

A Decent Devil?

June 13, 2016



"It is notable that nearly all the poisonous fungi are scarlet or speckled and the wholesome ones brown or grey, as if to show us that things rising out of darkness and decay are always most deadly when they are well dressed." – Ruskin

Some people think that if you believe in the devil, you never really graduated from childhood. Or as one put it, "Belief in a personal Satan is part of mankind's nursery furniture." Others believe in a quasi-devil who is really not as bad as everybody makes him out to be. He's pictured as a red-suited, pointed-horned, long-tailed, fun-loving cartoon character in Hollywood films and Saturday Night Live skits.

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The Bible, however, is not unclear about his existence or evil intentions. It should be enough to say that Jesus acknowledged Satan and talked often of him (e.g., Matthew 25:41; John 8:44). Satan is found in the Bible 55 times (19 times in the Old Testament; 36 in the New Testament). Devil is found 59 times (all in the NT). Analyzing these texts gives us much detail about our enemy.

NATURE: WHAT IS SATAN LIKE?

He is a slanderer (Job 1:7-8; Psalm 109:6).

Devil means “slanderer” or “accuser.” He slandered Job, but take heart, God defended him. When Satan accuses us as Christians before God (or to ourselves), we should remember that Jesus defends us as our Advocate in heaven. A faithful Christian’s case is in good hands (1 John 2:1-2; Romans 8:31-39; Revelation 12:10)!

He is a counterfeiter of God (Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36-43; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

He seeks to confuse us, and one of the easiest ways is to duplicate—with significant but hard to notice changes—God’s creations. In the parable of the tares, the enemy (Satan) sows tares (a poisonous plant that looks like wheat) among the farmer’s wheat (God’s world). Satan is in the religion business! He has counterfeit gods, counterfeit religions, counterfeit Bibles, counterfeit churches, and counterfeit preachers. He might prefer that we all become atheists, but he is content with us being idolaters or participants in false religions. The only way to determine the difference between the genuine and the fake is to shine the light of God’s Word upon it in careful examination (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

He is a liar, deceiver, and murderer (John 8:44).

Since Eden, he has been lying to us, and since he introduced death into the world, he has (indirectly) brought it to every single person who has lived here, starting with Adam and Eve (except Enoch and Elijah and those living presently). Paul warned, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent

beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

He is the ruler of this world (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11; 1 John 5:19) and the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4).

He has more followers presently than God does (Matthew 7:13-14). In fact, the only times the "good guys" have outnumbered the "bad guys" were when Adam stepped into the Garden and when Noah stepped off the boat. Nonetheless, when God gets ready to enforce His will, Satan will bow as will the knee of his every devotee (Revelation 22:2-3; cf. Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10).

He is our adversary (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The word *Satan* means "adversary." Though we do not see him, he is there laying traps for us (2 Timothy 2:24). Paul explained, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:11-12).

He is a destroyer (Revelation 9:11).

Abaddon means "destruction.") It is his goal to wreck every couple's marriage, every person's health, every mind's sanity, every heart's peace, every maiden's virtue, every friendship's bond, every good work's capability, every servant's ministry, every church's harmony, every sermon's effectiveness, and every soul's destiny.

WORKS: WHAT DOES SATAN DO?

- **He deceives** (Genesis 3:10; Matthew 16:21-23; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 11:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 2:9). (Think.)
- **He insinuates doubt** (Genesis 3:1). Does God really mean what He says? Surely not, Satan says. (Believe.)
- **He snatches away God's Word** (Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:15) and turns men from the Truth (1 Timothy 5:15). He often does this by misusing Scripture (Matthew 4:6). Whenever the Word is being preached, he is ready to turn our attention from it by the crying of a baby or the color of the preacher's tie. (Concentrate.)
- **He traps** (1 Timothy 3:7). Paul speaks of his snare (pagis), which is literally a "trap fastened by a noose or notch" (2 Timothy 2:26). Metaphorically, it refers to "a trick." An alcoholic is a classic example of one snared and held in one of his traps. (Watch.)
- **He wants to control the mind** (1 Chronicles 21:1ff; Acts 5:3). Books, magazines, radio, television, the Internet, and conversation are all used as tools. (Discern.)
- **He attacks bodies. He did Job's** (Job 2:4-7). Paul called his "thorn in the flesh" a "messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Corinthians 12:7; cf. Matthew 17:5-8; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). At least we may safely say that he uses normal body afflictions to tempt us. (Endure.)²
- **He destroyed Job's possessions** (Job 1:13ff). He can at least use normal disasters to tempt us. (Trust.)
- **He hinders our spiritual work** (1 Thessalonians 2:18, hinder, egkopto, "to cut into, impede, detain." Galatians 5:7 uses the root (*anakopto*) which means a "roadblock" (the KJV margin has "who did drive you back"). (Persevere.)
- **He seeks to make you proud** (1 Timothy 3:6-7). (Resist.)
- **He persecutes** (Revelation 2:10). God's people are soldiers on the battlefield, but sometimes they are the

battlefield. He uses others to deliver his blows, but he is behind all evil (Matthew 16:23; Luke 22:3; Acts 13:10). If we obey God's Word only during the good times (cf. Job 1:9-11; cf. Matthew 4:8-10), then our faith is shallow (Matthew 7:24-27; Matthew 13:20-21). Faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted (James 1:1-8; 1 Peter 1:3-9). (Withstand.)

- **When we sin, he accuses and discourages you** (2 Corinthians 2:6-11). Satan never gives up (Luke 4:13). (Go on.)

In an ancient legend Satan summoned his top three aides to a planning session. One lieutenant, Rancor, said, "Let's convince them there is no God." Satan sneered, "That won't work. They know there is a God." Another aide, Bitterness, spoke up. "We'll convince them God does not really care about right or wrong." Satan toyed with the notion, but rejected it because he knew that too many already know He does care. Malice came with his idea. "We'll let them think there is a God and that He cares about right and wrong. But we will keep whispering 'there is no hurry, there is no hurry.'" Satan howled with glee and promoted Malice.

Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, but people who reject Christ and believe Satan's lies will suffer there with him (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15). Do you need to make preparation to avoid spending time with the devil? God requires faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:35-40). One must remain faithful to Christ in order to avoid returning to the devil's ways (2 Peter 2:20-22; Revelation 2:10).

[easy-tweet tweet="A decent devil? Hardly."]

Endnotes

¹Isaiah 45:7 (KJV) says that God creates evil, but means that He brings adversity on His people to test them (evil ra',adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, sorrow, trouble).

²Interestingly, Satan disputed with Michael over Moses' body (Jude 9). What he wanted with it we cannot tell, but we can be assured that it was not just to give it a decent burial!