

Know Your Enemy: Satan, His Origin, Activity and His Downfall

There is a considerable literature available which talks about our adversary, Satan, but not too many people know that this is not his name, but is a description of who he is: enemy or adversary. He is mentioned in all three of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and is correctly seen as the consummate enemy of G-d and of mankind.

His activity has a three pronged assault in that first, he tempts, then he condemns and then he confuses. His first appearance is in the garden where he deceives Eve by casting doubt on what G-d had told her: has G-d really said? Mention of him is made throughout the rest of the Scriptures, either directly by name or indirectly as evil, or darkness.

I am saddened and surprised by the number of foolish and inaccurate descriptions of him which appear in accounts which have been written about him over the centuries. He is frequently given too much credit and is falsely portrayed as almost equal in power to G-d. Rather than go through all the nonsense which is still circulating about our enemy, I want to establish what the Scriptures teach about his origin, his activity and his downfall. I also want to discuss what the Bible says about how we can defeat him.

I want to begin with what I consider to be three of the most popular misconceptions about our enemy, which many falsely claim are derived from the Scriptures. After this, I want to get into what the Scriptures actually do say about our enemy and how he operates – and how he can be defeated. The first three misconceptions will be grouped as follows: the Gap Theory from **Genesis 1:1, 2**, Isaiah's description of the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar in **Is. 14:12-20** and Ezekiel's description of the demise of the Prince of Tyre in **Ezek. 28:11-19**.

Some mention will also be made of the dialogue between G-d and Satan in the book of Job and of the temptation of our Messiah in the wilderness in the Gospels. We will also look at Revelation chapter 12 to understand the nature of the conflict of the ages we are engaged in. We will then look at several passages which talk about the origin and nature of the Devil (John 8:44, Isaiah 45:7 [with cross references: Lamentations 3:38, Deut. 32:39 and Amos 3:6] and Proverbs 16:4).

I freely admit that the scriptures give relatively little information about the origin of the Devil, but we need to limit ourselves to what the Bible says about our enemy and not delve into fantasies about the enemy which the Scriptures do not teach. Deut. 29:29 comes into play when we run out of Scriptural explanations, because the secret things do truly belong to G-d. Putting our understanding of the enemy into a proper biblical perspective will both prevent us from giving him too much credit and will also allow us to defeat him by accessing what the Scriptures actually teach about defeating him.

Over the centuries the biggest problem with Judaism and Christianity has been the rise of various extra-biblical traditions which have taken on equal authority with the Bible. This brief study shall not fall into this error and will let the Scriptures speak for themselves. Let us look at the first of our three misconceptions and look at what is actually being said.

That Gap Theory: Genesis 1:1,2

In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from G-d swept over the face of the waters.

One thing is immediately obvious and that is that there is no mention of the enemy, nor of any conflict between G-d and

Satan. Genesis One is a description of Creation which ends up with the highest point of Creation being man. There are six days, followed by a blessing on the seventh day of rest. Genesis 1:1 is the opening statement which declares that G-d is both the author of Creation and His existence precedes Creation. In most major religions and mythologies (defunct religions which are studied for their literary merit), the supreme god or gods, are born out of chaos and do not precede or even create chaos. Ours is the only major religion where the Creator is pre-existent and has no beginning.

What happens next is an account of creation which begins with an inert mass of matter and energy (chaos), which is whipped into shape to end up with the orderly cosmos we have today. No real time frame is given as to when this occurred or as to how long it took to complete – the seven days of creation really mean that G-d built time into the fabric of the cosmos. This is evident, because in Genesis chapter two the order of Creation is reversed. Whereas in Chapter One, Creation is completed and ends with man as the final, crowning glory of Creation, in Chapter Two, man is created first, before all the plants and animals and gender is seen as the crowning accomplishment of Creation.

There are not two creations in Chapter One and there is no gap between verse one and verse two. Verse one is the opening statement/assertion and verse two introduces the seven day Creation account. The enemy did not ruin G-d's first Creation and G-d did not have to remake what the devil messed up. Nowhere in the Bible is the devil given this kind of power and when he is called the god of this world (2 Corin. 4:4), it refers to his influence over the affairs of men to get them to worship him. He is not on the same level with G-d, anymore than the false gods of the heathen nations, who cannot see, speak or act.

At worst he is a fallen angel, but we will deal with this fall later on. There is no gap and there is no recreation in Genesis chapter one and the enemy is not part of any yin and yang where the universe is supposedly balanced between the evenly matched powers of darkness and those of light. The universe is the sole creation of the sole Creator and is sustained by Him alone. Let's move on the passage in Isaiah.

The Downfall of Nebuchadnezzar: Isaiah 14:14-20

***How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the
nations low! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to
heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of G-d; I
will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of the
far north; I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will
make myself like the Most High." But you are brought
down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.***

***Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you:
"Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook
kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and
overthrew its cities, and who would not let his prisoners
go home?" All the kings of the earth lie in glory, each in
his own tomb; but you are cast out, away from your grave,
like loathsome carrion, clothed with the dead, those
pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the
Pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot. You will not be
joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed
your land, you have killed your people."***

This passage is talking about a man who tried to exalt himself as a god, but who perished and was not even buried properly. He claimed titles of deity, but was just an arrogant man who did not possess deity. He has been identified as Nebuchadnezzar who had an image of himself erected and directed all the citizens of his empire to pray to it. The

passage is sarcastic when it says he fell from heaven and claimed to be both the Day Star and the son of the Dawn. These last two titles belong properly to our Messiah and are used in the Revelation, where He is called the bright and morning Star (22:16).

The one who made these false claims is described as a fallen man, who imagined he could ascend higher than the clouds and make his throne above the stars of G-d and become the equal of the Most High. Nowhere in the passage is this person called an angel or a spirit and everywhere in the passage he is described as an arrogant man who has not only had his pride fall from the heavens, but who will also perish and become a spectacle to those he conquered and took captive.

It is interesting that those who claim this refers to Satan, take the part where Nebuchadnezzar claims titles of divinity literally and yet spiritualize (creatively reinterpret the content of a passage away from its original meaning) the rest of the portion where it talks about the downfall and death of this pretentious human character. The claims were made by a man whose downfall is described in graphic, final detail. If indeed the passage were to describe Satan, then he is not just a defeated foe, he is dead and his body is cast out of any tomb and lies rotting as a spectacle for the kings of the earth he defeated.

There is no indication that this passage refers to an angel who fell, but it definitely describes an arrogant man whose claims to deity are mocked as he meets a miserable final end in death. You cannot have it both ways. The passage mentions titles of deity which this man usurped and describes his final demise and death. The fall does not occur in the distant past and the final destruction of this man, is not going to occur in the distant future. He was a horrible tyrant who boasted about possessing divinity, but he was only human and he died a

horrible death and is mocked by those he once conquered.

This character is a human being and not a spirit and unless we think that Satan is a human being, it cannot be applied to him and to his supposed fall from an exalted position in the distant past.

We will now deal with the tragic downfall of the Prince of Tyre.

The Downfall of the Prince of Tyre: Ezekiel 28:11-19

Moreover the word of the L-RD came to me in these words: son of man, pronounce a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the L-RD G-d: You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of G-d; every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone, beryl, onyx and jasper, sapphire turquoise and emerald; and worked in gold were your settings and your engravings. Your flutes and tambourines were at your service. On the day when you were created they were prepared. You were a protecting cherub with wings extended. I had placed you on the holy mountain of G-d; you walked among the stones of fire. You had integrity in all of your ways, from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of G-d, and I made you disappear, protecting cherub, from among the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. So I brought out fire from within you; it

consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

The individual who is being discussed on this passage is the King of Tyre and he is either an angelic being who assumed an earthly throne and who also had an existence in the heavenlies, or he is a man who made these claims. He is said to be clothed with all kinds of precious stones and gold and it was quite common for oriental monarchs to wear garments covered with gems and woven with gold. The winged cherub is a common symbol of the kings in the ancient Middle East, as was their claims of deity.

The rich symbolism describes the incredible wealth which the king of Tyre possessed through the unrighteousness of his trade, and this sinfulness caused his downfall, and like Nebuchadnezzar, once he falls, he is made a spectacle before the kings to feast their eyes on. He is reduced to ashes and shall never rise again.

He is either an angelic being who also has a human nature, or like Nebuchadnezzar, he was just an arrogant ruler who made false claims of possessing deity. Again, he is nowhere referred to as Satan and though he appeared to have an exaltation from G-d, who is the One who raises up kings and makes them fall, iniquity was found in the way he conducted himself during his exaltation and the same G-d who exalted him, brought him crashing down.

Too much should not be made about him being placed on the holy mountain and may refer to the part the people of Tyre played in building Solomon's temple and whatever it means that he walked among the stone of fire, he is violently deprived of all of his splendour and is cast down to the ground

and turned into ashes.

There is a big difference between examining the meaning of symbolic language and changing the meaning of a passage by spiritualizing the language it uses. This passage uses symbolic language which is usually reserved for descriptions of G-d and His angels and since the meaning of a symbol is what it symbolizes, we can say with certainty that either the king of Tyre was an angel who also assumed human form (which is nowhere found in the Scriptures) or he is an arrogant ruler who claimed characteristics of deity which he did not possess.

As well, in the passage, there does not appear to be a time lapse between the king's exaltation and his downfall, and with the passage in Isaiah, the exaltation is not presented as having occurred in the long distant past and his fall is not portrayed as happening in the far distant future.

What you have is a lament over the king of Tyre, who, while claiming attributes of divinity, was cast down from his exalted position because of the iniquity he committed. In fact, he even ignored the author of his exaltation and did not readily acknowledge that his elevation came from G-d. So, in his arrogance, he practised iniquity in the way he traded and in the way he acquired great wealth. He was cast down because of his misconduct in how he acquired his wealth and not because of some supposed celestial rebellion against G-d.

The devil is nowhere presented as possessing great wealth which he acquired through unrighteous trading practices and he is nowhere portrayed as a cherub clothed in exalted clothing. This depiction in Ezekiel is of a mortal man, called the king of Tyre, who wore gorgeous apparel, but who came to a horrible, final end in the sight of all the people he had commerce with. He is not actually an angelic being and you

cannot spiritualize this description to make it apply to the devil, without doing great violence to the text and changing its original meaning.

Both passages, in Isaiah and in Ezekiel refer to human beings, not angels, and neither passage is talking about either the exaltation or the demise of Satan. There is no doubt that he inspired both of these individuals, but he is neither the one nor the other. The devil is never described as a man, either exalted or fallen, and we must look elsewhere for a scriptural discussion of his fall, and of any supposed exaltation it is falsely claimed that he once possessed.

His influence on mankind has been strong and tragic and he continues to exercise a great negative influence upon the nations and generation of mankind, but this understanding must be taken from passages where he and his nature are actually discussed. We cannot and should not build a false picture of our enemy by spiritualizing scriptural passages which clearly refer to human beings, who nonetheless may have been acting under his influence.

We can learn nothing about the origin or the nature of the enemy from Genesis 1:1,2 and the two passages in Isaiah 14:12-20 and in Ezekiel 28:12-19 are definitely referring to human beings who lived and who died and should not be applied to the enemy of our souls. A true knowledge of our enemy must come from other portions of the Scriptures.

A Scriptural Understanding of the Nature, the Origin and the Demise of the Enemy:

While the Scriptures do not go into great detail about how the enemy came into being, they do describe what he is like and what activities he engages in and even how we may defeat him. He appears suddenly in Genesis 3:1-5 (14, 15) and his final destruction is described in Revelation 20:7-10. We are

not told when he came into existence, but we are told that he has always been evil (John 8:44) and that he was brought into existence by G-d (Is. 45:7) and is thus under the L-rd's final and ultimate control (Proverbs 16:4). He is also mentioned in Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-10 as the agent of Job's torment, but only as an agent who acts solely with divine permission and can not strike beyond that which he is allowed to by G-d.

The most extensive description of the operations of Satan is found in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation and he is also mentioned in the Gospels when he came to tempt the Messiah (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13 and Mark 1:12, 13). We are told that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking those he may devour (I Peter 5:8) and that he will flee from us when we resist him (James 4:7). In various places in the Gospels he and his demons are mentioned as a source of sickness and they sometimes take possession of people to torment them,

The lack of detail is not an omission on the part of the authors of the Bible, but greater space is given to talking about G-d and how to walk with G-d and also telling stories of people who either walked with G-d or who walked away from G-d. The Devil and his henchmen are the spiritual enemies and influences which we are told to avoid and to resist and over whom we are given power to break the bonds they imprison people with.

So far, we have said that he is not a glorious angel, who led the celestial choir and who functioned as an assistant at G-d's right hand, but who was supposedly expelled from Heaven before the foundation of the world, for trying to lead a rebellion against G-d. Now, we need to understand what he is like and what he is capable of doing. He and his henchmen are assuredly influences for the evil that once took control

over all of mankind before the flood and who are trying to fill the world again with the same darkness that once dominated all of mankind. We are told that he can appear in the disguise of an angel of light (2 Corin. 11:14), but that he really only comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10).

He is the driving force behind both the final antichrist and all those other antichrists who have appeared from time to time throughout history. He and his henchmen are the unclean spirits which inspire false prophets and it is to them that pagan sacrifices are really being made (I Corin. 10:20; Lev. 17:7).

We are not told directly where he and his henchmen came from, but we are told that his henchmen are fallen angels and that the angels of G-d outnumber them two to one (Revelation 12:4). We are also told that the demons engage in battles with the angels (Daniel 10:12, 13; Zach 3:1) and that believers are given the power to cast them out (Matt. 10:8). We are warned against the influence of the devil and his demons who may seek a foothold in our lives (Eph. 4:27) and may inspire us to wrath and dissension in our midst (2 Tim. 2:24-26). It is against them and their influence that our real battle is waged (Eph. 6:12).

He is also called the god or ruler of this world (2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30 and 16:11), but not the god of the physical world, but only of the world system which is falling increasingly under his power (Acts 26:18). As he once took control of the world in the days of Noah, he is working towards this same goal, trying to destroy us and our faith as he undermines our spirituality and the morality which the Bible teaches. He is the active agent behind all the false religions of the world and is the mover and shaker behind the greatest false religion the world has ever known – Evolution.

So rather than considering him to be bright angel who fell

from heaven because of his sin, we need to see him as the dark angel who is working in this world and is making war on the children of G-d who keep the commandments and who have the testimony of Yeshua HaMashiach (Rev. 12:17) He reserves a special hatred for Jewish people because it is through them that our blessed Messiah entered the world (Rev. 12:1,2 and 13-17).

We are told that there was war in the heavenlies and that Satan and his angels were cast out when our Messiah ascended (Rev. 12:7-10). There is truly a demonic conspiracy going on in the world against Jews and Christians (and against Messianic Jews and Gentiles), as the roaring lion who is the old serpent and the red dragon, seeks to devour us and remove our influence from this dark and dying world.

There is, however, victory for us and we can overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, as we do not cling to life even in the face of death (Rev. 12:11). At times he may overcome some of us (Rev. 13:7) and cast some of us into prison (Rev. 2:10). Without a doubt he was the driving force behind the inquisition, the pogroms and the Holocaust. He is the true author of antisemitism and Anti-Zionism and is the inspiration behind every doctrine of demons and seducing spirits that have ever arisen deceive and lead the generations and nations of mankind astray (I Tim. 4:1).

He inspired Nebuchadnezzar and the King of Tyre to make false claims of deity, but even though he may disguise himself as an angel of light, he is a murderer and a liar from the beginning and G-d brought him into existence (Is. 45:7; Prov. 16:4 and Lam. 3:38) so that we would have a choice between actual evil and actual good. He does not have an eternal existence and just as he was brought into being by G-d, he will ultimately be defeated by G-d and thrown into the

everlasting fire and suffer everlasting destruction (Rev. 20:10).

He has deceived people into thinking he was once seated at the right hand of G-d until he rebelled and was cast out of heaven. The only great war in heaven was fought between the Devil and his angels and Michael and his angels. It was then that the Devil was cast down to wander the earth until the final battle, when our Messiah returns to establish His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind. We are on the winning side and though we may suffer greatly, ultimately, the Devil will be destroyed and we shall rule and reign with our blessed Messiah. Until that glorious day, we must fight against all the spiritual powers of darkness and deception in this world and never allow our faith to lose its grip on the Holy Word of G-d as we live lives full of salt and light, sharing the Gospel of G-d's love.