

61 PROBLEMS WITH THE WORD “SATAN” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction: This paper builds on presentation #60 “PROBLEMS WITH THE WORD ‘SATAN’ IN THE OLD TESTAMENT”. The word *satanas* in the greek (Strong's #4567) is a common noun meaning opponent, adversary, or accuser. Confusion regarding this word is due to translator bias/error and the absorption of the Zoroastrian dualistic belief into Judaism during the Babylonian exile.

1. The satan saved people from sin.

Scripture: “You...are to deliver such a one to Satan [adversary, #4567] for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” I Cor. 5:5

Questions: Does it make sense to deliver a sinner to an evil entity to be saved? Is Paul directing the Corinthians to turn this person over to legal authorities who would rightly prosecute this individual for incest hopefully causing repentance?

2. The satan taught people not to blaspheme.

Scripture: “Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust away made a shipwreck concerning the faith; of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered to Satan [adversary #4567], that they might be taught not to blaspheme. I Tim. 1:19-20

Questions: Does it make sense to turn sinners over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme? Could Paul be advocating, giving them over to Jewish authorities for correction, or alternatively, severing ties with them, giving them over to the consequences of their own self-serving practices?

3. The satan prevented Paul’s travels.

Scripture: “We wanted to come to you...I, Paul, once again--but Satan [adversary #4567] hindered us.” I Th 2:18

Question: Was Paul referring to Jewish opposition he had encountered previously in Thessalonica and elsewhere?

4. The satan had synagogues. (Synagogues are houses of Jewish religious worship and instruction.)

Scripture: “I know your works, oppression, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan [adversary #4567].” Rev. 2:9

Scripture: “Behold, I make some of the synagogue of Satan [adversary #4567], of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.” Rev. 3:9-10

Related Scripture: Jesus said, “They will deliver you up to... their synagogues. They will scourge you.” Mt 10:17

Question: Was the adversary the persistent persecutors of the messengers of the gospel of Christ—unbelieving Jews?

5. The satan lived in Pergamum and ruled from there.

Scripture: “I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan’s [adversary’s #4567] throne is. You hold firmly to my name, and didn’t deny my faith in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where satan [adversary #4567] dwells.” Rev. 2:13

Question: Was the great rich center of paganism, the city-state of Pergamum, adversarial to Christians?

6. The satan entered into Judas.

Scripture: “Satan [adversary #4567] entered into Judas, who was also called Iscariot, who was counted with the twelve.” Lk. 22:3

Question: Perhaps angered by the gospel of service (Jn 15:18 ff) instead of political over-throw, did Judas’ serpent nature decide to side with the accusers of Christ? (“Iscariot” may be indicative of his affiliation with the zealot sicarii.)

7. Peter was the satan.

Scripture: But he [Jesus]...rebuked Peter, and said, “Get behind me, Satan [adversary #4567]! For you have in mind not the things of God, but the things of men.” Mk 8:33

Questions: Was the satan something extrinsic or intrinsic to Peter? Did Jesus define “the satan” in this rebuke—having in mind the things of men that exclude the things of God?

8. Ananias conceived the lie and the satan filled Ananias’ heart to lie.

Scripture: Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? While you kept it, didn’t it remain your own? After it was sold, wasn’t it in your power? How is it that you have conceived this thing in your heart?” Acts 5:3-4

Question: If Ananias conceived the lie and the satan filled Ananias’s heart to lie, doesn’t that make Ananias and the satan one and the same?

9. The satan fell from heaven in the first century.

Scripture: The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" He said to them, "I saw Satan [adversary #4567] having fallen like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." Lk 10:17-19

Scripture: "You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of Gehenna?" Mt. 23:33

Question: If Satan had already fallen from heaven before Eden and in Genesis 6, as the extra-biblical "fallen angel" mythology indicates, why is he falling thousands of years later in the first century?

Question: In Jesus' vision, was the first century Jewish leaders the adversaries/serpents Jesus saw fall from "heaven," i.e. their place of authority, when their power and jurisdiction was transferred to His disciples? (Mt. 23:33)

Reference: P.P #18 "Heaven and Earth" defined. "Heaven" often indicates leaders, authorities.

10. The satan tempted Jesus to make self-serving choices.

Scripture: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil...Then Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan [adversary #4567]! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve him only.' Then the devil left him." Mt. 4:1, 10-11.

Related scripture: "[Jesus] emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." Phil 2:7

Related scripture: We have a high priest "who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15

Question: Did Jesus have the inner temptation to make self-serving, serpent choices but declined to give in to them and stayed perfectly in the will of the Father?

11. The satan would be crushed in the upcoming national judgment of Israel.

Scripture: "The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Rom 16:20

Question: Wasn't it the Messiah-denying Jews along with the entire corrupted temple leadership who were the adversaries of the followers of Jesus during Paul's ministry and were crushed during the Roman-Jewish War?

12. The satan was the dragon, serpent, and devil and was "thrown down."

Scripture: "The great dragon was thrown down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan [adversary #4567], the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Rev. 12:9

Questions: Wasn't "Satan" thrown down millennia before the first century? Who were the adversaries to the gospel throughout Acts who were ultimately "thrown down" with the destruction of the Old Covenant world order?

13. The satan was a dragon, serpent, and devil and was bound.

Scripture: "He seized the dragon, the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan [adversary #4567], who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years..." Rev. 20:2

Question: Weren't the wicked Old Covenant Jewish authorities bound and finally destroyed, along with the entire corrupted religious system, ending in AD 70?

GUIDING SCRIPTURES ON THE SOURCE OF EVIL

A. Jesus taught sin comes from within the heart of man.

Scripture: Jesus said, "That which proceeds out of the man... defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual sins, murders, thefts, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Mark 7:20-23.

B. Paul understood his own nature to be adversarial to God.

Scripture: "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin [satan] which dwells in me...I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." Rom 7:18-23

Notes:

Highly recommended: The Real Devil, by Duncan Heaster. Out of print but free on line. <https://heaster.org/rd.pdf>

Related Preterist Papers discussions: #59 "The Serpent in the Garden was not Satan," #58 "Genesis Establishes Essential...", #60 "Satan in the Old Testament" #41 "Accuser of the Brothers".

Other Papers on Translator bias: P.P. #25 "Bias in Translation" P.P. #10 "Hell is not in the Bible"