looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8) and we need to resist him.

It is not until Rev 12:9 that we read that Satan and his angels will be defeated by Michael and his angels and thrown down to Earth. His time on Earth will be short, the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation (Rev 12:12-14). He’ll come down in great anger, intent on destroying God’s plan for Israel and the Church and preventing the Messianic kingdom from taking place. The martyrs at that time will conquer Satan by their reliance on the blood of the Lamb and by the

confession of their faith. They will not cling to their lives even in the face of death (Rev 12:11).

Today, Satan and his cohorts are judicially defeated, but obviously, still very active in the world, trying to thwart God's purposes. That is something to remember when we, as God's children, are being tempted or persecuted. There is no evidence that the activities of these evil forces have changed since the crucifixion. Satan is still as active as ever; he is not yet bound.

G. Eldon Ladd (A Commentary on the Revelation of John p. 173) says that the martyrdom of the martyrs is their victory over Satan. It is proof that his accusations against them are empty. They follow in the steps of their master. Since God's children are made of flesh and blood, God the Son also became human like them, so that by his death he might destroy the devil who holds the power of death and might free those who were in slavery during their lives to the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15).

The Messiah's death on the cross has far-reaching benefits. Through his shed blood on the cross, God reconciled all things to himself, making peace with things on Earth and things in heaven (Col 1:20). Jesus' death on the cross has made possible a reconciliation between God and creation. Because of his redemptive work, he'll be able to set creation free from its bondage to decay during the millennium. In addition, those who are redeemed and empowered by the Holy Spirit can overcome sin and evil forces. Christians are far less likely than unbelievers to be possessed by evil spirits or affected by black magic. Even Muslims seek refuge from these evil powers in church communities. The devil has been bound to some degree as far as the righteous are concerned, but he's still ruling the world of unbelievers. He'll continue to do evil, sow tares, and hinder Christian workers until the Messiah comes. Then he'll be put out of action and cast into the Abyss for 1000 years.

Satan should not be regarded as a defeated outcast, he is still in control of this world. His evil influence affects the entire world; he is the prince of this world, and he doesn't want to lose his kingship to the Messiah when he returns. His future strategy will be to empower the last world empire and ultimately, the Antichrist. He'll not only give him great power and authority over every tribe, people, language, and

nation but also his kingship (Rev 13:2b). This final world dictator will be the most powerful and evil dictator that the world has ever known. The ensuing persecution and defeat of the saints will be the final suffering the Church will endure before Christ's return, and it will be extensive; there will be many martyrs all over the world in those last days. Christians are called not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him.

## **Satan in Revelation**

1. John's vision of Satan in heaven is of an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns (12:3). He is dangerous and bloodthirsty. The seven heads represent powerful world empires he has founded, and the ten horns represent his claim to total sovereignty.
2. This powerful angel leads the whole world astray (12:9). He opposes God's plan to set up the Messiah as the world's future king. Man failed in his responsibility to rule the Earth on God's behalf, so Satan usurped that power and wants to maintain his exalted position.
3. The dragon swept one-third of the stars (angels) from the sky and flung them to Earth (12:4) to do his work. There they roam as evil spirits, territorial spirits, and possessing spirits.
4. Historically, Satan sought to kill the Christ child through King Herod but failed (12:4). He tempted Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days and offered him all the kingdoms of the earth, but Jesus refused to worship him. He did not succumb to Satan's temptation as Adam did.
5. Shortly before Christ's return, war will break out in heaven between Satan and Michael, the protector of Israel (Dan 12:1). Satan and his angels lose their right to be in heaven and are hurled to Earth. Woe to the land and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you filled with fury because he knows that he only has a short time (12:12).
6. He immediately pursues Israel (12:13) and seeks to destroy the nation, but Israel is rescued by the Earth (12:16). Israel is

rescued by two wings of a great eagle, which may indicate an airlift (by US?) to the wilderness (Jordan?) where she is cared for for 3 ½ years.

7. He then wages war against Christians for 3 ½ years and defeats them (Dan 7:21), after which God takes away his power and destroys it forever (Dan 7:17, 25-26).
8. Satan is the power behind the last world empire (13:1) and its leader, the Antichrist, (the small horn). The evil empire also has seven heads and ten horns, which are interpreted as kings. This beast seen by Daniel (7:2, 7) is a terrifying and frightening empire with ten kings. It devours the whole Earth, trampling and crushing its victims (Dan 7:23).
9. The seven heads are interpreted as seven mountains and seven kings (17:9), probably referring to seven world empires and their emperors. Five have fallen (Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Greece), one is (Rome), and one is yet to come (a revived Rome).
10. The ten kings of the evil empire surrender their authority to the Antichrist (17:13), and Satan also gives the beast his authority.
11. The immoral woman (Babylon) is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth. She is described as sitting on many waters, meaning that she is a network of mainly coastal worldwide cities. The kings commit adultery with her (idolatry, immorality, corruption) and the earth's inhabitants are intoxicated with her wine. All these world cities collapse when the seventh bowl of God's wrath is poured out.
12. God is sovereign over the universe, but in this fallen world, where many, especially people in authority, have turned their backs on God, Satan has found a foothold. Politicians are deceived by corruption and false ideologies. The rich are deceived by the love of money. False religions are deceived by idolatrous gods. Tribal groups are deceived by occult power and traditional animistic religion. Individuals surrender themselves to be possessed or influenced by demons. Immorality and corruption open the way for demonic influence.

13. The Christian's spiritual battle is not against flesh and blood (humans) but against these powers of darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.
14. Satan was defeated by Jesus initially, when he refused to be tempted by Satan in the wilderness and judicially at the cross when by his death he broke Satan's power over death (Heb 2:14). Jesus demonstrated this by casting out demons and delivering people from Satanic oppression, but it's not until the beginning of the millennium after Christ's return that Satan is arrested and imprisoned in the Abyss (Rev 20:2), and not until after the millennium that he is finally thrown into hell (20:10).
15. Satan is not yet bound. Christians can get victory over him by surrendering their lives to Jesus, but unbelievers have no such recourse. Many Muslims in West Africa, suffering under curses or the result of black magic, have been released through the prayers of Christian pastors. Countless others are bound by Satan and his minions.
16. He who sins belongs to the devil (1 John 3:8) and will be tempted and harmed by him. Missionaries and evangelists are sent to open people's eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.