

"Is Satan Real?"

Is Satan real? Should we take him seriously? Does he really tempt us and want to steal our soul? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord's Way. What does the Word of God say about the devil and what should I know about him?

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search the Scriptures for what God wants in our lives. Thanks for spending this time with us. We love to hear that you're watching or listening to our program. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

For most people Satan is a riddle that won't go away. We've heard about him, known about his evil influence, and wrestled with him more than once. Many folks, however, don't know what to make of Satan. A recent Barna poll found that more than half of American adults (almost 60 percent) say that the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but just a symbol of evil.

Medieval Christians depicted Satan as a character with a tail, dressed in a red suit, smelling of brimstone (that is sulfur) and carrying a pitchfork. They believed that he was the warden of hell and will torture us for an eternity, and he'll torture the unfortunate, evil souls who are cast from the presence of God.

Well Hollywood usually depicts Satan as rich, cunning, successful, powerful and good looking. He appears as a winner with every pleasure that he wants. His prime work seems to be to roam over the earth seeking individuals who will sign over their souls to him in exchange for special powers or possessions. Well in the end of a Hollywood script Satan never wins but gets outwitted and reverts to a more familiar angry, immature, hate-filled guy with horns and revenge in mind. Well to Hollywood Satan doesn't seem particularly intelligent, because he's easily tricked by humans. But is that the real Satan?

The Bible always tells the truth. And if we want to know what Satan is really like, let's go to the Bible. We don't want someone's imaginary idea about Satan. We want what God has to say. Only the Bible can give us the true picture

For more than thirty years SEARCH has offered the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org. Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in song, we'll read from Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 13 and then we'll find out what the Bible says about Satan.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 to 13. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." That's an encouragement from the apostle Paul. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to stand firm against all of the schemes of the devil. Help us to stay fully engaged in our love for You, to want to do You will and to serve You always. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven Father. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

People who deny the supernatural usually regard Satan as merely a symbol of evil. For them, Satan is a spiritual threat but not an actual being. To them the devil or Satan is only an impersonal evil force present and operating in the world. Now since mentioning hell or judgment is politically incorrect, they have no need for Satan. Many believe that everyone is ultimately going to be saved, so Satan is merely a token, spiritual opposition. For 13 percent of Americans, hell is just a symbol for a bad outcome after life is over. Many people regard Satan as the personification of an influence.

The Bible describes Satan and his demons as actual beings during the days of Jesus, but churches that hold classical liberal views explain Satan away by saying the first century was pre-scientific and used the concepts of demons and Satan to frighten people into obedience and to account for events and diseases for which they had no other explanation. They regard belief in Satan and demons as real, say that they're real today as a view that was left over from a pre-scientific day.

The word "Satan," as it appears in both Hebrew and Greek, means "adversary." The word describes a person who lies in wait as an enemy. Satan is commonly called "the devil," which points to one who engages in slander or accusing. Now in addition to these two principal names, the Scriptures also call Satan the tempter (Matthew 4:5); Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24); the enemy (Matthew 13:39); Belial (2 Corinthians 6 verse 15); an adversary (1 Peter 5 verse 8); he is the deceiver (Revelation 12:9); and the father of lies and a murderer (John 8 and verse 44). 1 John 3 and verse 8 says that the devil has "sinned from the beginning." The Lord Jesus describes Satan as the "evil one" (Matthew 13:16), that is, he is the one whose nature and will are given over to evil. Now moral evil is his dominant attribute. The devil stands in stark contrast with God the Father who is the "Holy One" (Isaiah 1 and verse 14).

He's also called "the dragon," "the old serpent" in Revelation 12 and verse 9; he is "the prince of this world" (John 14 verse 30); and he is "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians 2 and verse 2. Paul calls him "the god of this world" (in 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4) and "the spirit that is now working in the children of disobedience" (in Ephesians 2 and verse 2).

Now Satan's power is very great in the world. He is like a "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" according to 1 Peter 5 and verse 8. Satan is the one who takes the word away from men (Mark 4 and verse 15). The Bible says that people are "taken captive by him" (2 Timothy 2 and verse 26). Paul warned Christians against his "devices" in 2 Corinthians 2 verse 11. And James called on Christians to "resist" him in James 4 and verse 7.

The Lord Jesus faced Satan when he was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4 verse 1 says). Satan tried to persuade Jesus, the Son of God, three times to follow His desires and to disobey the will of God. But Jesus met each temptation by citing to the devil principles from the word of God, specifically from the book of Deuteronomy. And in the end, the Lord Jesus said, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him (Matthew 4 verses 10 to 11). Luke 4 and verse 13 notes that when "the devil had finished every temptation, that he left Him (that is Jesus) until an opportune time."

Now in this Biblical passage one has to admit the devil is just as real as the angels. If Satan is merely an influence, this passage actually becomes nonsense. When Jesus told Satan to "go," He wasn't speaking to a symbol but to a person. In these verses, the Bible speaks of the devil as a person who travels, speaks, reasons, and is persistent. Such characteristics belong to a person, not a symbol.

When Jesus predicted to his apostles that He must go to Jerusalem and there suffer many things, be killed, and rise again the third day, you remember that Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you." Well in response, Jesus said, "Get behind

Me, Satan! You're a stumbling block to me; for you're not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Matthew 16 verses 21 to 23). Now calling Peter "Satan" suggests that Jesus considered Peter's behavior like that of the evil person Satan, who sets his mind on human interests. Personalities (not symbols) set their minds, make decisions, and oppose the will of God. Satan is a person.

In Luke 22 verse 31, Jesus revealed that Satan had asked permission of God to sift Peter like wheat. Well such language again suggests that Jesus considered the devil as a person.

Again, the Lord Jesus recognized the problem that the church at Smyrna faced in living in a city where they were being blasphemed. Now Jesus condemned "the blasphemy by those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2 verse 9). The book of Revelation reveals that the final end of Satan, or the devil, and what it's going to be. Well if Satan were just a symbol, such a graphic statement would be meaningless. Revelation 20 verse 10 says, "that the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Well you can't torment a symbol; one can only torment a person.

That Paul regarded Satan as a real person may be seen in many of his statements about Satan. When he wanted to visit the Thessalonians, Paul said that "Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 18). In 2 Corinthians 2 and verse 11 Paul described Satan as one who had "schemes," not that's a sure indication of intelligence and personality. In 2 Corinthians 11 verse 14 Paul reveals that Satan "disguises himself as an angel of light." Well from this Paul says it's not surprising that "his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (chapter 11 verse 15).

Now Paul judged the man who had his father's wife by delivering "such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5 and verse 5). In 1 Timothy 1 and verse 20 Paul handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan, "so that they will be taught not to blaspheme." Now such statements do not reflect a mere influence, but rather suggest one who has the ability to do physical harm to disobedient saints.

Now in a different way Paul also speaks of being given a "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!" (2 Corinthians 12 and verse 7). Paul was well aware of the powers in the heavenly places with which he wrestled. Satan was not an influence, not a personification, and not a symbol; he is a person.

God's word says in Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 13 that we read a few moments ago, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

Now each of us faces a battle in life against the devil. This is a personal battle, and we can't pass this battle off to somebody else. When people fought battles in ancient times the one who was standing at the end was the winner, the other was dead, he perished in death. Our battle is spiritual; we're not fighting for our lives, we're fighting for our souls. We're also fighting to show others what side we are on—to encourage others to fight the good fight and to stand.

We need the Lord's help in fighting this battle. We need His strength and the armor that He provides to us. If we ignore the fact that we're engaged in a spiritual battle, we'll likely lose. If we fail to arm ourselves with God's strength, we will fall victim to the devil. If we are unwilling to fight, we will

perish spiritually. If we don't give it all we have, we will likely come in second place. Now to lose this battle means we'll lose our souls. This is no matter to take lightly.

God's word says in Ephesians 6 verses 14 to 17, "Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now the Lord loves us and so he equips us with armor that will help us win. Fasten on "the belt of truth." Why, because the devil is a liar, and the truth exposes his lies. God gives us the knowledge of the truth in the Word of God. The best way to defeat the devil is to expose him for what he is, an enemy who lies and accuses people falsely in order to gain power. He gains power when he enslaves people to sin. He promises the pleasure of sin, but that pleasure never lasts. In the end it enslaves and destroys.

The Lord equips us with the breastplate of righteousness. God lovingly forgives and cleanses us from sin. Righteousness motivates us to do what is right and to avoid destructive sins. The Lord equips us with protective shoes that allow us to move quickly in the gospel of peace. The gospel of Christ gives us peace and confidence, so that we can handle life's spiritual challenges without fear.

Now the Lord equips us with the shield of faith, which is able to put out the fiery arrows of the devil. When a Christian believes in Christ and believes in His love and in His Word, he has the power to block the lies that the devil tells. He knows Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and every word that He spoke is true and righteous altogether. He knows that whatever Jesus says is right and there's a difference between right and wrong. He knows he's a created being not a product of evolution. He knows heaven and hell are real destinies of souls of each of us.

The Lord equips us with the helmet of salvation. And that helmet protects the head from the blows of the opponent, and our salvation protects us today. The Scriptures marvelously promise in 1 John 1 and verse 7 "that if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, that we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Verse nine says, "that if we confess our sins, He's faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we walk with the Lord Jesus and confess our sins, asking God to forgive us, we have an ongoing relationship with God that keeps us completely free from sin.

The Lord also equips us with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. God's word instructs, reproves, corrects, and trains us, so that we might fight the good fight of faith. Soldiers used the sword both defensively and offensively. And the Scriptures keep us from sin and it also helps us to defeat the devil by exposing his wicked ways. My friend, you can trust the Bible to give you the answers that you need to overcome temptation, overcome sin, and overcome the devil. So keep your Bible close to your heart if you wish to win this battle for your soul. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to fight with all our heart, and having done everything to stand firm against the devil. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The Scriptures reveal that the devil is a deceiver, a liar in disguise. He wants people to think he's an angel of light, while in reality he is pure evil. Make no mistake, Satan is not now, nor has he ever been, your friend. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8 to 9, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith,

knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

God’s Word says in James 4 verses 7 and 8, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” God wants us to draw close to Him and submit to His commandments. If we draw close to God and resist the devil, the devil will flee from us! And we’ll win this battle.

How do you draw close to God? Well, submit your heart and your will to Him, place your trust in Him. You can’t draw close to God if you doubt Him or you’re fighting with Him. You can’t be friends with sin and be friends with God. You must give up the sin and submit to God. With your faith and repentance out of love, you must be willing to confess your faith in Jesus Christ before others and to be baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now at that point God cleanses you from sin, adds you to His family the church. If you draw close to Him, He will draw close to you! Now if you’re a Christian who’s moved away from Christ, why not come back to Him by repenting of that sin and praying to God for forgiveness.

We hope that you’ve been blessed by today’s study of God’s Word. If you want a free printed copy, or a CD of this message, “Is Satan Real?,” then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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