

11. The Devil and the Fallen Angels

God The Father, God The Son

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We must continue with the doctrine of the angels, because, unfortunately, all that which we have considered together about the holy angels does not exhaust what the Bible tells us about these spiritual powers that dwell in the heavenlies. In addition to those beings who help us and care for us, there are others who are our greatest enemies. They are opposed to us and set against us, and obviously, therefore, we must consider the teaching of the Bible concerning them. There are many reasons for doing that. It is quite impossible to understand human history without considering what the Bible has to tell us about these fallen or evil angels. We cannot hope to understand man as he is today, we cannot hope to understand the world, apart from this. And it increasingly seems to me that the essence of the error which most people seem to make, even in the history of this twentieth century to which we belong, is that they fail to consider the biblical doctrine of the devil and his angels.

But it is also a most practical doctrine from the standpoint of the individual Christian's personal experience. I find more and more in my pastoral experience, as I am privileged to interview people, and to help them in their personal fight of faith, and in their personal problems, that the essence of the trouble so frequently is that such people have not realised the powers that are set against them. So often I have to deal with people who have been sent to a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, or somebody like that, and whose problem very frequently is simply that they have without realising it been besieged and attacked by the devil. And the essence of the treatment, and of the cure, is to enlighten them with respect to this; to make them see that what they have attributed to themselves and their personal sin and failure (perhaps even mental disease), is really to be attributed only to this mighty antagonist who is described in the Bible as the devil. So that, strange though it may sound, to understand the biblical doctrine of the devil and his angels can be a most comforting and releasing doctrine.

So then let us look at it as it is unfolded to us in the Scriptures and we start at once with the one who is described as the devil. Here is one to whom reference is made in the Bible from the very beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation. Constantly, running right through, there are references to the devil and his captives. At this point again, as we have done earlier, we need to ask why it is that those of us who are evangelical Christians so infrequently study this doctrine and fail to give it its due place and attention in our Christian life. I maintain seriously that it is our failure at this point that surely must account for many of the pitfalls into which we fall so readily, not only in our personal experiences, but in our evangelism, and in many other respects. For if the devil can but keep us asleep, he will fill us with a false zeal, causing us to confuse the flesh and the spirit, and thus when we appear to be most zealous we can unwittingly be most under the influence of the enemy.

So, what has the Bible to tell us about the devil? First of all, let us consider some of the names that are applied to him in the Scriptures. He is referred to as "Satan", and the word Satan means "adversary". He is also referred to as the "devil", and that means "slanderer", one who slanders us. He is also described as "Beelzebub", which means that he is the prince of the devils. He is described as

“Apollyon”, and as the “angel of the bottomless pit”. He is called the “prince of this world” and the “god of this world”. He is described as the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:20). He is referred to as the “dragon”, as a lion, as “Lucifer, that old serpent”, and, perhaps one of the most significant names of all, as the “evil one”.

Now you will often find in the New Testament that whereas in the Authorised Version the word “evil” is used, it is probably true to say that it should be the “evil one”. Sometimes you will find “wicked” when it should be “wicked one”. There are those who say that when we pray, “deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13), it should be “deliver us from the evil one”. And when John, in the last chapter of his epistle, says that the “whole world lieth in wickedness” he is undoubtedly saying that the whole world lies in the “evil one” (1 John 5:19). And in the same way in John 17 when our Lord prays his high priestly prayer, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil,” it should be translated “from the evil one” (John 17:15). It is a most important term – the evil one.

The second thing that the Bible tells us about the devil is that he is a person. This is most important at the present time, because it has been the fashion for at least a century not to believe in the devil as a person. This is true not only of those who are unbelievers but also of many who call themselves Christians. They say they believe in the power of evil, or an evil influence, or a kind of lack in us, but they have a feeling that to believe in a personal devil is to be very much behind the times. But that is thoroughly unbiblical, because the Bible, as I shall show you, teaches us that the devil is a person. For myself, there is one proof that is more than sufficient in and of itself, and that is the accounts we have in the Gospels of the temptations of our Lord. Now obviously our Lord's temptations came from somewhere, and when people say that temptation to evil is something which arises solely from within, and from a certain lack of power or positive qualities in us, they have no explanation to offer of the temptations of our Lord. (See Chapter 24 on the person of Christ.) It was a person who tempted our Lord, and our Lord addressed him as such; it was the devil who spoke to Him, and He spoke to the devil (Luke 4:1-13) – not an influence but a person. Furthermore, we find the same thing shown quite clearly in the book of Job in the first chapter, where the devil appears quite clearly as a person and addresses God. And God addresses him.

The biblical teaching is in no doubt at all about this. Our Lord, turning to certain Jews one day said to them, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). How often you find the phrase, “the wicked one” – “then cometh the wicked one” (Matt. 13:19) – and that phrase, let me emphasise again, is very significant. Indeed, all these names that are applied to the devil assert in different ways that he is a person. Now I must not stay with this, but you notice that there is always a kind of parallelism in false doctrine. In dealing with the doctrine of God we had to point out that God is personal, but that people have been trying to describe God as some Force or some Energy. They have said that He is some great mind behind the universe and have denied the personality. The same error, you see, has been committed with regard to the evil one.

And what applies to the devil also applies to those who follow him, those who are described as “devils” or “demons” or “fallen angels”. You remember, for instance, the conversation between our Lord and the legion of devils that were in the poor man of Gadara. They spoke to our Lord and made a request. They not only said, “My name is Legion,” but asked that they might be allowed to enter into the swine – again revealing that they have definite personalities. So we must realise that apart from the sin that is in us, and the evil of our nature as the result of the Fall, we are confronted by a person outside us who is

tracking us down, a person who has a kingdom, of which he is the head, and which is highly organised, and his one great concern is to destroy the work of God. We have referred to the great statement in Ephesians 6:12 "against principalities, and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world" that is the kingdom, the organised kingdom of Satan, the evil one.

Then, of course, at the very beginning of the human story, in the first chapters of Genesis, we are given positive evidence that the devil is a person, because he came and tempted Eve and led to the Fall. Indeed, if you want one other proof I would suggest that the very term the "Holy Spirit" who is a person, suggests the opposite "evil spirit", the evil one, who is also a person and who tries to counterfeit all that God does. That is something, then, which we must never forget. It is of vital importance to realise that there is this person set over against the kingdom of God and His Christ, and all that belongs to it.

Next we must come to a very important and difficult question: What is the origin of the devil? The Bible asserts the fact of the devil, and of his personality. Where has he come from? Now we are not told much about this in the Bible, which is generally concerned simply to state things about the devil and his activities. The devil's origin seems to be assumed in Genesis, but I think there can be very little doubt but that in Ezekiel 28:11-19 we are given an account of the devil. Now it is clear that in the whole chapter two persons are being dealt with. The first is the king of Tyre. But certain of the descriptions in verses 11-19 obviously are not descriptive of any human being; they arise above that to another.

That is typical of Scripture. We see it in the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy is often put in that kind of dual form; it refers partly to some king or to some prince, but in addition there is a further suggestion about the Messiah. There are many examples of that in the prophecies of Isaiah, and in other prophecies "an immediate reference, but then in it and above it a remote reference" and here in Ezekiel, it seems to me, we have exactly the same thing. These verses, then, clearly refer to Satan and his origin, and there are certain things in them which we must emphasise.

The first thing we are told about Satan is that he was created: ". . . the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created" (v. 13); "Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (v. 15). The devil has not existed from all eternity; he is not an eternal being; he is a created being. There was a time in the history of the Church when that needed to be emphasised very powerfully, because there were those who taught that evil was eternal, that Satan was eternal, and that there were two gods, the good and the evil god. But that is an unscriptural idea. The devil is not eternal "he was made by God. Not only that. We are told that he had great power and ability. You get that in verse 12: "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." That was the devil as he was made by God. He seemed to sum up perfection.

He is also described, you notice, as the "anointed cherub that covereth . . ." (v. 14). Now this is a very significant statement "the anointed cherub". You remember that in dealing with the angels in an introductory manner in the last chapter, we pointed out that the cherubim are undoubtedly the highest form of being, and that their special function is to worship God, and to present to Him the worship of the entire universe. You see that in the four beasts in Revelation 4. They are the representations of man worshipping God, and, therefore, of the whole universe worshipping God "the living creatures". Well now, here we seem to have an indication that the devil was originally made by God as the anointed

cherub, the chief of all cherubs. The suggestion is (and it is only a suggestion) that when God created this being he meant him, as it were, to represent the whole universe in its praise, worship and adoration. He was the anointed cherub — this cherub that “covereth”. Does it not remind us of the Ark of the Covenant, shielded by the wings of the cherubim, still with the idea of worship and of adoration? There is much in Scripture that leads one to the conclusion that the devil was the brightest of all the angelic beings, given this position of superiority in which he was the head of the whole created universe in representing worship and adoration unto God.

You see also that we are told that he was “in Eden the garden of God” (Ezek. 28:13). But that is not a reference to his being in the Garden of Eden when he tempted Eve and Adam, and they fell, because the description given here of this Eden, the garden of God, does not tally at all with the description in Genesis. Here is an Eden which is characterised not so much by fruit as by precious stones, and in verse 13 a list is given of these stones. Now many saintly men reading this passage have meditated upon it and perhaps have speculated a little, and they have suggested an explanation that cannot be proved. But I mention it to you for what it is worth, and it seems to me that there is much to be said for it. It is suggested that the devil and his angels were present at the original creation of the world and it was when the devil and his angels fell, that a calamity took place which reduced this first world into a condition in which it had no form and was void, and necessitated the creation which is described in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. We will come back to that later on, I just mention in passing that Eden, the garden of God, to which reference is made here, may well be a reference to that first original creation of God.

And then we are told here in verse 15 that the devil was perfect in all his ways, but that, alas, he did not keep that first estate: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Then in verse 17 we read, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” This bright, angelic, glorious being was perfect in beauty, but he became lifted up and consumed with pride. Instead of leading the worship and adoration of God, he desired to be worshipped himself, and to be equal with God, and thus he raised himself against God, sinned against God, and was cast down and cast out by God. That seems to be the teaching of Ezekiel 28, and in Isaiah 14 you find something similar. Verses 12–15 of Isaiah read: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” That undoubtedly is a reference to the same thing.

Now, you notice, the Bible does not tell us how all this became possible. It does not explain to us how all these thoughts ever entered into the heart of Satan, the devil. It simply tells us that they did. The Bible gives us no explanation as to the ultimate origin of evil, and I suggest to you, therefore, that if you waste a second of your time in trying to speculate about that you are guilty of a lack of faith, because faith means to be content with the revelation given. It is beyond us. We cannot understand it. Theologians have speculated and have said that because the devil was perfect he must have been perfectly free, and perfect freedom in itself contains within itself the possibility of choosing against God. All right. Still, it does not seem to me to explain the ultimate origin of evil; all we do know is that the devil was created, as we have seen, then that evil entered his heart, and he rebelled against God, and was cast down.

What do we know further about him? Well, we are told a good deal in the Bible about his power, and what we learn about it is not surprising in view of what we have been told about his origin. Peter tells us that the devil is like a "roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8). He is described as "leviathan" (Isa. 27:1), and the "dragon" in several places in Revelation. I wonder whether you have ever noticed, when you have gone through your Bible, that there is the suggestion that the power of Satan is even greater than the power of the archangel? In Jude 9 we read, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Even Michael the archangel speaks to the devil in that way "he does not "bring against him a railing accusation"; he does not treat him with contempt, as if he were a nonentity. Even Michael says, "The Lord rebuke thee." You will find the same suggestion in 2 Peter 2:10-11.

There is no doubt at all about the power of the devil being greater than human power. Our Lord Himself described Satan as the "strong man armed" who "keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11:21). And you will recall that the devil is as powerful as this (I must come back to it, but I just mention it to make this section complete at this point): that he is able to influence our bodies. You remember what he did to Job? And Peter tells us that our Lord "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). Then you remember what Paul tells us about himself and the "messenger of Satan" that was sent to buffet him (2 Cor. 12:7). Yes, the devil can affect and influence our bodies.

What is his status? He is described as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). He is the evil one, the concentration of evil; all evil, as it were, is centred in him; he is the head and all evil seems to emanate out of him. Indeed, we are told in the Scriptures that he is the one who controls the power of death (Heb. 2:14). And in Matthew 25:41 we read that our Lord refers to the "devil and his angels", again showing that he is powerful.

Now I emphasise all that for this reason: if there is one lesson we should learn above all others from this consideration, it is that we should never speak loosely or flippantly about the devil. I am often appalled as I hear good Christian people referring jocularly to the devil. The Bible never refers to him in that light and flippant manner; it emphasises his power, his status. Nevertheless, let me hasten to say, his power is limited, he is not all-mighty. In the first chapter of Job we are told that God, as it were, gave the devil permission to do certain things to Job, but he put a very definite limit upon them, and the devil could not go beyond that.

There is a mystery at this point; ultimately the devil acts within the power of God, and yet the Bible teaches quite clearly that for some inscrutable reason that we cannot understand, God seems to accord to the devil a certain status and position. He allows him to do certain things; these very names and distinctions are applied to him. God in His eternal wisdom has allowed the devil to maintain a certain amount of power until the end, and yet that power is ultimately under the control of God. It is His permissive will that allows it, and the devil, as in the case of Job, was only allowed to go so far and no further (Job 1:12; 2:6).

Where does the devil exist? Where is his place? Where does he work? Well, we read in many places that he dwells in "the heavenlies". He is the prince of the power of the air, and yet we read of him "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down it" (Job 1:7). This again is an important point, and to me a very comforting one. The devil, because he is a created being, and because he is finite, is limited and can therefore only be in one place at a time. Yes, but he is a deceiver, and because he has so many

emissaries and because he is represented by his agents everywhere, he deceives us into thinking that he is everywhere at the same time. But he is not. He is not omnipresent.

What is the character of the devil? The things that characterise him supremely are his pride, pride above everything else; then malignity; then subtlety; then deceitfulness. Another term applied to him by our Lord Himself is "murderer": "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). That is his character "a deceiver, a liar, a whisperer, a murderer; one who hates God and is full of subtlety and pride.

Then the Bible speaks about the "works of the devil". John tells us that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), so what are his activities? Well, these are shown in his attacks upon the Son of God: his one great objective always is to destroy the work of God and to set himself up as God. So the first activity of the devil recorded in the Bible is the fall of man (Gen. 3). But if some of you have doubts (which you should not have) about the historicity of Genesis 3, then you will find your answer in 2 Corinthians 11:3 where Paul says, "as the serpent beguiled Eve". And what he did there, of course, was to produce in Adam and Eve antagonism to God: "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3: 1). The suggestion was that God was unfair, that God was keeping them down. Everything opposed to God "that is his activity.

And then because Adam and Eve listened to him, and fell, the devil became the one who controlled the power of death. I have already reminded you of that statement in Hebrews 2:14. It is a difficult verse to understand, because ultimately the power of death is in the hands of God, but it seems to me to mean this: the moment man listened to the devil he put himself under the power and under the dominion of the devil, and thereby the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. And the devil, as it were, claims this sentence of death, because one who breaks the law automatically belongs to the devil and is in the territory of the devil, which is the territory and the dominion of death. And it is only in that sense that the devil has the power of death.

Then we are told, of course, that he controls all unbelievers, all who are not Christians, in their lives and in the whole of their activities. Our Lord says that they are the children of the devil, (John 8:44), and John says that "we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [the evil one]" (1 John 5:19). Then Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, describes the devil as "the god of this world", while in Ephesians 2:2 he describes him as "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". We have seen, too, that our Lord describes him as "the strong man armed" who keeps constant control of those who are unbelievers.

How does he do this? Well, the first thing he does is blind them to the truth. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," says Paul, "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not . . ." (2 Cor. 4:3-4). And that is the trouble with every man and woman in the world today who is not a Christian. They are lost, not because they are scientists or philosophers, not because they have gigantic brains, or have read more than other people who call themselves Christians, but because the devil, the god of this world, has blinded their minds to the truth, and does not allow them to see that he is hiding it from them. That is the only explanation of why there is a single person in the world who does not believe in God or in His Christ. Then the second thing the devil does is to order and control the lives of these people: "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience". He is the father of lust and desire and evil in every form in the life of the ungodly.

If, then, that is what he does to unbelievers, what are his activities with respect to believers? The Bible describes him as our "adversary" — one who is always opposed to us in every way. He is also our accuser; he is essentially the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us to God, and he accuses us to ourselves. What does he do in particular? First, he resists our works and our activities. In Zechariah 3:1 you will find, "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Daniel 10:13 tells us that the prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted the archangel Michael. Paul writes about the "messenger of Satan sent to buffet him" — to prevent his preaching, and doing his work as he would like to do it. Then in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Paul says, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."

Satan also discourages us. He is always waiting to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8), to try us and to deceive us. "Satan hath desired to have you," said our Lord to Peter, "that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). He tempts us with his wiles, his snares, his fiery darts, his deceits and his suggestions; he excites our passions; he affects our minds. He is responsible for most of our moodiness, our depressions, our sense of hopelessness and our sense of despair. Indeed, you can be certain of this — every time you are turned in upon yourself, and find yourself looking at your weakness, your failure, your disability, or anything else in yourself, when you are looking at yourself like that, it is always the devil. I do not hesitate to say that the devil turns men and women in upon themselves, knowing that when they are looking at themselves they are not looking at God, and so he produces all these moods and depressions within us. He even affects our bodies, as I have already reminded you (Job 2:7; 2 Cor. 12:7). He can produce sickness and illness; he has the power to do so and he uses it. Later on in the series I hope to come back to these things; I just tabulate them for you at this point.

How does the devil do all this work? He does a great deal of it directly himself, but he also does it through his angels. We have seen already that the Lord refers to "the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41), and in 2 Peter 2:4 we read, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment . . ." There were certain angels that sinned as well as the devil, and God has cast them down.

In other words, those whom the Bible refers to as demons or as devils, or as unclean spirits, are undoubtedly fallen angels, these angels that sinned against God with the devil, the angels that followed him, that "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6). These are the devil's angels, his emissaries, his agents, the instruments that he uses to do his work. These are the principalities and powers and "rulers of the darkness of this world", the "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). All these are fallen angels. They must be — what else can they be? The devil cannot create; he cannot produce such followers; he cannot produce his own angels, because he is only a created being himself. No. The demons or the devils are those who followed this "anointed cherub" and have been cast out by God.

That, then, is in its essence the biblical doctrine of the devil and of the fallen angels, and we are confronted by this adversary. But we cannot finish without emphasising this: we must never forget that the devil's power is limited; it is under God. Christ in His life, His death and His resurrection, has already vanquished the devil. And we, as Christian people, should be enabled by the Lord to resist, and we can, for James tells us, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It is not that we refer to him disparagingly, nor that we bring against him a railing accusation or regard him as a joke. No! But in the power of the risen Lord we can resist, knowing that we can defeat him, we can withstand him. We are

told in Revelation that the saints "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11).

How important it is to remember both sides. We must never be light or flippant; we must never be foolhardy. There is always the adversary. Yes, but we need not spend our lives in a craven fear of him, mighty as he is. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). So, as we see the truth about the devil, let us realise more than ever the truth about our God, and about His Christ.